



פרשת וירא
מרחשון תשפ"ב

YARCHEI KALLAH

Plans are underway for this year's Yarchei Kallah learning programs.

IYH, things will be opened up and we look forward to welcoming you to join us for these amazing annual learning opportunities.

Yarchei Kallah Melbourne learning program will run from December 26 - January 2

The Yarchei Kallah retreat will take place at Camp Marysville from January 2 - 9.

For more information about these programs, please email Kollel@yeshivahcentre.org

Stay tuned for details of the programs, including speakers and topics, that will be shared in the coming weeks.

RESUMING LEARNING IN KOLLEL

As we are now opening up and resuming Minyanim, Kollel is looking forward to welcoming you back for face-to-face shiurim and Chavrusas and Davening times.

To come to Kollel learning, please ensure that you have sent in your proof of double-vaccination to

kollel@yeshivahcentre.org

Shiurim will also continue online for the immediate future. Stay tuned for details of all of our upcoming learning programs and classes.

A collection of Torah thoughts produced by Kollel Menachem

אין בית המדרש בלא
חידוש Chiddush



In this Edition

Creating the kindest society **P.1**

When do we ask for rain down-under **P.2**

Creating the kindest society

Parshas Vayeira tells us about the sinfulness and evil of the cities of Sedom and Amora, "The outrage of Sedom and Amora is so great, and their sin so grave!". Elsewhere, the Torah relates "the inhabitants of Sedom were very wicked sinners against Hashem".

The Midrash brings horrific examples of the corruption. Their sins were particularly in relation to man and his fellow man; hospitality etc. Hashem considered their behaviour so evil and unconscionable, that they had to be completely destroyed.

In Halacha, there is a concept of Middas Sedom - behaviour and attitudes that are like the people of Sedom.

One of the examples of this behaviour applies in the case of **זה נהנה וזה לא חסר** - where something can benefit someone else, without causing a loss to oneself. If one refuses to give the other this benefit, it is considered Middas Sedom.

In last week's Halacha section, we illustrated this with the example of someone who has extra room in their garbage bin, but refuses to let their neighbour use it.

The rationale behind this law is that the Torah wants us to create a just society, where people are kind and generous to one another.

The fact that this is described as Middas Sedom implies that not only did they behave this way, but that this is the defining trait of their evil nature.

Pirkei Avos (5:10), discusses the four different characters in human beings and their attitudes;

One that says "mine is mine, and yours is yours", this is the average type. And some say that this is Middas Sedom. "Mine is yours and yours is mine": is an unlearned person. "Mine is yours and yours is yours" is a pious person. "Mine is mine, and yours is mine" is a wicked person.

In the first case, where one says "mine is mine and yours is yours" **שלי שלי ושלך שלך**, the view that this is the average attitude is self-understood as this is how most people think. But how can this be considered as Middas Sedom?

If I say that "mine is yours", that would mean that I am lose out or giving up on "mine". Middas Sedom, as discussed above, only applies if I don't give to

others when there is no loss to myself.

Most of the commentaries explain that the Mishna does not literally mean that this is Middas Sedom. Rather, if one is not generous and forgoing on personal loss to do a favour, one will eventually come to behave like the people of Sedom, refusing to extend a kindness, even when there is no loss to oneself.

The Maharal explains that the person says "what's yours is yours" in order to protect "what's mine is mine". If the poor know that their attitude is "what's yours is yours", they will not try to ask for anything, thereby ensuring "what's mine is mine". This way, they ensure that they will never be asked for anything, even if there is no personal loss.

Chaza"l teach that someone who wants to be a Chossid, should occupy themselves with the words of Pirkei Avos. A Chossid refers to one who goes beyond the letter-of-the-law. Unlike Halacha which reflects the letter-of-the-law, Pirkei Avos teaches one how to be a Chossid and go above and beyond.

