

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

Weapons of Mass Distraction

“I shall rest My Presence among the Children of Yisrael and I shall be their G-d.” (29:45)

At the end of the section on Torah prohibitions in the Rambam’s Sefer HaMitzvot, the Ramban adds a list of *mitzvot* that he believes the Rambam should have also included. The second of these is the mitzvah not to forget the events at Mount Sinai. The Ramban lists this as a *negative* mitzvah, a “Don’t do.” Meaning, so to speak, “Don’t spoil the situation as it stands.” This is difficult to understand, for it suggests that the experience of Mount Sinai is something current right now and we must not do anything to destroy our awareness of it. The Ramban says that we should not “remove it from our consciousness” that “our eyes and our ears” should be constantly and forever at Mount Sinai.

The message is that the broadcast from Mount Sinai is constantly with us, and all we need to do is not to ‘jam’ the broadcast.

Before the Torah was given, it says in Shemot 19:16, “And it was on the third day, when it became morning, and there were *sounds and lightning flashes...*” After the giving of the Torah it says in 20:15, “And all the people saw the *sounds and the torches...*”

The lightning flashes that precede the Torah become torches afterwards. Before the giving of the Torah, the Word of Hashem was like lightning – a flash that lasted for a moment. After the Torah’s

giving, the words of the Torah became fixed, continuous and continuing – like a torch. The essence of a torch is that its light continues. It does not vanish in a flash. After the Torah was given to us, its sound is eternally present.

With this we can understand Onkelos’ translation of the verse in Devarim 5:19, describing the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai as a “great sound that does not cease,” meaning you can still hear it today.

So why don’t we hear it?

The concept that the world is filled with sounds that we cannot hear was once difficult to grasp, but nowadays many people have in the pocket a device that makes this concept abundantly clear. The air is full of sounds. Sounds that travel from one side of the world to the other. A myriad of voices throngs the atmosphere.

The Talmud (Yoma 20b) makes a cryptic statement about the abounding sounds in the world: “Were it not for the sound of the sun in its orbit you would hear the sound of the hordes of Rome, and were it not for the sound of the hordes of Rome you could hear the sound of the sun in its orbit.”

In other words, there is a fight in this a world, a fight to dominate the “airwaves” between the voice of Rome and the voice of the sun.

One of the names of Yaakov Avinu, Jacob, is *Shemesh* – “Sun.” In Yosef’s first dream of the sun and the moon and the stars bowing to him, Yaakov is represented by the sun.

The sun – Yaakov Avinu – and the “hordes of Rome” – the descendants of Esav – are locked in a battle for the airwaves, and for the minds and hearts of mankind.

To the extent that we tune in to Esav’s broadcast, we will not be able to hear the unending and eternal broadcast from Mount Sinai.

PEREK SHIRA: The Song of Existence

by Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

THE SONG OF THE WIND

The Wind says: “Say to the north wind ‘Give!’ and to the south wind, ‘Do not withhold!’ Bring My sons from afar and My daughters from the ends of the Earth!” (*Yeshayahu* 43:6)

Agents of Hashem’s will, winds move unrestrained to perform the desire of their Creator. They play an essential role in the process of precipitation and in the dispersing of plant seeds for propagation, among many other benefits they provide the world. They sing of Hashem’s limitless control of His world, and especially the awesome ingathering of exiles, portrayed as winds speedily bringing ships of His people back home from the ends of the earth.

▪ *Sources: Mesaprim Tehillos Hashem*

**In loving memory of Harav Zeev Shlomo ben Zecharia Leib*

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Hashem tells Moshe to command the Jewish People to supply pure olive oil for the Menorah in the Mishkan (Tent of Meeting). He also tells Moshe to organize the making of the *Bigdei Kehuna* (priestly garments): A breastplate, an *ephod*, a robe, a checkered tunic, a turban, a sash, a forehead-plate and linen trousers. Upon their completion, Moshe is to perform a ceremony for seven days to consecrate Aharon and his sons. This includes offering sacrifices, dressing Aharon and his sons in their respective garments, and anointing Aharon with oil.

Hashem commands that every morning and afternoon a sheep be offered on the Altar in the Mishkan. This offering should be accompanied by a meal-offering and libations of wine and oil. Hashem commands that another Altar for incense be built from acacia wood and covered with gold. Aharon and his descendants should burn incense on this Altar each day.

