

HALOCHOSCOPE

This week's question:

Someone has a very regular learning session on *Shabbos*, for a specific course of study. He also has regular sessions during the week. At other times, he is extremely busy, and has no fixed spare time. In keeping with the institution to teach the laws of *Pesach* on *Shabbos Hagadol*, he would like to either attend a *Shabbos Hagadol drasha*, or spend some of his regular study time on *hilchos Pesach*. This will set him back, interrupt his momentum and interfere with the schedules of his partners. Should he follow his routine, or break for *Shabbos hagadol* and *Pesach*? Is there any other way he may fulfill both requirements? What if the *Shabbos hagadol drasha* does not cover areas that he needs to review?

The issues:

- A) The nature of the requirement to review *hilchos Pesach*
- B) *Shabbos Hagadol*
- C) *Kvius itim*, following a fixed study routine

A) Reviewing *hilchos Pesach* before *Pesach*

The Talmud records an obligation to review the *halachos* of *Pesach* for thirty days before *YomTov*. Moshe Rabeinu was instructed to prepare the Jewish people for the upcoming *mitzvah* of *korban Pesach*. For those unable to fulfill this *mitzvah* on time, he was instructed to teach them about *Pesach Sheini*, the consolation for it, one month later. From here we learn that Moshe taught these *halachos* in advance. The Talmud debates the length of time, two weeks or thirty days. Thus, it appears to be of Scriptural origin. There is an institution by Moshe Rabeinu to study the laws of the holiday on the holiday. At least one of the poskim links the two rulings. In this view, Moshe's institution includes the time period before the holiday and the holiday itself. There is a minority view that one who studied ahead of the holiday is exempt from the studying during the holiday.

The exact case mentioned by the *pasuk* refers to the *halachos* of the *korban*. Some poskim maintain that this is indeed the intent of the *mitzvah* to prepare. However, others maintain that the language used by the Talmud clearly indicates that all *halachos* are included. The poskim debate whether this *mitzvah* applies specifically to *Pesach*, or to all other *Yamim Tovim* as well. In part, this debate is linked to the first debate. If the intent is to inform about the *korban*, this would not apply to other holidays.

Every *korban* requires a four day checking period. This *korban* was offered by every single Jewish household. In addition, it had some more detailed requirements than the usual. Therefore, thirty days would be needed, to instruct the Jews how to acquire, offer, and prepare it correctly. Furthermore, *Pesach* has many other *halachos*. These require intensive study, and in fact, some of them apply before *Pesach* begins. In one passage, the Talmud discusses extending the year by a month, in the times when this was not predetermined by a calendar. It could be done after *Purim*. However, since people begin study-

ing for *Pesach* on Purim (thirty days before), they would be ready for *Pesach* in its usual time. Some would be in violation of not observing it a month later. This seems to apply the study to the prohibitions of *chametz*. However, it is possible that they would study the laws of *korban Pesach*, and use it as a cue for the observances of the rest of the holiday.

There is further debate on whether this is a timely sub-category of the general *mitzvah* of Torah study? Or is it a preparatory part of the *mitzvos* of the holiday? Actually, regular Torah study is also divided in two parts. Part of the *mitzvah* is to study for its own sake, as an end in itself. Of course, any type of study should lead to action. However, the initial goal of the study would be as a *mitzvah* in its own right. Another part is to know what to do when fulfilling a *mitzvah*. This second part can be viewed as another dimension of Torah study, as a preparatory part of the fulfillment of the *mitzvos*, or as both. One difference that this would make applies to women. They are exempt from general study in its own right. They are obligated to know the *mitzvos* and to fulfill them.

This pertains to our question. If it is not connected to the regular Torah study, it is not viewed as a conflict with one's regular schedule. Rather, it is the same as any *mitzvah*, especially a timely obligation. These take precedence over the general *mitzvah* of Torah study. If it is a sub-category of Torah study in general, it is viewed as a choice.

