

MOOR LANE MORE TORAH

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Meeting Points

Rabbi M Stamler



The Jewish year is full of moadim, meeting points. The ninth of Av is also a moed, a meeting point: it is a point in the year where we meet what we are missing. It is not easy to relate to the spiritual concepts we lost on that day, but every effort we make to feel that loss is a positive step and part of the rebuilding process. The very realisation that we do not know what we are missing is an achievement, as is extra effort in saying the berachot about Yerushalayim in the Amida and in birkat hamazon during the three weeks is all part of this process. Rabbi Yonathan Eybeschutz [1690-1764] in his commentary on the Amida writes a whole paragraph about the meaning of the blessing of rebuilding Jerusalem. The very language he uses made one realize just how much our conceptualisation of the loss has gone down in the four hundred

years since he wrote these words.

This is a selection of his commentary:

'There is no need to write a length about the blessings of Jerusalem and the kingdom of David, because a person needs to cry incessantly about the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the return of the pride of David, which is the ultimate in human perfection. If we do not have Jerusalem and the kingdom of David, what purpose is there in life?



If the heavenly angels call out in crying and lamenting about the destruction of Jerusalem, day

and night they do not cease and they are mourning for Zion, how can we be quiet and not cry on the desecration of God's name which was desecrated by the destruction of Jerusalem and the loss of the kingdom of the House of David.

A person is obliged to say in his heart 'Creator of the Universe, I deliver my soul over for the sanctity of your name and if I'm not worthy to see the building of Zion and the return of the kingdom of the House of David, I would rather die sanctifying your name.'

Everyone knows how much goodness we are missing; literally we have gone from life to death. Conversely when God will return the captivity of Zion we will go up from death to life. Now we only have one part in sixty of life: that is why it says 'when G-d returned the captivity of Zion we were like dreamers': just as a dream has one sixtieth part of death so by contrast, we will realize that we only had one sixtieth part of life.◆



Mind the GAP

R' Yishai Lister

The ever-growing popularity of wearing cardigans or jumpers with a zip down the middle,

combined with the occasional emblem on the front of these items of clothing presents a problem of Kotev [the melacha of writing] on Shabbat. If the zip goes through a word or letters of a word or even a picture, may it be opened or fastened on Shabbat? There could be a potential problem of Kotev (writing) and Mochek (erasing) letters on Shabbat. Before we answer our she'ilah, let's first get some understanding of what these melachot are and how they work.

Kotev and Mochek were acts done in the setting up of the beams of the Mishkan. The Mishkan was constructed of Kerashim, special boards, made of cedar wood that were the walls of the Mishkan. The Cohanim would inscribe a letter on all of the boards as a sign that it was to be placed into the correct position (Kotev). If a mistake was made, it was erased and then re-written (Mochek). (Mishna Shabbat 103a)

Any method of forming two characters or symbols is the melacha of Kotev (even one letter is assur min haTorah midin Chatzi Shiur). Even forming a letter by writing on one's skin or by tearing animal hide into letter shapes is the melacha of Kotev De'oraita. (Rambam 11:16) Similarly, drawing a sketch is also Kotev De'oraita. (Rambam 11:17) This can also be

applied to taking a photograph. (Igros Moshe 4:40:10)

The Melacha of Mochek is usually accomplished by erasing two characters or symbols with intent to write in the space now gained (Mid'oraita.) (Mishna Ibid.) It is also possible to do this melacha by erasing an extra unwanted single character from a combination of correct characters even if no further characters will be written. (Pri Megadim)

Now we can start answering our question. Does connecting/disconnecting two pre-existing halves of a letter or word constitute the melachot of Kotev/mochek?

Sefarim/ books that have letters printed on the edges of the pages present this question. When the book is opened, the letters break and when closed the letters are reformed.

The Magen Avraham (OC 340:6) quotes the Teshuvat Rema (Teshuva 119) who says it is permitted to open such a sefer, (mainly because it is not considered to be an act of mochek if the damage can be undone— opening the sefer obliterates the words but they can be replaced just as easily, which cannot truly be considered erasing. This is evident from the fact that the melachah of Mochek is learned from the rubbing out of letters when a mistake was made: why not just say that the source of Mochek is that the formations

of the letters on the boards were disconnected when dismantling the mishkan? Rather, it must be that simply disconnecting the words is not under the category of Mochek).

However, the Magen Avraham proceeds to quote the Levush (340:4) who says it is definitely not allowed and could be Assur Mid'oraita (as one is obliterating the letters with intention of "re-writing" them when he eventually closes the sefer. It could also be pointed out that it is not similar to the moving apart of the beams in the Mishkan which the Rema brings a proof from, as the letters were only separated, not obliterated.) This is how the Magen Avraham chooses to pasken, that one should be machmir not to open such a sefer.

The Taz (340:1) also quotes the Levush but disagrees with what his view and writes that it is permitted, rather like the Teshuvot Rema. (Firstly, the contention of the Levush that opening and closing the sefer is Mochek with intention Lichtov (erasing with intent to write, constituting the melacha De'oraita) is not so straightforward. One does not close the sefer with intent to write, rather one just closes the sefer to close the sefer! He also brings a proof that simply moving letters together without first writing anything is completely permitted. This is brought from the Gemara (in Shabbat 104b) that states that

when one writes a letter in one place and a letter in another that can potentially be bought together, he is chayav chatat, even though they haven't been brought together, just the potential that they could be brought together is enough. We see from here that only writing is a melachah, not simply bringing two letters together; the location of separate letters is neither here nor there. Therefore, opening and closing a sefer is completely permitted.)

