COMMENTS BY RABBI DR. CHAIM SIMONS ON TEN MINUTE HALACHAH SHIURIM GIVEN BY RABBI ARYEH LEBOWITZ OF YESHIVAH UNIVERSITY, NEW YORK

Yeshiva University in New York has put over 50,000 of its shiurim on the internet, and they should be praised for making all these shiurim freely available to the public. Amongst these shiurim are several hundred "ten minute halachah" shiurim delivered by Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz. In this limited time, the Rabbi goes through the different subject magnificenty. I myself have learned much new material from these shiurim and it has also enabled me to revise subjects which I have learned in the past. For each shiur, there is a space for the users to add their own comments. I myself have used this opportunity to add interesting or unusual comments. In a few of the cases I have described my personal reminiscences or have made a humerous point or given a riddle for the users to solve. Since these comments of mine can also be used independently of the actual shiur, I am giving them all here. The heavy print in capital letters is the name of Rabbi Lebowitz' shiur and the small letters in heavy print is my title to the comments which follow. I have kept the comments in the order that I made them. I have also added the date and time that they were made. The time corresponds to the time in New York – I did not arise in the middle of the night to write the comments!

CHANUKAH GELT

Further reason for Chanukah gelt

There is another source for Chanukah gelt, which is brought by Rabbi Yosef Kapach in his book Halichot Taiman, (Jerusalem: Machon Ben-Zvi, 5762), p.64. He writes that in Yemen every day during Chanukah, Jewish mothers would give their children a small coin. The child would then hurry to the market and with half of this money would purchase some small and tender carrots and with the remainder some fine sugar which the shopkeeper would put in small paper containers and add some red colouring matter. The child would then happily return home, put this red coloured sugar in a bottle, fill it with water and it would then resemble the wine which the grownups drank.

20 July 2011 4.12 a.m.

KASHRUS OF MEDICINE AND VITAMINS

Gelatine and glycerine in medicaments

This question was also discussed in a lecture entitled "Kashrus, Food and Chemicals" delivered by Dayan Gavriel Kraus of the Manchester Beth Din (England) in April 1972 and this lecture was reproduced in a booklet. Dayan Kraus states on page 7, "... gelatine and glycerine are used extensively

in medicines.... However, one can be "mekil" – lenient, with regard to many medicaments, especially if they are tasteless or better still if they have an unpleasant taste."

21 July 2011 6.15 a.m.

LECHEM MISHNAH FOR SEUDA SHELISHIS

Ray Chidka's 4 meals on Shabbos

Rav Avraham Yitzchak Sperling in his book "Ta'amei Haminhagim Umekorei Hadinim" writes on page 140, that it is commonly said that by eating of the various foods served at a kiddush on Shabbos morning one fulfils the opinion of Rav Chidka that one must eat 4 meals on Shabbos. Since this book gives no source for this statement, can any reader supply it? However, since the halachah is not in accordance with Rav Chidka, is it not problematic to intend that the eating of this food at the kiddush is to fulfill this opinion?

24 July 2011 3.22 a.m.

SHABBOS ZEMIROS

Tzur Mishelo

Rav Chaim Volozhin in his work "Orchot Chaim" which speaks about the practices of the Vilna Gaon, writes that the Vilna Gaon did not sing "Tzur Mishelo" (end of paragraph 94). I have heard that the reason was that the content of "Tzur Mishelo" includes a summary of the three Torah berachos of birchas hamazon and by singing it one might fulfill the mitzvah of birchas hamazon. Furthermore, I have heard that to avoid this problem, when singing it one should say "Hashem" instead of the actual Divine Name.

24 July 2011 4.24 a.m.

CORRECTING THE BAL KOREI

Who should correct the Ba'al Koreh?

A question which can well be asked is whether there should there be a specific person present to correct the mistakes of the Ba'al Koreh or may anyone in the congregation call out the correction? Rabbi Chaim David Halevi writes on this subject in his Mekor Chaim (part 3 125:9) that it is bad when the whole congregation call out such corrections, but instead a knowledgeable person should stand by the side of the reader and only he should correct any mistakes made by the reader. Incidentally, this was the procedure followed by the Chinese Jews of Kaifeng.

24 July 2011 6.29 a.m.

PESACH SHEINI

Date of Pesach Sheini

Although calendars invariably give the date of Pesach Sheini as 14 Iyar, it would seem to be more correct to give its date as the afternoon of 14 Iyar and the night of 15 Iyar. One can possibly bring a proof from the services on which one does not say tachanun. The practice is that on a day that one does not say tachanun, one also omits it on the previous minchah. This is not the case with Pesach Sheini. Although tachanun is omitted on the 14 Iyar, it is recited at minchah of 13 Iyar (see "Luach l'Eretz Yisrael" by Rav Tuchachinsky). In the case of Pesach Sheni, the service prior to the afternoon of 14 Iyar is shacharis, and in accordance with the practice to also omit tachanun on the service prior to a specific occasion, it is omitted at shacharis of 14 Iyar.

26 July 2011 4.10 a.m.

SIYUM

Ta'anis Bechorim and Women

According to the Shulchan Aruch, first-born women must also fast on Erev Pesach and this is possibly the custom amongst some sefaradi women. Also if the father is a first-born and so is his infant son, then the mother should fast for her son. There are discussions regarding whether such women participate in such a siyum. In Pressburg (Bratislava) the women would participate. (Piskei Teshuvos vol.5 chap.570 fn.21) Rav Ovadiah Yosef says it is good for such women to hear the siyum from the ezras nashim, but it is also sufficient to bring some cake home from the siyum for them. (Yalkut Yosef - Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 570:2)

26 July 2011 6.30 a.m.

SIMANA MILSA

Apple only on 2nd night of Rosh Hashanah

I recollect that my grandmother had the custom to eat apple dipped in honey on the 2nd night of Rosh Hashanah and not on the 1st night, and I assume she had this custom from Poland where she was born. A possible reason for this is that unlike today when apples are on the market throughout the year, in those days in Poland, they were seasonal, and it was at Rosh Hashanah time that they became available. To avoid the shehecheyanu problem on the 2nd night of Rosh Hashanah, one takes a new fruit. Quite possibly the apple was the new fruit and for this reason eating an apple dipped in honey was delayed until the 2nd night.

27 July 2011 4.39 a.m.

MISHLOACH MANOS

Lomdisher Mishloach Manos

One cannot give seforim for mishloach manos, but one can give "lomdisher mishloach manos" where the recipient needs to do halachic research. It should be stressed that this should only be done with, for example, fellow kollelniks who will not take offence and will take it in the spirit of Purim. One sends "unusual" mishloach manot and the recipients must answer in writing giving sources, explaining whether they think the sender has fulfilled the mitzvah. Examples are: an uncooked potato and some tea bags; a packet of salt and a bottle of tap water; orange peel and apple peel – they are both edible!; two different sorts of vitamin pills. A further suggestion is that one could send just one very nice item of food and the recipient has to answer whether or not the sender has performed part of the mitzvah of mishloach manos. Another possibility is to make the recipient sign that he has received the mishloach manos and the recipient must also explain why his signature has been asked for. A final word – send at least one mishloach manos which one fulfills the mitzvah without any doubt!

28 July 2011 3.06 a.m.

MAYIM ACHARONIM

Finger Bowls

At dinners, especially in past generations, a "finger bowl" containing water with a flower petal floating in it would be passed around towards the end of the meal and the diners would dip their fingers in it. The question is: Does one fulfill the mitzvah of mayim acharonim by this method? The Kaf Hachaim discusses this question (Kaf Hachaim 181:9) and states that if there was a lot of water in the "finger-bowl" it would then be permitted, although this is not the preferred method for mayim acharonim.

28 July 2011 3.59 a.m.

KISSING THE MEZUZAH

The Sharp Pointed Shin

Over forty years ago, I went to visit a friend and when I reached his front door, I kissed the mezuzah, The mezuzah case had a metal letter "shin" on it and the points at the top of this letter were sharp. As a result when I kissed the mezuzah I cut my hand! I mentioned this to the master of the house (who incidentally today is the Rabbi of an Israeli town and a Rosh Yeshivah). He answered me that the protection afforded by a mezuzah is only when you are already inside the house but you were still outside when this happened! [see Bavli Avodah Zarah 11a and Yerushalmi Peah chapter 1 halachah1]

KITNIYOS (AND QINOA)

Are Potatoes Kitniyos?

Although the vast majority of Jews in the world do not regard potatoes as kitniyos and eat them on Pesach, there are opinions which rule otherwise. The community of Padua forbade the eating of potatoes during Pesach since they regarded them as kitniyos. The author of the Chayei Odom in his additions/commentary Nishmas Odom [hilchos Pesach responsa 20] states that in the years 5531-2 (1771-2) there was a famine in Germany and the Beth Din permitted the eating of potatoes, because in Germany they did not eat them on Pesach since flour was made from potatoes. The Pri Megadim, [Mishbetzos Zahav Orach Chaim 453:1] who lived in Berlin, also mentions the opinion that potatoes are kitniyos, but in a more indirect manner.

29 July 2011 3.37 a.m.

BERACHOS ON DESSERT

Is Ice Cream a Solid or a Liquid?

When one puts ice cream into one's mouth it is a solid but it turns into a liquid in one's mouth before one swallows it. This could have ramifications on whether one says a berachah on it when it is eaten as a dessert during a meal which has begun with hamotzi. It is the general practice not to say a berachah on liquids drunk even towards the end of a meal. Therefore what is the halachah regarding ice cream eaten as a dessert? Today's poskim are divided on whether one says a berachah on it. [see Rav Alexander Mandlebaum, Vezos Haberachah p.74 fn.12]

29 July 2011 4.18 a.m.

USING AUTOMATIC BATHROOMS ON SHABBOS

Public Toilets versus Private Toilets

Rabbi Lev-Bochbot, a Rosh Kollel in Bnei Brak, researched this question and came to a conclusion which could possibly distinguish between a hotel's public toilet and the toilet in one's own hotel room. In the former case one can utilise the principles "p'sik reisha d'lo niche lei" and "kel'achar yad". However, in one's own hotel room, one obviously does not want a toilet to be unflushed and thus this makes the automatic flushing more questionable.

31 July 2011 9.28 a.m.

LAUNDRY DURING THE NINE DAYS

T-shirts and Jeans

The heter to change one's clothes several times throughout a Shabbos which occurs during the 9 days, will only be valid for those clothes suitable for Shabbos wear – such as white shirts. However, if on weekdays one wears T-shirts, coloured shirts and jeans, one would not be permitted to put them on for short periods of time during Shabbos. [see Rav Shimon Eider, A Summary of Halachos of the Three Weeks]

1 August 2011 4.09 a.m.

GREETINGS BEFORE DAVENING

"Shabbat Shalom"

It is the accepted practice that when one meets someone that one knows one greets them. In Israel, on a weekday one says "boker tov", on Shabbos "Shabbat shalom" and on Yom Tov "Chag sameach". The Shabbos greeting includes the word "shalom". If therefore one meets someone on Shabbos morning before davening, is it preferable to give a greeting which does not include the word "shalom" such as "Gut Shabbes" or can one say that "Shabbat shalom" just parallels the words "boker tov" which one says on a weekday, and that it is not one's intention to give shalom?

2 August 2011 3.32 a.m.

MINHAGIM

Sukkah or House on Shemini Atzeres?

According to the Gemara and Shulchan Aruch, a person in the Diaspora is required to live in his sukkah also on Shemini Atzeres. In practice, many people do not act this way. Both "Shaarim Metzuyanim Behalachah" (138:3) and "Piskei Teshuvos" (668:1) write on the question and bring many sources which justify this.

5 August 2010 5.13 a.m.

AL NAHAROS BAVEL AND SHIR HAMA'ALOS

Seudah Hamafsekes before Tisha b'Av

On the afternoon of erev Tisha b'Av one does not say tachanun. Therefore what does a person (who is always particular to say shir hama'alos when tachanun is not said and al naharos bovel when it is) recite after sitting on the floor, eating his seudah hamafsekes before Tisha b'Av?

HAVE WE FOUND THE CHILAZON?

