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# PARSHA ENCOUNTERS

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Parshas Noach ✍️ Rabbi Yossi Lowinger

## The Waters of Noach

In this week's *Haftarah* the *posuk* says: "For like the waters of Noach this shall be to me; just as I swore that the waters of Noach would never again pass over the earth, so have I sworn not to be wrathful with you nor to rebuke you." The navi refers to the *mabul* as the "waters of Noach." This reference is puzzling. Associating Noach's name with the *mabul* seems to unfairly imply his guilt; was it not the wickedness of the **people** that caused the *mabul*?

The Zohar explains that Noach **was** somewhat culpable for the *mabul*, because he did not *daven* enough that his generation should be spared. Zohar contrasts Noach's efforts with the efforts of Moshe Rabbeinu, who was *moser nefesh* to pray for the Jews many times. The Satmar Rebbe notes that after the sin of the golden calf, Moshe Rabbeinu said: "And now if you would but forgive their sin- but if not, erase me from your book." The Hebrew word for "erase me" is "*mecheini*." The letters spelling "*mecheini*," when rearranged, spell "*mei noach*," which means "the waters of Noach." The Torah is alluding to this difference between Noach and Moshe. Noach failed to pray enough for his generation, whereas Moshe Rabbeinu put **himself** on the line, telling Hashem that if the Jews will not be forgiven, his own name should be erased from the Torah.

This Zohar can possibly clarify the purpose of Noach's role in the *teivah*. We learn that Noach was busy around the clock taking care of the animals in the *teivah*. The Gemara describes in detail how Noach and his sons had no rest that entire year in the *teivah*, as they were running from one animal to the next and feeding them all. Perhaps this was Noach's opportunity to rectify his weakness in caring for his generation. The year in the *teivah* taught Noach how to concern himself with all of Hashem's creatures, and dedicate himself solely to meeting their needs.

We, too, can incorporate this lesson into our own lives. We must realize that a person can't be completely self-absorbed. Instead of focusing on his own needs, he must pray and care for those around him as well.

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## Soap on *Shabbos*

Rabbi Akiva Niehaus

### Bar Soap

The *Rama* (326:10) writes that it is forbidden to wash one's hands with soap on *Shabbos*. Three reasons are given for this prohibition. The *Rama* explains that using soap on *Shabbos* causes it to turn into liquid, which is in violation of *Nolad* (creating a new entity). This is comparable to crushing ice on *Shabbos*, which is prohibited for the same reason (see *S.A.* 320:9).

This reason, however, is not accepted by the *Magen Avrohom* (brought in *M.B.* 326:30). He argues that crushing ice is forbidden only because of the concern that one may eventually squeeze fruit that is intended for its juice, since ice is also intended to be used as liquid. However, the main purpose of soap is not to serve as a liquid, and therefore, this fear is not relevant to soap.

A second reason for the prohibition, mentioned by the *Mishna Brurah* (*ibid.*), is that using soap is in violation of *mimarayach* (smearing), similar to the prohibition of smoothing wax on *Shabbos* (see *S.A.* 314:11). Many *Poskim* argue that this reason only applies to soap used in previous generations, which was rough and needed to be smoothed. This would not apply to bar soap used in modern times, which is quite smooth. (Some brands of bar soap have pointy edges; perhaps smoothing those edges is in violation of *mimarayach*. Additionally, if a bar of soap remains in water for some time, it can become pasty and soft. If one wipes off the soft part in order to smooth out the bar, he may have violated the prohibition of *mimarayach*.)

A third reason, quoted by the *Mishna Brurah*, is that soap may be so abrasive that it will pull out hair on *Shabbos*. This reason, too, does not apply to modern soap.

In conclusion, there is a universal custom to avoid using bar soap on *Shabbos*. Although the rationale behind the custom may be unclear, we dare not tamper with this custom (*M.B.* 326:30, *A.H.* 326:11, *S.S.K.* 14:16, *Ben Ish Chai II Yisro* 15, *Kitzur Hilchos Shabbos* 32:4). However, in extenuating circumstances (*e.g.*, a doctor only has bar soap with which to sterilize his hands before a medical procedure), one may wash his hands using bar soap. It is preferable, however, to use the soap under running water (*S.S.K.* 40:11).

