



פרשת בשלח  
ט"ו בשבט  
שבט תשע"ז

### GALA EVENING

The Partners in Torah gala evening was a smashing success. Over 460 men and women came out in force to show their support for the Kollel and our activities.

Rabbi Leibel Groner spoke about strengthening our Hiskashrus to the Rebbe by supporting the Mosdos of the Rebbe and shared stories about the Tzedaka in which the Rebbe was involved.

The Partners in Torah campaign was launched with a great start raising over \$100,000 to date.

Thank you to all of the participants and contributors to our appeal.

### KOLLEL IN THE COMMUNITY

Recently 2 of our Kollel Rabbis were invited to the Mizrachi community to give shiurim.

Rabbi Doobie Lisker delivered a shiur on Sous Vide cooking and whether it is permissible to use on Shabbos.

Rabbi Michael Stern addressed the topic of the Shabbos elevator.

The shiurim were stimulating and high level and the feedback was that they were really enjoyable and well received.

Kollel members often give shiurim in other communities and private homes and a tremendous resource for the wider community.

### WOMEN'S HALACHA SHIUR

The Monday morning Halacha shiur resumes this week.

This term we will be exploring the Halachos of lighting Shabbos candles and accepting Shabbos.

10:00-11:00am at 9 Sidwell Ave.



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## Tasting the fruits of success

Tu Bishvat is the Rosh Hashona for trees and it is customary to eat from the Seven Species which Eretz Yisroel is praised.

*"a land of wheat and barley, vine and figs and pomegranates, a land of oil producing olives and honey"*

The list comprises two grains and five fruits, the final one being dates which produce a sweet and sticky honey.

In the posuk, the word *eretz* (a land) appears twice, dividing the list of species into two groups. The second group separates olives and dates from the remaining species. Additionally whereas the first five species are identified only by the name of the fruit, the olives and dates are associated with their respective extracts, oil and honey.

What is so unique about the olives and dates that they stand alone?

The first five species have intrinsic value and immediate utility. The grains form the basic staple of man's diet. The fruits - grapes, figs and pomegranates - are ready to eat, providing enjoyment and refreshment.

However, olives and dates in their natural state are not as readily pleasing and have untoward affects;

The sages of the Gemara teach that eating olives causes a person to forget their Torah learning. Concerning dates, the Talmud tells the story of the sage Ulla on his travels to the city of Pumpedisa. In the marketplace Ulla saw that the dates were very cheap - three baskets for a zuz. He bemoaned 'Three baskets of such honey for one small coin! If good food is available so cheaply, why don't the residents of Pumpedisa learn more Torah?' That night Ulla suffered a terrible stomach-ache from eating the dates. He quickly retracted his criticism saying 'baskets of poison cost no more than a zuz, and yet they still continue to learn so much Torah'.

In contrast, the Talmud praises the extracts of both of these fruits. Whilst olives cause forgetfulness, olive oil causes one to remember even 70 years of Torah learning that had been forgotten. For this reason, when eating olives, many have the custom to first add a few drops of olive oil, to mitigate any

negative side effects. Concerning date honey, our sages teach that it illuminates the eyes with wisdom. Since the Torah wishes to describe the praises of the Holy Land the olives and dates are alluded to by their therapeutic extracts as opposed to the fruit.

Like the land of Israel, in our own lives we have many blessings. Some, like the first five species are sweet and readily apparent. These are our moments of revealed goodness, happiness and success.

We also have blessings like the dates and olives. In these instances, the blessings are not immediately apparent. Alongside the more enjoyable aspects of our lives, we all experience challenges and difficulties. On the surface these challenging moments seem to be anything but a blessing. However by delving deeper and working hard to overcome and grow from our challenges we reveal the hidden, innate goodness which lies beneath and positive growth that will ensue.

An interesting Halacha is derived from this verse. When a person is eating a selection of fruits, he recites the blessing on one fruit, having in mind to include the other fruits in this blessing. Which fruit should he recite the blessing over?

In the absence of a preference for one in particular, there is a halachic hierarchy determining which fruit takes precedence. Assuming that he likes all fruits equally, preference is given to the fruits of the 7 species (excluding wheat and barley which are not really fruits). If there are a number of fruits of the 7 species, whichever fruit appears closest to the word *eretz* (land) in the verse take precedence. Since the word *eretz* appears twice in the verse, the order of preference would be; olives, dates, grapes, figs and then pomegranates.

So it turns out that the fruits which are considered Eretz Yisrael's greatest blessing are the olive and the date.

The fruits of Eretz Yisrael teach us how to embrace our struggles; Easy and open success is sweet, but the greatest sense of happiness, fulfilment and triumph comes as a result of hard work to surmount the difficulties which we experience in life.

# Taking three steps back after Shemoneh Esrei

Rabbi Yonason Johnson

The Gemara<sup>1</sup> teaches that after concluding Shemoneh Esrei one should take three paces backwards and offer “Shalom” i.e. greeting. This is like taking leave of the King and saying farewell<sup>2</sup>. We leave the place of holiness where the Shechina rested on the person davening to return to the mundane<sup>3</sup>.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi adds about one who does not do so that it would be better had they not davened.

The Gemara continues that we should first offer “Shalom” to the right i.e. bowing, and then to the left. The Gemara qualifies that this does not mean the right and left side of the person davening, but rather the right and left of the Shechina before him. Thus one bows first to their left and then to the right.

Shulchan Aruch<sup>4</sup> brings this *Lehalacha*, writing that at the end of Shemoneh Esrei one should bow their head down and take three steps back. After completing the three steps while still bowing, they turn to the left and say *Oseh Shalom Bimromav*. Then turning to the right they say *Hu Yaaseh Shalom Aleinu*. When saying *Veal Kol Yisroel Veimru Amen* one should bow forward<sup>5</sup>.