University Degree D.Litt

The degree which was awarded to Rabbi Herzog by London University for his work on techeles was a D.Litt. degree and not a Ph.D. The D.Litt. degree is a higher doctorate, namely it is degree which is higher than a Ph.D. He was awarded this degree in 1913 for his thesis entitled "Hebrew Porphyrology", which means the study of purple dye. About 50 years ago I read this extremely interesting thesis at the University of London Senate House Library. Unlike theses today which have to be bound to rigid specifications, this thesis consisted of piles of pages which were just clipped together!

8 August 2011 2.56 a.m.

SHNAYIM MIKRA

The Verse "Shema Yisrael"

According to the halachah, one is not permitted to say the verse in the Torah "Shema Yisrael" twice in rapid succession. What then does one do when reading "shnayim mikra" on Parashas Voeschanan where this verse occurs? The Kaf Hachaim discusses this question (chapter 61 paragraph 35) and brings an opinion that on the second occasion one should say this verse silently.

15 August 2011 5.18 a.m.

MELAVE MALKA

Migdol vs Magdil

It is the general custom to say "migdol" on days when one says mussaf and "magdil" on all other days. However, there are some Sefaradi poskim, including the Ben Ish Chai (first year Chukas paragraph 19) and the Kaf Hachaim (chapter 189 paragraph 11 and chapter 300 paragraph 14) who extend the saying of "migdol" to the melave malka.

15 August 2011 6.04 a.m.

KIDDUSH LEVANAH

3 Days after the Molad

According to many opinions, the earliest time for kiddush levanah is 3 days after the molad. It is an error to think that a person can take the time which is given for the molad, add 72 hours to it, and

consider this to be the earliest time for him to recite kiddush levanah. One needs to know in which part of the world the time given for the molad refers to. In fact there are numerous opinions on the location. These include: "sof hamizrach" – 130 degrees east of Jerusalem; "ketzai hamizrach" – 90 or 114 degrees east of Jerusalem; "tabor haaretz" – 24 degrees east of Jerusalem; near to Netzivin in Babylon; Eretz Yisrael – probably Jerusalem, but Yavneh and Jericho have also been suggested. It would seem that there is no authoritative ruling on which opinion is correct. In practice however, since the vast majority of the Jews in the world live to the west (or virtually to the west) of all these locations, there would be no problem for them to recite kiddush levanah 72 hours after the time given for the molad. The problem will only arise regarding the latest time for this mitzvah.

16 August 2011 3.49 a.m.

WEARING A HAT FOR DAVENING

Hat plus Yarmulka

Ideally, a hat is not in place of a yarmulke but in addition to it (Mishnah Berurah 91:12; Piskei Teshuvos 2:10). There are thus two layers of covers on one's head during davening. At shacharis, the tallis covering one's head will be the second layer. This reminds me of the time when I attended a Chabad bris. Since those who were to receive kibudim were only wearing a yarmulke, one of the Ba'alei Bris went around putting an additional yarmulke on the heads of these people.

16 August 2011 7.43 a.m.

WEARING A JACKET FOR DAVENING

Jacket or Tallis

In a shul I davened in, which is situated in Har Nof Jerusalem, there are on the wall regulations for a shaliach tzibur. One of them is that he has to wear a jacket and hat. However it continues that if he does not have these garments, then he has to put on a tallis.

16 August 2011 7.45 a.m.

GEBRUKTS

Only after a Leap Year

I have heard (but have not seen it in writing) that a person using his Pesach kelim for gebrukts on the 8th day of Pesach, would only use them on the next Pesach if that following year was a leap year, and in this way more than 12 months would have passed. If however the following year was not a leap year, then less than 12 months would have passed, and they would wait until yet the following Pesach to use the kelim.

WHO CAN COUNT TOWARD A MINYAN?

Karaites

Although is it customary today to allow a non-observant Jew to be counted in a minyan, on the grounds that he comes under the category of "tinok shenishbah", does this permission also include Karaites? Karaites are definitely Jews but they do not accept the Oral Law. The Rambam wrote a teshuvah on this question (edition "Mekitzei Nirdamim" responsum14) where he clearly rules in the negative, the reason being that Karaites do not accept the idea of a minyan.

17 August 2011 9.08 a.m.

NETILAS YADAYIM IN THE BATHROOM

With a Keli or Without a Keli?

In many washrooms in or adjacent to a toilet, one will find a keli for netilas yadayim. According to the halachah, is one required to use such a keli? The answer is no. It was a personal custom of the Chazon Ish to use a keli. However, Rabbi Abba Shaul would intentionally not use a keli, even if one was to be found in the washroom.

18 August 2011 3.34 a.m.

SHOVELING SNOW ON SHABBOS

Salt – yes, Sand – possibly no!

Although the spreading of salt onto snow on Shabbos is permitted, the spreading of sand is more problematic. Some authorities forbid it saying that one is adding a new permanent layer to the ground and it would thus be forbidden under the prohibition of boneh. Others however hold that it is permitted since this layer cannot be considered as permanent. [see Rabbi Dovid Ribiat, "The 39 Melochos", volume 2, pages 368-69]

18 August 2011 5.41 a.m.

PEYOS

Twirling of Peyos on Shabbos

A question connected with peyos is whether one is permitted to twirl one's peyos on Shabbos or Yom Tov with the intention of forming them into curls. Rav Dovid Ribiat mentions this question and recommends that it is preferable not to do so. ("The 39 Melachos" volume 4 page 1061)

WALKING IN FRONT OF SOMEBODY DAVENING

Reaction of a Gadol

I read of an incident where a boy davened the amidah very slowly directly behind one of our Gedolim. As a result, this Gadol had to wait until the boy finished his amidah before he could step backwards. The boy's father, who was present in the Shul, went afterwards and apologised to the Gadol. The latter however replied that it was wonderful to see a boy davening like that.

22 August 2011 10.34 a.m.

SEUDAS PURIM

What if one omits "Al Hanisim"?

Since one is obligated to eat one meal during the daytime of Purim, what happens if one omits "Al hanisim" when bensching after the first meal eaten during the day of Purim. On this there are discussions by the poskim with the suggestion that one would have to bensch again. (see: Taz Orach Chaim 693:2)

23 August 2011 3.43 a.m.

WASHING FOR DAVENING

Washing between Services

What would those who are particular to wash between minchah and ma'ariv do in the following cases? If on Rosh Hashanah one davens minchah immediately after mussaf; between minchah and ne'ilah (fingers only!); between ne'ilah and ma'ariv.

23 August 2011 4.20 a.m.

CONSIDEARTIONS IN ADOPTION

Not a Levi

Nearly 40 years ago, I had a problem with regards to one of my teenage pupils who had been adopted, but his adopted parents did not want him to know this fact. His adopted father was a Levi, but from the information I had obtained from the Beth Din who had a file on his adoption, I learned that this boy was a Yisrael. The problem was in connection with an Aliyah to the Torah at the school's weekday morning services. All the pupils in his class regularly had Aliyos, and thus a way had to be found to give him an Aliyah. Sometimes I gave him hagba or gelila and when there was no Kohen present, I

gave him the first Aliyah. On one occasion there were two Kohanim present but no Levi. I got around the problem by asking the two Kohanim to "forgo" their right to the first Aliyah, (of course without telling them the reason), which they agreed to, and I then called up this adopted boy to the first Aliyah.

23 August 2011 6.17 a.m.

DRINKING ON PURIM

Leil Shikurim

In "Machzor Vitri", a work written by Rabbeinu Simchah a student of Rashi, appears "ma'arovis" (piyutim for the ma'ariv service for Purim) which begin with the words "leil shikurim" and repeatedly mention wine. (Ish Horovitz edition, volume 2, pages 583-84) They are interposed in the birchos kriyas shema of the ma'ariv service of Purim, and this could give support to the fact that the drinking of wine and becoming shikur is an integral part of Purim.

24 August 2011 3.51 a.m.

MEDICINE ON SHABBOS II

Cannot Decide

What happens when a person cannot decide whether or not he has reached the state of choleh kol gufo? In such a case we allow him to take medication on Shabbos, the reason being that today we are not proficient in the grinding up of herbs, which was the reason for the Rabbinic ordinance of not taking medication on Shabbos. (see: Rabbi Dovid Ribiat, "The 39 Melochos" volume 2, pages 492-93, and footnote 175a)

24 August 2011 4.30 a.m.

EATING MATZAH ON EREV PESACH

Hamotzi on Afternoon of Erev Pesach

A riddle type question that one can ask is how can one make the berachah hamotzi on the afternoon of erev Pesach (before the tenth hour)? At this period one may not eat bread or matzah or even cakes containing matzah meal. (The answer is based on the writings of Rav Ovadiah Yosef regarding erev Pesach which occurs on Shabbos and one wants to make hamotzi at the seudah shlishis.) One takes a whole matzah and puts it in a hot meat or chicken soup (in a keli rishon), so that it absorbs the taste of the soup. One then takes out the matzos from the soup in one piece. They will then be cooked matzos

(which may be eaten on erev Pesach), the pieces of which are larger than a kezayis, and so the berachah will be hamotzi.

24 August 2011 6.38 a.m.

EINO YEHUDI AT THE SEDER

Date not convenient

When I was at university, a fellow non-Jewish student told me that he was interested to attend a Seder. I said that I would see if it could be arranged. However, when I told him the date of the Seder, he told me that it was not convenient for him and asked if it could therefore be held on a different date!!

25 August 2011 3.45 a.m.

TZITZIS: IN OR OUT?

Tzitzis Inside on Tisha b'Av

Some people who throughout the year have their tzitzis outside their clothes, will on Tisha b'Av until noon, have them inside. (see: Piskei Teshuvos, volume 6, 555:2)

25 August 2011 4.06 a.m.

HAVDALAH FOR WOMEN

Havdalah in Shul

In some shuls, havdalah is made at the end of the ma'ariv service on motzaei Shabbos. Although this can be advantageous for a single person, it can be problematic for a married man who has his wife and daughters at home. Should he fulfil the mitzvah of havdalah in shul, he will not be able to make it when he gets home. It would thus seem that he should have the intention not to fulfil this mitzvah when havdalah is being made in shul.

25 August 2011 7.01 a.m.

KAPAROS

Flora for Kaparos

Rashi writes about taking flora for kaparos on erev Rosh Hashanah. The use of flora for kaparos is also mentioned by both Rav Yaakov Emden in his siddur (Shaarei Shamayim, page 112b) and the Mate Efraim (604-05: 4), but unlike Rashi, they state that the flora is used on erev Yom Kippur.

HAFTARAH

"Ben Rosho"

On Shabbos and Yom Tov, four berachos are recited after the haftarah. From Maseches Sofrim (13:10) we can see that the first of these four berachos is "semi-divided" into two, with the second part beginning with the words "ne'eman ata hu". Machzor Vitri (section 166) goes as far as to state that "ne'eman ata hu" is the beginning of a separate berachah. It was once pointed out to me that if we take the acrostic of these berachos (including "ne'eman"), we have beis, nun, reish, shin, ayin which spells out "ben rosho". Can we learn from this that the father of the composer of these berachos was a rosho?

26 August 2011 5.36 a.m.

BIRCHAS HAMAPIL

Aninus

An onen (a person who is obligated to mourn for certain relatives is known as an "onen" between the time of death and the burial of that relative) is forbidden (or at least has an exemption) to recite berachos. However, (according to Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach z'tl), an exception to this rule is that an onen is obligated to say the berachah hamapil before going to sleep. (see: Rav Chaim Binyamin Goldberg, "Penei Baruch", page 21 and footnote 19)

28 August 2011 5.26 a.m.

KASHRUS OF CHEWING GUM

Chewing Gum on Furniture

Although many aspects concerning "chewing gum" which are solely "bein odom laMakom" are often discussed, there is an aspect which is also "bein adom l'chaveiro". How often have people gone into a shul (or other public building) and found chewing gum stuck to the furniture or floor? Sadly, often. A child must be taught that before going into a shul (or other public building), he must throw away any chewing gum he has in his mouth into the nearest dust bin.