In a strict letter-of-the-law sense, Middas Sedom only applies when there is no personal loss or inconvenience involved. Where one would be inconvenienced or incur a loss, they technically have not done anything wrong by not doing the favour.

Pirkei Avos calls on us to go beyond the letter-of-the-law. I may not be obligated to put myself out and do the kindness, but I should anyway. I may not be doing the wrong thing, but am I doing the wrong thing?

By the standard of Middas Chassidus, the letter-of-the-law is actually Middas Sedom!

Over the past year and a half, we have all stepped up to exercise Middas Chassidus. Many of the COVID restrictions which have inconvenienced us or caused us losses in other ways, have been for the benefit of others who are more vulnerable and at risk than we ourselves may be.

There has also been the unbelievable Chessed that people have done to support others, giving up their time and resources. And of course, the tremendous personal sacrifice of the frontline workers for the sake of others.

The extreme selfishness of Middas Sedom was punished with the ultimate destruction. May our extreme kindness be repaid with the ultimate reward.

The weekly Halacha analysis

When do we ask for rain down-under?

Rabbi Yonason Johnson

On the 7th of Cheshvan, the Jews in Eretz Yisroel began adding the request for rain in the Shemoneh Esrei, saying ותן טל ומטר לברכה. The request for rain is added into the blessing בריך עלינו, the blessing for Parnoso¹.

This follows the view of Rabban Gamliel quoted in the Mishna². Even though Eretz Yisroel requires rain immediately after Sukkos, they delay request for rain for 15 days to allow the last person who had travelled to the Beis Hamikdosh to cross the Euphrates River before rain would make the roads impassable³.

Even after the destruction of the Beis Hamikdosh we continue to delay the request for rain until the 7th of Marcheshvan as many Jews would continue to be Oleh L'regel in Yerushalayim even after the Churban⁴.

Outside of Eretz Yisroel, in the exile (a reference to Bavel), they begin requesting rain from the 60th day after the Tekufah of Tishrei – the Autumn Equinox⁵. Bavel was a low-lying region and did not require rain until later. Earlier rainfall would damage the fruits and crops which were still out in the field. Based on the halachic calculation this falls on the eve of the 5th of December and the eve of the 6th of December in the year preceding a secular leap year.

In both Bavel and Eretz Yisroel we conclude requesting rain at Mincha on Erev Pesach which marks the end of the winter months. After Pesach one may no longer request rain. If they did so in error, they are required to repeat the Shemoneh Esrei.

Other Countries

What about countries outside of Bavel and Eretz Yisroel who have different rainy seasons and different rainfall requirements?

The Rif and Rambam⁶ only quote the dates listed in the Gemora. The Rambam writes that in Egypt and Syria they begin requesting rain from the 60th day from the Tekufah, following the Minhag of Bavel. Lechem Mishna explains that since the Gemora uses the generic term “the exile”, it refers to all countries outside of Eretz Yisroel.

In contrast, the Rosh asserts that the request for rain depends on the rainy season of each country or region. In his commentary on the

Talmud⁷, the Rosh questions why we follow the practise of Bavel in this matter, suggesting that lands who require rain earlier should be able to begin requesting rain from the 7th of Cheshvan. He notes that this was the practise of the communities in Province.

In a Teshuvah of the Rosh⁸ he takes his argument a step further. The Teshuvah begins with an introduction written by his son;

In the year 5073 (1313) the land was in drought throughout the rainy season. On the first night of Pesach Rabbi Asher ben Yechiel (the Rosh) told his students that he had long been bothered why we should be bound by the custom of Bavel. Why in Ashkenaz, whose crops require rain until Shavuot, not continue to mention and request rain after Pesach? He instructed that the Chazzan continue to say משיב הרוח ומוריד המשקט in all of the Yomtov prayers. A tumult ensued and in response, even though it was Chol Hamoed, the Rosh wrote his Teshuvah setting forth his position⁹.

