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מסעי

MASEI
SHABBAT MEVARCHIM

דף השבוע
Daf Hashavua

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Shabbat ends in London at 9.56 pm
Rosh Chodesh Av is on Monday

Judaism and
Modernity
Part 7:

Electricity on Shabbat (Part 2)

by Rabbi Garry Wayland, Assistant, Youth and Young Families Rabbi,
Woodside Park United Synagogue

Last week, we discussed the source and scope of the prohibition of using electricity on Shabbat. Whilst all Rabbinic authorities rule that the use of the electricity is generally forbidden, there are certain circumstances in which it is permitted.

Many shuls have hearing aid loops – a system of discreetly placed microphones that transmit signals to hearing aids. When set correctly, these allow their users to hear (for example) the Torah reading and the sermon. However, other forms of amplification systems are forbidden. What is the difference?

This question actually sheds light on many of the issues that underlie the laws of Shabbat. Several potential issues arise – is the hearing aid like a musical instrument, the use of which is forbidden on Shabbat? Is speaking into the microphone, or the hearing aid itself, generating electricity? Is one permitted to wear a hearing aid in a street that does not have an Eruv?

Needless to say, the Rabbinic authorities grappled with these common issues. They permit the use of hearing aids, wearing them in the street and even adjusting the volume, provided that they were turned on before Shabbat. A factor that underlies their permis-

sibility is '*kavod habriyot*' – protecting the dignity of those involved. Halachic questions are not viewed in a vacuum. Hearing aids transform the daily lives of those who need them, and it would be unimaginable if the hard of hearing were not able to communicate with the world on Shabbat.

This factor, however, is largely absent in the question of other amplification systems: whilst the Rabbi or chazzan may have to strain his voice, and shuls can be occasionally noisy, there is much less need for leniency. So even though the technical principles may be the same, the human factors that play a role in halachic decision making are radically different.

Based on similar principles, institutions such as Zomet, in Israel, design special 'Shabbat compliant' devices to allow life in challenging situations to carry on as normally as possible, whilst still observing Shabbat. Therefore, hospitals may have Shabbat keyboards, phones and microwaves that can be used even in non-emergency situations. Other devices, such as Shabbat lifts, electric wheelchairs and water pumps, often make Shabbat more pleasant in otherwise difficult situations.



The Direction of the Signpost

by Rabbi Mendel Lew

Senior Rabbi, Stanmore & Canons Park United Synagogue

The story is told of a man who was walking along a path. His destination was the next town and he was grateful for the clear directions and signs on the way. Well before the invention of satellite positioning, these markers helped him to navigate the route.

He soon arrived at an intersection, with roads heading in different directions. There was a signpost indicating where each road would lead. Alas, the sign had fallen down, and was now lying at the side of the road. The man was in a quandary, uncertain what to do next.

Soon, a fellow traveller arrived at the junction. Responding to the man's predicament, the traveller pointed out that on the fallen sign there were also, presumably, directions to the place from where our man began his journey. "Pick up the sign and point it in the direction from where you have come. The direction of the other paths and roads will now be clear".

True progress in life works best when we look to our past. By implementing all the best advice and guidance from our parents, grandparents and from our rich Jewish history, we are better able to establish our own path – and ultimately reach the goal of a contented and meaningful life.

This sheds light on a critical passage in this week's sidrah. In Chapter 19, the Torah outlines the regulations for one who accidentally takes the life of another human being. The accused was required to escape to a city of refuge. Only there would the accused be safe from

the wrath of the grieving family.

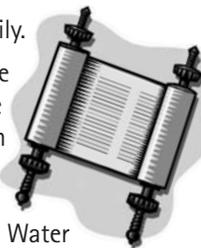
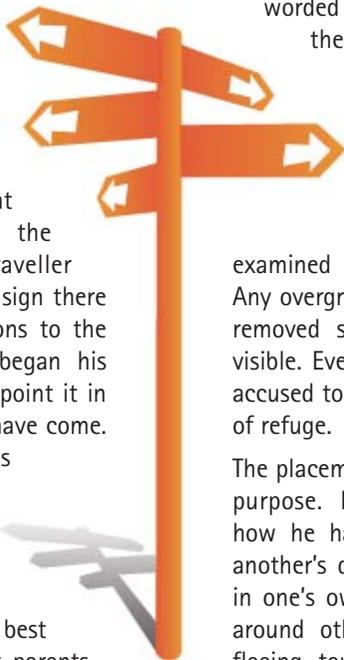
These cities of refuge were functioning cities, where the accused was entitled to live in relative peace. They were required to be of decent size, so as not to appear isolated. Water and amenities had to be readily available.

The rules also stipulate that clearly worded and visible road signs identifying the cities of refuge were to be erected. These markers had the Hebrew word *miklat* (shelter) written on them, and they were installed all along the roads and highways.

These signposts were regularly examined for damage and wear and tear. Any overgrown shrubbery and greenery was removed so that the signs were always visible. Every opportunity was afforded the accused to make his way to the closest city of refuge.