28 August 2011 5.57 a.m.

SHEMURA MATZAH

Satmar Matzos

There is almost no limit to the number of chumros that one can do when baking matzos for Pesach. The late Satmar Rebbe, Rav Yoel Teitelbaum z'tl declared, "Every single chumrah that can possibly exist in industrial matzoh production, I have instituted in my bakery." These included: discarding wheat if the slightest scent of onion or garlic could be detected in it; the wheat could only be reaped between noon and five o'clock in the afternoon; the farmers were forbidden to drink water (despite the intense heat) whilst harvesting; there was absolutely no trace of salt or other chemicals in the water drawn from the Satmar's own well for the "mayim shelanu". (see: Mishpacha (English edition), 13 April 2011, pages 56-67)

28 August 2011 8.25 a.m.

WEARING A GARTEL FOR DAVENING

Forgetting one's Gartel!

What happens if one arrives in shul and finds that one has forgotten one's gartel? Does one return home for it and in this way lose out on tefillah betzibur, or does one daven without a gartel? This question is brought in "Piskei Teshuvos" (volume 1 page 692) and the ruling given there is to daven without a gartel.

29 August 2011 5.29 a.m.

WHEN A SEFER TORAH FALLS

Sending a Sefer Torah by Post

Suppose one needs to transfer a Sefer Torah from a shul which has closed down in the Diaspora to a shul in Eretz Yisroel. The ideal way is for a traveller to take it personally with him all the way. However a number of innocent travellers who have been asked to transport a package to another country and unknown to them hidden in the package are drugs, and as a result these innocent couriers have found themselves thrown into jail. For this reason people usually refuse to carry any packages. The question thus arises can one send such a Sefer Torah by post? It is well known that in transit, postal packages sometimes fall (or are put) onto the floor. Some poskim have dealt with this question and when there is no alternative, the post may be used. However, before sending the Sefer Torah, the gidim between two yerios should be removed, thus making the Sefer Torah posul, and it should then be placed in a container which in turn is in a further container, and one should also ensure that the package is waterproof.(see: Piskei Teshuvos, volume 2, page 134)

29 August 2011 5.49 a.m.

STANDING FOR THE READING OF ASERES HADIBROS

Upper or Lower Notes

For shuls who always lein the aseres hadibros with the "ta'am hoelyon", one could argue that one stands during the reading, since the sound of the leining is different from other parts of the Torah, especially at the end of each dibrah. This is admittedly not a strong argument, but maybe one can make a comparison with "oz yoshir" which is leined to a special tune and one stands. On Shavuos, there is an additional reason to stand when reading the aseres hadibros, namely, that this Festival marks the anniversary of receiving the Torah. However, according to "Luach l'Eretz Yisroel" of Rav Tukachinski, one only uses the "ta'am hoelyon" on Shavuos, but for the parshios Yisro and Voeschanan, he writes that one reads the aseres hadibros, as for other parts of the Torah, namely with the "ta'am hatachton". Since the above two reasons for standing do not apply on these two Shabbosos, it could therefore be argued that one should remain seated.

30 August 2011 4.36 a.m.

HALF KEDUSHA

Heicha Kedusha in Kollel

One day I attended a minchah minyan of a kollel (in Eretz Yisroel), and was quite shocked to see that they did a heicha kedusha. Since it was minchah gedolah, there was no chance of them overstepping shekiyah. Being a kollel minyan I sincerely hope that at least nine of those present would have answered amen to the berachos. The minyan was followed by the afternoon break and so one could not give the answer "bitul Torah". The answer that Chazal did not institute the repetition of the amidah for people like kollelniks, which even if acceptable, is based on the assumption that no people living in the area or those passing by at the time attend the minyan, which is often not the case.

30 August 2011 6.55 a.m.

WRITING BS"D AND B"H

B.H. = B'ezras Hashem or Birchas Hamazon

I recollect an amusing incident which occurred nearly 40 years ago. At that time, in England, one would head correspondence with the letters Beis Hei in Hebrew, whereas in the United States, they would often use the transliterated equivalent of B.H. One day I received a letter from the U.S. which was headed B.H. and dealt with some Birchas Hamazon booklets I had ordered. I showed the letter to somebody, mentioning that the B.H. stood for B'ezras Hashem. This person, who had never heard of writing B.H. instead of Beis Hei, argued that the B.H. was in fact the sender's reference, which often appeared towards the top of business letters, to the fact that the letter dealt with booklets for Birchas Hamazon!

CHALAV AKUM

Saudi Arabian Milk

I heard that during the Gulf War (1990-91) when Jewish soldiers were stationed in Saudi Arabia, the question was asked whether they could rely on Rav Moshe Feinstein's heter for cholov akum. The answer given was they could not, since unlike in the United States where all the milk is cow's milk, in Saudi Arabia there was also camel's milk.

31 August 2011 4.05 a.m.

NEWSPAPER ON SHABBOS

Keep it in your house!

The following point should be noted for Yom Tov regarding newspapers. Should a newspaper (and according to some opinions, even that day's newspaper) arrive at one's house on Yom Tov (in a permitted manner!) and it was in a location outside the techum at the start of Yom Tov, one would be forbidden to carry it outside the eruv. (see: Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 515:9; Piskei Teshivos, volume 5, pages 404-05)

31 August 2011 4.38 a.m.

KASHRUS OF GLASS

3 times 24

There is a method of kashering glass for Pesach, known as "milui veirui". In this method the glassware is soaked in water for 3 days, changing the water every 24 hours. (see: Mishnah Berurah. 451:154) Although I saw this method bring used when I was young, I can say that I have not seen it used during the last 50 years. It is very possible that due to the cheap price of glassware today, this method is rarely used today.

1 September 2011 4.17 a.m.

EARLY SHABBOS

Retract!

After a person had accepted Shabbos early, he realised that he had not put on tefillin that day. He asked one of today's Gedolim what do do and he told him to do hataras nedarim to cancel his early acceptance of Shabbos. (see Piskei Teshuvos, volume 3, chapter 261, paragraph 9, for a discussion on this question)

SHABBOS HAGADOL

Rhymed Laws of Pesach

Toward the end of the "yotzros" for Shabbos Hagadol is a piyut composed by R' Yosef Tov Elem (who lived 1,000 years ago) and which begins "Elokei haruchos l'chol bosor". This piyut gives the whole spectrum of the laws of Pesach in a rhymed form and it begins with an alphabetical acrostic. A slow reading of this piyut can serve as an excellent introduction to one's learning the detailed laws of Pesach.

1 September 2011 8.02 a.m.

NER HAVDALAH

A New Fire on Motzaei Shabbos?

The reason for saying a berachah over fire on motzaei Shabbos is as a remembrance that Hakadosh Baruch Hu instructed Adam harishon on the first motzaei Shabbos how to rub two stones together and create a fire. (Pesachim 54a) One could think from this that the fire to be used at havdalah on motzaei Shabbos must be a new fire made on motzaei Shabbos, and that one cannot use a ner sheshovas as is required on motzaei Yom Kippur. However, no one seems to suggest this, even as a hiddur.

2 September 2011 4.52 a.m.

SHINUY MAKOM AND BERACHOS

Corridors of an Apartment Building

Consider the case of a person living in an apartment building who whilst eating goes outside his front door into the corridor. Is this regarded as shinui makom? In Israel, every apartment dweller pays local taxes (arnona) on a certain proportion of the area of these corridors at the same rate as if it was an integral part of his apartment. Thus it might be considered that the apartment dweller has a part-ownership of this corridor, and thus going into the corridor will not be considered as shinui makom. Today's poskim are divided on this question. (see: Rav Alexander Mandelbaum, Vezos Haberachah, page 57)

4 September 2011 3.20 a.m.

ELEVATORS ON SHABBOS

Height of Apartment Buildings in Bnei Brak

"Since Bnei Brak rabbanim do not endorse the use of Shabbos elevators, seven stories is the maximum height for Bnei Brak housing projects." (from an article in Mishpacha (English edition) 31 August 2011, page 50)

4 September 2011 3.46 a.m.

ASSORTED SHEIMOS ISSUES

Genizah or Recycle?

In Israel, an "exponentially" increasing number of Torah pamphlets are to be found in the shuls on Shabbos. (It has become "big business" and in some of these pamphlets one has to search out the words of Torah from amongst the advertisements!!) After each Shabbos they would reach the genizah and it was becoming impossible to deal with such quantities of material. As a result, there are some poskim who have ruled that these pamphlets can be recycled and there are special containers provided in which to put them.

4 September 2011 6.51 a.m.

BEDIKAS CHAMETZ PART 1

Take a New Fruit

Although the custom is not to say bircas shehecheyanu over the mitzvah of bedikas chametz, there are in fact some authorities who rule that one does recite it. Thus some are accustomed to take a new fruit and when saying the berachah shehecheyanu over it, have in mind that it is also for bedikas chametz. (see: Piskei Teshuvos, volume 5, 432:2)

5 September 2011 3.18 a.m.

ELECTRIC SHAVERS

No Problem for a Shliach Tzibur!

A person who is a regular shaliach tzibur or is one on Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur or Fast Days does not have to worry whether or not an electric shaver is permitted – according to the halachah he has to have a beard! (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 53:6 and Mishnah Berurah 53:23-24)

5 September 2011 3.20 a.m.

NER SHABBOS

Electric Shabbos "candles"

Instead of the conventional candles or oil for ner Shabbos, may one instead use an electric light? Today's poskim are divided on the question and of those who allow an electric light, some prefer a light powdered by a battery. There are reported cases of poskei hador in the United States, who in exceptional cases used an electric light for neros Shabbos. One of them was Rav Moshe Feinstein who when he was once in a hotel and unable to light candles, lit a flashlight and made a berachah over it. Another possible case was with Rav Aharon Kotler, who being in a hotel room where it was forbidden to kindle a flame, and he therefore utilised the electric light; (one should add that it is not clear from the context whether this was an actual occurrence with him or he just held this opinion). (see: http://ohr.edu/ask_db/ask_main.php/93/Q2/

http://www.dailyhalacha.com/m/halacha.aspx?id=1655)

5 September 2011 5.44 a.m.

FISH AND MEAT

Beware at Buffets!

In a wedding in Israel, a buffet is often held before the chupah, and depending on the grandiose of the buffet, all sorts of foods appear on the various tables. Some of them are fried pâtés which could be filled with either vegetables or fish or meat. Without tasting them, one has no idea of the filling. When going around the tables, one can thus easily put onto one's plate both fish and meat pâtés and start eating both of them almost simultaneously. So when in doubt, ask the waiters what the filling is!

6 September 2011 3.20 a.m.

VISITORS KEEPING TWO DAYS OF YOM TOV IN ISRAEL

Money Collectors leave Disappointed!

There was an occasion when I went into a shul in Jerusalem to daven minchah on the Second Day of Yom Tov of the Diaspora. When after ashrei they began uvo letzion, I realised it was a minyan for tourists. During the service, some locals came into the shul, and as often happens in many shuls in Israel, went around the shul shaking their cupped hands hoping to receive money. Needless to say, they left the shul disappointed and empty handed!

6 September 2011 9.24 a.m.

HAVDALAH B'TEFILAH

First or Second Amidah?

A person who forgets to daven ma'ariv on motzaei Shabbos is required to recite the amidah twice at shacharis on Sunday morning. In the event of him not having made havdalah, he would have to say "ato chonantonu" in one of the amidahs. In which one does he say it? On the one hand, the first amidah he recites, namely the amidah for shacharis, is the first amidah for him after Shabbos. On the other hand the second amidah is the tashlumin for the previous ma'ariv, the service at which chazal ruled one must say ato chonantonu. The poskim are divided on this question. (see: Talmudic Encyclopedia, volume 8, columns 95-96)

7 September 2011 2.54 a.m.

BENTCHING AFTER AL YICHASREINU (ON SHABBOS)

Leave the Knives on Shabbos?

