



Moor Lane More Torah

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Ruthless Sefardim

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Please read on before you contact me with indignant complaints, as my title only refers to the difference in customs regarding reading Megillat Ruth on Shavuot. What I have come up with so far in my limited research is this:

Although it is very widespread for Ashkenazim to read Ruth publicly on Shavuot, it is not universal. It is less common among Sefardim.

Some Sefardim read Ruth in public before mincha of Yom Tov. It is separated in two parts for the two days outside Eretz Israel. This is the case in France for Jewish from North Africa.

Many Sefardim include the entire Ruth in the Tikkun Leil Shavuot (as opposed to sections from the book, as with other sifrei neviim and ketuvim).

[I would love to know more about the various minhagim, so feel free to contact me at rstamlermoorlane@gmail.com]

The minhag is first mentioned in Masechet Soferim (14:16). Amongst the reasons for this are:

Ruth's coming to Israel took place around Shavuot time, and her acceptance into the Jewish religion was similar to the acceptance of the Torah.

King David, descended from Ruth - as the megillah ends with - died on Shavuot.

The story takes place at harvest time, as does Shavuot.

[Re my title, the word 'ruthless' comes from an old English word 'reuthe', meaning pity. I would be curious to know if this comes from the name 'Ruth'.]



By Rabbi Meir Rabinowitz

Milk & Meat in the Same Meal

One of the reasons we eat milk on Shavuot quoted by the Rema is as a reminder of the two loaves of the shteit helechem flour offering which was brought on Shavuot: we eat milk and meat which then requires us halachically to use separate bread loaves for the milk and the meat.

The Gemara in Chulin says that one may eat milk and then meat. However, one may not eat milk after meat unless it is 'from meal to meal'. The Rishonim argue as to what this means. Rif contends (and this is also the opinion of Maran in Shulchan Aruch) that this means that one must wait the usual time between meals, which is six hours. Some say that the six hours referred to by the Rif means into the sixth hour i.e. five hours and a bit. They base this on the wording of Rambam who says 'like six hours'. Pri Chadash says that the timespan of 'meal to meal' differs from summer to winter. In the winter one waits less than six hours.

Pitchei Teshuvah quotes the Maharit who says that the six hours mentioned are halachic hours (sha'ot zemaniot). Pri Megadim maintains they are regular hours.

Tosafot hold that all one needs to do between meat and milk is Birkat Hamazon. The Rema also follows this opinion, adding that one should still wait an hour: the Vilna Gaon explains that this is rooted in the Zohar which requires

waiting an hour. Rema concludes that scrupulous individuals wait six hours. Chatam Sofer says that an ill person may be lenient and wait just one hour. This is also the opinion of the Ben Ish Chai.

Chok Yaakov says that on Shavuot one can be lenient to eat meat and then milk without waiting six hours. However, he concludes that one should not rely on this leniency.

In contrast, when eating milk followed by meat one need not wait six hours; Magen Avraham comments that

one should not eat them in the same meal without first saying Birkat Hamazon. Matei

Yonatan questions this from the Gemara in Chulin which says that between milk and meat, washing one's hands is not obligatory (reshut). If it's a requirement to say Birkat Hamazon, then washing the hands is obligatory, not just reshut.

Therefore, he says one need not 'bentsh' between milk and meat. The new editions of

the Shulchan Aruch amend the Magen Avraham to refer to meat followed by milk which everyone agrees cannot be eaten in the same meal.

The Pri Megadim writes that those who are stringent to follow the Zohar with regard to waiting an hour should also not eat milk and meat in the same meal without Birkat Hamazon. This can be done lechatchila, unlike between meat and milk where the Taz writes that it is preferable not to do so. In Hilchot Shavuot, the Magen Avraham says that one need not be stringent about this and can have milk and meat in the same meal.





Water, Fire and Wilderness *By Rabbi Shmuel Oppenheimer*

And Hashem spoke to Moshe in the Desert of Sinai" (1.1)

"With three things the Torah was given: Water, Fire and in the desert" (Midrash Rabba)

The Ktav Sofer (1815 – 1871) explains that these three things symbolize three important points in regards to acquiring and valuing the Torah.

WATER: Just as water flows from a high place to a low place, so the Torah flows away from one who is big headed to one who is humble. Thus, the Torah was given on a low, small mountain to show that the Torah stays with one who is humble. A haughty person will shy away from asking about something they don't understand out of fear of the shame they may feel if their question turns out to be ill structured or plain stupid. A humble person however will persevere even if people will laugh at him. So in order to acquire Torah knowledge one must be humble and thus willing to ask.

