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By the Hakham

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Using a Water Filter on Shabbath

If one has a filtration system attached to one's faucet, may one use it on Shabbath? The Shulhan 'Arukh writes that if water is clear, it may be filtered with a strainer on Shabbath. If the water is murky, it may not. The Ben Ish Hai adds that if the water has worms in it and is thus, undrinkable, it may not be strained either. Other bugs in the water would elicit the same ruling. Only if people would be willing to drink it the way it is, but would prefer it to be filtered, may one filter it on Shabbath.

The same rule applies to the modern day filters and systems which are attached to our faucets. If one would be willing to drink the water without filtering it, the water may be run through the filter on Shabbath. If one would not drink the water on Shabbath, one may not filter it.

What this means is that those who live in areas where the water is required to be filtered for Halakhic or other reasons, prior to being drunk, may not use water filters on Shabbath. Those who live in areas where the water may be drunk as is, and most people are willing to do so, may filter their water on Shabbath.

(See Shulhan 'Arukh with Rama, 319:10. Taz, ibid, 9. Ben Ish Hai, 2nd year, Parashath Beshallah, Oth 17. Shemirath Shabbath Kehilkhatha, 3:49,56,125)



מדרש בן איש חי
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Shelah Lekha: One Day for One Year Is a Kindness

בְּמִסְפַּר הַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר־תִּרְתֶּם אֶת־הָאָרֶץ אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם יוֹם לְשָׁנָה יוֹם לְשָׁנָה תִּשָּׂאוּ אֶת־עֲוֹנוֹתֵיכֶם אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה "Like the number of the days that you spied the Land, forty days, one day for a year, one day for a year, you will carry your transgressions forty years" (Bammidbar 14:34).

Why did the Children of Israel have to wait till the entire generation of the spies died, before they were permitted to enter the Land of Israel? It says in Aqedath Yiṣ-ḥaq that the fact that the generation following the generation of the spies, had to wait 40 years before entering the Land, is connected to the sin of their parents' generation. As long as members of that generation were alive, they were living testimony to the sin that their generation committed. They were proof of their disloyalty to G-d.

As a result, if they the Jewish people were to enter the Land while some of them were still alive, G-d's protection would not be there for their children, on account of of their disloyalty to Him. How could G-d give His protection to their children while they are still there as testimony to their transgression?

For each day they spied the Land, they were punished one year. Here too, we see G-d's infinite mercy. Had He meted out the punishment to everyone at once, it would have shown their weakness to their enemies who would have seen the dramatic decline in their numbers. Instead, He spread it out over 40 years.

(See Aqedath Yiṣ-ḥaq, Parashath Shelah Lekha)

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Studying Torah During the Torah Reading

The words of the Zohar imply that when the Sefer Torah is being taken out of the Hekhal, one is not permitted to speak about mundane matters (Dibrei Hol). The reason is that at that moment, the gates of mercy in Heaven are opened. While the reading is taking place, one may not even study Torah, since one must listen to the reading.

The Shulhan 'Arukh mentions lenient opinions concerning learning Torah or reading the Torah portion twice and the Aramaic translation once (Shenayim Miqra WeEhad Targum), but states that the correct thing to do is to be particular to apply one's mind to the reading of the Torah. The Mishnah Berurah quotes the Peri Hadash who mentions that one should do nothing other than listen to the reading, even if there are ten males listening to the reading, other than him.

In Torah Lishmah, based on the Gemara of Berakhoth (8a), it states that someone who is unable to hear the reading because he is hard of hearing, is permitted to study Torah during the reading. However he must study quietly.

(See Kaf Hachayyim, 146, Oth 18. Shulhan 'Arukh, 146:2. Torah Lishmah, O.H. 42)

Eating Fruit from Multiple Trees

The Shulhan 'Arukh quotes an opinion that if one is in a garden and wishes to eat fruits from multiple trees, once he blesses over the fruit of one tree, he no longer has any need to bless over the others when he eats from them. This assumes that when he recited the blessing he had the intention of eating from those others.

The Mishnah Berurah, while also commenting that it is necessary to have the intention of eating from the other trees when blessing on the first, adds that the Hayyei Adam is of the opinion that if the garden is surrounded by an enclosure, it is not necessary to have the intention to eat from all the trees. As long as one did not have the specific intention to eat from only the one tree that he blessed on (in which case he would have to bless on any other that he ate from), he is not required to bless again on the fruits of the other trees.

If, however, the garden is not surrounded by an enclosure, he must specifically have in mind that his blessing will cover the fruit of other trees also. If not, he must recite a blessing on the next tree. Being able to see the second tree from the first does not help the situation.

The Ben Ish Hai's opinion is different and we shall look at that next.

(See Shulhan 'Arukh 167:18. Oraḥ Hayyim, 178:3. Mishnah Berurah, ibid, 38)

Women's Corner - by Rabbanith Ruth Menashe 'a"ḥ

Instilling Love of Modesty in Our Daughters, Part 1

I recently met the children of a good friend. Unfortunately, they lost her at a young age. Together we exchanged some memories, one of which, I would like to share with you. The children proudly told me how pretty their mother was, and showed me a picture of hers which was taken in her youth. They then showed me a more recent picture, with my friend, the way I remembered her.

Over the years, the family has become observant, which was evident in the two totally different pictures of my friend. The more recent one, obviously showed a picture of a lady dressed according to Jewish guidelines of modesty. Her children told me how their mother reacted when she saw both of the pictures. She said, pointing at the more recent picture: "In my eyes, this is where I really look beautiful!"

(To be continued)