Is there any difference between Shabbos and weekdays with regards to removing or covering the knives before bentching? Some authorities hold that this only applies on weekdays (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 180:5) whilst others hold that it includes Shabbos and Yom Tov (Be'er Heteiv, Orach Chaim 180:4; Kaf Hachaim, Orach Chaim 180:15)

7 September 2011 4.21 a.m.

BERACHOS ON SMELLS

Smelling instead of Arbes

What does one do when the Shabbos for a shalom zachor is Yom Kippur? One obviously cannot serve the arbes and the other foods. An answer to this appeared in "Ohr Somayach, Ask the Rabbi", issue 267, and it stated that one makes a "besamim shalom zachor". Instead of the foods, the parents of the new born boy set out various items for smelling and the participants say the appropriate berachos over these items. Incidentally, this is a good opportunity to help arrive at one's 100 berachos on that Yom Kippur. (see: Mishnah Berurah 46:14)

7 September 2011 6.01 a.m.

BORROWING A SEFER, TALLIS OR TEFILLIN WITHOUT PERMISSION

30 or 100

It is permitted to borrow someone's shofar on Rosh Hashanah without asking the owner and say over it the berachos for blowing the shofar. It may well be asked whether under such circumstances, one is limited to the 30 obligatory notes, or may one also blow a further 70 notes which are customarily

blown in order to reach the number 100. The answer is 100 – but no more than that! (Mate Efraim 586:5)

7 September 2011 6.44 a.m.

TRYING ON CLOTHING BEFORE CHECKING FOR SHATNES

Sample Check for Shaatnez

In a large batch of identical garments, is a sample check for shaatnez sufficient to permit the remaining garments to be worn without checking? "The Shaatnez Newsletter" (volume 1, Issue 2) bought out in 5765/2005 answered this question in the negative and brought an actual case from Cleveland to prove it. It happens that sometimes oddments of material are used for functions such as padding in a jacket and in just some of the clothing within the same batch these oddments may be made of linen. A few years ago I asked the same question in Jerusalem on a jacket which stated it had been sample tested for shaatnez and was told that it needed to be sent for testing.

8 September 2011 9.13 a.m.

SAYING L'DOVID DURING ELUL

The Judge who recited Psalm 27

In a certain shul in an Anglo-Saxon country there was an argument between the chazan and the gabbai as to what date one finishes saying "L'Dovid Hashem Ori" (Psalm 27) and because of this the chazan was dismissed from his post. The chazan took the matter to court and when the non-Jewish judge heard that the dispute was about the recital of Psalm 27, the judge began to recite this Psalm by heart (in English) and commented that it is such a beautiful Psalm and thus it ought to be recited every day of the year!

8 September 2011 9.48 a.m.

RETZUOS OF TEFILLIN

No to two sides

A tefillin batim maker offered to paint black the backside of the retzuos of Rav Eliashiv's tefillin. The Rav, whilst agreeing it was a hiddur mitzvah to do so, declined the offer. He explained that if he had both sides of the retzuos of his tefillin painted black, many others would rush to do so, and there is no

hiddur mitzvah when this results in others having to spend money. (see: Mishpacha (English edition) 16 February 2011, page 24)

9 September 2011 6.26 a.m.

SHOALIN V'DORSHIN B'HILCHOS HACHAG

What about Rosh Hashanah?

The poskim write about learning the halachos of Pesach, Shavuos and Sukkos before these Festivals, with the Shulchan Aruch Harav ruling that 30 days applies to all these three Festivals. (Orach Chaim 429:1-3) But what about Rosh Hashanah? In fact for Rosh Hashanah one does more than theoretically learn the dinim. For (almost) the entire month of Elul, the baal tokea blows the shofar every morning with the tekiah, shevarim and terua. This should be an inducement for him to learn (or revise) the various dinim concerning the mitzvah of shofar, in particular the many dinim concerning the blowing of the different notes for the shofar, including such details such as the length of each note and at which stages to take a new breath.

11 September 2011 6.11 a.m.

******BEHAVIOR DURING CHAZARAS

HASHATZ

Standing during the Piyutim?

What should a person whose custom is to stand during the chazoras hashatz do during the time when the piyutim which are found within the amidah on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and in some places also on other occasions during the year, are being recited? Are these piyutim to be regarded as part of the amidah and thus require standing? The poskim write that even when one is able to rely on the chazoras hashatz as one's own amidah, one cannot do so when there are piyutim. (Mate Efraim 591:1) Thus these piyutim are not regarded as part of the amidah, and maybe one could sit down when they are being recited.

12 September 2011 5.08 a.m.

WEARING TEFILLIN FOR MINCHA (AND ALL DAY)

Tefillin on Shabbos?

Nearly 40 years ago, the Rabbi of a shul in England told me that the mother of a boy who had had his Barmitzvah on the previous Shabbos, had proudly told the Rabbi that her son had put on his tefillin before going to shul that Shabbos! I later spoke to this boy and said to him that surely he knows that one does not put on tefillin on Shabbos. He answered that he knows that, but considered that the Shabbos of his Barmitzvah was an important occasion and therefore he put on tefillin. There is an "upside" to this incident and that is that the boy saw the importance of the mitzvah of tefillin. This reminds me of the incident when Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev saw a man oiling the wheel of his

cart whilst wearing tefillin. Rav Levi Yitzchak said "Look how the man loves the mitzvah of tefillin, that even when he oils wheels he does not remove his tefillin." I hope that after all these years this Barmitzvah boy is still laying tefillin – every weekday.

13 September 2011 5.56 a.m.

GEZEL SHEINA: "STEALING" SLEEP

Wake up for my Chanukah Lighting!

A person arrives home at two o'clock in the night during Chanukah whilst everybody is asleep, but he has not yet lit Chanukah lights. Under such circumstances he would not be able to recite the berachos over the lighting. The Mishnah Berurah writes (672:11) that he should wake up people in order that he may say the berachos over the lighting. Thus we can see from this that one may wake up third parties in order that the person himself might perform this mitzvah.

14 September 2011 5.41 a.m.

BOWING AND BOUNCING DURING DAVENING

3 or 6

The universal custom before reciting "oseh shalom" at the end of the amidah is to go back 3 steps – left, right, left. However there are poskim who write there should be 6 steps backwards, namely three steps with each foot, and this is done as follows: left, then right to make it level with the left, and the same thing is then repeated twice more, thus making a total of 6 steps backwards. (see: Divrei Chamudos on Rosh, Berachos, perek "ain omdim" paragraphs 67 and 68; Machatzis Hashekel Orach Chaim 123:10)

15 September 2011 6.06 a.m.

TEFILAS HADERECH

How to carry around a Tefilas Haderech card

It is advisable to carry around in one's pocket the text of tefilas haderech. However in the course of travelling one is sure to need to use a toilet. One may well ask whether or not one is allowed to enter a toilet with this prayer in one's pocket, and furthermore in some cases it may even contain the name of Hashem written in full. The answer is that it is preferable to have a small durable container for this prayer and this container is put in one's pocket. This arrangement is known as a keli within another keli, and one can then enter a toilet with it in one's pocket without any problem. (Mishnah Berurah 43:25)

COMING LATE FOR DAVENING

Latecomers not admitted for Kol Nidrei

About half a century ago I heard about the following incident which occurred in a Shul in England, which obviously did not like its worshippers arriving late for davening. What occurred was that when the time the Shul had announced for Kol Nidrei had arrived, they locked the doors of the Shul and did not let in anyone who arrived late.... I wonder if that Shul then omitted the pronouncement "Al daas Hamakom onu matirim lehispalel im ha'avaryanim"!!

15 September 2011 9.08 a.m.

WAITING BETWEEN MEAT AND DAIRY

Space Between Meat and Dairy sinks

Some kitchens are built with just one sink and this will necessitate the use of separate washing up bowls for meat and dairy. Others have two sinks. However in some cases they are placed right next to each other and this can be a liability, since if one is not very careful there may be some splashing from sink to sink. The ideal is to have the two sinks in separate parts of the kitchen.

15 September 2011 9.33 a.m.

BAL TISHAKTSU

No torn toilet paper on Shabbos

What if one is in a place on Shabbos where one needs to use the toilet and discovers that there are only rolls of toilet paper? By then not using the toilet could result in transgressing bal tishaktsu. Not using toilet paper would be contrary to kavod labriyos. What then should one do? Under such circumstances the poskim rule that one may tear the toilet paper using a shinui, such as unrolling a length of paper, pressing it on the wall with one's two fists and then pulling the fists apart in order to tear the paper. (see: Rav Dovid Ribiat, The 39 Melochos, volume 3, page 843) To avoid this situation, if one is living in area where there is an eruy, it is a good idea to carry a supply of toilet paper in one's pocket.

18 September 2011 2.32 a.m.

MATANOS L'EVYONIM

Matanos L'evyonim from Schnorrers

On Purim the proper way is to give each of two evyonim an honourable amount of money or food so that they can celebrate Purim with great enjoyment. But unfortunately there are schnorrers in this world who want to get away with the minimum! According to the Ritva, one fulfils the mitzvah by giving just one pruta to each evyon. (Mishnah Berurah 694:1) A super schnorrer might want to go further and give his pruta "al m'nat l'hachzir", namely, on condition that the evyon returns this pruta! Is such a condition valid? The poskim hold that one cannot make such a condition with mishloach manos, but they are not sure about it with matanos l'evyonim. (first Biur Halachah to Orach Chaim chapter 694) Let us hope that this discussion is theoretical and every evyon will have a Happy Purim.

18 September 2011 2.39 a.m.

THE BERACHOS ON THUNDER AND LIGHTNING

Thunder and Lightning on Purim

The Noda Beyehudah rules that one is allowed to interrupt the reading of the megillah on Purim in order to recite kiddush levanah. It would seem that the same should apply if there is thunder and lightning whilst reading the megillah. However here there could be some additional points. Since one must recite the berachah for these things "toch kedai dibur", which is about three seconds, one might well have to say these berachot even in the middle of a verse of the megillah. In such a case would one return to the next word or the beginning of that verse? Another point is that because light travels much faster than sound, there could well be a space of over half a minute between seeing the lightning and hearing the thunder. Would one wait in silence after saying the berachah over the lighting until one hears the thunder, or alternatively would one meanwhile read another verse or so of the megillah? A related issue is if during the reading the megillah, someone calls out that there is a rainbow outside, would one then interrupt the reading and go outside to recite the berachah, as in the case of kiddush levanah?

18 September 2011 3.02 a.m.

NETILAS YADAYIM IN THE BATHROOM

Asher Yotzer Card

In order to remind people to say "asher yotzer" and /or to give them the text of this berachah, during the last years, some very decorative "asher yotzer" cards have been been produced to attach to the wall near the washbasin for netillas yadayim, with some of them having the name of Hashem written in full. According to the Tzitz Eliezer one may recite this berachah in a room where there is a toilet, washbasin and various other facilities. On the basis of this, is it permitted to hang up such a card in such a room? One should also remember that there are times when the toilet in such a room is in actual use.

HAFTARAH

Kohanim and Leviim Excluded

Here is a riddle that one can ask people? Which haftorahs cannot be recited by a kohen or levi? The answer is haftorahs which are recited at minchah on Yom Kippur and other fast days and on the morning of Tisha b'Av. The reason is that they are read by the person called up for shlishi and this can only be a yisrael.

18 September 2011 4.57 a.m.

SHABBOS ZEMIROS

Suspected Maskil Authorship

Should one find in a zemiros book brought out by an organisation whose orthodoxy has much to be desired, a zemer not appearing elsewhere, one might justifiably assume that it was written by a maskil. But this might not always be the case. One such example was the zemer "Al Ahavoscha Eshte G'vi'i" which I found in such an organisation's zemer book. As a result, for several decades I would not sing it. It was by hashgacha pratis that I found this zemer in Machzor Vitri (Hurwitz edition, pages 147-48), a work written by Rabbeinu Simchah a student of Rashi, and that the authorship was Rav Yehudah Halevi. Since then it forms part of my repertoire of zemiros, and I would like to see zemiros books incorporating this zemer.

18 September 2011 6.37 a.m.

TZITZIS: IN OR OUT

Everyone's Tzitzis Out at Night

Ask your friends the following question. On which two ma'ariv services during the year does one wear a tallis? They are sure to give one occasion – namely Yom Kippur, but they may find it difficult to think of the second occasion. It is ma'ariv of motzaei Yom Kippur – a person does not take off their tallis between neilah and ma'ariv.