Q & A

Questions

1. What two precautions were taken to assure the purity of the oil for the menorah?
2. How was Aharon commanded to kindle the menorah?
3. What does tamid mean in reference to the menorah?
4. What does kehuna mean?
5. Name the eight garments worn by the Kohen Gadol.
6. To what does Rashi compare the ephod?
7. In which order were the names of the Tribes inscribed on the ephod?
8. The stones of the ephod bore the inscription of the names of the sons of Yaakov. Why?
9. For what sins did the choshen mishpat atone?
10. What are three meanings of the word mishpat?
11. What was lacking in the bigdei kehuna in the second Beit Hamikdash?
12. Which garment's fabric was woven of only one material?
13. When the Kohen Gadol wore all his priestly garments, where on his head was the tefillin situated?
14. What does the word tamid mean in reference to the tzitz? (two answers)
15. Which garments were worn by a kohen hediot?
16. During the inauguration of the kohanim, a bullock was brought as a sin offering. For what sin did this offering atone?
17. Moshe was commanded to wash Aharon and his sons to prepare them to serve as kohanim (29:4). How were they washed?
18. What was unique about the bull sin-offering brought during the inauguration of the kohanim?
19. How did the oil used for the meal-offering differ from the oil used for the menorah?
20. What does the crown on the mizbeach haketoret symbolize?

Answers

1. 27:20 - The olives were pressed and not ground; and only the first drop was used.
2. 27:20 - He was commanded to kindle it until the flame ascended by itself.
3. 27:20 - It means that it should be kindled every night.
4. 28:3 - Service.
5. 28:4,36,42 - Choshen, ephod, me'il, ketonet, mitznefet, avnet, tzitz, and michnasayim.
6. 28:6 - A woman's riding garment.
7. 28:10 - In order of birth.
8. 28:12 - So that G-d would see their names and recall their righteousness.
9. 28:15 - For judicial errors.
10. 1. 28:15 -
 - (a) The claims of the litigants
 - (b) The court's ruling
 - (c) The court's punishment.
11. 28:30 - The Urim V'Tumim ~ the "Shem Ha'meforash" placed in the folds of the choshen.
12. 28:31 - The fabric of the me'il was made only of techelet.
13. 28:37 - Between the tzitz and the mitznefet.
14. 28:38 -
 - (a) It always atones, even when not being worn.
 - (b) The Kohen Gadol must always be aware that he is wearing it.
15. 28:40,42 - Ketonet, avnet, migba'at and michnasayim.
16. 29:1 - The sin of the golden calf.
17. 29:4 - They immersed in a mikveh.
18. 29:14 - It is the only external sin-offering that was completely burned.
19. 29:40 - Oil for the menorah comes only from beaten olives. Oil for meal-offerings may come from either beaten olives or from ground-up olives.
20. 30:3 - The crown of kehuna.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

The Color Purple

Let's clarify this from the get-go: There is no word in Classical Hebrew for the color "purple." I repeat: There is no word in Classical Hebrew for the color "purple." In fact, the English word *purple* itself does not necessarily even refer to what we call "purple" nowadays. That being said, there are three Hebrew words which have come to be associated with "purple" – *argaman*, *segol*, and *lilach*. In this essay we will show how *argaman* does not mean "purple" and is not, in fact, even a color, and how *segol* and *lilach* are Modern Hebrew neologisms that only recently came to mean "purple."

The word *argaman* appears 38 times in the Bible. Additionally, the words *argavan* in Biblical Hebrew (II Chron. 2:6) and *argavana* in Biblical Aramaic (Dan. 5:7) are alternate forms of *argaman*, based on the interchangeability of the letters MEM and VAV. Moreover, *argavana* is also the Aramaic word used by the Targum to translate the Hebrew *argaman*. But what does the word *argaman/argavan* mean, and from where does this word come?

The root of *argaman* seems to be comprised of five letters: ALEPH-REISH-GIMMEL-MEM-NUN. When writing about four – (quadrilateral), or five – (pentaliteral) letter roots in Hebrew, Ibn Ezra asserts that such atypical words are either compound roots comprised of multiple roots fused together, or are loanwords borrowed from a language other than Hebrew. Indeed, scholars like Rabbi Dr. Ernest Klein (1899-1983) and Dr. Chaim Tawil see the Hebrew *argaman* as borrowed from the Akkadian *argamannu*. The famous American archeologist William Foxwell Albright (1891-1971) argued that the Hebrew word *argaman* cognates with similar Hittite and Ugaritic words that mean "tribute/offering," and thus evoke *argaman* as an expensive dyed cloth that was often paid as tribute.

In detailing the laws of the Temple and its paraphernalia, Maimonides (*Laws of Klei HaMikdash* 8:13) writes that *argaman* refers to wool that was dyed red. In his commentary to the Mishna, Maimonides (to *Kilayim* 9:1) again defines *argaman*, this time using the Arabic word *laca*. Bartenuro (there) uses that same word, but also clarifies that *argaman* was wool dyed red. The word *lac* is actually also an English word and refers to a "red resin." It comes up more often in the English terms *shellac* and *lacquer*, which refer to red coloring. Maimonides' approach that *argaman* refers to something dyed red is echoed by later authorities, including his son Rabbi Avraham Maimuni (to Ex. 25:4), Rabbi Tanchum HaYerushalmi (to Dan. 5:7), and *Torat HaMincha* (*Parshat Tetzaveh*).

