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By the Hakham
Rabbi Ya'aqob Menashe

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The Order and Importance of Besamim on Moṣei Shabbath

The Shulḥan 'Arukh states that at the conclusion of Shabbath (Moṣei Shabbath) a blessing is recited on Besamim (a fragrance), if one has it available, but if not, one does not need to make a point to go get some.

The blessing on the Besamim is recited before the blessing on the candle. If one erred and recited the blessing on the candle before the Besamim, one should let the blessing on the candle stand and look at the nails of one's fingers, as one ordinarily does when reciting the blessing on the candle. Then, after that, one recites the blessing on the Besamim, and even though that is not the correct order and the preferred manner is to recite the Besamim first, nevertheless, if one has already said the blessing on the candle, what is done is done.

The reason the Shulḥan 'Arukh mentions that we do not have to make a point of going to get Besamim, if it is not readily available, is because the purpose of the Besamim is to refresh one's soul which is in pain over the fact that Shabbath has ended. One should be aware, however, that according to Rabbenu the Ari, z"l, it appears that the correct thing to do is to indeed make a point of getting some Besamim.

(See Shulḥan 'Arukh 297:1.
Kaf Haḥayyim, ibid, Oth 9 and 13.
Mishnah Berurah ibid, 2)



מדרש בן איש חי
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Mishpatim: Don't Toot Your Flute

אם-כִּסְף | תִּלְוֶה אֶת-עַמִּי אֶת-הָעֹנִי עִמָּךְ "If you lend money to my people, to one who is poor with you" (Shemoth 22:24). Both the accepted norms in the world as well as our holy Torah, instruct us to do justice and to love to do kindness with each other. However, there is a difference between them.

The difference is that the way of the world is to do one's deeds with the maximum amount of noise and publicity. Their idea is that one's deeds should be made known to everybody, so that they will be remembered forever.

If we see someone who does justice and kindness with others, how can we tell what his motivation is? Is he doing it because it is the way of the world, or is he doing it because it is G-d's commandment? The test is whether he did it in a concealed manner, hidden from the eyes of others, or not. If he did, it is proof that his whole purpose in doing it was because G-d commanded him to do so.

This verse is speaking about the commandment of charity to the poor. The poor man obviously wishes to receive it in a discreet way. The nature of the rich person, however, is to give the charity and publicise his generous deed. We can now read the verse as when we give charity "to one who is poor", just as he desires it to be given discreetly, so must it be "with you", to also desire to give it discreetly.

(See Benayahu, Parashath Mishpatim)

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Why Did G-d Place Images of Impure Animals on His Throne?

Why did G-d place on his Holy Throne, images of an impure beast and impure fowl – the lion and the eagle?

It says in the Nabi (Prophets), וַיִּמַּן אֱלֹהֵימִין לְאַרְבַּעַתָּם וּפְנֵי־שׁוֹר מִחֻמָּאוֹל לְאַרְבַּעַתָּן וּפְנֵי־נֶשֶׁר לְאַרְבַּעַתָּן *Their images were that of the face of a man, the face of a lion to the right of the four of them; and the face of a wild ox (buffalo) to the left of the four and the face of an eagle to the four* (Ezekiel 1:10).

The reason why Haqqadosh Barukh Hu (the Holy One, blessed be He) chose these four faces to be the bearers of His Holy Throne, is because each of them is a king in its own right. The lion is the king of the wild beasts (Hayyoth), the eagle is the king of the birds, the wild ox (buffalo) is the king of all animals (Behemoth) and the king over all living creatures is man.

All these four are affixed to His Holy Throne, serving Him and carrying His Throne. And G-d rides on these four kings and is, consequently, the King of the king of the kings.

(See Minhath Yehuda [Haruhoth Mesapperoth], Yeḥesqel 1, ch. 87)

Three Steps Back After Which Qaddish?

It says in 'Od Yoseph Hai, regarding taking three steps back after the Qaddish, that one must not take three steps back after any Qaddish except for Qaddish Tithqabbal. The reason for taking three steps back after Qaddish Tithqabbal, is that the Hazzan did not take three steps back after the repetition of the 'Amidah, but takes them at the end of Qaddish Tithqabbal.

These three steps back are considered to be the three steps that need to be taken after the repetition of the 'Amidah. As such, one does not take three steps back after any other Qaddish. This is the custom of Sephardim. The Ashkenazi custom is to take three steps back after all Qaddishim.

(See 'Od Yoseph Hai, Parashath Wayhi, Oth 7)



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