19 September 2011 4.11 a.m.

PRACTICAL TEVILAS KELIM ISSUES

Snow for Toiveling

There has been a snowstorm and a substantial amount of snow has settled. The kelim mikvah is a long way away and difficult to get to, and one has kelim to toivel. Can one use the snow? Under such conditions the book "Tevilas Kelim" (by Rav Tzvi Cohen, page 150) allows one to toivel glass kelim in the snow.

19 September 2011 4.19 a.m.

GEZEL SHEINAH: "STEALING" SLEEP

Waking up People with the Shofar

Sefardim start reciting selichos daily from the beginning of Elul, and they are often recited each night at midnight or in the early morning. The shofar is blown on a number of occasions during the recital of these selichos. However, the Rav of the Porat Yosef Yeshivah in Jerusalem has ruled that one should omit blowing the shofar since one has no right to deprive the neighbours of their sleep, and to do so would be gezel sheinah. (Mishpacha, English edition, 14 September 2011, p.28).

20 September 2011 4.24 a.m.

BIRCHAS HAMAPIL

Even on Tisha b'Av

Kriyas shema al hamita consists of the beracha "hamapil", the first paragraph of the shema, and many other pesukim and prayers. One might reasonably expect that on the night of Tisha b'Av it would be limited to just hamapil and shema. One might especially expect to have to omit the part beginning "vihi noam", which is indeed omitted at the ma'ariv service when Tisha b'Av occurs on motzaei Shabbos. However the poskim rule that on Tisha b'Av one recites kriyas shema al hamita with all the pesukim and prayers as on any other night of the year. (see: Rav Moshe Harari, "Mikroei Kodesh, Hilchos Ta'aniyos", page 285)

21 September 2011 3.24 a.m.

LAWS AND CUSTOMS OF CHODESH NISSAN

Shelumiel on Shabbos

It is customary during the first 12 (or 13) days of Nisan to read each day the korban which a nasi brought for the chanukas hamizbeiach. This is also the leining for Chanukah. The only day

Chanukah cannot begin on is Tuesday, which means that the 5th day of Chanukah can never fall on Shabbos, and as a result the korban for Shelumiel ben Tsurishadai is never read on Shabbos. (Because of this, some say that Shelumiel is the origin of the word schlemiel!!) However Shelumiel does get his opportunity to be read on Shabbos - during Nisan, since the 5th day can fall on Shabbos!

21 September 2011 3.40 a.m.

TORN TZITZIS STRINGS

More than just torn!

Tzitzis can often get torn if one does not use sufficient care when laundering them. There are various patents in how to launder them without damage. However, sending them to a non-Jewish laundry can indeed create problems. One person reports that the laundry charged him a large sum and when queried they answered that "it was hard work undoing all those knots". At least the tzitzis were not ruined – they could be reknotted. However in another story I heard, (I cannot vouch for its accuracy), the tzitzis beged was returned minus the tzitzis together with a note that the laundry had cut off the threads hanging from the corners – in this case the tzitzis threads were more than just torn!!

22 September 2011 5.20 a.m.

DAVENING ON A PLANE

Tal Umotor or Berachah?

About 40 years ago, I had occasion to fly from Israel to Europe, (it was an occasion when it was halachically permitted for me to leave Israel). The date was when one was already saying "vesein tal umotor" in Israel but not yet in the Diaspora. During the flight, whilst already over Europe, a minyan was arranged to daven minchah on the airplane (in an area of the plane which did not disturb other passengers). I recollect someone questioning whether to say "vesein tal umotor" or "vesein berachah". However, the general custom is that since one has already begun to say "vesein tal umotor" whilst in Israel, one should continue to say it when outside Israel. (Sha'arei Teshuvah, Orach Chaim 117:4)

22 September 2011 5.29 a.m.

SHLISSEL CHALLAH

Berachah over the Shlissel

What berachah does one say over the shlissel?! Baruch ato bevoecha, ubaruch ato betseisecha. (Devarim 28:6)

22 September 2011 5.36 a.m.

WHO CAN COUNT TOWARD A MINYAN?

He could not make up the Minyan!

He was born on the 7th day of Chanukah. Thirteen years later on the 7th day of Chanukah there were 9 Jewish men above the age of Barmitzvah plus him in the Shul. Yet there was not a minyan! How could this be? In the year he was born, there were 29 days in Kislev; thus he was born on 2 Teves. Thirteen years later there were 30 days in Kislev and the 7th day of Chanukah was thus on 1 Teves. Therefore he only became a man on the following day, the 8th day of Chanukah. Incidentally, over 40 years ago I was in a Shul where this actually occurred, but they incorrectly decided that there was a minyan.

22 September 2011 6.14 a.m.

MINYAN: CAKE OR ICING?

"Minyan and Cake with Icing"

Ten men, a minyan, met together, and amongst the food in front of them was a cake with icing. This iced cake looked so appetising that at least seven of these men decided they would "koveya seudah" on it; the others ate a more limited quantity. This means that at least seven have to do netillas yadayim, make hamotzi over this cake and after eating it have to recite birchas hamazon. Since at least seven have to say birchas hamazon and because a minyan has eaten, they have to add the name of Hashem into the zimun.

22 September 2011 6.24 a.m.

EREV ROSH HASHANA

Everyone "Dayanim Mumchim"

The minhag in many shuls is that immediately after shacharis on erev Rosh Hashanah, the congregation disperses into various groups for hataras nedarim. Three of the worshippers, usually chosen randomly, sit on a row of chairs, and another worshipper or sometimes a group of worshippers stand before them and recite the long nusach for hataras nedarim which begins "shimu noh rabosei dayanim mumchim". These "dayanim mumchim" can somtimes be the biggest amei haaretz, who do not even have a clue of the halachos of hataras nedarim. At least once a year, some people have the "honour" to be called "dayanim mumchim"! This is unless one follows the opinion of Rav Eliyahu Dovid Rabinowitz-Teomim, (the "Aderet") who wrote that one should omit these two words!

23 September 2011 3.39 a.m.

EREV ROSH HASHANA

Shofar on Friday Erev Rosh Hashanah?

It is customary to blow the shofar at the end of every weekday shacharis service during Elul with the exception of erev Rosh Hashanah, even if it occurs on a Friday. However the instruction in the "Singer's Prayer Book" which has been the standard siddur used in England since the early 1890s, and was originally authorised by the then British Chief Rabbi Nathan Adler, states that when erev Rosh Hashanah occurs on Friday the shofar is blown. The same instruction is to be found in the edition of this siddur with the commentary of the then British Chief Rabbi Joseph Hertz. However, despite searching, I have never found a source for shofar blowing on erev Rosh Hashanah occurring on a Friday.

23 September 2011 3.55 a.m.

EREV ROSH HASHANA

Fasts with an increasing intensity

Based on a Midrash Tanchuma about a king who remitted taxes in three stages, one learns about fasting in three stages: erev Rosh Hashanah; during the aseras yemai teshuvah; Yom Kippur. When comparing these fasts with this Midrash, in going from stage to stage, these fasts could well be with an increasing intensity. However Rav Yosef Karo in his Shulchan Aruch writes about fasting on erev Rosh Hashanah but omits fasting during the aseres yemai teshurah. Maybe a Talmudic support can be found for giving a specific mention to fasting on erev Rosh Hashanah, (as distinct from the aseres yemai teshuvah), from a Yerushalmi in maseches Taanis (perek 2, halachah 12) where it states that Rav Yonoson fasted every erev Rosh Hashanah.

23 September 2011 6.32 a.m.

EREV ROSH HASHANA

A Mikvah in the House

In 1930, Rav David Miller of New York, published a book entitled "The Secret of the Jew: His Life – His Family" which includes how one can easily build a mikvah in one's house at a very low cost. Although he claimed that this mikvah was also kosher for women, this came under criticism due to the fact that some opinions held that the water was "sh'uvim". However, as far as a men's mikvah is concerned this criticism is irrelevant, since one can use ordinary tap water. Men who want to use the mikvah but prefer the privacy of a mikvah in their own house, can study the relevant chapters of Rav Miller's book which appear online: http://www.homemikveh.org/sotj/sotj.html

25 September 2011 2.43 a.m.

EATING ON EREV SHABBOS

Very late Friday meal

If one eats a meal on Friday and before one has finished it, it is sunset, namely Shabbos begins, one must stop eating, put out a covered lechem mishnah, make kiddush and eat at least a kezayis from this lechem mishnah – (no netillas yadayim or hamotzi is required). It is best to avoid being in such a situation, but there could be occasions when one does need to eat such a meal. Consider the case in the summer in a very northern location where Shabbos begins very late indeed. For children or elderly people eating at a very late hour could well be very difficult. They could start a meal with a "Shabbos type" menu and when at least "plag minchah" arrives, they could accept Shabbos, stop eating, make kiddush and eat at least a kezayis from the lechem mishnah. (see: Piskei Teshuvos, volume 3, 271:14)

25 September 2011 3.11 a.m.

BIRTHDAYS

Beware if born after nightfall!

The date of one's birthday in the secular calendar will have two equivalents in the Jewish calendar, the first if one is born before nightfall, the second if after nightfall. If one is fortunate to be born in Israel, both the correct Jewish and secular dates will appear on one's "teudat zehut" (identity card). However if one was born in the Diaspora, the Hebrew date appearing will automatically be as if one was born before nightfall. If one were born after nightfall, unless one can produce an official documentation to prove it, something which is almost impossible to obtain, they will register one's Jewish birth date as if one was born before nightfall, despite what one might tell the registrations clerk. I was in this situation and when I complained about this, was told that I could now celebrate two birthdays!

25 September 2011 3.32 a.m.

COMING LATE FOR DAVENING

The Chazzan who arrives late!

If one recites "baruch sheamar" and "yishtabach", one is required to say a minimum of pesukei dezimrah between them. It is also possible to say just either "baruch sheamar" or "yishtabach", plus a minimum of pesukei dezimrah. What happens if the chazzan for shacharis on Shabbos arrives in shul immediately before "shochen ad"? Would the saying of the very short passage between "shochen ad" and "yishtabach" be sufficient to justify him saying "yishtabach"?

26 September 20111 3.38 a.m.

BEDIKAS CHAMETZ PART I

Lights on or off?

Rav Moshe Sternbuch in his Hagadah "Moadim Uzmanim" discusses whether one should leave the electric lights on or turn them off during bedikas chametz. On the first year after I was married, I could not decide what to do in this matter. It was the electric corporation who finally decided the matter for me! When I began bedikas chametz there was power outage, but during the bedikah the power returned. I was thus able to follow both opinions! Since then I have followed this procedure each year, I begin with the electric lights off and then during the course of the bedikah, I turn on the lights.

26 September 2011 3.43 a.m.

BENTCHING AFTER AL YICHASREINU (ON SHABBOS)

Also on Weekdays

In an article on Rav Menachem Manes Moore who studied in the Mir Yeshiva before the Second World War, Rav Moore says in describing his experiences "... in Bircas Hamozone we would only bentsch until 'al yechasreinu,' and from there on not another word." (Yated Ne'eman, English edition, 2 May 2003, page 20) It would seem from the context, that he his speaking of any time and not just Shabbos.

26 September 2011 6.27 a.m.

ERUV TAVSHILIN (THEORY)

1 or 2 or 3

In the Diaspora, one can have a situation when one needs Eruv Tavshilin three times within a short period of just three weeks, namely when Rosh Hashanah, Succos and Shemini Atzeres occur on Thursday and Friday. The general custom is to make it on the day before each of these Festivals. One might well ask whether one can make Eruv Tavshilin just once before Rosh Hashanah, then preserve the tavshilin, for example in the freezer? The poskim are divided on this question. There is also a third intermediate opinion, which allows one to make Eruv Tavshilin before Succos to also include Shemini Atzeres, the reason being that they are regarded as the same Festival. (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 527:14 and Mishnah Berurah (including Biur Halachah) on it)

27 September 2011 2.38 a.m.

ERUV TAVSHILIN (PRACTICAL)

Washing the dishes

It was over 40 years ago at a period where there was communal kitchen at the kollel where I was studying at. On an occasion when Yom Tov was on Friday, the women in the kitchen, who were kollel wives, themselves decided that they they had to wait till Shabbos began to wash up the dishes from the Friday Yom-Tov meal. Their reasoning was that since one was allowed to wash up dishes on Shabbos, this was not covered by Eruv Tavshilin. The women in fact had support for their actions – the Mishnah Berurah! There it states that Eruv Tavshilin only permits things which are "tzorchei seudah". (Mishnah Berurah 528:3) It should be mentioned however that the custom is to allow things such as hachanah, which would include washing up the dishes on Yom Tov for Shabbos.

