

A PARASHA THOUGHT

Kashering Our Neshamos

After battling the Midyanim, Elazar HaKohen instructs the Jewish people about how to *kasher* (halachically cleanse) the metal utensils of their non-Jewish captives. The Torah introduces this set of laws with the words “*zos chukas haTorah*” – this is the law of the Torah. Rav Moshe Feinstein questions why the law of *kashering* utensils used by non-Jews is introduced with the words *zos chukas hatorah*, which indicates that it is an overarching pillar of the Torah?

Rav Moshe suggests that the process of *kashering* a utensil which is full of non-kosher flavor is symbolic of a Jew's ability to remove the spiritual stains on his *neshamah* which have been created through sin. The Torah is teaching us a fundamental concept of *Yiddeshkeit*, that through the process called *teshuva*, one can remove the stains of sin and purify himself. The idea that a Jew must never despair that his sins have ruined his *neshamah* forever, is indeed all encompassing and is justly referred to as *zos chukas hatorah* – this is the law of the Torah.

However, Rav Moshe points out that there is an important condition to this cleansing process. Just as a non-kosher utensil must be *kashered* in the way that it was used (e.g., a pot in which non-kosher was cooked requires *hagalah*, while a spit used to roast non-kosher requires *libun*), likewise, the *teshuva* process must reflect the severity of the sin and how deeply it affected the person. A sin which was performed with minimal desire requires less *teshuva* than a sin which was

performed with a burning passion.

Although *teshuva* often seems like a daunting process, we must remind ourselves that even the smallest act of *teshuva* has the power to cleanse. Rav Hutner provides a parable. Imagine one has a shirt full of mud. Each time he soaks it in water and squeezes, some of the dirt is removed. The shirt may still be “dirty” but it is cleaner than it was before. Likewise, every act of *teshuva* and every desire to come close to Hashem removes another layer of dirt from our *neshamos*.

Kashering non-kosher utensils is not an everyday occurrence. But next time you perform *hagalah* or *libun*, or ask your rabbi to do it for you, let's remember that just as a non-kosher utensil can be cleansed of its contamination, so too, through *teshuva*, we can cleanse our *neshamos* and maintain our pure relationships with Hashem.

The *Three Weeks*, a period referred to as *bein ha-metzarim* based on the *pasuk* in *Eichah* (1: 3) “*kol rodfeha hisiguah bein ha-mitzarim* – all of her pursuers overtook her in dire straits,” is also a unique time during which we can come close to Hashem. The Maggid of Mezritch (Reb Dov Ber ben Avraham, 1704-1772), one of the illustrious disciples of the Ba'al Shem Tov, would customarily interpret the above verse *kol rodfeha*, - כל רודף י'ה whoever runs after Hashem, *hisiguah bein ha-mitzarim*, will attain closeness to Him during *bein ha-metzarim*. Let us utilize this period to work on our relationships with Hashem! 🤍

RABBI
NOSSON
WIGGINS



LEARNING WITH THE KOLLEL (BASAR B'CHALAV)

WITH

RABBI CHAIM HEINEMANN

Q: We all know that there is a Biblical prohibition of eating meat and milk (that has been cooked with one another) together. Where do whey, human milk, and non-kosher animal meat/milk stand on this topic of *basar b'chalav*?

A: Whey, which is the clear fluid that separates from the cheese curds during the process of making cheese, is subject to a big disagreement amongst the *Rishonim* (medieval commentators, *Rosh* vs *Tosfos*) about what status it has. The *halacha* follows the opinion that whey is considered milk and is Biblically prohibited when cooked with meat (YD 87:8). However, all would agree that whey permeate (also known in dairy plants as “cow water”), which is the byproduct of the cooking of whey in order to cause the protein to precipitate out of the mixture, is not included in the Biblical prohibition.

Human milk is not included in the prohibition of *basar b'chalav*; nevertheless, one should not cook meat (even fowl – *Shach* 87:8) in human milk due to the concern of *maris ayin* (it appears to the eye of a bystander as something which is forbidden). In the event that human milk falls into a meat food, it is *batel* (nullified) and the food can be eaten. Therefore, if a bottle used by a nursing mother to store her milk is washed with meat dishes, neither the bottle nor the dishes are affected (YD 87:4).

In regard to non-kosher animals, there is dispute between the early *Achronim* with no real consensus. The *Bach* and *Drisha*

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LEARNING WITH THE KOLLEL (BASAR B'CHALAV)

CONTINUED

(YD 87) are of the opinion that it was not necessary for Chazal to prohibit *basar b'chalav* of non-kosher animals since they cannot be eaten anyways. The *Taz* (2) and *Shach* (3) contend that Chazal extended *basar b'chalav* to non-kosher animals as well. Hence, all the rules of meat and milk, which are more *chamur* (stringent) than those of non-kosher milk or non-kosher meat alone (for example: cooking and deriving pleasure), apply to *basar b'chalav* of non-kosher animals as well. 🕒

A SHINING EXAMPLE

RABBI NOSSON WIGGINS

Rabbi Binyamin Eldad, a prominent rabbi from Jerusalem, Israel, had an only daughter who was very ill with a rare disease. The young girl needed a certain procedure which only one private doctor in Tel Aviv, Dr. Oren Ben-David, could perform. Rabbi Eldad called Dr. Ben-David's office hoping to make an appointment but the secretary regrettably informed him that the doctor had no availability for the next year and a half. And besides which, the doctor didn't accept insurance and a full deposit of 850,00 NIS was required ahead of time. Rabbi Eldad was dejected but decided to call Avi, a renowned *askan*, to ask him to help him get an appointment. Rabbi Eldad spoke with Avi's secretary and poured his heart out. Although Avi's schedule was full that day, the secretary told Rabbi Eldad to come anyway.