The Midrash (*Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 3:16, *Bamidbar Rabbah* 12:4) states that *argaman* resembles the gold of the *kapporet*, which was of a reddish hue (*Yoma* 45a). In fact, Rabbi Yechezkel Michel Epstein (1829-1908) in *Aruch HaShulchan HaAtid* (*Klei Hamikdash* 28:12) adduces Maimonides' position from this source.

Radak, in his *Sefer HaShorashim*, initially writes that *argaman* refers to crimson red, but then cites Rasag as explaining that *tola'at shani* refers to crimson red. He therefore concludes that *argaman* must refer to a different shade of red. Several Midrashic sources assert that *argaman* resembles fire, which points to the notion that *argaman* refers to something akin to the color orange (see *Sifrei Zuta*, *Midrash HaGadol* and *Yalkut Midrashei Teiman* to Num. 4:13, and *Midrash Agur* ch. 14). Several Yemenite sources, including *Midrash Chefetz* and *Meor HaAfeilah* (to Ex. 25:4) write that *argaman* refers to a yellowish-red, while *tola'at shani* refers to a strong red. So perhaps Radak would agree that *argaman* was orange-colored. (After writing that *argaman* cannot refer to crimson but must be a different shade of red, Radak mentions those who explain *argaman* as *lac*.)

Explaining *argaman* as red does not preclude also explaining *argaman* as orange, for essentially orange is a shade of red (mixed with yellow). What is clear, though, is that none of these sources see *argaman* as a mixture of red and blue/green. This omission seems to obviate the notion that *argaman* refers to what we call “purple.” Moreover, all commentators agree that *argaman* does not actually denote a color, but rather refers to woolen fabric that was dyed a certain color. So even if *argaman* refers to purple, it does not refer to the color purple, but to wool that was dyed purple.

Maimonides’ famed interlocutor Rabbi Avraham ben David of Posquieres (1110-1180), also known as Raavad, disagrees with his position. Instead, he asserts that *argaman* refers to something comprised of two or three colors “woven” (*arug*) together. As Rabbi Yosef Kurkis (circa. 1540) and Rabbi Yosef Karo (1488-1575) clarify, Raavad understood the word *argaman* as a portmanteau of the trilateral root ALEPH-REISH-GIMMEL (like in *arigah*, “weaving/tapestry”) and the word *min* (“species/type”). Thus, he understood *argaman* as reflecting a sort of panoply of colors, not just one specific color.

The Midrash (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 12:4) states that the term *argaman* alludes to the sun, who prepares (*oreg*, literally “weaves”) different forms of “sustenance” (*manna*). Alternatively, *argaman* is a reference to G-d, Who “weaves (*oreg*) together the world, so that each thing brings out its species (*min*), and one species will not mix with another.” Similarly, the *Zohar* in *Idra Rabbah* (141b) seems to understand that *argaman* refers to a hue of red that includes other shades as well (see also *Zohar Terumah* 139a).

Rashi (to Psalms 68:28), basing himself on *Machberet Menachem*, seems to explain that *argaman* is derived from the trilateral root REISH-GIMMEL-MEM, which usually means “gathering” or “stoning somebody to death.” As Rashi explains it, that root is, in turn, related to the root REISH-KUF-MEM (possibly via the interchangeability of KUF and GIMMEL), which usually refers to “embroidery.” Although Rashi does not explicitly make this point, the common denominator between all the meanings of REISH-KUF-MEM and REISH-GIMMEL-MEM is that they refer to gathering things together – be they multiple stones to kill a person or multiple threads to produce needlework. This perhaps suggests that Rashi follows Raavad’s understanding of *argaman* as consisting of multiple shades joined together.

Like Rashi, Ibn Ezra (to Proverbs 26:8) also seems to understand *argaman* as a derivative of the root REISH-GIMMEL-MEM, but he explains that root as referring to “exalted” things, with *argaman* thus seemingly referring to an “exalted” sort of dyed fabric.

Ohalei Yehuda sees the word *argaman* as a portmanteau of *oreg* (“weaving”) and *manah* (“respectable portion”) in reference to *argaman* being considered an important type of clothing in the ancient world. Alternatively, he prefers the understanding that *argaman* derives from *argavan*, which is comprised of the roots ALEPH-VAV-REISH (“light”) and GIMMEL-VAV-NUN (“color/appearance”), in allusion to the bright color that *argaman* denotes. I similarly propose that *argavan* could be seen as a contraction of ALEPH-REISH-GIMMEL (“weaving”) and GIMMEL-VAV-NUN (“color/appearance”), with the middle letter GIMMEL related to both etymons.