The poskim debate who this *mitzvah* applies to – the *Rav*, the students, or both. A *Rav* is obliged to do the same as everyone, but if this is his *mitzvah*, it means that he must fulfill it as part of his duty to teach. The students or his flock may insist on his setting aside other matters to deal with this. If it is the obligation of all Jews to take care of themselves, The *Rav* may compel them to study this area, as opposed to what they usually ask him to teach them. The terminology used by the Talmud indicates that this *mitzvah* applies to both. People should 'ask about' implies that this is an obligation on every Jew, and Rabbis should 'preach', on the laws of *Pesach*.

A minority maintain that there is indeed no special *mitzvah* to study these laws at all. Rather, the usual rule is that when a *Rav* is asked questions, he should answer them in the order they were presented. No-one may jump the line. There are exceptions to this, based on the gravity of the situation. In the thirty days preceding *Pesach*, any questioner who wishes to discuss the laws of *Pesach* takes precedence. Thus, there is indeed a view that this entire passage does not imply any new obligations, but that a *Rav's* responsibility changes slightly. At least one major *posek* specifies a double obligation: Thirty days before *Pesach*, one must study the *halachos* of *Pesach* himself, and he must teach them to the members of his household. There seems to be a *mitzvah* on a householder.

The *Yerushalmi* says these *halachos* taught in study halls. Some link this to Moshe's institution. It was for thirty days in the study hall and on the holiday in the home. Others maintain that the *Yerushalmi* disagrees with the standard Talmud's version. We follow the standard version, and apply the obligation to individuals for the entire thirty days.

A further subject of debate is whether this applies mainly to studying the practical laws of the holiday, or also to the esoteric meanings of the festivals. Some translate the term for to preach as a way of including *derush*, esoteric meaning. Both are necessary. Especially in the case of *Pesach*, and, to a lesser degree, *Sukos*, one cannot fulfill the *mitzvos* of the holiday without a proper understanding of their esoteric meanings. Part of the *mitzvah* of *Pesach* is to understand the significance relevance of the Exodus to each

individual. Relating the story involves more than practical *halacha*. The *mitzvah* of *Sukah* involves knowing why we perform it. In relation to our question, the issue then becomes twofold. Should one set aside his usual regimen of *halacha*, esoterica, or both, for this special study? We may infer from the various references that one must devote some time to the study of *halacha*, and to the knowledge of the esoterica that pertains to the *halacha*, such as the *hagadah*. As for the *agaddaic* parts to each holiday, it would seem to be more of an obligation during the holiday, but praiseworthy beforehand as well.

In summary, the majority consider this a personal obligation. They also maintain that public study should focus on the upcoming holiday as well. [See Psachim 6a-b & Yerushalmi Rosh Hashanah 7a Megillah 4a 32a Baba Kama 113a Sanhedrin 12b Bechoros 58a, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar OC 429:1, commentaries.]

B) Shabbos Hagadol

The *Shabbos* immediately preceding *Pesach* is called *Shabbos Hagadol*. The year the Jews left Egypt, *Shabbos* 10th of *Nissan* the Jews were instructed to designate a lamb for the *korban*. The Egyptians, who worshiped the lamb as a god, looked on and gnashed their teeth. The fact that they were unable to stop the Jews was a great miracle. It was the beginning of their miraculous liberation by Hashem. The *haftarah* read on this *Shabbos* makes mention of the *Yom Hagadol*, the great day of the arrival of *Mashiach*. Actually, that passage refers to the advent of *Eliyahu Hanavi*, right before *Mashiach*. In reality, we should be celebrating the 10th of *Nissan*, even on a weekday. Various answers are suggested as to why we always celebrate it on a *Shabbos*, regardless of the date.

Among the customs associated with this *Shabbos* are that to recite the first half of the *Hagadah*. The *minhag* that we are discussing here is to gather as a community to hear from the *Rav*. This practice goes back to Talmudic times, when there was a *Shabbos Kallah*. On the *Shabbos* preceding any *Yomtov*, it was customary to go to hear the *Rav* speak about the upcoming *Yomtov*. These gatherings were the largest gatherings of Torah study of the year. Everybody, scholar and layman, man woman and child, came to hear the words of the *Rav*. The ideal subject matter is the *halachos* of the holiday.

