



CHOF AV PROGRAM

Join us this Sunday night in marking the Hilulah of the Rebbe's father, the Gaon and Kabbalist Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Schneerson.

Rabbi Dovid Dubov (author of Yalkut Levi Yitzchok of the Rebbe's father's teaching) will give a shiur on a sampling of insights from the deep and esoteric teachings of Reb Levik on Shofar and Teshuvah.

Sunday 8:30pm אור ליל מנ"א

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TISHREI HALACHOS

Join the Mivtza Halacha program and learn the key halachos for Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur and Sukkos from the Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch in 15 minutes each day.

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אין בית המדרש בלא **חידוש** Chiddush



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Climbing the Shvindel Trep

There is a fascinating Midrash that describes how Hashem responded to the lament of the Jewish people at the beginning of this week's Haftorah.

“And Zion said Hashem has forsaken me and the L-rd has forgotten me.” תאמר ציון עזבני ה' ואדני שכחני

This emotional cry expresses the deep pain of the Jewish people. The Beis Hamikdash had been destroyed, the Jewish people were now being thrown into the darkness of Golus. Hashem's presence was hidden and they felt completely abandoned.

What was Hashem's response? You Jewish people are a bunch of complainers; complainers the sons of complainers!

When I made a wife and soulmate for Adam, after the sin of the Eitz Hadaas, he complained about her. Yaakov did the same when Yosef was sold. I was preparing to crown Yosef as king over Egypt and Yaakov complained.

Their descendants are the same. When I gave the Jewish people the Manna, the sublime food of the angels, they too complained.

And Zion did the same. I was preparing to eradicate the evil kingdoms from the world. I removed the Babylonians, the Medes and the Greeks and in the future I will remove the fourth kingdom (Rome). Yet Zion complains, saying “Hashem abandoned me and Hashem has forgotten me.”

The implication of this Midrash is that, like the other examples, the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash and subsequent exile was an amazing kindness that Hashem was doing for us and that we were wrong to complain about it.

How could this be? The Churban was one of the darkest moments in our history and we mourn it deeply. How could it be anything other than darkness? It seems the antithesis of kindness.

We can understand this through one of the famous teachings of the Baal Shem Tov - the analogy of a spiral staircase.

In Yiddish, a spiral staircase is called a “Shvindel Trep”, literally swindling stairs. This is because the spiral staircase swindles and confuses the person who is climbing them.

When you climb a vertical staircase, you can see the apex at every point of your climb. You can sense how each step brings you closer to your destination.

But on a spiral staircase you can't always see the place that you are trying to reach. You may see it initially, but as you climb and turn 180 degrees around, you can't see it anymore. It even seems as though you are moving in the opposite direction and further away from your destination.

But once you turn the next 180 degrees, you can see the top again... that is until you make the next half circuit and are 'swindled' again.

The destruction of the Temple and subsequent exile was a 180 degrees turn up the spiral staircase of Jewish destiny. This staircase is leading us to the ultimate redemption when Hashem's presence will be openly manifest in our world. Without going through the moments of darkness and concealment, we will never reach the top.

The Churban and Golus present us with an opportunity to grow from the darkness and reach heights that we would not have otherwise been able to reach. These times of darkness force us to dig deeper and access our deepest levels of Emunah and spiritual strength.

Our own lives are also like a Shvindel Trep. We have moments of clarity, light and revelation. We experience the good times of success and open blessings. But we also suffer times of darkness, loss and failure.

We don't always see it while we are going through these times, but every step is taking us higher. If we persevere, when we turn the corner, we will see how the setback was in fact part of our growth and ascent.

The Jewish people got swindled. When they could no longer see Hashem's presence and a brighter future, they felt abandoned.

Hashem's response was that these are the blind steps leading us closer to the Redemption. He never abandoned us. He is hidden, waiting for us to climb through the darkness and complete the revolution.

And when we do we will come to the apex of Geulah; the ultimate revelation of Hashem's presence. Then the will be no more concealment as the evil kingdoms and darkness are eradicated forever.

