

תורה מציון Torah MiTzion

RELIGIOUS ZIONIST KOLLELS כוללים ציוניים בתפוצות

Shabbat Shalom from Torah MiTzion

Issue 115: Parshat Vayera

18-19 November 2005, 17 Mar-Cheshvan 5766

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Parshat Vayera: Na'aseh v'nishma Rav Moshe Pinchuk

Chumash records two dialogues between Hashem and Avraham in our Sedra. In the first, Hashem reveals to Avraham his plans to destroy Sodom. Avraham's reaction is bold and astounding he begs for mercy on Sodom and practically criticizes Hashem for improper ethics.

In the second, Hashem asks Avraham to offer his child Yitzchak as a sacrifice. Here Avraham's reaction is equally astounding. He does not utter a word, complete silence. This is not a dialogue but a monologue.

Avraham's reactions in both instances are enigmatic. Hashem's decision to destroy Sodom a source of concentrated evil is completely understandable, even desired, why then would Avraham argue this decision? Conversely, the request for child sacrifice cries out against all that Hashem has taught and promised Avraham. How can he be silent here?

There is one basic difference between these two dialogues - The first is simply a revelation, Hashem has decided to share with Avraham his divine plans. Under such circumstances one is allowed if not required to understand Hashem's ways so that he can understand Hashem, come closer to him and emulate him. This is exactly Avraham's reaction in the Dialogue of Sodom. The second is not a revelation but a command, an order. The reaction to the command of Hashem is silent obedience. "na'aseh v'nishma". Such was Avraham's reaction in the Monologue of the Akedah.

I leave to the reader a point to ponder - The dialogue of Moses at the burning bush. There too a command was presented to Moses and nevertheless his reaction was a dialogue - for three days he argued with Hashem in an attempt to avoid the command. How does such behavior square with the above suggestion?

Bishul Akum (5)

Rav Nehemya Taylor, Torani Advisor to Torah MiTzion

In our previous article we wrote about the parameters of "any food which is eaten raw," the first definition of foods which are exempt from the prohibition of *bishul akum* (eating food cooked by non-Jews). This time we will discuss the parameters of the second definition, "anything which is not fit to be eaten with bread on a king's table." (See *Avodah Zarah* 38a.) The straightforward understanding of this expression is that any food which is served to kings and is eaten as a part of the meal, such as meat and fish and other foods which are eaten together with bread, is included in the prohibition of *bishul akum*.

Two points need to be clarified:

- 1) What is the meaning of the phrase "a king's table"? Did Chazal mean this to be taken literally?
- 2) Is "eaten with bread" an absolute requirement? For example, are rice or other foods which are not eaten together with bread included in the prohibition?

Regarding the first point, the Rambam writes, "The decree is primarily to prevent intermarriage by setting things up so that a non-Jew will not invite a Jew for meals. A person does not invite his friend for food which is not fit for a king's table" (*Hilkhos Melakhim* 17:15). It is clear from this that the criterion of "fit for a king's table" means that people see this food as significant enough that they would invite guests to partake of it.

The reason that Chazal chose the criterion of "a king's table" is because at that time, the only non-Jews whom Jews would want to marry were important people and officials. Accordingly, it was easier then to establish a criterion which would cover all cases of intermarriage. Today, however, the deciding factor is clearly not "a king's table" but rather the importance of the food, as the Rambam said above. He clarifies in his *Commentary to the Mishnah (Avodah Zarah 2:6)*, "[Food is permitted if] it is not fit to be eaten with bread at a king's table in that place."

This means that we establish the parameters according to the place, and, it would seem, according to the time. It is possible that the law relating to a given food changes in accordance with the time and place. Similarly, the *Chokhmat Adam* (66:4) writes, "The principle is that everything depends on the place. In a particular place, what is eaten by most people raw, or is deemed unfit for a king's table, is permitted. Otherwise it is forbidden. . . ."