The Rosh writes that since his opinion was not accepted by the community, he deferred so as not to create divisions within the Kehillah.

The Shulchan Aruch¹⁰ rules like the Rambam and Rif, that throughout Chutz Laaretz we begin requesting rain from the evening of the 60th day from the Tekufah.

However, the Rosh's view is not discounted completely. The Shulchan Aruch¹¹ adds that if one lives in a country which requires rain in the summer and they mistakenly said ותן טל ומטר לברכה after Pesach, they do not need to repeat the Shemoneh Esrei.

In this case we rely on the Rosh who would say that one had in fact davened correctly. If they wish to, they can daven a voluntary Shemoneh Esrei but are not obliged to do so¹². This ruling is also echoed by the Levush, the Alter Rebbe and Mishna Berura.

The Southern Hemisphere

This discussion is relevant in the Southern Hemisphere where from Pesach until Sukkos is our winter (rainy) season and from Shemini Atzeres until Pesach is our summer season.

There is a great deal of correspondence from the 1800s between communities in Melbourne,

Sydney, Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina and the Gedolei Haposkim in Europe and Eretz Yisroel addressing how they should conduct themselves with regards to requesting rain in the Shemoneh Esrei¹³.

Based on the above ruling of the Shulchan Aruch, the consensus of most Poskim¹⁴ is that in Southern Hemisphere countries where rainfall in our summer months is not harmful – either to crops or to people's health – we should request rain from the 60th day of the Tekufah until Pesach.

Even though it is not our rainy season, it is the rainy season for the majority of the (Jewish) world who live in the northern hemisphere and we are requesting for them. In our winter we do not request rain in בריך עלינו since it is after Pesach.

If rain in the summer is harmful, we would not request rain at all during our Shemoneh Esrei at any time during the year.

The leniency of the Shulchan Aruch which relies on the Rosh would apply in the Southern Hemisphere and if one mistakenly requested rain after Pesach, they would not be required to repeat the Shemoneh Esrei.

There is a minority view¹⁵ that in the Southern Hemisphere, where the seasons are completely inverted, we should request rain in בריך עלינו in our winter months from Pesach until Shemini Atzeres.

In a Sicha¹⁶ on the topic, the Rebbe suggests that this view makes sense. However, he stresses that this is only as a theoretical Torah discussion. Once the Minhag has already been established especially when it has been observed for generations, we should not change so as not to make Machlokes.

Whether we request rain or not and whether the Shemoneh Esrei is thereby invalidated is a case of doubt. Whereas avoiding Machlokes is expressly forbidden by the Torah “you should not be like Korach and his followers”.

It should be noted that anywhere in the world that requires rain or are experiencing drought between Pesach and Shemini Atzeres, they can (and should) request rain in the blessing שומע תפילה where one may add their personal requests.

1. Brachos 33a

2. Taanis 10a

3. Mishna ibid according to Rashi

4. See Shulchan Aruch Harav 117:1 in brackets quoting the Ra"n Taanis 2a.

5. Taanis 10a

6. Hilchos Tefillah 2:16

7. Taanis Ch. 1 Siman 4

8. Teshuvos Harosh Klal 4 Siman 10

9. In the Teshuvah he quotes the Rambam Pirush Hamishnayos which seems to take the same stance.

10. O.C. 117:1

11. O.C. 117:2

12. Ibid with Ram"o

13. See Teshuvos Btzel Hachochma siman 85 who records the history of correspondence and the responses of Rabbi Shmuel Salant (Yerushalayim), Rabbi Yitzchok Elchonon Spektor (Kovno), Rabbi Nosson Adler (London) and others. See Hisvaduyos 5743 volume 1 p389 for a

comprehensive list of sources.

14. Including modern day Poskim including the Minchas Yitzchok 6:171.

15. Shevet halevi 1:2

16. Hisvaduyos 5742 4:2119 and 5743 1:389