Even though Raavad, Rashi, and the others do not explicitly identify *argaman* as red, that does still seem to be their understanding. However, they seem to understand that *argaman* includes multiple shades of red. Indeed, Professor Athalya Brenner-Idan sees *argaman* as a general term that includes various shades of red that range from pink all the way to violet/dark purple. She supports this position by noting that the Temple Scroll (found within the DSS) uses the expression *argaman adom* (“red *argaman*”), implying that the term *argaman* alone can also include shades that are not typically understood as strictly “red.”

There are some cases in which it is fairly clear that *argaman* does not refer to purple. For example, Rashi (to Song of Songs 7:6) implies that *argaman* is a color that is sometimes found in women’s hair. Yet, as Professor Brenner-Idan first pointed out, it is dissatisfactory to understand *argaman* as referring to purple in that case, because no natural hair is purple-colored. In that particular instance, she supposes that perhaps *argaman* does

not refer to a specific color, but serves as a stand-in for any expensive or rare item. See also Targum Onkelos (to Gen. 49:11) and Rashi (there) who write that *argaman* resembles the color of wine, which again seemingly precludes *argaman* as referring to “purple.”

That said, the Septuagint consistently translates *argaman* into Greek as *porphyra*, which is the antecedent of the Latin *purpura*, and, ultimately, the Old English word *purpure*. The Modern English word *purple* derives from those earlier words, but did not always refer exclusively to the red-blue combination with which most English speakers are now familiar. Rather, in several languages the word *purple* means “red,” and the word for what we call “purple” is actually *violet*. The same was true in English until relatively recently. Indeed, the *Oxford English Dictionary* offers the following alternate definition for the word *purple*: “Formerly: of any generally red shade; (now) of a deep, rich shade intermediate between crimson and violet.” Thus, when we hear the word *argaman* translated into *purple*, this is not necessarily what we call “purple,” but rather a generic type of red.

The Midrash (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 12:4) states that *argaman* is the most esteemed of the different fabrics used in the Tabernacle and Temple because it represents the garments used by royalty. In many other Midrashic sources, the word used for royal clothes is *purpura*. For instance, the Midrash (*Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer*, ch. 50) writes about Mordecai that just as the king wore *purpura*, so did Mordecai wear *purpura*. We also know from various Greco-Roman historians that Tyrian purple was a controlled commodity that was typically only made available to the royal family. However, just because the Greek word we are discussing is a cognate of the Modern English word *purple*, this does not mean that the actual color of the clothes in question was really what we call “purple.”

In 1894, Yechiel Michel Pines introduced a new word for “purple”: *segol*. This word seems to be influenced by the English word *violet*, which was originally the name of a purple-colored flower, and then became the word for the color itself. The Talmud (*Brachot* 43b, *Shabbat* 50b) mentions a plant called a *siglei*, which Rashi (there) explains is a reference to the three-petal “violet” flower.

Rabbi Dr. Ernest Klein suggests that the name *siglei* derives from the Aramaic word *sigla* (“cluster of grapes”), probably because the formation and color of grapes on a cluster resembles the formation and color of the violet flower. I would further argue that perhaps the Aramaic word *sigla* itself derives from the Hebrew word *eshkol* due to the interchangeability of SHIN and SAMECH, as well as KAF and GIMMEL. We find, in fact, that Targum Yerushalmi typically translates the Hebrew word *eshkol* into the Aramaic *sigla*. Interestingly, Rabbi Eliyahu HaBachur (1468-1549) in *Meturgaman* notes that *sigla* also lends its name to the vowelization symbol *segol*, which is comprised of three dots in a cluster-shaped formation.

Another Modern Hebrew term for the color “purple” is *lilach*. Just like *segol* primarily refers to the violet flower and was later extended to refer to the color of said flower, so too was *lilach* (literally, “lilac”) a term originally used from the lilac flower that was later extended to the color of said flower. The same is true of the Modern Hebrew words for “lavender” and “mauve,” which are also recognized by the Academy of the Hebrew Language as different words for “purple.”

For more information about the meaning of *argaman*, see *Kuntres Merkavo Argaman* by Rabbi Yisrael Rosenberg of Lakewood. Many of the ideas and sources discussed in this essay were inspired by that work.

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

THE AMIDAH (PART 4) – *BIRKAT HA'AVOT*

“Prayer is not a miracle. It is a tool, man’s paintbrush in the art of life. Prayer is man’s weapon to defend himself in the struggle of life. It is a reality. A fact of life.”

(Rabbi Avrohom Chaim Feuer)

The first blessing concludes, “O King, Helper, Savior, and Shield. Blessed are you, G-d, Shield of Avraham.”

Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg (1785-1865) was the Rabbi of Konigsberg in East Prussia. His most famous work was *HaKetav v’Hakabbalah*, which proves the indivisibility of the Written Torah and the Oral Torah. He also authored a commentary on the Siddur called *Iyun Tefillah* (not to be confused with Rabbi Shimon Schwab’s commentary with the same name). In his commentary he explains that the G-d is described as being “Helper” because G-d helps those who attempt to help themselves. Our Sages teach us that there is a concept called *hishtadlut* – that, as a rule, we should not just sit back and expect G-d to take care of everything. Rather, we must be proactive in trying to find solutions to our problems. If we do so, G-d joins together with us and helps us. That is why He is described as “Helper”. However, there is a level that surpasses “*hishtadlut*” and that is when a person is so completely helpless in the face of whatever they are grappling with and they are so entirely powerless to act. As a result, they have no other alternative than to turn to G-d and place their trust entirely in His Hands. At such times, G-d saves the person even without the person being actively involved. This is why He is also referred to as “Savior.”

Rabbi Elya Lopian explains that when G-d acts in the role of either “Helper” or “Savior” He does so by using the natural world so that His acts are hidden behind a veneer of being “natural.” However, there is

an even higher level of connection to G-d that is so elevated that it generates Divine protection in a supernatural fashion. And that is someone who is prepared to put his life in danger to serve G-d. For such a selfless person, G-d becomes a “Shield,” protecting the person and assisting him in an obviously unearthly fashion.

Perhaps this explains two verses in Tehillim (91:11-12): “He [G-d] will send His angels to protect you on all your travels. They will carry you on their hands, lest you hurt your feet on a stone.” Why does G-d command the angels to carry the traveler above the stones? Surely, it would be simpler to have the angels remove the stones so that he can walk smoothly along the path ahead of him. G-d gives everything its particular location in this world – even a simple, inanimate stone has been placed where it is by G-d. If so, even the place where the stone lies is an integral part of G-d’s plan, and sometimes it cannot be moved. The Midrash (*Shemot Rabbah*) teaches that the person being spoken about is someone whose sole concern is to do G-d’s Will without taking into account their own personal comfort and safety. Therefore, for those who live their lives on the loftiest spiritual planes, G-d shields them and raises them above the stones in a supernatural way.

The first blessing in the *Amidah* ends with the words “...Shield of Avraham.” Rabbi Shimon Shkop (1860-1939), was the famed Rosh Yeshiva in Grodno, Belarus. He was considered to be one of the most brilliant and influential leaders of the Yeshiva world

during the upheavals of the First World War and the calamitous buildup to the Holocaust. He has a beautifully poignant explanation as to why Avraham is singled out by name, whereas the two following blessings only allude to Yitzchak and Yaakov without mentioning them directly. In Judaism ancestry is often quite emphasized. A person who comes from a prestigious lineage of Torah scholars and spiritual mentors might mistakenly imagine that their antecedents are a reason for them to be treated with extra honor despite the fact that they, themselves, have not reached similar levels of scholarship and righteousness. Yitzchak merited having an illustrious father. Yaakov had both his father *and* his grandfather to learn from. Perhaps, then, it is no surprise that they reached the towering heights that they did. Not so Avraham. Our forefather Avraham came from a family of idol worshippers. He had no

distinguished lineage whatsoever. Nothing to feel proud of. And, yet, Avraham, despite his complete lack of pedigree, found G-d all by himself, and revealed G-d's Majesty to all those around him. From absolutely nothing, he succeeded in building a relationship with G-d that would become the prototype for the Jewish nation's spiritual aspirations. As we conclude the first blessing of the *Amidah* – the prayer that expresses our closeness and intimacy with G-d – it is imperative that each and every one of us clearly understands that our connection to the Divine is defined only by ourselves. It is not classified by how esteemed our parents and grandparents are. So, too, such a relationship is not unattainable because of a paucity of lineage. Rather, it is available to all. And it is dependent on only one factor, and that is how I relate to G-d.

To be continued...

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TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Mo'ed Katan 16-22

Word Power

“A covenant exists for the lips.” (The spoken word has great power.)

The Torah Sage Shmuel paid a *shiva* call to his brother Pinchas, whose child had departed this world. Shmuel asked his brother why he had not trimmed his fingernails despite being allowed to cut them during the mourning period. Pinchas replied, “If a tragedy like mine had happened to you, would you also show such disregard for mourning?” Pinchas’ reply was not only harsh, but, as we learn on our *daf*, was dangerous as well. Afterwards, Shmuel’s close relative passed, and when Pinchas visited him, Shmuel took his cut nails and threw them towards Pinchas, saying, “You do not know that *brit kruta l’sfatayim*?” (“There is a covenant of the speech,” meaning that one’s words have the power to effect fulfillment of what is spoken.) A word is not just a word, as the saying goes. The *gemara* describes Pinchas’ unfortunate statement as an example of “an error that goes forth from the ruler.” (Kohelet 10:5) It is irreversible and inevitable. To be fair, we should favorably judge this “error” to be a slip of the tongue, stemming from the unsettled state of mind of the mourning speaker.

