

Ohr Shabbos

Shoneh Halachos - Hilchos Pesach

The following is a translation of an excerpt from the Shoneh Halachos, a sefer by Rav Chaim Kanievsky that summarizes the halachos found in Mishnah Brurah and other sefarim.

1) We begin inquiring and learning about the halchos of Pesach 30 days before it starts; On Purim itself. This is true regarding all Yomim Tovim: we begin inquiring and learning about their halachos 30 days before them. The opinion of the Vilna Gaon is that for the Yom Tov of Shavuos, we may begin on the 1st of Sivan. Some say that the mandate of learning for 30 days before the Yom Tov is only for Pesach since it has many halachos associated with it, for example, the halachos of grinding wheat, baking matzos, kashering dishes and utensils, destroying the chametz etc. Furthermore, a lack of understanding of these halchos would lead to performing the above not in accordance with halacha, and in turn would render one unable to celebrate the Yom Tov properly. Additionally there often is no way to fix these halachic problems on the Yom Tov itself. This unique factor is not present by all other Yomim Tovim, and so learning their halachos just a few days before the yomtov is sufficient.

Nevertheless, on the Yom Tov itself, everyone agrees that one must learn the halachos of the Yom Tov. This is a special takanah that Moshe Rabbeinu instituted. Even if one has learned the halachos for 30 days before the Yom Tov, one must still also learn on the Yom Tov itself. Furthermore, one is not yotzei simply by listening to the krias haTorah on the Yom Tov, as one must learn about specifically what is assur and what is mutur. (ס"א וסק"א) ובה"ל ד"ה שואלין ושה"ץ וע"ל סי' תל"ו דין א'

2) Nowadays, we have a minhag for a special drasha to be given on the Shabbos preceding Pesach, called Shabbos haGadol, and the Shabbos between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, called Shabbos Shuvah. When Shabbos is the day before Pesach, we move the drasha to be one week early. This is so that there is time to implement what is learned in the drasha. The main point of these drashos is to show the tzibbur the ways of Hashem and to teach the practical aspects of the Yomim Tovim. On Shabbos haGadol, this means the halachos of kashering, destroying chametz, baking matzos etc. So too on Shabbos Shuvah, the drasha should discuss the halachos of Yom Kippur and Sukkos, besides for discussing the concepts of Teshuvah. If the drasha contains only pilpul or general drush, then one is not yotzei. In any case, it is still a mitzvah for each individual to learn the laws of Pesach 30 days before the Yom Tov, and on the Yom Tov itself. And in a beis Medrash, it is an absolute chiyuv to learn for 30 days before Pesach. (סק"ב ובה"ל ד"ה שואלין)

Parshas Shemini

The following is taken from Rav Chaim Kanievsky on Chumash.

"מעלת גרה בבהמה אתה תאכלו"
 "That brings up its cud - that one you may eat" (Vayikra 11:3)

Why is chewing cud a sign of a kosher animal? Rav Chaim explained that an animal chews its cud in order to grind its food well, to ensure that it gets the maximal nutrition from what it eats. This action is the antithesis of laziness; a lazy person would be satisfied with a minimum of effort, even if that will result in a less optimal outcome. Since this sign indicates diligence and industriousness, it is the mark of a kosher animal, which may be eaten by a people who are enjoined to stay far from sloth. Rav Chaim noted that an animal chewing its cud is an analogue to a person reviewing a masechta that he already knows very well; a lazy person will say that he already knows it, and resist reviewing it. But we know that it is vitally important to review, again and again, regardless of how well we think we know the material. When someone would come to the Vilna Gaon, wanting to be accepted into the select group of his disciples, the Gaon would instruct him to prepare by learning a specific page of Gemara. When he returned, saying that he had completed it, the Gaon would indicate that he was not ready to test him yet, and that he should go back and review what he had learnt. The Gaon would repeat this many times; a student who began to show impatience or disinterest in reviewing the Gemara over and over was sent away. Only one whose love for Torah was such that he could