27 September 2011 2.49 a.m.

THE PROCEDURE FOR GETTING AN ALIYAH

No work for the Gabbai!

When one is called up for an aliyah, the Torah should already be rolled to the correct place. This is one of the many functions of a shul gabbai to ensure that this has been done, the reason being to avoid inconveniencing the congregation. We learn this from the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur who would first read from parashas Acharei Mos, (which today is the leining for Yom Kippur) and he would then roll the Torah to parashas Emor, which is very close and again read, (which today is part of the leining for the first day of Succos). He would not however roll the Torah to parashas Pinchas which is a relatively long way away. (Yoma 68b, 69b-70a) Thus in a shul which uses a specific Sefer Torah just for Shabbos and Yom Tov, the gabbai does not need to roll the Torah between Yom Kippur and Succos (in years when there is no Shabbos between them).

5 October 2011 4.06 a.m.

ONE WHO CAN'T FAST BOTH TSOM GEDALYA AND YOM KIPPUR

Seems more theoretical

There has been a lot of discussion by the Poskim on the question of when one can only fast either on Tsom Gedaliah or on Yom Kippur. However I have always thought that this discussion is theoretical. Surely a person who for medical reasons would not be able to fast on Yom Kippur if he fasted a week earlier (or in some years six days), would be forbidden to fast on any fast day

5 October 2011 4.13 a.m.

TOILETRIES AND CHAMETZ

Schnitzel on Serviettes

I have been informed by a mashgiach that serviettes (table napkins) could contain amylene, which could have been derived from wheat. Often when frying schnitzel or potato chips, one places the boiling hot food after removing it from the frying pan onto such serviettes in order that the serviette absorb any excess oil, but in the process the food might well absorb some of this amylene. There would seem to be room to investigate whether or not this is a problem on Pesach.

5 October 2011 4.23 a.m.

KITTEL ON YOM KIPPUR

Kittel and Burial

In the Diaspora, men are often buried wearing their kittel, the garment they wore each Yom Kippur. In Israel however, the custom is not to add to detract from the tachrichim. Therefore in answer to a question on this subject, Rav Tukachinski (Gesher Hachaim, part 2, 28:3) writes that if there is time to convert the kittel into the ktones garment of the tachrichim, it is proper to do so.

5 October 2011 4.34 a.m.

HELLO, BLESS ME AND GOODBYE (SHALOM ALEICHEM ON FRIDAY NIGHT)

When Yom Tov occurs on Shabbos

Is there any difference regarding the singing of Shalom Aleichem when a Yom Tov occurs on Shabbos? According to "Luach l'Eretz Yisrael" of Rav Tukachinshi, one says it, including when Seder night or Rosh Hashanah occurs on Shabbos. "Luach Dvar B'ito" writes that according to minhag Vishnitz when Yom Kippur occurs on Shabbos, Shalom Alecheim and some Shabbos zemiros are sung in the Shul.

6 October 2011 5.19 a.m.

MECHITZAH PART 2 – HEIGHT, MATERIAL AND CIRCUMSTANCES

Lovud and Mechitzos

Consider the following scenario: The mechitzah in a shul consists of metal poles which are of the correct height for a mechitzah but there is more space between the metal poles than the width of the metal itself. The space between the poles is however less than 3 tefachim. There is no curtain covering

these poles. The women's section is at the same level as the men's and is situated both the right and the left of the men's section. Needless to say one can see the women. The question: Can one apply the principle of "lovud" to call this a mechitzah and hence it would be permitted to daven at such a shul?

11 October 2011 4.09 a.m.

INVITING PEOPLE TO A BRIS

Mixed Seating at a Bris Milah?

According to Rav Moshe Feinstein (Igros Moshe, Orach Chaim, volume1, responsum 41) one can have mixed seating at a wedding since people are there by invitation. However for a bris milah, one specifically does not "invite" people, but one just "informs" them. Will this affect the seating arrangements?!

11 October 2011 4.14 a.m.

CLAPPING AND DANCING ON SHABBOS

Dancing at an Aufruf

Rav Shlomo Aviner in answer to a question on this subject relates the following incident: "There is a story about Rav Moshe Feinstein that a student in his Yeshiva finally got married after many, many years. At the Aufruf they were so excited that they, including Rav Feinstein, began to dance around the bima. A student asked him. 'Isn't it forbidden to dance on Shabbos?' Rav Feinstein responded, 'You call this dancing?!'"

(see: www.ravaviner.com/2011_04_01_archive.html)

11 October 2011 4.23 a.m.

MAKING A ZECHER L'CHURBAN IN OUR HOMES

Additions to House

Consider the following scenario (which is in fact relevant to my apartment). A person makes the "zecher l'churban" in his house opposite the front door as required by halachah. At a later date he builds additions to his house and as a result this "zecher l'churban" is no longer opposite his front door. Is he required to make another "zecher l'churban" opposite his new front door?

24 October 2011 7.55 a.m.

REMOVING RINGS FOR NETILAS YADAYIM

Use the side of one's Spectacles

If one is concerned that one may forget one's rings after doing netilas yadayim and one is wearing spectacles, one can put them on the side frame of the spectacles.

24 October 2011 8.17 a.m.

MECHIRAS CHAMETZ

Detail your Sale!

The author of the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch gives a sample deed of sale which he used for mechiras chametz. (end of chapter 114) In this deed he gives a detailed list of the chametz items to be sold, the sale value of each item and its precise location in the house of the seller. In contrast, I have seen such deeds in which there is barely room for the members of the community to write just their name and address!

25 October 2011 4.44 a.m.

MACHNISEI RACHAMIM AND PRAYING TO ANGELS

Mentioning Angels by Name every Night

Every night in Krias Shema al Hamita, we invoke that specific angels should be in various positions surrounding us – "Mimini Michael, umismoli Gavriel ...". The source is from the Zohar parashas Bamidbar.

25 October 2011 5.46 a.m.

NEFILAS APAYIM WHEN THERE IS NO SEFER TORAH

Tachanun in Hebron

Rav Eliyahu Mani, who was the Chief Rabbi of Hebron in the mid-19th century wrote in his book "Zichronos Eliyahu" (part 1, Orach Chaim, page14) concerning the reciting of tachanun in Hebron, that one does not rest one's head on one's arm (paragraph 16). However a few paragraphs later (paragraph 19) one could understand him to have written that in Hebron one rests one's head on one's arm even when there is no Sefer Torah in the room and even if one is davening alone. How does one resolve this apparent contradiction? Perhaps the meaning is that wherever one is located in Hebron, and even if davening alone, one always recites tachanun. However even if there is a Sefer Torah in the room in Hebron, and even if there is a minyan, one does not rest one's head on one's arm.

NEFILAS APAYIM WHEN THERE IS NO SEFER TORAH

Tachanun on Tisha b'Av!!

Here is a riddle. When one recites tachanun at minchah, one rests one's head on one's left arm. At shacharis, because one is wearing tefillin on the left arm, one rests one's head on one's right arm. On Tisha b'Av, one puts on tefillin at minchah and not at shacharis. Therefore on which arm does one rest one's head on when one says tachanun at shacharis and minchah on Tisha b'Av? The answer: One does not say tachanun on Tisha b'Av!!

26 October 2011 4.01 a.m.

INTRODUCTION TO HILCHOS CHOL HAMOED

No Succah – no Tiyul?

Although people often utilise Chol Hamoed to go on tiyulim, this could be a potential problem on Succos if there will be no succah on the route. Does the exemption that travellers have from dwelling in the succah also apply to those going on a mere tiyul. Rav Moshe Feinstein writes that such people are not exempt from the mitzvah of succah. (Igros Moshe, Orach Chaim, volume 3, responsum 93) Although there are other poskim who disagree, they add that it is not proper to go on a tiyul when there will not be a succah on the route. (Sefer Hasuccah by Rav Eliahu Weissfish, page 433)

27 October 2011 4.25 a.m.

SUMMARY OF HILCHOS CHOL HAMOED

Driving a Car on Chol Hamoed – Maaseh Hedyot???

To be able to drive a car, one takes numerous lessons, does countless hours of supervised practice and then has to pass a rigorous test. Driving a public vehicle, such as a bus, coach or taxi is tzorchei rabim and is thus permitted even though it is maaseh uman. If there would be a real financial loss if one did not drive, it would be permitted even though it is maaseh uman. However driving for pleasure, which could be classed as tzorech hamoed, is only permitted if it is maaseh hedyot and surely driving a vehicle cannot be so classed!

27 October 2011 4.36 a.m.

SUMMARY OF HILCHOS CHOL HAMOED

Photography on Chol Hamoed

In the era when one photographed onto a photographic film, such photography was halachically writing. (The 39 Melachos by Rav Dovid Ribiat, volume 4, pages 952-53) One sees numerous photographs of gedolei hador carrying their arbaas haminim and the fact that they did not prevent the photographers strongly indicates that it is permitted to take such photographs on Chol Hamoed. Since the only time in the year that one can take such photographs is during Chol Hamoed Succos, it might be classed as davar haovud. Furthermore, since almost every child can use a home camera, it could be classed as maaseh hedyot. Possibly today's digital cameras are even more permissible.

27 October 2011 4.43 a.m.

PAS PALTAR (DURING ASERES YEMEI TESHUVA)

Parisian Bread in London

Nearly 50 years ago, I heard the following incident related in the course of a shiur. A person bought a loaf of bread in Paris where no pas yisrael was available. He ate half of the loaf in Paris. He then flew with what was left of it to London. In London pas yisrael was readily available. The question was could he finish eating this loaf of bread in London. He submitted the question to a posek. I don't recollect the answer, but in this case it was theoretical, since by that time the bread was no longer fit to be eaten!

27 October 2011 4.52 a.m.

CHECKING TEFILLIN AND MEZUZOS

Every Adar Rishon

I have seen it suggested that one have one's mezuzos checked every Adar Rishon. In this way one will have had them checked twice within a period of 6 years (or sometimes even 5 years) and thus will have fulfilled the requirement of checking them twice in 7 years. Also since there are no days in Adar Rishon which require special preparations, one has the time to arrange for this checking.

28 October 2011 4.41 a.m.

HAIRCUTS AND SHAVING DURING SEFIRA

When 3 Sivan is on Sunday

When Lag b'Omer occurs on Sunday, the Rema writes that one may cut one's hair on the previous Friday in honour of Shabbos. Those who follow Minhag Vilna observe the mourning laws of sefirah until the morning of 3 Sivan. From the case of Lag b'Omer, we can possibly derive that should 3 Sivan occur on a Sunday, one may cut one's hair on the previous Friday.

30 October 2011 5.47 a.m.

HAIRCUTS AND SHAVING DURING SEFIRA

Shaving – Haircutting

In the case of sefirah, the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 493:2) uses the word "lehistaper" (haircutting). However in the case of Chol Hamoed the word "megalchin" (shaving) is used (Orach Chaim 531:2). Why the difference in wording for the same actions? It is possible that the reason is that the third perek of Moed Koton which includes the subject of cutting any human hair on Chol Hamoed begins with the words "v'ailu megalchin".

30 October 2011 5.51 a.m.

ISSUES OF AIRPLANE TRAVEL

Tal u'Matar or Berachah?

In Eretz Yisroel one begins "v'sein tal u'matar" on 7 Marcheshvan, and this includes areas close to Eretz Yisroel (Rav Yehosef Schwartz, "Divrei Yosef", responsum 4); elsewhere in the world, one begins 60 days after tekufa of Tishri. Consider the following scenario: a person is on an airplane going towards Israel (and especially in a case where he intends remaining in Israel) on a date between 7 Marcheshvan and 60 days after tekufa of Tishri. He davens on the airplane over the Mediterranean, when he is close to Israel. Does he say "v'sein tal u'matar" or "v'sein berachah"?