FIRE: The Torah was also given with fire, symbolizing that the Torah lights up the correct path for a person. Every single life decision can be derived from the timeless wisdom of the Torah. David Hamelech refers to the Torah as complete (Torah Temima), as it is complete in every aspect. One can apply it to

any life-situation. Our Torah leaders, who toil for thousands of hours with extreme devotion and exertion over the Torah, are able to guide and advise people on the most mundane of matters. See a fascinating insight on this subject by Rav Moshe Feinstein, one of the greatest recent halachic authorities, in his responsa Even Haezer, vol. 2 responsum 11.

DESERT: The Torah was also given in the wilderness, symbolizing that the Torah is found in a person who makes himself like the generation who went through the desert. They ate only the manna and they had just the right amount to sustain them without any surplus. Our Sages taught us that "The Torah was only given to the eaters of the manna". Only one who is happy with little, with their lot, without indulging in excessive mundane pleasures, truly merits the Torah. This is the way of the Torah, you shall eat bread with salt, and drink a measured amount of water. If you do this, fortunate are you in this world and it will be good for you in the next world (Mishna, Pirkei Avot).

At the time of year of the giving of the Torah, we can appreciate these three points: humility leads us to ask; the timeless guidance of the Torah; being happy with our portion.



The Beracha on Cheesecake

Rabbi Chaim Tangy

The Shulchan Aruch [168 and 112] writes that if one eats a mirkachat (a thick fruit compote or jam) with a cracker, one only says a beracha on the mirkachat and not on the cracker, because he is clearly only having the cracker as a way of holding the mirkachat to keep his fingers clean. Magen Avraham [212 5] adds that if the cracker also has a good taste, then his intention is also for the cracker and he should therefore say a mezonot on it. Machatzit Hashekel takes this to mean two berachot: a mezonot in addition to the beracha on the mirkachat. However, the Gra"z explains the Magen Avraham to mean only mezonot on the cracker and this covers the mirkachat. Mishna Berura and Yabia Omer follow his view.

The same would apply for cheesecake: if the base has a good taste, a beracha is only made on the base; if there is no interest in the taste of the base a beracha is only said on the cheese.

Mishna Berura limits the above 'one beracha' ruling to where the cheese was baked together with the cake. However, if they were not baked together, one should say two berachot, provided there is an interest in the base as well. If the base is of no interest, only shehakol is said, according to everyone. Yabia Omer [7 33] argues and says that the Magen Avraham and Gra"z are referring to even when the cheese was added after baking. He therefore

holds that even for 'non-baked-together' cheesecake only mezonot is said.

The Ta"z writes that if one eats all the cheese on its own and leaves the cake part for the end, he should say a beracha on the cake as well.

Halacha Berura says it is preferable to say a beracha on a piece of the cake separately with explicit intention not to cover the cheese, and then to say shehakol on the cheese. This is to satisfy the opinions of the Emek Beracha and the Shel"i who argue with the Magen Avraham's ruling re making mezonot, and of the Machatzit Hashekel who understood this to mean mezonot as well as the other beracha. This also complies with the Mishna Berura's ruling where the cheese is added after baking.

In summary: 1) if the base of the cheesecake is there solely as a means of holding the cake to keep the fingers clean, and there is no interest in it whatsoever, only shehakol is made.

2) if the base has a good taste as well and there is also some interest in it, (albeit secondary) it depends: if the cheese was baked together with the base, both Yabia Omer and Mishna Berura hold that only mezonot is recited. If the base was baked separately and only afterwards the cheese was added, according to Mishna Berura two berachot are made. According to Yabia Omer only mezonot is said. Halacha Berura advises taking off a piece of the base and saying mezonot with intention not to cover the cheese and then saying shehakol on the cheese.





Morning Blessings After No Sleep

By Rabbi Namir Cohen

The Ben Ish Chai quotes the Zohar in parshat Emor that the early chasidim did not sleep on Leil Shavuot and instead studied the Torah, saying 'Let's come and acquire an inheritance for us and our children in this world and the world to come'. Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai says that one who studies Torah on Leil Shavuot will be inscribed in the book of remembrance and the Almighty will bless him with a multitude of blessings and crowns in the Higher Worlds. It is therefore the custom in many Kehilot - including our Kehila - to spend the night immersed in the Torah. This raises a halachic debate regarding the morning blessings after staying up the whole night.