Shmuel cites a teaching from Rabbi Yochanan as the source for our knowledge of this “speech covenant.” It is based on what Avraham Avinu said to the accompanying lads, prior to ascending with his son Yitzchak for the *akeidah*. Avraham told them, “Stay here, and I and the young man will return to you.” (Ber. 22:5) And, so it was, that both Avraham and his son Yitzchak returned alive and unscathed, and a ram was offered on the mountain per Hashem’s command. Avraham Avinu’s words were more than prophetic. They were an effective means for invoking Divine Mercy to spare his son in accordance with *brit krutah l’sfatayim*.

The concept of *brit krutah l’sfatayim* appears to be identical, or at least quite similar, to another teaching: “A *tzaddik* decrees something, and Hashem fulfills it.” (This is the way many paraphrase a teaching by Rabbi Abahu that is found above in Mo’ed Katan 16b). Hashem willingly grants a *tzaddik* an awesome power, measure for measure. Since a *tzaddik* controls his desires and humbly nullifies himself to Hashem, Hashem in turn “nullifies” Himself to the *tzaddik*, as it were.

Tosefot raises a strong question. In our *gemara*, Shmuel cites Rabbi Yochanan’s teaching regarding the *positive* outcome in the case of Avraham and Yitzchak as proof for *brit krutah l’sfatayim*. “This is a wonder,” asserts Tosefot. Since that case was one with a *positive* outcome, how can it be a proof for “a covenant of speech” in Shmuel’s case, where there was a *negative* and tragic outcome? We know the established Torah concept that the Divine trait of Mercy is much greater than the Divine trait of Punishment. Therefore, perhaps *brit kruta l’sfatayim* is true for Divine Mercy but not for Divine Punishment? Tosefot concludes this question by suggestion should Shmuel should instead cite a teaching of Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish in Masechet Berachot (19a), “A person should never open his mouth to the Satan.” One should not say something of a harmful nature – whether it be regarding himself or others – because invoking the Divine trait of Punishment may lead to a negative outcome. Tosefot leaves this entire question unanswered. (See the Maharsha for a discussion of the differences in the various teachings, and a suggested answer to Tosefot’s question.)

When I was a youngish student in our local *cheder*, a few of us boys, “being boys,” were joking around, saying this and that about each other and others.

Stu* said, "If only David would break an ankle while skating, I am sure that coach would let me play third base this year." Lewis* replied, "Even if he dies, you would not even make the team!" I do not recall what "witty" remark I made, if any. Our teacher, a rabbi whose Torah greatness would be appreciated by us only later in life, walked into the classroom at that very moment. "I was not eavesdropping, but I heard your words about your baseball team and they sadden me." "But we did not mean to talk behind David's back," we explained. "Even if he were here, we would say it about him or even about each other!" "It is just talk and the way we speak all the time. Doesn't everyone speak like that?" we said with righteous confidence. "Not everyone," our rabbi said. "Words are not just sounds that we make to communicate with each other. Words are extremely powerful, and

can actually serve as a type of 'ammunition' to cause a bad outcome. Just as Hashem created the world with Divine words, we, who are created in His image with the 'power' of speech, can also create with our words, so to speak. So, let us be careful when saying something injurious about another person or to another person, even if we are 'just talking'."

The words of the great rabbi made a positive impact in my soul, *baruch Hashem*, and I have shared my rabbi's teaching with my students over the years. As needed, I even stop the speaker midsentence: "Please do not say 'If I accidentally kill B*...' (using an actual student's name), but rather say, 'If one person accidentally kills another person, in the abstract, without a name or specifying a particular person.'" My experience has been that the students "get it," internalize it, and are very careful in their choice of words from then on.

▪ *Mo'ed Katan 18a*

LETTER AND SPIRIT

Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch by Rabbi Yosef Herschman

Cut from the Cloth of Character

Clothes don't make the man. Or do they?

The Kohen's garments were more than a uniform. The entire character of the priesthood and the validity of the offering procedures depended on these priestly garments, and on every detail prescribed for them in this week's Torah portion. Without these garments the Kohen is not fit to perform Temple service; the service is invalid. Without them the Kohen exposes his own persona, with all its faults and weaknesses, and is thus unfit to serve. But when he is clothed in the priestly garments, the Kohen assumes a new identity. He does not appear as he actually is, but as he ought to be, and can then meet the standards of sanctity required for the service.

Our Scripture is full of references to clothing, expressing, and even imbuing, character. Consider

the first appearance of clothing in the Torah. After Adam and Eve sin, and they are banished from Gan Eden, G-d *clothes them*. Now that they are in danger of straying to the level of beast, they are given clothing to remind them of their higher moral calling.

The Hebrew words for clothe, cover and clothing are often used to describe the integration of character traits. G-d is said to be clothed in majesty, in righteousness, and in zeal, among other attributes. Our prophets describe man as clothed in salvation, righteousness, strength, dignity and faithfulness, and there are several instances where the *kohanim* are singled out as being clothed in righteousness and salvation. (*Tehillim 132:9, 16*) The garments of the Kohen must express the character he is to achieve, and set the standard for the nation as a whole. The Kohen must not wear anything else on his body that

would interfere with these garments – he is to be one with the traits they symbolize.