The weekly Halacha analysis

Tying-up the Sefer Torah on Shabbos

In honour of the Siyum of Mesechta Shabbos in the Daf Yomi cycle
Rabbi Yonason Johnson

Background Principles

Tying and untying knots are both forbidden Melachos on Shabbos. Halacha distinguishes between knots which are forbidden *Mideoraisa* and *Miderabanan* and which knots are permissible *Lechatchila*. For the purpose of simplicity, the distinction is as follows¹;

To be Biblically forbidden to tie or untie, the knot must be tied with the intention that it remain in place forever i.e. there is no plan to untie it at a future point. This is called a קשר קיימא, a permanent knot. According to some authorities, the knot must also be a professional knot to constitute an *Issur Deoraisa*.

A knot that one intends to untie within 24 hours and is also a non-professional knot, may be tied and untied on Shabbos *Lechatchila*.

Tying a professional knot, even if one intends to untie it within 24 hours, is Rabbinically forbidden to tie or untie on Shabbos. A non-professional knot which is tied with the intention to untie it in the future (after 24 hours), is also Rabbinically forbidden to either tie or untie on Shabbos.

The Status of Different Types of Knots

A single knot is not considered a knot at all² as it will not hold. One may tie or untie such a knot on Shabbos *Lechatchila*.

A double knot is considered a knot. Because it is tight, it may be considered a professional knot and is Rabbinically forbidden to tie even if one plans to undo it within 24 hours³.

A bow is also not considered a knot⁴ and may be tied and untied without any concern. The Alter Rebbe⁵ and also the Mishna Berura rules that one may also tie a bow on top of a bow (double bow) even though it will hold tightly⁶.

However, if the bow is tied on top of a knot (e.g. how we tie shoelaces), this is considered a knot⁷. It is not considered to be a professional knot as it is not tight⁸. If this type of knot is intended to be untied within 24 hours, it is permissible to tie and untie on Shabbos *Lechatchila* (this is why we can untie and tie shoelaces).

If it was tied to last for longer than 1 day but will be untied at some point in the future, it is Rabbinically forbidden to tie or untie.

It is possible that if one ties a single knot and then does something else to secure it (i.e. not necessarily a bow), this too would be forbidden like a bow⁹. Therefore one should not wind a string around something and secure it by tying a

single knot and tucking the ends of the string back through underneath the windings. Doing so may even be considered like a double knot which can't even be tied for less than 24 hours¹⁰.

There is a minority view that a bow on top of a knot is also not considered a knot and would be permissible in all circumstances¹¹.

Tying for a Mitzvah

The Shulchan Aruch¹² rules that a knot which is only Rabbinically forbidden may be tied (and untied) on Shabbos for the need of a Mitzvah.

This is derived from the final Mishna in Mesechta Shabbos¹³ which describes an incident that took place one Shabbos in the days of Rabbi Tzadok's father where they tied an earthenware vessel with a reed-grass to measure if there was a hand-breadth size opening in a certain barrel (to determine a law concerning ritual impurity).

The Mishna concludes that from this episode we learn that we can tie knots on Shabbos. The Gemara qualifies that this is only permissible for the needs of a Mitzvah. Rashi¹⁴ qualifies that one may only tie a Rabbinically forbidden knot¹⁵.

This is brought as Halacha in Shulchan Aruch¹⁶. This allowance is for both types of Rabbinically forbidden knots – a professional knot that will be untied within 24 hours or a non-professional knot that will be untied in the future¹⁷.

The Magen Avraham¹⁸ qualifies that the allowance for the sake of a Mitzvah only applies if one cannot achieve the outcome in any other permissible way. If other options are possible, why should we do something that would be otherwise Rabbinically forbidden¹⁹?

Even for the purpose of a Mitzvah, one cannot tie a knot if it will be left indefinitely, even if it is an unprofessional knot²⁰ as this is Biblically forbidden according to some opinions. Even if one intends to untie the knot after Shabbos, if there is a concern that one may decide later to leave it in place, it is not permissible for a Mitzvah²¹.

