

Parsha Encounters

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Parshas Achrei Mos-Kedoshim – Rabbi Meir Stern

Clinging to Hashem

"Vo'avdil Eschem Min Ho'amim Lihiyos Li"

"And I will separate you from the nations to become mine"

R' Elazar Ben Azarya derives from this Posuk the following idea "One should not say, I am disgusted by this pig meat, or I do not want to wear this garment with Shaatnez. Rather one should say, I want these (i.e. the pig meat or Shaatnez) but my Father in Heaven forbade me."

We learn a remarkable principle from this Medrash. It is preferable to allow one's natural desires to remain intact and consistently try to overcome them, rather than to curb his desires to the point where he would not have to fight his *Yetzer Horah*. This can be better understood with the Gemara (Kidushin 39b) which states that one who sits and does not commit a sin gets a reward as if he had done a positive commandment. However, the Gemara explains that this applies only if he had an opportunity and desire to do the *aveirah*, yet quelled his desire in order not to sin. One who does not have an interest in sinning will not get this reward. Hence, R' Elazar Ben Azarya says, one should allow his natural desires to remain intact. This way, when he is tempted to eat pig meat, he can fight and overcome his *Yetzer Horah* and only then refrain from eating the forbidden meat. In doing so, he will have earned his reward. (This point is qualified by the Rambam who holds it only applies to *Chukim*, meaning to *mitzvos* we would not have done of our own accord had the Torah not commanded us to.)

However, what of the *aveiros* in which we really have no natural desires to commit? How can we get

a reward for abstaining from them? The Shem Mishmuel says that if when one refrains from committing a sin, he does so with the intent to accept the yoke of Heaven upon himself and with intention to do the Mitzvah of "*Ul'dovka Bo*" which includes coming close to Hashem by keeping all that he commands, then while keeping that negative commandment, he is also doing a positive commandment of "*Ul'dovka Bo*" for which he will receive a great reward.

Furthermore, the Shem Mishmuel explains that a person who wants to do a *Mitzvah* is given extra strength to assist him in battling the *Yetzer Horah*. However, when avoiding a negative commandment we are not given this extra strength. Therefore, he advises, that whenever one is tempted by sin, he should have in mind that by refraining from this *aveirah*, I am doing Hashem's will and fulfilling the positive commandment of "*Ul'dovka Bo*". This way he will be invoking the power of a positive commandment and will then be given special strength and assistance in overcoming his desires.

In summation, one can be rewarded for refraining from sin in one of two instances. Either if he was tempted to sin and overcame his desires, or by having in mind that by not doing the *aveirah* he is fulfilling the mitzvah of "*Ul'dovka Bo*". In addition, whether he is tempted or not, if he intends to fulfill the mitzvah of "*Ul'dovka Bo*", he is given special assistance from Hashem to refrain from sinning. May we all merit to fulfill the will of our Father in Heaven.

Rabbi Stern learns regularly at the kollel.

Halacha Encounters

What Comes First?

Performing Mitzvos in the Proper Order

Rabbi Yisroel Langer

There are times when opportunity presents itself with multiple Mitzvos to perform. One cannot pick and chose which Mitzvah one would like to do first. There are rules given by Chazal as to which Mitzvah takes precedence. One such situation is on Friday night during the period between Pesach and Shavuos. If one brought in Shabbos and davened Ma'ariv early, he must repeat over Krias Shema and recite Sefiras haomer after nightfall. One may be faced with a situation in which he is ready to recite Birchas Hamazon, Krias Shema and Sefiras Haomer. What is the proper order in which to recite them?

One rule, which applies in situations such as these, is that a Mitzvah performed more frequently should precede a Mitzvah performed less frequently. We find this concept by Korbonos. The Korbon Tomid (daily sacrifice) preceded the other Korbonos of the day because it was most frequent. A practical application of this Halacha is that one who upon finishing eating becomes obligated to recite the beracha "Asher Yatzar". At the same time he is also obligated to recite the Beracha Acharona on what he ate. Which Beracha should he recite first? The Maharshal¹, applying the principle that the more frequent mitzvah comes first, rules that the Beracha of "Asher Yatzar" precedes the Beracha Acharona.

R' Akiva Eiger² questions what the ruling would be if one had to recite *Birchas Hamazon* and *Asher Yatzar*. In this instance perhaps *Birchas Hamazon*, which is a Mitzvah D'oraysa, is considered a Mitzvah of greater sanctity and therefore can come before "Asher Yatzar". Whether or not a Mitzvah d'oraysa precedes a Mitzvah D'rabanan is subject to a dispute amongst the Gedolei Acharonim. The Noda B'Yehuda³ is of the opinion that a Mitzvah D'oraysa is considered a Mitzvah of greater sanctity than a Mitzvah D'rabanan and therefore will precede a Mitzvah D'rabanan. The Shaagas Aryeh⁴ disagrees with this and holds that a Mitzvah D'oraysa doesn't necessarily precede a Mitzvah D'rabanan.⁵ In this situation, the Chavos Yair⁶ Paskins that "Asher Yatzar" precedes even Birchas Hamazon.

With regard to Birchas Hamazon and Sefiras Haomer according to the Noda B'Yehuda Birchas Hamazon certainly takes precedence since it is a Mitzvah D'oraysa while Sefiras Haomer is only a Mitzvah Mid'rabanan (according to the majority of opinions). According to the Shaagas Aryeh one could actually chose whichever he

would like to do first. Even though Birchas Hamazon is recited more frequently than Sefiras Haomer, since one is not obligated to eat bread during the week it is not considered by Halacha to be a more frequent Mitzvah.⁷ However on Shabbos and Yom Tov when one is required to eat bread and therefore required to bentch, the Mitzvah of Birchas hamazon is considered to be a more frequent Mitzvah than Sefiras Haomer and will therefore precede it.⁸

Consequently, returning to our original question, on Friday night the correct order to perform the Mitzvos would be:⁹

- 1 - Krias Shema(which is most frequent)
- 2 - Birchas Hamazon
- 3 - Sefiras Haomer

Despite what we have clarified, it seems that many people are accustomed to recite Krias Shema after Birchas Hamazon, even though Krias Shema is the more frequent Mitzvah. The reason why many permit this is that one is not obligated to interrupt his meal to perform other Mitzvos. Birchas Hamazon is considered by some to be a component of the meal, and therefore one is not obligated to recite Krias Shema until completion of the entire meal including Birchas Hamazon.¹⁰ Still, Sefiras Haomer according to all opinions is recited last.¹¹

Note: According to most Poskim, these rules only apply when one is prepared to do all the Mitzvos consecutively. But if one is not yet ready to bentch he may recite Sefiras Haomer during the meal. Or if one is not yet ready to recite Krias Shema until a later point in the evening he may bentch and recite Sefiras Haomer first.

¹ Quoted in M.B. Siman 8 s.k.2

² O.C. Siman 8

³ O.C. 39

⁴ 22

⁵ See ibid. for reason

⁶ Mkor Chaim (Kitzor Halachos, 165)

⁷ This is called a "Tadir Hamtzo"

⁸ There are more than 50 Shabosos and Yom Tov during the year. Sefiras haomer is only done 49 times during the year.

⁹ Shaagas Aryeh 21-22.

¹⁰ HaRav Dovid Feinstein Shlita, HaRav Chaim Stein (Rosh Yeshiva Telshe Cleveland)- [heard from HaRav Boruch Hirshfeld shlita]

¹¹ Shaagas Aryeh 22