30 October 2011 6.13 a.m.

CELEBRATING ROSH CHODESH

Rosh Chodesh Fasts

The Mishnah Berurah writes (418:1) that the community of Worms in Germany fast on Rosh Chodesh Sivan and recite selichos, to commemorate the evil degrees enacted against the Jews on that date in the year 4856 (1096). What is the leining on this fast? In the morning one does the leining for Rosh Chodesh and in the afternoon "vayechal". (Kaf Hachaim 418:2) Other cases of fasts decreed for Rosh Chodesh can be found in a list of fasts appearing in Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 580. These

fasts include Rosh Chodesh Nisan and Rosh Chodesh Av. The source of this list can be traced back as far as the Behag (the period of the Geonim) – (it is often incorrectly stated that this list is the last chapter of Megillas Ta'anis). The fasts on these two dates even have an application today, since a Choson and Kallah fast if they get married on Rosh Chodesh Nisan and (at least theoretically) on Rosh Chodesh Av. (Mishnah Berurah 573:9), although not on other Roshei Chodoshim.

31 October 2011 4.32 a.m.

CELEBRATING ROSH CHODESH

Lines which have dropped out of Amidah!

The last paragraph of the middle berachah in the amidah for Shabbos begins with "... retzeh bimnuchoseinu, kadsheinu bemitzvosecho ..." The wording in this paragraph is to be found in every Shabbos amidah, even when any Yomtov occurs on Shabbos – with one exception! This is in musaf for Shabbos Rosh Chodesh when this wording for Shabbos is almost entirely absent from the amidah. The Aruch Hashulchan (Orach Chaim 425:2) considers that they were omitted by a printer and he personally would say the words which had been omitted when he said this amidah.

31 October 2011 4.47 a.m.

CELEBRATING ROSH CHODESH

Meat instead of Fish

One of today's leading Poskim and also head of the largest non governmental Beis Din in Israel, Rav Nissim Karelitz of Bnei Brak, each day includes fish in his daily lunch menu. However, on Rosh Chodesh meat is substituted for the fish. (Mishpacha, English edition, 13 April 2011, page 48)

1 November 2011 3.43 a.m.

ADHESIVE TABS (DIAPERS AND STARK MARKS) ON SHABBOS

After using the Diaper

When a diaper is in actual use on a baby, the "sticking" of the tab could well be classed as temporary. However after removing the diaper from the baby, resticking the tab before throwing it into the garbage is more problematic since this sticking might be considered permanent and thus not be permitted. Rav Dovid Ribiat considers that it is better to be stringent, and instead fold up the diaper and put it in a plastic bag before throwing it away. (The 39 Melachos, volume 3, page 814)

1 November 2011 3.48 a.m.

SAYING L'CHAIM

Rishonim say l'Chaim

Rav Shraga Simmons gives two sources from Rishonim who specifically state that before drinking wine people say l'chaim. The first source is from Machzor Vitri (chapter 80), written nearly 1,000 years ago, and it is linked to the prohibition of speaking whilst eating, since this could lead people to choke to death. To avoid this eventuality, before a person says the berachah over wine, which under the principle of "shomea k'oneh" could also enable others to fulfil the mitzvah of saying the berachah by just listening, one asks that they agree that their mouths are empty and they answer l'chaim – and thus they won't choke to death. The second source is the Kol Bo (chapter 25) written in about the 14th century. There is a dispute whether one is obliged to bentch over a cup of wine and one asks the others present if they hold that one should bentch over it and they answer l'chaim – it should be for life and not for the purpose of those to be put to death by a Beis Din.

1 November 2011 3.59 a.m.

DISPLAYING THE ASERES HADIBROS

Lions in Shuls

In a number of shuls in the world, two model lions have been placed above or in front of the Aron Kodesh and the question has often been asked as to whether or not it was permissible to have such lions in the shul, since there could be avodah zoroh problems. There have been numerous halachic discussions on this question and in the answers given some permit whilst others forbid putting models of lions and other creatures on the Aron Kodesh. (see: Minhagei Hakehilos by Rav Bunim Yoel Tausig, 1:30-44)

1 November 2011 4.01 a.m.

PURIM COSTUMES

Save your Money!

There is also a downside to Purim costumes. Parents, many of whom cannot really afford it, annually purchase expensive Purim costumes for their many children. Often these costumes are used just once. Who wants to wear the same costume on two Purims?! Surely it is far better to make your own costume with things found in every house and try to give this homemade costume an original caption. When my brother was at elementary school, the family put together from things found in our house, the clothing worn by a farmer. He was given a large bundle of hay to carry and he wore a caption with the word "HA(y)MAN". For this he won the fancy dress prize in his class – and the fancy dress cost us nothing!

2 November 2011 4.14 a.m.

CROSSDRESSING ON PURIM

A few days before Purim

In Israel, schools are on holiday on Purim and thus often a few days before Purim, schools will arrange for their pupils to turn up in fancy dress. Would those Poskim who allow crossdressing on Purim, also allow it at the fancy dress parade held a few days before Purim?

2 November 2011 4.21 a.m.

WAITING FOR TEN TO START CHAZARAS HASHATZ

Only 6 remain in the Shul

The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 124:4) writes that if 9 men don't answer "omein" to a berachah during chazoras hashatz it is close to a berachah l'vatalah. There is also a halachah that if men leave the shul during the chazoras hashatz, and only 6 men remain, the shaliach tzibur can continue until (at least) the end of the amidah (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 55:2), and this applies even if they leave during the course of the first berachah (Mishnah Berurah 55:8). In such a case it will be impossible for 9 men to answer "omein" to even one of the berachos.

2 November 2011 4.38 a.m.

WAITING FOR TEN TO START CHAZARAS HASHATZ

The Sons of Ya'akov

Although the Bavli only gives the 10 evil meraglim as the source of the number 10 for a minyan, the Yerushalmi (Megillah, perek 4, halachah 4) gives a second source, again using the word "betoch" (Bereshis 42:5). Here the number 10 is derived from the sons of Ya'akov, (minus Yosef and Binyamin), who went down to Egypt to purchase food.

2 November 2011 4.44 a.m.

BESAMIM

Choose from Three

Siddurim which follow the Eidot Hamizrach, Yemenite (both baladi and shami), Persian and Italian rites, give three possible berachos which can be recited when smelling the besamim at havdalah, but the first one which they all give is "borei atzei vesamim". An extant manuscript from the Jewish community of Kaifeng in China gives only "borei atzei vesamim". However

since this community was isolated from all other Jewish communities in the world for several hundred years and their scribes recopied by hand, probably numerous times, their siddurim, it is possible that the other berachos over besamim at havdalah were, over the course of time, accidentally omitted.

3 November 2011 9.47 a.m.

DAVENING AND LEARNING ON THE TRAIN

Don't waste even a moment!

Not only should one learn whilst on a journey, one should also use the opportunity to do so whilst waiting in a queue at: a bus stop, a bank, a post office, a medical centre, etc. In all of these places one should be able to find a solution to the tzenius question. There was one well known Jerusalem Rav, who completed the whole of Shas (I believe even twice) whilst waiting in these various queues and on journeys.

3 November 2011 9.51 a.m.

WOMEN'S OBLIGATION IN ZIMUN

A Woman as the Tzenter!

The Mordechai (on Berachos 45b) quotes Rabbeinu Simchah who held that 9 men and 1 woman can make up a mezuman which would be able to add in the word "Elokeinu" during the zimun.

3 November 2011 9.55 a.m.

PAS HABA B'KISNIN

A Piece of Cake at an Israeli Wedding

I have noticed that at an Israeli wedding, some people don't eat the roll - maybe thinking that they then won't have to say birchas hamazon! They prefer to say a berachah over each of the foods. They begin by eating the numerous salads, then the fish, then the main course of rice, potatoes and some form of meat. By that time they are almost sovea and they just have room to eat the dessert which consists of ice cream – and a piece of cake. According to the Ashkenazi practice, this piece of cake could mean that they would have to say birchas hamazon in the same way as if they had eaten the roll at the beginning of the meal! (for discussion of this subject see: Vezos Haberachah by Rav Alexander Mandelbaum, pages 31-33)

3 November 2011 10.05 a.m.

KOL ISHA ON RECORDED MUSIC

Woman Chanting

Both when one is hearing the actual voice of a woman or her recorded voice, there is a definite difference between when a person speaks and when a person sings. However there is also an "in between case"; it is difficult to find a word to describe it, but maybe "chant" can be used. One might then ask whether or not it is permitted to listen to a women chanting, or even listen to her answering "omein" in such a manner?

7 November 2011 3.24 a.m.

PAS HABA B'KISNIN

Beware of the Roll!

In a publicised ruling made by six leading Poskim in the United States regarding rolls made with fruit juice, they write that the custom to put out such rolls which are marked "borei minei mezonos" at meals such as at weddings and on airplanes, where obviously people "kovea seudah" on them, results in a "stumbling block" for a large number of people. (ruling reproduced (but without a date) in "Luach Berachos" by Rav Alexander Mandelbaum, page 50)

7 November 2011 3.28 a.m.

BERACHOS ON CEREALS

Shehakol on all Cereals!!

Some time ago, I read in a religious newspaper (I think it was a paper published in England) that because of the difficulty in knowing which berachah to say over the various cereals, the writer admitted that he always said shehakol. In the next edition of this paper, a reader wrote to castigate this writer and quoted the halachah that if a person does not know which berachah to recite over a particular food, he may not say shehakol, but before eating has to go and learn which berachah to recite. (see: Vezos Haberachah by Rav Alexander Mandelbaum, page 1)

7 November 2011 3.45 a.m.

WEARING WOOL TZITZIS

Silk Tzitzis

Just as the wool for tzitzis has to be spun lishmah by Jews, so does the silk for making silk tzitzis. But here there is problem. Spinning silk is a specialised activity involving extremely

delicate work and almost all the silk thread in the world is spun in China by experts who are non Jews. However in Italy, there are Jews who know how to spin silk, and indeed there are Italian Jews who wear tzitzis made from silk threads. (see: Mishpacha, English edition, 2 November 2011, page 60)

7 November 2011 4.04 a.m.

NER HAVDALAH

In a large Beis Hamidrash

Consider the following scenario: Havdalah is being made in a large yeshivah Beis Hamidrash and this will be the only havdalah that the bachurim will hear and they will fulfil the mitzvah of havdalah by the principle of shomea k'one. However, to fulfil the mitzvah of the berachah over the light one has to be close enough to be able to distinguish by its light coins of two different countries. (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 298:4) Those bachurim who are too far away from the candle, as many will be in a large full Beis Hamidrash, will certainly not be close enough to be able to distinguish two such coins. In fact it would be necessary after havdalah to leave the havdalah candle burning so that the bachurim can approach it and recite the berachah. (Mishnah Berurah: 297:13 (end), 298:13)

8 November 2011 4.10 a.m.

SERVING AS SANDEK MULTIPLE TIMES

Both or None

The father of new born twins invited one of the Gedolei Hador to be the sandek for one of his twins. The Gadol replied that it would have to be both or none. The reason was that he had the foresight to realise that when these twins would get older, the one whose sandek had been this Gadol might taunt the other twin by saying that "my sandek was one of the Gedolei Hador".

8 November 2011 5.45 a.m.

HONORING KOHANIM

The Kohen doesn't have to search!

The Kohen by having the first aliyah, also has another "plus". Before reciting the berachah over the Torah, he (or the baal koreh) does not have to search in the middle of a "paragraph" for the place where his leining will begin. It will always be at the beginning of a new "paragraph" either a parashah pesuchah or a parashah sesumah. (The only two exceptions are parashas Vayechi, and Vayechal on a Fast Day)

TA'ANIS CHALOM

Tune without words during Duchaning

If one has had a worrying dream, there is a tefillah to recite during duchaning. (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 130:1) Since it takes time to say this tefillah, the chazzan sings a "tune without words" extending for about half a minute at the last word in each of the three verses of duchaning. (Mishnah Berurah 130:3) In Chutz La'aretz where one only duchans at mussaf on Yom Tov, this singing has to be limited to the days of Yom Tov (occurring on a weekday). However, in Eretz Yisroel where there is duchaning every day of the year, surely a case could be made for this "tune without words" to be sung every weekday, for the sake of people who have had a worrying dream on the previous night.