## Why Three Steps?

The Beis Yosef brings many reasons for why we take three steps.

- Rav Hai Gaon writes that when we finish davening we are like a Kohen descending the Mizbeach after offering a Korban who would pass over 3 rows of stone between the Mizbeach and the ramp<sup>6</sup>.
- Rabbeinu Manoch derives the 3 steps from a verse in the Vision of Yechezkel describing the angels which refers to 3 legs; “and their legs were a straight leg.” (Legs in plural is a minimum of two).
- Additionally our sages teach that Nevuchadnezzar was able to destroy the Beis Hamikdash because he took three steps in honour of Hashem<sup>7</sup>.
- When Moshe ascended Har Sinai he entered through three Heavenly veils – a darkness, cloud and opaque darkness<sup>8</sup>. When he descended from before Hashem, he emerged through the same three veils. Our three steps represent our descent from before Hashem<sup>9</sup>.

- They also correspond to the three *Mil* (a Talmudic measure) which Bnei Yisroel moved away from Har Sinai at Matan Torah on hearing the sound of Hashem giving the Torah<sup>10</sup>.

One should not take more than three steps back as this would appear as showing off<sup>11</sup> by giving more honour to the Shechina than others do<sup>12</sup>.

## How Do We Take the Steps

When taking the three steps backwards we begin with the left foot<sup>13</sup>. Magen Avraham explains that when one starts with their left foot it shows that it is difficult for one to take leave of the Shechina and does so reluctantly with the weaker foot<sup>14</sup>. The Ta”z writes that we begin with the left foot which is the right side of the Shechina in front of us.

The Nafka Mina would be for a left footed person. According to the Magen Avraham they would step back starting with their right foot. According to the Ta”z<sup>15</sup> they would step back with the left foot like anyone else. The Halacha is like the Magen Avraham<sup>16</sup>.

Mishna Berura<sup>17</sup> writes that the first step is taken by bringing the left foot behind the right foot. The second step the right foot is brought behind the left foot. The final step brings the left foot in line with the right foot (figure a). Others write that the final step should bring the left foot behind the right foot (figure b). Another opinion writes that we add a final 4<sup>th</sup> step with the right foot to bring it in line with the left<sup>18</sup> (figure c).

There is an opinion<sup>19</sup> that says we should take six steps backwards because each pace must involve moving both feet i.e. left-right-left-right-left-right (figure d). The additional three steps are alluded to in Yechezkel in a subsequent Posuk “the foot of their legs was like the foot of the leg of a calf”. Many great Tzaddikim would follow this opinion taking six steps back, bringing each foot in line with the other after each step.

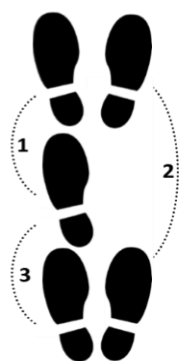


Figure A



Figure B

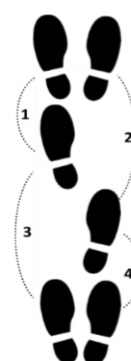


Figure C



Figure D

Avudraham writes that the additional three steps are made by moving forward<sup>20</sup> after the three steps moving backwards. According to this opinion one is obligated to return back to their place. This is in contrast with Kesef Mishna<sup>21</sup> who writes that after taking three paces backwards does not need to return to their place and can remain there or move elsewhere. Halachic practise follows the Avudraham.

Based on this, there are those who are *makpid* not to allow anyone to pass in front of them between they take the three steps forward<sup>22</sup> so as not to interrupt the six steps. The Poskim warn that one should not hurry to return to their place to ensure that no one crosses before them<sup>23</sup> because they will not be waiting the minimum time (discussed below). Rather they should signal that others not pass in front of them<sup>24</sup>.

To be continued

1. Yoma 53b
2. Ritva Yoma 53b
3. Shiblei haleket
4. Orach Chaim 123
5. Beer Heitev. This bowing should be lower than when bowing to the sides (Likutei Mahar”ch). See annotated Siddur that Minhag Harabi was to bow left while saying *Oseh*, right when saying *Shalom* and forward when saying *Bimromav*.
6. Many question this rationale because the gap between the ramp and Mizbeach was a hair-breadth.
7. See Midrash Rabbah Shir Hashirim 3:6
8. Devarim 4:11
9. Beis Yosef in the name of Orchos Chaim
10. Shabbos 88b. Quoted by Beis Yosef in the name of Orchos Chaim
11. Shiblei Haleket. Shulchan Aruch 123:4
12. Shulchan Aruch Harav 123:2
13. Hagahos Maimonis Hilchos Tefillah 5:60 based on Midrash Shocheh Tov Tehillim 35. In contrast Mahar”I Abuhav rules that one should begin
14. with the right foot as our sages teach that one should always turn to the right.
15. 123:10
16. 123:6
17. Shulchan Aruch Harav 123:5
18. 123:13. This is also the opinion of Birkei Yosef 123:6 and Chayei Adam 24:28 and Kaf Hachaim 123:24
19. An allusion to the additional 4<sup>th</sup> step is found in a version of the Gemara that Nevuchadnezzar took four steps in honour of the shechina.
20. See Beis Yosef.
21. Magen Avraham 6, Shulchan Aruch Harav 4
22. Tefillah 9:4
23. Magen Avraham 123:6
24. Pri Megadim Eshel Avraham. Shulchan Aruch Harav 123:4 quoting Lechem Chamudus
25. Machatzis Hashekel 123:6. The one who passes in front after being warned is at fault and will bear their sin. See Beer Moshe (7:16) that those who ask the person to pass back in front of them are mistaken as this is even worse.