The *Chokhmat Adam* and *Arukh HaShulkhan* disagree about potatoes. According to the *Chokhmat Adam* they are fit for a king's table, but the *Arukh HaShulkhan* doubts this.

This leads us to consider the case of potato chips. Do they present a problem of *bishul akum*? The *Iggerot Moshe (Yoreh De'ah 4:48)* writes, "Is there a prohibition of *bishul akum* when it is known that [the chips] are made with kosher fats? If there is a God-fearing *mashgiach* (supervisor) who supplied this knowledge, one can rely on the fact that the *mashgiach* also makes sure that the chips will not be prohibited on account of *bishul akum*. But if in truth he did not supervise this, and they were cooked by non-Jews, it is not clear that it is permissible. It is like everything made in factories, where some suggest reasons to be lenient. This is the practice of most people, and since this prohibition is rabbinic, one should not castigate people who are lenient." This means that the only room to be lenient that the *Iggerot Moshe* found is that potato chips are prepared in factories.

However, the author of *Shevet HaLevi* disagrees with him. Regarding a particular type of potato, he suggests and rejects three more rationales for leniency:

"a) The opinion of the *Arukh HaShulkhan* (113:18) who feels that potatoes are not fit for a king's table in our times. But my humble opinion inclines more to the *Chokhmat Adam*, who says that they are considered fit for a king's table.

"b) The opinion of those who feel that steaming food is comparable to smoking it. Smoked food is not included in the prohibition of *bishul akum*. But here too the final halakhic decision is to be stringent.

"c) The opinion of those who feel that food made in a factory is not included in the prohibition of *bishul akum* because it will not lead to intermarriage. But world-class sages were stringent, among them the brilliant Chazon Ish zt"l" (*Shevet HaLevi* 2:45).

Nevertheless, there is still a possibility of permitting potato chips and the like. This would depend on the second point which we said needs to be clarified. Is "eaten with bread" an absolute requirement? If it is, then certainly potato chips would not qualify.

The Rashba in *Torat HaBayit* (3:7) writes, "But foods which are eaten as independent foods and not with bread are included in the prohibition of *bishul akum* if they are fit for a king's table. This applies even if they are not served with bread. Therefore, porridge, which is fit for a king's table, is prohibited [even though it is not served with bread]."

On the other hand, the Ritva (*Avodah Zarah* 38a) maintains that "eaten with bread" is an absolute requirement. Therefore, in his opinion, porridge does not fall under the rubric of *bishul akum* because it is not eaten with bread.

The *Pri Chadash* decides in accordance with the Rashba, taking into account that the Rosh (*Responsa* 19:21) rules that rice is included in the prohibition of *bishul akum*. According to this, it is reasonable to forbid potato chips.

However, there are still grounds to permit potato chips, because they come as a dessert and not a main dish. But there is disagreement here too. The *Shulkhan Arukh* says even a dessert is included in the prohibition of *bishul akum*, while the *Pri Chadash* maintains that desserts are not included. The majority of the decisors follow the *Shulkhan Arukh*. According to this, the sole justification for allowing potato chips would be based on the *Iggerot Moshe*, who permitted them because they are made in factories. However, as we saw, the Chazon Ish finds this unacceptable.

In our next article we will discuss additional foods which raise *bishul akum* problems.

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Family Learning, Parshat Vayera Bluma Zalzman

- 1) Why was HaShem angry at Sarah for laughing at the news that she would have a child, but not at Avraham in parshat Lech Lecha?
- 2) Why does HaShem change what Sarah said when He repeats it to Avraham? (Rashi 18:12-13)
- 3) Why was Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt?
- 4) Why were Hagar and Yishmael expelled from Avraham's house?
- 5) Where is Har HaMoriyah?

Answers follow below

Looking Back: Kristellnacht- Night of the Broken Glass

Kristellnacht was a massive nationwide pogrom which took place in Germany and Austria on the night between the 9th and 10th of November, 1938. It was directed to the Jews of those countries, one of the earlier atrocities of the Holocaust.