The placement of signs served an additional purpose. It reminded the individual of how he had fallen. Being responsible for another's demise was indicative of neglect in one's own behaviour – acting carelessly around others. While this individual was fleeing towards safety, he was never to forget the origins of his journey. The signs leading him further and further away from his hometown could be seen, in truth, as the story of his life.

We face new situations and experiences each day. Often we have regrets. Yet we should seek time to pause, to assess the path and route we are following in life. It is wise to occasionally redirect that signpost and make sure we are heading for a stable and fulfilling future.



Making a *Tzohar*

by Menachem Salasnik, Israel Educator

When G-d instructed Noah how to build the Ark, He told him to make a *tzohar* (Bereishit 6:16). This is the only time this word appears in the Torah. It is clearly etymologically related to the words *zohar* (radiance), *tzahoraim* (noon) and *yitzhar* (olive oil for lamps).

It seems that the *tzohar* provided light so that those in the Ark would be able to see what they were doing. There are two opinions as to what this light source was. The first opinion is that it was a window. We see (ibid 8:6) the Ark had a window which Noah opened for the dove (although there it is referred to by its more regular term – *chalon*). The second opinion is that it was a precious stone which emitted its own light, a type of phosphorescent gemstone.



Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson of Lubavitch (d.1994) suggests that there was deep spiritual significance to this *tzohar* beyond its light-providing qualities. The people of the time had driven spirituality from their lives. Their passion was for fulfilling their physical needs; stealing and adultery were rife. Noah needed to make a window in the physical world to allow some of the spiritual light to shine through and elevate himself beyond the problems of his society. However, there is an even higher level than a 'window'. A precious stone that represents the physical world itself emitting spiritual light – the physicality has been turned into something that creates spirituality.

An approach sometimes found in religious life around the world is that the physical world is

bad and holds one back. If you want to reach the highest level of spirituality, you need to leave as much of the physical world behind you. Religious asceticism is practiced by monks of many religions, whether in regards to celibacy, food, alcohol, money or even speech.

Judaism is radically different. Walk into the home of our greatest spiritual leaders on Shabbat and you could see plenty food and drink and joyous talk around the table. It is possible to reach a level of spirituality by abstaining from the physical; yet the ultimate form of spirituality is to take that very physicality and transform it into a conduit of spirituality. If we eat in order to have energy so that we can carry

out mitzvot, we have elevated the food to a spiritual level. If we work honestly and donate part of our income to charity, we make G-d a partner in our working life.

We live in a world where it can sometimes be difficult to perceive G-d's presence. The regularity of nature, the drive for money and physical pleasure, can often leave little room for spirituality. It is worth taking time to allow spirituality to shine into our life, to meditate on concepts of purpose and meaning. Even more importantly, if we can utilise the physical world that we deal with on a daily basis and elevate it, we have the opportunity to achieve true greatness in every aspect of our lives.

Menachem Salasnik is a Low Vision and Geriatric Optometrist

(Green Siddur, p.130 and 430)

Psalm 24 is recited when returning the Torah to the *Aron Hakodesh* (Ark) on weekdays and Shabbat afternoons. It is also by Sefardi and some Ashkenazi communities on the nights of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur after Ma'ariv. It is also incorporated as part of the 'Kingship verses' in Musaf on Rosh Hashanah.

This psalm is actually a composite of three separate parts.

1. The first verse speaks of G-d as Creator and of His ownership of the world:

"The earth is the Lord's and all it contains"

The Talmud (Berachot 35a) teaches from here that we are not allowed to derive benefit from anything in this world without reciting a prior blessing.

2. The next section focuses on mankind and how it can achieve high moral and spiritual stature. *"Who may ascend the mountain of G-d?"*

The prescription by which a person may draw near to Him is through *"clean palms"* – honesty and integrity in everything we do; *"a pure heart"* – striving in our thoughts never to forget Him and aiming to be one *"who has*

not sworn deceitfully" – not taken His name in vain and been deceitful. The Radak (Rabbi David Kimchi d.1235) suggests that these three qualities encompass a person's actions, thoughts and speech respectively.

3. The last four verses emphasise G-d as King and welcome Him into the holy gates of the Temple. This last part could actually be interpreted as a reference to the movements of the Biblical Ark that was at the front of the Israelites as they went into battle against their enemies and then returned to the Tabernacle (Mishkan) gates. This idea justifies describing G-d as mighty in battle' – the purpose of having the *Aron Hakodesh* lead them into battle was to emphasise that G-d is the Protector of Israel.

Others suggest that this psalm was recited when the original Ark of the Covenant came to its final resting place after the dedication of the first Temple in the time of King Shlomo (Solomon), as recorded in Melachim I (the first book of Kings).

It makes sense that we recite this psalm as the Torah is returned to the Ark. A shul is a microcosm of the Temple. The Torah is the means by which we acknowledge G-d as Creator and ongoing ruler.