Rabbi Eldad hopped in a taxi and headed to Avi's office in downtown Tel Aviv. During the

45-minute ride from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv, Rabbi Eldad explained the severe situation to the taxi driver. The driver sympathized with the rabbi's sorrowful predicament and said he would wait for him outside and drive him back to Jerusalem afterwards for free. Rabbi Eldad entered Avi's office, informed the secretary of his arrival, and sat down to wait. Minutes turned to an hour, an hour into two and two into three. After three hours of waiting, Rabbi Eldad nervously approached the secretary and asked why the line hadn't budged. The secretary replied that Avi had left for an emergency meeting in Jerusalem. The rabbi replied "I just came from there!" Overwhelmed, Rabbi Eldad was about to faint, so the secretary ran to bring him a cup of water. Rabbi Eldad slowly sat up and was about to recite a *beracha* when he remembered that the *beracha* he was about to recite – *Shehakol* – means that everything which happens is Hashem's will. Rabbi Eldad stood up, went to the corner of the waiting room, and made a *beracha* with great *kavanah*. Rabbi Eldad then thanked the secretary for reminding him of Whom he must turn to and stepped out of the office.

When Rabbi Eldad exited the building, he found the taxi driver still waiting for him. The driver asked, "did you find the man you were looking for?" Rabbi Eldad responded enthusiastically, "yes, He was there all along." Rabbi Eldad returned to Jerusalem and that night davened the most amazing and inspiring *Ma'ariv*.

The next morning the doctor's office called Rabbi Eldad back. The secretary said, "we had a cancellation from a patient overseas who already paid for the procedure. If you can get your daughter to Tel Aviv by 3 p.m., the doctor can do the procedure for you for free!" The power of one *Shehakol*. 🕒

TEFILLA TIDBITS

RABBI YAAKOV MARCHUK

Al Nahros Bavel continues by discussing what happened on the river of Bavel. We hung our harps on the willows when our captors requested from us to sing the music of Hashem, and we responded "how can we sing the song of Hashem on foreign soil? If I forget Zion let my right hand be forgotten." The simple reading of these *pesukim* is that the Jews refused to play music and sing for their captors. However, the *Midrash Yalkut Shimoni*, explains that the *Levi'im* asked themselves, "how can we play the holy songs of the *Bais Hamikdash* in front of these idol worshippers and their gods?" So, they made a group decision to bite off their thumbs, and told the Babylonians, "how can we play our harps without our thumbs?" When this happened, the *Midrash* continues, "Hashem said I swear to you that which I didn't swear to the prophet Yirmiyahu, that if I (God) forget Zion let my right hand be forgotten." From this story we see clearly that Hashem is in the *golus* (exile) with us, and more than anything else He desires to bring "His children home." All He is waiting for is our true desire to be returned. 🕒



THE SECOND CRUSADE AND RABBEINU TAM'S MIRACULOUS SALVATION

RABBI NOSSON WIGGINS

The Second Crusade (1146-49), another religiously charged effort to conquer the Holy City of Jerusalem from its "infidel" Muslim captors, shattered in its wake many *kehillos* across Europe. However, the suffering and tragedies which befell European Jewry during the Second Crusade are often overshadowed by the brutal massacres, forced conversions, and pillages of the First Crusade just 50 years earlier. Yet, we are privy to some of the events that occurred during the Second Crusade. Rabbi Ephraim (ben Yakov) of Bonn, a boy of 13 when the Crusaders trampled his village, subsequently recorded many of the devastating events which occurred to the German and French Jews during and after the Second Crusade in a historical account titled *Sefer Ha-Zechirah*.

One such frightening event which Rabbi Ephraim records in his *Sefer Ha-Zechirah* is the Crusaders' attack on the village of Ramerupt (in northern France) and Rabbeinu Tam's near-death experience and miraculous salvation:

During the prime of Rabbeinu Tam's life, on the second day of Shavous, 1146, a band of Crusaders entered Ramerupt and savaged the city. During the massacre, Rabbeinu Tam's fortified home was raided and his possessions seized. The Crusaders ripped a *sefer Torah* in front of him and then dragged Rabbeinu Tam out to the fields. The Crusaders spoke harshly to Rabbeinu Tam about his religion and then proceeded to stab him five times in the head. Rabbeinu Tam was on the verge of death but Hashem decided to have mercy, and a royal knight suddenly appeared and told the Crusaders to let the rabbi live, promising that he would convince Rabbeinu Tam to convert to Christianity within one day or he would return the victim to the Crusaders. The Crusaders agreed and Rabbeinu Tam's life was spared. This miracle granted Rabbeinu Tam another 25 years, during which he would continue to produce the *chiddushim* which we encounter on nearly every *daf* of the Talmud. 🕒