Tying the Sefer Torah

Tying the Sefer Torah is considered to be for the purpose of a Mitzvah and if required, one may tie it with a Rabbinically forbidden knot. There is no concern that the knot will be left indefinitely as the Sefer Torah will be used in the future²².

Based on the Magen Avraham's ruling, if there is a completely permissible alternative, one should not tie the Sefer Torah with a knot. One should rather use a gartel for the Sefer Torah which uses Velcro or buckle-type clicks.

But where there is no alternative, the Shaalah arises whether one may tie it with a knot and if yes, how it should be tied. The question is not only relevant for Gelilah on Shabbos. It also applies when tying the Sefer Torah on a weekday as this knot would be untied on Shabbos.

If the Sefer Torah being tied at Shachris will be used at Mincha as well, one may tie a non-professional knot even *Lechatchila* as it will be untied within 24 hours.

If one is tying the gartel at Mincha of Shabbos or if the Torah will not be used again within 24 hours e.g. when tying a Torah on Thursday morning that will be used on Shabbos, the following applies;

Tying a bow on top of a knot (shoelace knot) is otherwise Rabbinically forbidden and it is preferable not tie the gartel in this manner²³ if avoidable. For example, if one could wrap the sash tightly a number of times around the Sefer Torah in a secure manner, this would be preferable as it does not involve any knots. One may even wrap the gartel around the Torah and then thread the loose ends back under the windings to secure it.

However, if this will not hold the gartel securely, it is permissible to tie it instead.

Ketzos Hashulchan²⁴ writes that tying a knot with a bow may be preferable since some gartels may not be long enough to wrap them enough times to be secure. He also suggests that merely wrapping the gartel around the Torah without tying it, may be disrespectful to the Sefer Torah. Therefore (in the absence of a Velcro alternative) one can tie the gartel on the Sefer Torah using a knot and bow on top.

1. Based on Tur and Shulchan Aruch 317 and Shulchan Aruch Harav 317 1-2
2. Shulchan Aruch Harav 317:3
3. Ram"o 317:1 and Shulchan Aruch Harav 317:2
4. Shulchan Aruch 317:5
5. Shulchan Aruch Harav 651:6
6. 317:29. See Ta"z 317:7 quoting Mordechai
7. Ta"z 317:7 and Magen Avraham 317:15
8. *ibid*
9. See Avnei Nezer OC 179. Mishna Berura 651:11 writes that one may not bind a Lulav on Yomtov by tying a single knot and then wrapping the remaining ends to hold it in place.
10. See Divrei Nechemiah Hosafos on OC 651.
11. Ram"o 317:3. The Vilna Gaon explains that this is permissible because a single knot is not a knot (and a bow is not a knot).
12. 317:1
13. 157a
14. 157a וקושרין
15. The Acharonim (See Avnei Nezer OC 182) question why one is allowed to violate a Rabbinic law for the sake of a Mitzvah. The general rule is that on Shabbos one may only a 'double Rabbinic' act may be performed for the sake of a Mitzvah שבות דשבות שבות במקום מצוה. For a novel explanation see Likkutei Sichos Volume 14 Parshas Vaeschchanan.
16. 317:1
17. Magen Avraham 317:2
18. *ibid*
19. Shulchan Aruch Harav 317:4 and Mishna Berura 317:11
20. Ketzos Hashulchan 123:9 based on Shulchan Aruch Harav 651:6 concerning a Lulav where one does not untie the knot after Sukkos ends
21. Pri Megadim Eshel Avraham 317:6 and 20 concerning tying a knot in Tzitzis
22. Ketzos Hashulchan 123:9
23. Minchas Shabbos 80:155, Nimukei Orach Chaim quoting his father the Darkei Teshuvah, Minchas Yitzchak 8:19, Maharshag 1:60
24. 123:9