Rav Hirsch’s commentary leaves nary a detail of these garments unexplored. Here, we share only two examples. The linen pants of the Kohen are called *michnesei bod*, and the Torah instructs that they *cover his nakedness, from his waist until his thighs*. Thus, they cover the parts of the body involved in nourishment and reproduction; they cover them with the quality of purity, symbolized by the white linen. Purity is especially relevant to these two realms of human activity. The name for linen “*bod*” derives from the special way in which the plant grows as it rises from the ground: it rises in straight, separate, unbranched stems. This represents the straight, predetermined and undeviating path that purity demands.

The tunic, extending from shoulder to heel, also represents purity. The tunic thus covers the entire body, except the head; it clothes the *animal* nature of man with purity. It is woven into a small pattern of hollows, like hollows into which stones are set. This represents two fundamental steps required in the quest for purity: first, one must remove anything impure, creating a hollow space for the good to be set. As King David writes, *shun evil and do good*. (Psalms 34:15)

All of the Kohanic garments must be supplied and owned by the nation. The people, too, are to reflect on the attributes befitting a servant of G-d, even outside the Temple, and ‘clothe’ themselves accordingly.

- Sources: Commentary, Shemot 28:43

The Insights Into Halacha Series Presents: Snowballs on Shabbos?

by Rabbi Yehuda Spitz

Let It Snow!

The recent “Elpis” Storm blanketed Yerushalayim with snow, with meteorologists correctly predicting (and children ecstatic) that the accumulated snowfall would reach 20 centimeters (approximately 8 inches). To many, this brought back memories of Yerushalayim’s 2014 *Asarah B’Teves/Erev Shabbos* “Blizzard.” With this in mind, a specific halachic query readily comes to mind.

Is making snowballs permitted on Shabbos? And, if not, why not?

Truthfully, these questions are far more complex than one might think, and quite interestingly there is no clear-cut consensus of rationales and reasons even among the authorities who say it is prohibited.

Hotza’ah

One very important fact is clear. If the *Eruv* is down, or in a locale that does not have an *Eruv*, outdoor snowball fights (unless in an enclosed *Reshus HaYachid*/private domain) would certainly be forbidden, as throwing snowballs would transgress the prohibition of “*Hotza’ah*, carrying.” The question would not even start unless the place has a reliable *Eruv*.

However, to define what actions or set of actions define snowball *making*, and whether or not it is prohibited, is not so simple. Let us further explore these issues.

Muktzeh

First of all, is snow actually *Muktzeh* (prohibited for use)? Is one allowed to move it?

The common halachic consensus is that rain is not *Muktzeh* even if it fell on Shabbos, as proven by *Tosafos* and based on the *Gemara* in *Eruvin* (45b-46a). The moisture of the rain existed beforehand in the form of clouds. This is the codified halacha. Our question is whether the same categorization would apply to snow.

Many authorities, including the *Chavos Yair*, *Even HaOzer*, *Maamar Mordechai*, and the Butchatcher Rav, as well as many contemporary authorities, including the *Minchas Shabbos*, Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, the Debreciner Rav, the *She'arim Metzuyanim B'Halacha*, Rav Ovadia Yosef, Rav Chaim Kanievsky, the *Rivevos Efraim*, the *Nishmas Shabbos*, and Rav Pesach Elyahu Falk, do define snow similarly to rain, maintaining that the same rationale permitting utilizing rain on Shabbos applies to snow as well. Accordingly, snow is therefore *not Muktza* and thereby technically permitted for use.

On the other hand, there is a notable minority opinion, that of Rav Moshe Feinstein. He held that snow is indeed considered *Muktzeh* since nowadays people generally do not have a real use for it. It is more akin to gravel as its main use is simply to walk upon it. Additionally, he held that snow would be prohibited due to another concern as well. In Rav Feinstein's assessment, snow would be considered *Nolad* (came into existence on Shabbos) if it fell on Shabbos, since, as opposed to rain, people do not associate snow with being carried in the clouds (true as it may be).

An interesting upshot of this understanding is that although Rav Moshe held snow to be *Muktzeh*, he did not ascribe any other prohibition to making snowballs. Accordingly, it seems that Rav Moshe would be of the opinion that if one gathered snow on *Erev* Shabbos and set it aside for a snowball fight on Shabbos (within a proper *Erev*, of course), one may then make and throw those snowballs on Shabbos.

Boneh

However, many other authorities, although maintaining that snow itself is not *Muktzeh*, nevertheless held that making snowballs on Shabbos

is problematic for other reasons, chief among them being "*Boneh*, building." The *Rambam*, cited as halacha by the *Mishnah Berurah* in a discussion of cheese-making, rules that whenever one takes separate parts of an item and joins them together to make a new item, the action is "similar to *Boneh*" and therefore prohibited on Shabbos.