We have outlined below the correct way to act according to the Sephardi pesak and that of the Mishna Berura.

		מנהג ספרדים	מנהג ע"פ המ"ב
1.	ברכת על נטילת ידים	Wash without blessing	Wash with blessing, after being excused
2.	ברכת השחר	Say	Say
3.	אלקי נשמה	Say	Get someone who slept to make blessing for you, unless you slept during the day before, in which case you can say it
4.	המעביר שינה	Say	Get someone who slept to make blessing for you
5.	ברכת התורה	Say	Get someone who slept to make blessing for you unless you slept during the day and didn't learn immediately after maariv in which case you can say it yourself. If you can't find someone to say it for you, then you should have in mind to discharge your obligation when you say Ahavah Rabbah, and learn immediately after shachrit

We will now explain the reasoning behind the above chart.

1) Rosh and Rashba argue over the reason for washing one's hands in the morning. Rosh learns that whilst one sleeps, one will inevitably touch areas of the body which are usually covered. Rashba learns that whilst we sleep we return our souls to our Maker, and in the morning we receive them anew. We therefore wash our hands at the start of a new day of service of G-d, like the Kohanim did in the Holy Temple. Therefore, if one didn't sleep, according to the Rosh there is no reason to wash. According to the Rashba however, one should still wash, representing the general daily cycle when G-d returns the souls of His creations. So, since it is doubtful as to which reason we follow, the Mishna Berura concludes one should be excused and thus even according to the Rosh be obligated to wash. According to the Sephardim however, one should still not make a blessing on washing hands even after being excused, as they understand the Rosh's view to be that washing was only enacted for someone who touched their body whilst asleep. In any event one should wash one's hands before prayer.

2) These blessing are not sleep related.

3) & 4) Theoretically Sephardim should not make these blessings and Ashkenazim should, because Maran [46.8] writes that one should only make these blessings as he performs or sees the related happenings, e.g. only make Hanoten lasechvi after actually hearing the sound of the rooster, whereas the Rema comments (and this the opinion of the mekubalim) that one should say them all regardless, since it's the way of the world for these things to happen, even if this individual hasn't had this experience. However, l'halacha Sephardim follow the Mekubalim, whilst Ashkenazim follow the Mishna Berura who quotes the view that these two berachot are an exception where we do not follow the Rema: as the wording of these blessings is personal ['the soul You gave me', 'sleep from my eyes'] one should say them only if having slept.

5) The Sephardi minhag is based on the opinion that Bircat HaTorah expires at alot hashachar (dawn). The Ashkenazi minhag is based on the opinion that one is only definitely liable to make Bircat HaTorah after both sleep and having reached alot hashachar.



תורה וקדושה

By Rabbi Yehiel Haddad

This Yom Tov is when we celebrate the receiving of the Torah. As Jews our goal is the total and

absolute acceptance of and adherence to the Torah, which is what defines a Jew and what differentiates us from the rest of the world. One may wonder for what purpose we were given the Torah.

The Midrash (Bereshit Rabbah 44:1) says "לא נתנה" Torah was not given to mankind for any purpose other than to refine people. The Torah teaches us how to refine our character, and according to this Midrash that is the only, single reason we received it. Learning the Torah is meant to bring us to the level where we understand how to act towards each other. Similarly, in the beginning of the Mishnah Masechet Pe'ah where the R'osh reveals to us which mitzvot Hashem really enjoys. "שיעשה בהם גם רצון הבריות מבמצוות שבין אדם לקונו", Hashem has more desire in mitzvot which also serve to benefit people than mitzvot that are only between man and his Creator. From here we see the importance of מצוות בין אדם לחבירו in the eyes

of Hashem. (However, one should not be fooled into thinking we do not need to put effort into doing the mitzvot that are between man and his Creator, as they too are part of the master plan given to us by Him.)

The Ramban (Vayikra 18:2) on the verse קדושים תהיו explains at length how the מצוות, when done correctly, are meant to bring us to a level of קדושה.

When we are about to do a mitzva we bless beforehand אנוכי ה' אשר קדשנו במצוותי..., Who sanctified us with his mitzvot. What is sanctity?

The answer can be found in פרשת קדושים where the Torah shows us the way to sanctity. It is this פרשה where the Torah chose to teach us the way to reach the level of קדושה – sanctity; by treating each other with kindness and consideration in the way the Torah teaches us to.