In the 1930's there were many Jews who resided in Germany, who were of Polish origin. On Friday, October 28, 1938, 17,000 of them had been gathered without warning in the middle of the night and deported from Germany to Poland. The Polish government did not want to admit them, which resulted in their trudging between the German and Polish border posts in the cold day and night, until German authorities finally persuaded the Polish government to grant the Jews entry to Poland.

One of the families which had been deported was the Grynszpan family. However, not all the Grynszpans were in Poland. Herschel Grynszpan had been living in France. When he learned about the awful conditions his family endured he appealed to the Third Secretary of the German Embassy in France, Ernst vom Rath. His appeals were ignored.

Herschel had no intention of being ignored. On Monday, November 7th, Grynszpan shot vom Rath in the stomach. He missed three additional shots. The secretary died two days later in the hospital, due to his injuries.

Vom Rath's assassination served as an excuse for launching a pogrom against Jews all across Germany and Austria. The attack was intended to look like a spontaneous act, but it was in fact orchestrated by the German government, specifically by Reinhard Heydrich, and the government drew on the Nazi's organization to organize and carry out the riots.

This pogrom damaged, and destroyed, about 1,574 synagogues, many Jewish cemeteries, more than 7,000 Jewish shops, and 29 department stores. Some Jews were beaten to death with others forced to watch. More than 30,000 Jewish men were arrested and taken to concentration camps, mainly to Dachau, Buchenwald, and Sachsenhausen. The conditions were horrendous, but most were released after 3 months on the condition that they leave Germany right away.

The number of Jewish Germans killed is not known for sure, with estimates ranging from 36 to about 200 over two days of rioting. The number killed in the rioting is most often recorded as 91. Counting deaths at the concentration camps, around 2,000-2,500 deaths, were directly or indirectly a result of the Kristallnacht pogrom.

The events in Austria were no less atrocious, and most of Vienna's 94 synagogues were damaged or destroyed. People were subjected to all kinds of humiliations, including being forced to scrub the sidewalks all while being tormented by their fellow Austrians, some of whom had been their friends and neighbors.

The pogrom caused outrage from all around the world. It led to the decline of pro-Nazi movements in Europe and North America. Many newspapers condemned Kristallnacht, and most governments severed diplomatic relations with Germany in protest.

The persecution and economic damage done to German Jews did not stop with Kristallnacht, even as their places of business were ransacked, closed down or destroyed. They were also forced to pay a collective fine of 1 billion marks to the Nazi government for the death of Vom Rath, and the six million marks of insurance payments for property damage due to the Jewish community were to be paid to the government instead.

One of the top Nazi officials, Hermann Goring, met with other members of the Nazi leadership on November 12th to plan the next steps after the riot, setting the stage for formal government action that would soon lead to the Holocaust.

Kristallnacht began a new phase in the anti-Semitic activities by the Nazis. The Kristallnacht pogrom was a first step in the persecution and mass murder of Jews all over Europe in what was to become the Holocaust.

Torah MiTzion establishes Religious Zionist Kollels (centers of Jewish learning and outreach) in Diaspora Jewish communities to strengthen the study of Torah, Jewish identity, the unity of the Jewish people, and the connection between Torah study and Israel.

The Kollels, led by a Rosh Kollel, are comprised of Israeli shlichim (emissaries) - married men and their wives, and single young men, graduates of Yeshivot Hesder in Israel - who serve in the communities for a period of one-three years.

Torah MiTzion is also proud to be a partner of the "**Jewish Learning Initiative**" program on college campuses: www.jli.co.il.

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Family learning-

- 1) Because Sarah's laughter was disbelief and Avraham's was out of joy.
- 2) He wanted to keep Shalom Bayit
- 3) She told her neighbors that she needed to borrow salt because they guests, thus telling all of Sodom they had guests; midda knegged midda.
- 4) Yishmael was a bad influence on Yitzchak; one of Avraham's tests.
- 5) Yerushalayim!