



A PROJECT OF CHICAGO COMMUNITY KOLLEL

# PARSHA ENCOUNTERS

22 Tammuz 5768 / July 27, 2008

Parshas Mattos ✍️ Rabbi Dovid Rokach

## For Heaven's Sake

**A**fter *Midyan* caused *Klal Yisrael* to sin and suffer punishment, the *pasuk* states that *Hashem* commanded *Moshe* to take revenge on behalf of *Klal Yisrael*.

*Take the revenge of the children of Israel from the Midyanites, after which you will be gathered to your people (Bamidbar 31:2)*

However, when *Moshe* related this command, he instructed *Klal Yisrael* to take revenge on behalf of *Hashem*.

*And Moshe spoke to the people saying prepare from yourselves men of war to fight against Midyan to place the vengeance of Hashem upon Midyan (Bamidbar 31:3)*

Although *Hashem* specified that revenge should be taken on behalf of *Klal Yisrael*, *Moshe* instead referred to revenge on behalf of *Hashem*. Why did *Moshe* alter the language of the commandment in this way?

The *Mishna* states in *Pirkei Avos* that “all of your actions should be for the sake of Heaven.” (*Avos* 2:17) *Rabbeinu Yonah* explains that this encompasses even routine tasks we perform all the time, such as eating or sleeping. These mundane actions are typically performed for personal pleasure or merely for survival, regardless of any higher purpose. The *Mishna* is teaching us that even such acts, which would be performed anyway for various reasons, can be elevated if performed with the intent of helping us serve *Hashem*.

*Klal Yisrael* could have chosen to avenge *Midyan's* misconduct solely for personal reasons, because we were harmed. But there is another element to *Midyan's* wrongdoing, given that the way they harmed *Klal Yisrael* was by causing us to sin. Such conduct is not only an attack upon *Klal Yisrael*, but also an affront to *Hashem*. (*Rashi, Bamidbar* 3:3.) This gave rise to an additional aspect of vengeance directed to *Midyan's* offense against *Hashem*. By emphasizing revenge on behalf of *Hashem*, *Moshe* instructed that our objective should be to avenge the honor of *Hashem* rather than our own personal grievance. Thus, *Moshe*

was not altering the original command. *Moshe's* choice of words taught the ideal intent for *Klal Yisrael's* act of revenge.

It is also interesting to note that although *Moshe* instructed *Klal Yisrael* to act for the sake of *Hashem*, *Hashem* Himself instead emphasized revenge on behalf of *Klal Yisrael*. This is in line with the principle that the relationship between *Hashem* and *Klal Yisrael* is reciprocal in nature—*Hashem* relates to us in the same way we behave towards Him. Therefore, just like *Klal Yisrael* was supposed to focus on taking revenge from *Midyan* for *Hashem's* sake, *Hashem* indicated that His main concern was avenging the harm to *Klal Yisrael*.

Another example of the reciprocal relationship between *Hashem* and *Klal Yisrael* is found in connection with *tefillin*. Our *tefillin* contain the statement that “Listen Israel, *Hashem* is our G-d, *Hashem* is One.” The *Gemara* states that *Hashem* also wears *tefillin*, which state “who is like Your people Israel one nation in the world.” This indicates that when we give priority to *Hashem*, He responds by elevating us. (*Berachos* 6a.) May we be *zoche* to devote all our actions to serving *Hashem* and thereby receive a full measure of *Hashem's* attention and kindness.

*Rabbi Rokach* learns regularly at the kollel.

### YARCHEI KALLAH 5768 SPECIAL EVENING SHIURIM

Monday August 11, 2008

*For Men*

HaRav Naftali Jaeger  
“Tisha B'Av:  
From the Tears of the Churban  
to the Joy of Binyan”

*For Women*

Rebbetzin Tehila Jaeger  
“Speech:  
The Power to Recreate  
Your World”

8:15 p.m. at the home of  
Rabbi & Mrs. Harvey Zupnik  
6311 N. Monticello

8:15 p.m. at the home of  
Mr. & Mrs. Jonah Bruck  
6253 N. St. Louis

# HALACHA ENCOUNTERS

## Havdalah Part II

Rabbi Akiva Niehaus

### The Havdalah Procedure:

In order to escort *Shabbos* out respectfully, the table should remain covered with the *Shabbos* tablecloth and the participants should remain dressed in their *Shabbos* clothes (*M.B.* 262:4,8). The cup should be filled with wine until it overflows as a good sign for the coming week (*Rema* 296:1). One should minimize the amount that spills out in order to limit the amount of lost wine (*M.B. s.k.* 5). Some say that it suffices to fill the cup to the brim so that some wine will spill when the cup is lifted (*A.H. seif* 11).