Nowadays that the Oral Torah has been recorded, and most Jews are literate, this kind of study is usually observed through other means, such as personal study. Nonetheless, we still devote some time on This *Shabbos* to such study, as an institution. Many *Rabbanim* include the *halachos* as a part of their speech. Those who recite the *piyutim* liturgical poems inserted in the services, for this *Shabbos*, are really reviewing the *halachos* in poetic form. The main thrust of the speech, nowadays, is either a *pilpul*, analytical study of a section of *halacha*, or *derush* and *hashkafah*, esoterica and guidance on the meaning of the holiday. Since the original purpose of *Shabbos Kallah* is no longer accomplished through this gathering, many communities no longer have such a massive turnout. There is no record of abolishing the institution. However, the *Rav* will not be fulfilling his original role, and so the congregation will inevitably not fulfill its role. The institution will anyhow not be observed. Therefore, some people feel that their personal regimen of study should not be interrupted. [See Tur Sh Ar OC 430, commentaries.]

C) Kvius ittim

The *mitzvah* to study Torah applies every day and every night. Ideally, we should be studying all the time. At the very minimum, we study one passage each day and each

night. As a last resort, one may rely on his *krias shema*, which is a Biblical passage. The true obligation is for adults to study one passage of the Written Torah, the Oral Torah and Talmudic discussions. Common practice is to study our Talmud *Bavli*, that incorporates the three parts of study. Ideal studying is with a group, or at least a study partner.

Since the curse of Adam, our everyday needs do not allow us to devote the entire day and night to study. As an ideal, one should still devote all his time, apart from the time spent on daily needs, to study. Besides this, he should have a specific time set aside, each day and each night, that is devoted fully to study. He should also have a specific course of study, so that he can be assured that he will be doing his best to cover the entire Torah. At the same time, one must often study the *halachos* that arise in his daily living. Many maintain that this is a different type of study. As mentioned, Torah study can be for its own sake and as a manual for *halachic* living. Generally, one who has a fixed routine should not interrupt it. Our question is whether studying for the holiday should supersede the routine. Should it be relegated to the times that do not interfere with routine?

We have mentioned that some consider this holiday study part of the regular *mitzvah* of Torah study. It also appears from much of the terminology used, that many poskim assume that one will change course during this period, to devote his time to this study. It would certainly appear that one should engage in it with his partner or in a group, as well as personally and with his family. There seems to be room to insist on keeping to one's regimen as much as possible, while devoting special time to the holiday study. However, if the holiday study will suffer as a result, it seems that one must put it first. This can be compared to interrupting one's study to perform a *mitzvah*. Certain *mitzvos* are such that one need not choose between them and his study. They can both be satisfied. Other *mitzvos* pose a conflict. Of these, some are set aside in favor of the study. Others, including those that must be performed in a timely fashion and those that cannot be performed by others, take precedence over one's study regimen. Our case involves both of these conditions. The special holiday study cannot be fulfilled by another, and must be done in this time period. Furthermore, we have shown that this applies to both the practical and esoteric parts of this field of knowledge. [See Shabbos 31a Megillah 3a-b Kidushin 29b-30b 39b 49a-b, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar OC 687:2 YD 246:1 4 14, commentaries.]

In conclusion, one may continue his regimen of study, as long as he fulfills his obligation to study about Pesach as well, and it does not suffer at the expense of the regimen.

On the Parsha ... *A man who offers a korban .. you (plural) shall offer your korban. [1:2]* The plural teaches us that two may bring a *korban olas behaimah* in partnership. However, a *mincha* offering, brought by a poor man, may not be brought in partnership. Perhaps this alludes to a parallel in Torah study. Ideally, one should not study alone, but in partnership. Both need to coordinate their time. If they are too busy, they will never get together. If one has no time to study, he should at least dedicate some time to study alone. It still finds favor before Hahsem.

🕯 **Sponsored by Hersh and Gilah Dlinn in memory of Her father Mordechai ben Gedalia *Hakohain*, z"l, whose *yahrzeit* is on the 3rd of Nissan.**

© Rabbi Shimon Silver, March 2010.

Subscriptions and Sponsorships available. (412) 421-0508. halochoscope@hotmail.com