The Prishah writes that is Muttar to open such a sefer: he compares it to opening or closing a door which is not considered to be Boneh or Sotair, since the door is built to be open and closed and is part of the infrastructure of the building as is, so to the writing is meant to be obliterated and reconstructed- but the obliteration does not mean the writing is no longer there!

The Mishna Berurah (340:17) writes

that when another sefer is not available, one may use a sefer with writing on the edge. (The Steipler Goan zt'l was machmir not just for letters, but he even refrained from using Seforim with a patterned edge! (Orchos Rabbeinu I page 306))

Some people place a card in between the pages before Shabbos, splitting up the word from before Shabbat. The letters are broken to the extent that neither half of the letters are recognisable as a character. (It stands to reason that the separation should be significant, a thin card may not suffice).

Now we can start on our Shailah. Maybe the jumper with a zip down the middle can be compared to a sefer. When the zip is open/closed, it is as if the book is open/closed. It seems to be that this is dependent on the above machloket, on which the Mishna Berurah would rule that if another jumper is available, it

takes precedence over the one with a zip down the middle of the words.

Point to ponder: A Shaila posed to the Igros Moshe (4:40:22): A parochet of a shul had an opening in the middle and had writing across both sides, and this writing was separated when it was opened. Is this a problem of Mochek/Kotev? He answered that the parochet should be left slightly open before Shabbat and should not be fully closed. If Shabbat entered and they were closed, they may be opened but not fully re-closed, in accordance with the ruling of the Magen Avraham following the stricter view of the Levush.

It seems to be that the zip down the middle of a letter cannot be compared to a slight gap in the parochet or a card in a sefer, both of which effectively pre-split the letters, which allowed them even in accordance with the view of the Levush/ Magen Avraham. The zip is too thin, and a lot of jumpers also have material which come in and "hide" the zip after it has been closed, effectively almost closing the gap. Additionally, the parochet has another reason for the Igros Moshe's lenient ruling which may not be applicable to a zip: the curtains of the Aron HaKodesh hang loosely next to one another - it could be argued they are not properly attached, meaning there is no problem of Kotev/mochek whatsoever. However, the zip's firm attached to either side of the jumper ensures that they are properly fastened, giving the word/half letter extra connectivity. ♦





To Walk the Walk

R' Meir Simcha Cohen

It's been more than 2,000 years. 104,000 weeks. 728,000 days. And we're still waiting.

One almost begins to wonder what the waiting for the end of the galut is all about. Is it simply another year, another delay and another Bein Hametzarim to hope for the geulah?! Is there really no deeper rhyme nor reason to our current situation at present?!

We recently read in Parashat Masei about the 42 journeys on which the Jewish People travelled through the desert on their way to the Land of Israel. The Torah specifically mentions each and every journey by name and Rabbeinu Bahya (Bamidbar 33:2) explains that one reason for this is that when we return to Israel for the future and final Redemption, we will in fact follow this exact route on our voyage, retracing our forebears' very steps!

If we may suggest a layer of meaning to this cryptic comment of Rabbeinu Bahya, perhaps it could be as follows.

The original journeys and pit stops on which the nation travelled, were, of course, not only a physical and practical route that required traversing in order to reach the intended destination. Rather, on each step of the way there were spiritual gains and lofty levels

to be attained in order to ready themselves for entry to the Holy Land. They were many an opportunity, opening and offering of gaining the necessary tools and abilities to achieve their ultimate goal of the spiritual acquisition of the Land.

In the same way that they travelled this not only physical but also spiritual journey all those years ago, so too we will be presented with this same precise journey in order to receive the relevant hashpa'ot and heavenly gifts along our route to the final Redemption. In other words, the Torah is teaching us that the journey has inherent value in and of itself.

In a similar vein, in our own personal lives, we all have hopes, plans and goals that we wish to achieve over the years. Some successfully attain these targets, though many don't. The perplexing thing, however, is that the Gemara (Makkot 10b) explicitly states, "Baderech she'adam rotzeh leilech bah, molichin oto – On the journey that a person wishes to take, he is led". If so, why do we see so many apparently not achieving their genuine plans and desires?

Rabbi Gershon Miller (formerly of the Gateshead Yeshiva Gedola) suggests that the clue lies in the very first word. "Baderech – On the journey" that a person hopes for, he is led. To passively hope and await the result is not the whole

story. It is the effort and exertion that we apply along the lengthy and challenging journey called life that is the key to success. It is only once we're willing to put in, as Winston S. Churchill declared, the "Blood, toil, tears and sweat", that we may consider ourselves a large part of the way there. To merely 'talk the talk' is not good enough, we also have to 'walk the walk'.

In the same way that the Galut Mitzrayim is described as having been a 'kur habarzel – iron refinery' to polish and refine the Jewish People and remove the spiritual 'sediments' in order to ready them for the resulting geulah and Matan Torah, so too this galut has the ultimate and fundamental purpose of refining ourselves, on both a personal as well as national level, to the extent that we will have achieved the levels required for the Ultimate Redemption.

We are all only too keen and aware of the many trials and tribulations that appear to lurk around every corner of this seemingly endless galut. It is once we relate to them, even if only a little bit, as the opportunities for growth that they are, the final segments of this lengthy journey towards spiritual refinement and success, that we can then pray and hope that Hashem will swiftly bring us to our final destination once again, Amen. ♦