Before reciting *Havdalah*, the custom is to recite *Hinei Keil* etc. and other *pesukim* (as written in the *siddur*) as a good sign. [Although many people have a custom to raise the cup while reciting the words *Kos yeshuos esa*, a source for this custom has not been found.]

### The Bracha on Wine:

While making the *bracha* on the wine the cup is held in the right hand, and, according to some opinions, the *besamim* (spices) should be held in the left hand (*S.A.* 296:6). However, others say that it is unnecessary to hold the *besamim* during the *bracha* on wine (*A.H. seif* 17).

### The Bracha on Besamim:

Since we are saddened by the departure of the *neschama yeseira* after *Shabbos*, we smell *besamim* in order to refresh our soul (*M.B.* 297:2). If spices are not readily available, one need not exert himself to find them and should recite *Havdalah* without the *bracha* of *besamim* (*S.A.* 297:1). If *besamim* later become available, he may recite the *bracha* over them anytime on *Motzai Shabbos* (*S.A.* 299:6).

At this point in *Havdalah*, the cup should be switched to the left hand and continue to be held until after the *bracha* on the candle so that the entire *Havdalah* is recited over wine (*M.B. s.k.* 30, *Be'er Moshe* 8:28:7). However, others maintain that it is sufficient to leave the cup on the table at this time (*A.H. ibid.*). The spices should be held in the right hand while reciting the *bracha* (*S.A.* 296:6).

Although different kinds of spices require different *brachos*, on *Motzai Shabbos* the *bracha* of *Borei Minei Besamim* is always recited. However, ideally, one should use a spice that always requires this *bracha*, e.g. cloves or cinnamon (*M.B.* 299:1).

If *Havdalah* is being recited for a large group, it is important to arrange many containers of *besamim* so as to allow everyone to smell it without unnecessary delay (*S.S.K.* 61:7). If one of the listeners was unable to smell the *besamim* before the next *bracha* has begun, he should smell them after *Havdalah* without reciting a new *bracha* (*S.S.K.* 60:26). Alternatively, one can smell the *besamim* after the *bracha* on the candle, but not during the *bracha* itself (Harav D. Zucker *shlita*).

If one suspects that the spices may have lost their fragrance, he should test their smell before reciting the *bracha* (*Kaf HaChaim* 215:3). If one discovered that they lost their fragrance only after the *bracha* was recited, the *bracha* is invalid. In such a situation, one should not interrupt *Havdalah* to search for fresh spices [which, in any case, would necessitate a new *bracha*] (Harav D. Zucker *shlita*). Some say that since *Havdalah* was interrupted, one must repeat the *bracha* on the wine (*The Radiance of Shabbos* 22:V:5, *S.S.K.* 61:14), while others disagree (Harav D. Zucker *shlita*).

### The Bracha on the Candle:

As part of *Havdalah* we say a *bracha* on the light of a candle in order to recall that fire was created on *Motzai Shabbos* (*M.B.* 298:1). If fire is not readily available, one need not exert himself to find fire and should recite *Havdalah* without the *bracha* of the candle (*S.A.* 298:1). If fire subsequently becomes available, one can recite a *bracha* on it throughout *Motzai Shabbos* (*S.A.* 299:6).

Ideally, the *bracha* should be recited on a candle with at least two wicks (*Rema*

298:2), and the two flames should touch each other (*M.B. s.k.* 8). Additionally one can hold two burning matches together (*The Radiance of Shabbos* 23:V:1). If no other candle is available, one may recite the *bracha* over a candle with a single wick (*M.B. s.k.* 7).