A way to remember this lesson is as follows: sacred objects such as a ספר תורה or a מזוזה have many הלכות regarding treating them with respect and dignity; similarly, a human who was created sacred should be treated with respect and dignity. Let us learn the Torah, and let it elevate us to higher levels of sanctity, by learning from it how to treat our fellow neighbour. Then we will merit to truly be called the עם קדוש, the sanctified nation.





Is There an Insulation Issue in Using a Crock-Pot on Shabbat? *By Rabbi Aron Gillis*

There are two types of insulation of pots that the Rabbis prohibited on Shabbat. The first is insulation with material that does not increase the heat; this is done to ensure the pot does not cool down quickly. The reason this is forbidden is because the Rabbis were concerned that when insulating the pot on Shabbat, it may appear not be hot enough, which may cause one to instinctively heat it up. This obviously will involve the melachot of cooking and lighting a fire. This type of insulation is only forbidden on Shabbat itself where one could inadvertently do these melachot. However insulating in material that does not increase the heat is allowed to be done before Shabbat and left wrapped/insulated as Shabbat comes in.

The second type of insulating is with material that increases the heat. The Mishna gives an example of the sediment from olive-pressing. This is forbidden because one could come to the conclusion that if these types of materials are permitted then using hot ashes is also permitted to insulate with. The problem with insulating in hot ashes is that one will instinctively stoke the flames, hence the food will cook better which is a melacha of kindling and cooking. This type of insulating is forbidden to be done even before Shabbat to be left on as Shabbat enters.

Additionally if a pot is left above hot coals and is covered with insulation that does not increase the heat, since it is above a source of heat that increases the temperature of the pot and this is aided by the material covering it, this is also defined as insulating that increases the heat. Therefore it is forbidden to be done even before Shabbat. With this introduction it would seem that a crock-pot would fall into the category of insulation that increases heat, since there is a source of heat and the pot is enclosed: is this not forbidden to use even before Shabbat comes in?

There are, however, at least three reasons to permit using a crock-pot on Shabbat (regarding insulation). Firstly, there is the opinion of the Rashbam that since the prohibition of insulating with material that increases the heat is because one might use hot ashes and thereby stoke them; this is only true when one will gain by stoking the ashes. If, however, the food is fully cooked, or even according to one opinion partially cooked but edible, then there is no concern that one will stoke the ashes, as there is not much gained by this. The Rashbam here is a lone opinion. Most commentators disagree and hold that since the idea of insulating with hot ashes is usually to keep the food warm overnight, one will always gain from the stoking, as this will

help keep the food warm overnight. Therefore, according to the Rashbam insulation would be allowed in a crock pot providing the food is at least half cooked.

The Rema brings the Rashbam's opinion and adds that if one insulates before Shabbat with a material that increases the heat, with the intention to use for the day meal, it would be allowed even if it was less than half cooked. This is because there is ample time for the food to cook overnight and even if one were to use ashes there would be no need to stoke them. (The Rema himself says that we do not rely on this lechatchila). However, even according to the Rashbam it might not be allowed to insulate for the next day as one might change his mind at the beginning of Shabbat and decide to eat the food at the night meal.

The second reason to permit a crock-pot is that it is not insulated from all sides. Even though it has a lid, since the purpose of the lid is not to insulate but to protect the food it is not considered an insulation. The Rema holds that insulating when not covering all sides is permitted. The Shulchan Aruch, however, does not permit this.

The third reason to permit a crock-pot is that the normal way of insulating is to tightly insulate the pot. If, however one would put for example a wide dish on the pot and drape a blanket over the dish so it would hang loosely over the sides of the pot without touching it, this would be allowed: this is not the normal way of insulating. Similarly, it is allowed to place the pot inside a box and cover the box, since the pot is not snugly covered. This would apply to a crock-pot, which does not snugly fit to the walls of the heating elements, as in fact there is a small gap. As this is not the normal way to insulate it would be permitted. However one could argue that there is not a significant amount of space – only 2mm – and this is considered as if the pot is touching the walls.

Practically, in addition to these halachot, there are other prohibitions potentially involved in using a crock pot which is outside the scope of this article (primarily bishul, shehiya and chazara). Many poskim hold that in practice the halachically best way to use a crockpot on Shabbat is to ensure the following:

1. The inside of the outer pot is lined with silver foil.
 2. There should be a tape over the setting to prevent adjusting the level of heat. Some require the inner pot to be slightly raised, e.g. by coins or small balls of foil.
- However please always consult your own Rav.

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