review the same page repeatedly, maintaining his zeal and excitement, was worthy of being accepted into the Gaon's inner circle. There are times, however, when a lazy person is to be sought out, as he is the best man for the job. Shlomo HaMelech states (Mishlei 10:26): "Like vinegar to the teeth and like smoke to the eyes, so is a sluggard to those who send him." Why is a sluggard being compared to vinegar and smoke? Rav Chaim explained that while vinegar is generally bad for the teeth, and smoke for the eyes, this is not universally the case. When one is already suffering from a toothache, vinegar actually acts as a palliative and a curative (Shabbos 111a). Smoke, too, can sometimes heal an ailment of the eyes (Sefer Zichron Yaakov Yosef). This is why a lazy person is compared specifically to these things, said Rav Chaim. When the mission on which you are sending him is a positive task, comparable to healthy teeth and eyes, then the sluggard is a damaging force, as he will tarry and delay the desired result. When, however, the task that you need carried out is a negative one, then you should specifically choose a lazy man, because in the course of his delays, you might find an alternative resolution, and you will be glad that he never fulfilled his mission. A perfect example of this is the delivering of a get, a divorce document; we find that Chazal instituted a uniquely slow process for a Kohen's divorce (see Bava Basra 160b), and there is a story (brought in Gittin 34a) where a man rejoiced that the get he had sent had not yet reached his wife.

Inspiring Stories

When the time came for Rav Elyashiv's daughter, Batsheva, to get married, a shidduch was suggested with the son of the Steipler Gaon: Rav Chaim Kanievsky. The young couple met a few times, and they indicated their willingness to proceed. All that remained was to discuss finances. Rav Elyashiv traveled to Bnei Brak to meet with the father of the chassan, the Steipler Gaon. He did not know where he would get the funds to provide his daughter even with the bare necessities; at that time, the Elyashiv household existed in dire poverty, with Rav Elyashiv's meager salary used in its entirety for the minimal needs of food and clothing. The Steipler Gaon told Rav Elyashiv that he wanted an apartment to be provided for his son, to enable him to maintain his studies without the worry of paying rent to keep a roof over his head. "It is true that your son is a worthy scholar," Rav Elyashiv replied, "but my daughter is also a 'good catch.' While the custom is that the kallah's side provides the majority of the costs, I don't think I should be responsible for the full amount. They decided to go to the Chazon Ish to decide the matter. After hearing the details, the Chazon Ish asked them, "Are you prepared to accept whatever determination I reach?" When they both answered in the affirmative, the Chazon Ish took a piece of paper, and wrote, "The kallah's side accepts upon themselves to provide an apartment!" Rav Elyashiv looked at the paper; and indicated his acceptance, but asked, "What is the reasoning behind your decision?" The Chazon Ish smiled, and said, "You should change nothing about your lifestyle. Continue learning as you did in the past, and don't make any efforts to raise the money! All I meant was that the apartment will be procured through your pipeline; you don't need to do anything about it!" A month before the wedding was scheduled to take place, the Steipler Gaon sent a messenger to Rav Elyashiv: "My chashuve mechutan accepted on himself to provide an apartment; has any progress been made on that front?" Rav Elyashiv sent the messenger back with a firm response: "I am merely following the instructions of the Chazon Ish..." When he got the answer, the Steipler

Gaon went to the Chazon Ish to tell him what was happening. The Chazon Ish told him, "He is completely correct! Why did you even send a messenger to him? If you want to get things moving, you should send a messenger to his father-in-law, Rav Aryeh Levin! Tell him that the wedding is in a month, and the young couple does not yet have an apartment!" The Steipler Gaon followed the instructions of the Chazon Ish, and, sure enough, Rav Aryeh Levin arranged for the funds to purchase an apartment to be procured.

Rav Chaim Kanievsky



Rav Shmaryahu Yosef Chaim Kanievsky was born in Pinsk, Poland, in 1928. He is the son of Rav Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky, known as the Steipler Gaon, and Rebbetzin Miriam Karelitz, sister of Rav Avraham Yeshayahu Karelitz - the Chazon Ish. In his youth Rav Kanievsky studied with his father the Steipler, and with his uncle the Chazon Ish. He also studied in Yeshivas Tiferes Tzion of Bnei Brak under Rabbi Yechiel Michel Lefkowitz, and later on in the Lomza Yeshiva of Petach Tikvah under the Rosh yeshiva Rabbi Yechiel Michel Gordon and the Mashgiach Rabbi Eliyahu Dushnitzer. It was the Chazon Ish who arranged for the match between Rabbi Chaim and Batsheva Elyashiv, oldest daughter of Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv and Shaina Chaya Levin, and granddaughter of Rabbi Aryeh Levin and Tziporah Chana Shapira.

He has authored many works including: Shona Halachos - a systematic presentation of the popular work Mishnah Berurah, Derech Emunah - on agricultural laws of Eretz Yisroel, Derech Chochmoh - on the laws of the Beis Hamikdash, Shekel Hakodesh - on the laws of Kidush Hachodesh, Nachal Eisan - on the laws of Eglah Arufah, Siach Hasade, and many others.