Rav Yair Chaim Bachrach (1639-1702) – the renowned *Chavos Yair* – and on a more contemporary note, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach and Rav Chaim Kanievsky apply this rule to the formation of snowballs, prohibiting it. Although by making snowballs one is not actually creating something new, he is still giving form to something that was previously not extant, which gives the appearance of and is akin to the halachic definition of building.

Yet, other *Poskim*, including Rav Moshe Feinstein, the Debreciner Rav, and the *Nishmas Shabbos*, disagree, maintaining that the prohibition of *Boneh* applies only when one builds something that has at least a minimal semblance of permanence. Snowballs, they argue, which have a transient and ephemeral existence lasting a grand total of several seconds from time of throwing, should not be included in the 'building' category. Nonetheless, they concede that when it comes to building snowmen, which generally are meant to stick around until they melt several days later, would be proscribed due to *Boneh*.

Risuk

Another potential prohibition in making snowballs on Shabbos is "*Risuk*, crushing" (or mashing), related to the prohibition of "*Sechita*, squeezing" (as in squeezing out juice from a fruit). The *Shulchan Aruch*, regarding washing one's hands on Shabbos with icy or snowy water, rules that one should be careful not to rub his hands together with the ice as it may crush the ice, causing it to melt and him to unwittingly transgress the prohibition of *Risuk*.

Several authorities, including the *Chavos Yair*, and much later the Debreciner Rav, apply this ruling to making snowballs. In the formation of a snowball by applying direct pressure to it, one cannot avoid crushing the snow, causing a bit of it to melt.

In scientific terms, this process of applying pressure is referred to as regelation, where the compression causes a melt and then the release causes refreezing of that melt. This is what holds a well-made snowball together. (Thanks are due to David Lederman for pointing out to me this fascinating observation.) Interestingly, the discoverer of regelation, British scientist Michael Faraday, was *born 100 years after* the *Chavos Yair* first discussed this phenomenon regarding the halachic implications of snowball-making.

Either way, these *Poskim* explain that snowball-making would be prohibited on Shabbos due to this reason.

On the other hand, Rav Moshe Feinstein and the *Nishmas Shabbos* disagree. They assert that any minuscule amount of water that is possibly melted while forming a snowball outdoors in the freezing cold is definitely not noticeable, and in no way would this constitute crushing or squeezing out a liquid.

More *Melachos*?

Other potential prohibitions for the formation of snowballs, mentioned by several authorities and rejected by others include: *Ma'mar* - gathering (i.e. gathering the snow to make the snowballs), *Uvda D'Chol* - weekday activities, and *Soser*, destroying (i.e. when the thrown snowball hits its target and consequently falls apart).

So, Can We Build a Shabbos Snowman?

In the final analysis, although there are *Poskim* who give a dispensation to allow young children to make

and throw snowballs on Shabbos, nevertheless, the majority of authorities rule that it is strictly prohibited.

In fact, and unknown to most, this contemporary question is not as current as many suspect. As early as the 1690s (!) the *Chavos Yair* wrote that one who sees children throwing snowballs at each other on Shabbos should attempt to stop them.

The reason why the *Chavos Yair's* view on this topic is mostly unknown is that his full *sefer* called *Mekor Chaim on Orach Chaim* was first published only in 1982, posthumously, by *Machon Yerushalayim*, although it was written more than 300 years earlier! It is said that this work was originally intended as a principal commentary to *Shulchan Aruch* but was withdrawn by the author when he discovered that other commentaries, most notably the *Taz (Turei Zahav)* and the *Magen Avraham* (at the time known as the *Magen David* and *Ner Yisrael* respectively), had already been published.

Let us conclude and “summarize” this essay regarding snowballs and snowmen. Practically speaking, although the halachic authorities do not necessarily see eye to eye in their rationales, and there is no clear-cut consensus as to a singular reason why it should be prohibited, the accepted ruling is that making snowballs, and certainly making snowmen (especially for adults) is prohibited on Shabbos. Just another reason to play inside on Shabbos when a ‘White Winter Wonderland’ beckons from the great outdoors or a ‘Polar Vortex’ comes a-knocking.

This article was written L'iluy Nishmas this author's beloved grandmother, Chana Rus bas Rav Yissachar Dov, and l'zechus Shira Yaffa bas Rochel Miriam v'chol yotzei chalatzeha for a yeshua sheleimah teikif u'miyad!

Rabbi Spitz's recent English halacha *sefer*, [“Insights Into Halacha - Food: A Halachic Analysis”](#) (Mosaica/Feldheim) has more than 500 pages and features over 30 comprehensive chapters, discussing a myriad of halachic issues relating to food. It is now available online and in bookstores everywhere.