In order to recite the *bracha* on the candle one must be close enough to the fire to be able to benefit from the light (*S.A.* 298:4). Many have the custom to switch off the electric lights in the room in order to properly benefit from the candles (*S.S.K.* 61:33). The custom is to use the light of the fire to look at one's fingernails and the palm of the hand (*S.A.* 298:3), because these are signs of blessing (*M.B. s.k.* 9). This should be done by folding four fingers over the thumb on the right hand, and then looking at the fingernails and palm simultaneously (*Rema* 298:3). Some have a custom to then open up the hand and look at the fingernails from the front (*M.B. s.k.* 11). If one is too far from the fire to benefit from its light (e.g. if one is in a large group), he should have in mind not to fulfill his obligation for this *bracha*, and should later recite the *bracha* after *Havdalah* when he can properly benefit from the light (*M.B.* 197:13).

There is much dispute in the *poskim* if one should benefit from the candle before or after the *bracha*. The general rule regarding *birchos hanehenin* (*brachos* which thank Hashem for deriving certain pleasures) is to recite the *bracha* before deriving the benefit (*over li'asiyasam*). *Birchos Hashevach* (*brachos* which praise Hashem for His wondrous creations), on the other hand, are recited only *after* witnessing the wondrous creation because it is often extremely difficult or even impossible to recite the *bracha* first (e.g. the *bracha* on thunder can only be said *after* the thunder is heard. See *Ran Psachim* 4a). This gives rise to the question of how to classify the *bracha* on the candle. Are we thanking Hashem for the benefit that we receive from the light, or praising Him for creating it? The *Birkei Yosef* (693:1) maintains that this *bracha* is a *birchas hanehenin*, and should therefore be recited before any benefit is derived. This is also the opinion of many other *poskim* (*P.M.G. M.Z.* 298:2, *Kitzur S.A.* 96:9, *Siddur Yaavetz*). However, the *Biur Halacha* (296:8 *d.h. lo*) argues that if that were the case, a *bracha* would be required anytime one benefits from light, even during the week. Apparently, the *bracha* on the candle is a *birchas hashevach*. Consequently, one should benefit from the fire *before* the *bracha* is recited (*M.B.* 296:31). Many *poskim* support this view as well (*Prisha* 296:6, *P.M.G. M.Z.* 296:6. See also *Orchos Chaim* 298:3 who says that if one did recite the *bracha* before benefiting from the light, he must repeat the *bracha* afterwards). The *Igros Moshe* (*O.C.* 5:9:9) says that the accepted custom is to first recite the *bracha* and then look at the fingernails.

### The Bracha of Havdalah:

Although listening to the entire *Havdalah* is very important, hearing the last *bracha* is absolutely crucial. If one missed part or all of the first three *brachos* but heard every word of the fourth *bracha*, he has fulfilled his obligation. If, however, he did not hear the entire fourth *bracha*, he has not fulfilled his obligation (*S.S.K.* 60:30).

After reciting all the *brachos*, one drinks the wine while seated (*M.B.* 296:6). It is very important that the listeners avoid speaking (even to say *Gut Voch* or *Shavua Tov*) until at least a *m'lo lugmav* (approx. 2 oz.) of wine has been drunk (*IG"M O.C.* 4:70:1). If one did talk sooner, he need not repeat *Havdalah* (*Tshuvos V'Hanhagos* 1:257, Harav D. Zucker *shlita*).

The custom is that women do not drink from the *Havdalah* wine (*MG"A* 296:4. See *Tosfos Shabbos* 296:5 and *Shu"t Har Zvi O.C.* 154 for various reasons for this custom). However, when it is necessary for a woman to recite *Havdalah* herself, she must drink the wine (*M.B.* 296:35).

Unlike *Kiddush*, the one reciting *Havdalah* should drink all the wine himself and it is unnecessary to distribute wine to all the listeners (*S.A. Harav* 296:6).

After drinking the necessary amount, some wine should be poured on a plate and the *Havdalah* candle should be extinguished in it (*Rema* 296:1). The purpose of doing this is to demonstrate that the candle was lit solely for the purpose of this *mitzvah* (*S.A. Harav* 296:5). It is customary to rinse the eyes with the *Havdalah* wine in order to show love for the *mitzvah* (*Rema* *ibid.*).

Rabbi Niehaus learns full-time at the kollel.