

HALACHA V'HALICHA... By Rav Chaim Schabes

The Torah prefaces the laws of Koshering by saying *זאת הקת התורה*, which connotes that this is a concept that applies to the whole Torah. Rav Moshe ZT"l explains that it is coming to teach us that there is a way we can expel from our system something wrong that we did; this teaches us that if we did an *aveirah* and soiled our *neshamah* in the process, we could clean ourselves by doing *תשובה*, so that this is a rule that actually governs all areas of the Torah, and one should not give up hope in case one encountered spiritual trouble. A point that this *פרשה* teaches us also is, that according to the way one did an *aveirah*, so too one must correct it; if someone did an *aveirah* fired with passion, then his *תשובה* must correspond, and one has to repent with the same burning desire to do good, and if this fire was not present at the time of the sin, then a lighter *תשובה* will be sufficient. This may be the source of the concept of *תשובת המשקל*.

After returning from the war against Midyan, B'nai Yisrael had in their possession many pots and pans that were brought back as part of the booty, and which obviously were impregnated with non-Kosher foods, so the Torah instructs us that a utensil that was used with direct fire, must be passed through fire, and one that was used with liquid must be boiled with water. These are the two basic methods of Koshering utensils: *hag'alah* with water, and *libbun* with fire. There are a few prerequisites before we start Koshering. The first, and probably most difficult, is to make sure that the utensil that we are about to Kasher is perfectly clean, and in case this cannot be accomplished, the utensil cannot be made Kosher by means of *hag'alah*. The space between the teeth of the forks is at times difficult to clean thoroughly and in such a case it might be useful to pass it through fire to burn whatever is caught in there; the same is true with serrated knives, and sometimes, in the etching of the manufacturer's name (Oneida, etc.), some food is sometimes caught, and again, one could just burn those specific spots before doing *hag'alah* in order to get it clean of any leftovers. However when Koshering with *libbun*, this is not necessary because everything will get burned anyway. We must also wait 24 hrs. after the utensil was last used with heat in order to do *hag'alah*. This is again not required when doing *libbun*. One can do *hag'alah* to utensils made from wood, stone, metal, rubber, Correlle, pyrex and formica tops. Plastics that are dishwasher safe, according to the majority of the Poskim could be Koshered. However, if one is afraid that the plastic will get ruined, it cannot be Koshered. China and porcelain can not be Koshered, and enamel-covered surfaces are also treated like earthenware, but in a situation of a major loss, a Rav should be consulted (it may have a possible solution by waiting 12 months and doing *hag'alah* 3 times). Glass (without anything added to it, like pyrex, etc.) doesn't need Koshering for year round used (we are currently not discussing Pesach Koshering). If there should be a question about a Teflon frying pan, a Rav should be consulted. When Koshering, the water must be boiling with large bubbles, and we must make sure that after introducing one or more utensils the water gets cooled off and the bubbles stop, that we wait until it bubbles again (we can speed this by covering the pot or by throwing in a hot stone), and then continue with the Koshering of other utensils. The only liquid that could be used for *hag'alah* is water.

THE NINE DAYS. With the beginning of the month of Av, we restrict ourselves in practices that produce happiness, and therefore, building that is not needed for living quarters is postponed, as well as painting and decorating our homes, and planting in our gardens. We don't eat meat nor drink wine, unless at a *se'udas mitzvah*. We don't wear fresh clothing except for underwear, socks and pajamas, and we do not use fresh towels, linen and tablecloths. One should prepare before Rosh Chodesh all the articles of clothing that are needed for the ensuing week by wearing or using them so that they no longer have a fresh feeling. We don't launder during the Nine Days, except for young children (up to 4 yrs. old) when needed. We must refrain from purchasing clothing or from sewing or weaving. Bathing for pleasure is also prohibited, as well as swimming. Our custom is to change into Shabbos clothing for Shabbos Chazon, and one could be lenient with showering for Shabbos, having in mind that we don't do it for pleasure, and restricting it to what is necessary only.

THOUGHTS ON THE HAFTARAH ... By Rabbi Yaakov Shapiro

At the end of last week's haftara the Navi Yirmiyahu reminds the Jewish people of their early relationship with Hashem, how for forty years they traveled through the desert showing their complete faith in Hashem, and were finally rewarded by being brought into Eretz Yisrael. This week's haftara (Yirmiyahu 2:4-28,3:4) picks up from the next *pasuk* and contrasts that former unquestioning faith with the rampant idolatry that was ubiquitous in Yirmiyahu's time. The Navi then challenges the people with the following query: *ההמיר גוי אלוהים והמה לא אלוהים*: "Has there ever been a time in the history of mankind where a nation has forsaken its god like you have forsaken me?" The Navi's question is quite puzzling since there have in fact been many times in history where nations have switched allegiances from one god to another. The Abarbanel asks this question, citing as examples the Romans, who before accepting their current religion would jump from one idol to the next, and the Arabs, who started off as idol worshipers, were forced to accept the religion of Rome and finally accepted upon themselves the religion of Mohammed. He answers that the Navi is pointing to a major difference between what other nations had done and what the Jewish people did. When a particular nation would take upon themselves new gods they clearly understood that the god they had worshiped previously was not really a god and that they now believed that the 'new one' was. This is a logical thing to do. The Jews, on the other hand, rejected Hashem whom they recognized was, is, and would forever be, the only true G-d and accepted upon themselves a god that they knew was nothing!! This, the Navi cries, is not a logical action on their part!! The Malbim similarly explains the subsequent words of the Navi: *איתי עזבו מקור מים חיים לחצוב להם בארות בארות*. How is it you abandoned a well which is the source of all water (the Torah) for an empty pit (the idols) that is dry and can only be filled from some other source? If you would have exchanged what you have for something of equal value, the sin would have been bad enough, but you compounded it with the foolishness of exchanging it for something of no value!!