### Liquid Soap

Many *Poskim* write that one may use liquid soap on *Shabbos* (*A.H. ibid.*, *Kaf HaChaim* 326:43). Liquid soap is permissible because none of the aforementioned reasons for the prohibition of bar soap apply to liquid soap, and no custom developed to forbid its use.

Some *Poskim* question if the creation of foam while lathering is in violation of *Nolad* (creating a new entity). However, many *Poskim* write that since foam is an impermanent entity, its formation cannot be considered a "halachic creation" (see *Ginas V'rodim O.C.* 3:14). The *Kovetz Teshuvos* (*I siman* 38) quotes the *Eretz Tzvi* (*siman* 96) who brings conclusive proof of this idea based on the fact that one may pour beer on *Shabbos*, even though one is creating foam in the process. He writes that this is evi-

denced in *Hoshea* 10:7, "The king of Shomron has been silenced; he is like foam upon the water." Thus we see that foam is the quintessential example of an impermanent entity.

Accordingly, one may also use Foaming Soap on *Shabbos* because the creation of foam is not considered *Nolad* (Harav D. Zucker *shlita*, Harav G. Bess *shlita*).

However, Hagoon Rav Moshe Feinstein *zt"l* (*IG"M O.C. I siman* 113) writes that using liquid soap may be in violation of *mimachek* (smoothing). His reasoning is that when one uses soap, foam is created and the soap becomes smoother. He concludes that his household does not use soap on *Shabbos* and it is proper to be stringent.

Many *Poskim*, however, have difficulty understanding this reasoning and conclude that the custom is to be lenient and use liquid soap on *Shabbos* (*Kovetz Teshuvos ibid.*, *Kitzur Hilchos Shabbos* 32:4).

An additional issue requires exploration. The *Shulchan Aruch* (314:11) writes that one may not spread wax or thick oil on the opening of a barrel in order to seal it because this is in violation of *mimarayach* (smearing). The *Mishna Brurah* explains that smearing thick oil is rabbinically prohibited since it is similar to smearing a durable substance (*e.g.*, wax). However, one is only forbidden to smear thick oil; smearing thin oil is permitted because it is completely dissimilar to a thick substance. Consequently, smearing thick oil is prohibited but smearing baby oil or water is permitted. What is unclear, however, is what exactly is the consistency of "thick oil" which may not be smeared. Many *Poskim* feel that most hand-washing liquid soap commonly used nowadays is comparable to thick oil and is subject to the prohibition of *mimarayach*. In order to use these soaps on *Shabbos*, one would need to dilute the soap with water (Harav Dovid Zucker *shlita*, Harav Dovid Heber *shlita*). The soap may be diluted on *Shabbos*. Dishwashing liquid soap, however, is much thinner and one may use it on *Shabbos*. (The Star-K tested the viscosity levels of various liquids with a viscometer and concluded that any liquid with a viscosity level greater than 600 cP is subject to *mimarayach*. *Softsoap Antibacterial Liquid Hand Soap with Light Moisturizers*, for example, has a viscosity level that is much higher than 600 cP. Therefore, one would need to dilute it by a ratio of two parts soap to one part water in order for its use to be permitted. *Ultra Dawn Concentrated Dish Liquid/Anti-Bacterial Hand Soap* has a viscosity level of 600 cP and need not be diluted. Liquid dishwashing soap (intended for washing dishes only) has a viscosity level less than 600 cP and does not require dilution as well.)

Some *Poskim*, however, feel that the rabbinical prohibition of *mimarayach* applies only to very thick oil that doesn't move at all (*e.g.*, animal fats or margarine). Any liquid that moves when placed on a slanted surface is not subject to the prohibition of *mimarayach*, even if it moves slowly. Accordingly, one is permitted to use even thick liquid soap on *Shabbos* without diluting it before use (Dayan Y. Posen *shlita*, *Kitzur Hilchos Shabbos* 32:4 and footnote 19, Harav G. Bess *shlita*).

In conclusion, some *Poskim* feel that liquid soap may be used on *Shabbos* without dilution, but other *Poskim* feel that thick liquid soap must be diluted before use. Foaming Soap may be used on *Shabbos*.

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