9 November 2011 2.26 a.m.

TA'ANIS CHALOM

Leining on Ta'anis Chalom on Shabbos

The Shiurei Knesses Hagedolah (Orach Chaim 220:5) discusses the question of when a minyan of people fast a ta'anis chalom on Shabbos, whether the shaliach tzibur can say "aneinu" in the repetition of the amidah at minchah, and concludes that he had found no source to forbid it. On this basis, possibly one could also do the leining for a fast day on such a Shabbos? In such a case how would it be organised? A parallel case is a communal fast on Rosh Chodesh, when one leins the Rosh Chodesh leining at shacharis and "vayechal" at minchah. (Kaf Hachaim 418:2) Likewise here, one would lein the parashas hashavua at shacharis on the Shabbos, and at minchah "vayechal" would override the normal Shabbos minchah leining in a similar way as when Yom Kippur falls on a Shabbos.

10 November 2011 3.18 a.m.

SHEVA BERACHOS

Sheva Berachos on Seder Night

According to the Rema (Shulchan Aruch, Even Haezer 62:9), one uses two cups of wine at a sheva berachos. However, if a sheva berachos were to be held on seder night, there would be a problem, since one may not add to the number of cups of wine drunk after eating the afikoman. Rav Yaakov Emden discusses this problem in his siddur (Beis Yaakov, seder hagadah, netiv 10, paragraph 25) and he states several possible solutions: 1) the participants at the seder recite birchas hamazon over their own cups of wine and the sheva berachos are recited on the birchas hamazon cup of the choson. 2) to follow the opinion of the Shulchan Aruch, which states that

one always uses the same cup of wine for both birchas hamazon and the sheva berachos. 3) to use the cup of wine for birchas hamazon as the third cup and the cup of wine for the sheva berachos as the fourth cup. (see also Sha'arim Metzuyanim Bahalachah on the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 119:15)

10 November 2011 6.45 a.m.

WEARING A YARMULKA

Change in clothing styles

With today's multi-styles of clothes worn throughout almost the whole world, especially by different ethnic groups, the wearing of a yarmulka in public is nothing unusual. However as we can see from a teshuvah of Rav David Zvi Hoffman (Melamed L'hoil, Yoreh Deah, responsum 56) that this was not always the case. Rav Hoffman reports how one day he went to visit Rav Shimshon Refoel Hirsch. Rav Hirsch's Yeshivah had a department teaching secular subjects and whose lecturers were non-Jews. Rav Hirsch told him to remove his head covering since not being bareheaded would offend the non-Jewish lecturers.

11 November 2011 5.54 a.m.

THE SHEVA BERACHOS WEEK

Beware of grammen!

Mishpacha (English edition, 2 November 2011, pages 70-72) reports a true incident where at a sheva berachos, relatives of the choson, sang, with the best of intentions, grammen [rhyming songs to make people laugh] which disclosed the "not good" behaviour of the choson whilst he was still unmarried. It included a verse on how he was almost arrested for reckless driving, and a verse on how he was suspended from his Yeshivah. The kallah who was totally unaware of these incidents in her choson's life was quite shocked to hear of these incidents and it soured up the relations of the newly married couple for many weeks. The moral – be careful what one says at a sheva berachos!

11 November 2011 5.59 a.m.

THE SHEVA BERACHOS WEEK

Tachanun - "In the Spirit of Purim"

There are shuls who give a sigh of relief when there is a Choson present on a Tachanun Monday or Thursday. Reading between the lines of a sarcastic article written "In the Spirit of Purim" by Rav Pinchos Jung, who is an author of many mussar books, there is a strong criticism of those who gabble off their tefillos. On the subject of Tachanun he writes: "... But of course, tachanun is a rarity; if at all, it's only tolerated on Sundays, Tuesdays or Wednesdays – and we pay

Chassanim top rates here. Actually, we had a shaaloh yesterday – two Chassanim attended. Opinions varied. Celebrate the morrow as a nidche? Skip Uvo Letzion? The machmirim did both. 'If in doubt, leave it out', they said..." (Jewish Tribune London, 12 March 1976, page 9, extract has two words amended)

13 November 21011 5.54 a.m.

BOWING ON THE FLOOR ON YAMIM NORAIM

Doctor's Orders

The physician of one of our recent Gedolim instructed the Gadol not to do korim. In order not to be different from all the other worshippers in his yeshivah, when the time in the service came for korim, he left his seat at the front of his Beis Hamidrash and sat by the door.

14 November 2011 4.17 a.m.

DAVENING EARLY WHEN NEITZ IS LATE

Tefillin at Night

In the German concentration camps, the inmates invariably had to get up and start work even before amud hashachar. In some cases, with great mesiras nefesh, they succeeded in smuggling in a pair of tefillin. The question was whether one could put on tefillin before amud hashachar and furthermore, whether one could say a berachah over the tefillin? This question was answered by Rav Efraim Oshri, who was Rav of the Kovno Ghetto in Lithuania, (Divrei Efraim, responsum 2) who ruled that under such circumstances one could put on tefillin and also say the berachah over them. He wrote that the concern of Chazal that one might fall asleep with the tefillin on was not relevant here, since any person doing so would endanger his life.

14 November 2011 4.24 a.m.

EXCESSIVE SINGING BY CHAZANIM

Know your Tunes!

Many people in Eretz Yisroel are not acquainted with the words which accompany Western popular tunes and this sometimes leads to undesirable results. About twenty years ago I listened to a computer teaching aid for Gemara. It was accompanied by tunes. But what were many of the tunes? Christmas carols!!! Amongst the worshippers of the shul at which I daven there are a number of Anglo-Saxsons, and in the same building there is also a Talmud Torah. Throughout the day, a bell, which is a collection of tunes, rings to signal the beginning and end of lessons and it can clearly be heard even in the shul. The words of some of these tunes are close to pritsus.

One year they forgot to turn off the bell for Yom Kippur. Oshamnu, bogadnu with the accompaniment of these tunes!!!

15 November 2011 3.53 a.m.

DAVENING EARLY WHEN NEITZ IS LATE

Experiments in Yakir

It was nearly 50 years ago that the British branch of the Association of Orthodox Jewish Scientists performed practical experiments to determine the time of yakir relative to sunrise. A paper was written up on this and I think it appeared in the journal "Intercom" brought out by the American branch of this Association. The results of their experiments showed that the time for yakir depended on a number of factors, one which I remember was whether the person to be identified was facing east or west.

15 November 2011 4.09 a.m.

BIRCHAS HAMAPIL

The Galach

As we can see from Rabbah (Pesachim 117a) and also from the Chasam Sofer, it is good to start a shiur or a talk with a joke. Here is one which one can utilise on a whole variety of occasions, and it also teaches a halachah. The wife of a Jew living in Alaska gave birth to a boy. Normally a mohel would fly in to perform the bris. However that day it was very stormy and it was impossible to fly. It happened that the local Pastor – the "galach" - had learned how to do a bris in accordance with the halachah. Some authorities rule that if a non-Jew does a bris, it is a valid bris. (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 264:1) This Pastor therefore did the bris. The only problem was that when this boy got older and recited kriyas shema al hamita, instead of saying "hamalach hagoel..." he would say "hagalach hamohel...". (acknowledgements to R' Yisroel Goldstein z'l)

15 November 2011 4.17 a.m.

DALED KOSSOS WHEN WINE GETS YOU SICK

Tea sweetened with Saccharin

The use of "chamar medina" for the four cups of wine became relevant in the Kovno ghetto in Lithuania during the Second World War. When it came towards Pesach there was no wine available. In fact the only beverage available, and even that in limited quantities, was tea sweetened with saccharin. The question was whether it could be used for the four cups of wine. On this, Rav Efraim Oshry wrote a teshuvah (Mima'amakim, volume 3, responsum 5) in which

he permitted tea sweetened with saccharin to be used for the four cups, since it could be considered as "chamar medina". He added, however that, unlike wine where one says the berachah over all four cups, one should say the berachah over the tea sweetened with saccharin only on the first and third cups.

16 November 2011 3.32 a.m.

DALED KOSSOS WHEN WINE GETS YOU SICK

Only Water!

Baruch Duvdevani z'l, the executive director of the Jewish Agency's Aliyah department, related that in the 1950s he was in an Arab country pretending to be a non-Jew, in order to bring Jews from that country to Israel. Although he had planned to leave that country on erev Pesach, he was at the last moment delayed, and had to spend seder night in his hotel room. For the four cups of wine, all he could do was to fill a cup with water four times, at the appropriate times, and drink it. When he returned to Israel he asked a she'elah what he should have done in the circumstances and the answer he received was to do what he had in fact done.

16 November 2011 3.46 a.m.

HALLEL AFTER MA'ARIV ON THE SEDER NIGHT

Also on Erev Pesach

In addition to many shuls saying Hallel at ma'ariv on the first night(s) of Pesach, it could also be sung on the afternoon of erev Pesach. The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 458:1) based on a Yerushalmi, states that some people have the custom to bake their matzos for the seder on the afternoon of erev Pesach, namely, the same time that the korban pesach was being prepared. The Chidah (Moreh B'etzbah 7:205) writes that whilst baking these matzos, one sings the hallel, to commemorate hallel which was said whilst preparing the korban pesach. Beis Chernobyl even say the berachah over this hallel. (Piskei Teshuvos, volume 5, chapter 458, footnote 4)

17 November 2011 3.42 a.m.

HALLEL AFTER MA'ARIV ON THE SEDER NIGHT

Hallel or Tachanun?

On which day of the year does one sometimes say hallel and sometimes tachanun? The answer is 3 Teves. When there are 29 days in Kislev, the 8th day of Chanukah will be on 3 Teves and so hallel will be said. If however, there are 30 days in Kislev, then 3 Teves will be the day after Chanukah and tachanun will be said.

17 November 2011 3.48 a.m.

HALLEL AFTER MA'ARIV ON THE SEDER NIGHT

Don't rely on Kiddush in Shul!!

Just as many shuls say hallel on the first night(s) of Pesach, they also, in Chutz La'aretz, say kiddush towards the end of ma'ariv every Friday night. In the past, there were visitors who would eat their meals in the shul and for this reason, kiddush was instituted in the shul service. This was based on the principle that one has to eat one's Shabbos meal at the same place as one makes kiddush and since these visitors were eating in the shul, the shul kiddush enabled them to fulfil the mitzvah of kiddush. (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim, 269:1) However, there is also a downside to this shul kiddush, since some people eating their meal at home, may mistakenly think that having heard kiddush in shul, they do not have to make it when they return home.

17 November 2011 3.59 a.m.

CHALAV AKUM

Rabbi, Bless the Milk!

About 50 years ago, whilst I was living in an area of London, there was a certain occasion when there was a problem to receive cholov yisroel. Rav Morris Swift z'tl who was then a Dayan on the London Beis Din also lived in the same area, and he related to us that the milkman thought that for milk to be cholov yisroel, a Rabbi had to bless it. He therefore went to this Rav and said "You are a Rabbi. Will you bless the milk?!"

18 November 2011 3.56 a.m.

BARUCH HU U'VARUCH SHEMO

Shofar - and Kiddush

In the Beis Hamidrash of the Chasam Sofer, the worshippers would answer "baruch hu u'voruch shemo" during the berachah before blowing the shofar, but the Chasam Sofer did not stop them. (Shut Maharam Shik, Orach Chaim, responsum 51) A point for consideration is whether the Chasam Sofer would distinguish in this matter on the one hand between mitzvas shofar where the berachah is bircas hamitzvah and thus not l'ikuva, and on the other hand, kiddush, where the berachah itself is the mitzvah?

18 November 2011 4.09 a.m.

CHALAV AKUM

Butter from Cholov Akum

I recollect from about 40 years ago, when I lived in England, kosher butter arrived from Holland which was only supervised "mishas asiya", namely that the milk it was made from was cholov akum, yet people who would only drink cholov yisroel would use such butter. The reason is that milk from non-kosher animals cannot be made into butter. (Schach, Yoreh Deah 115:27) Such butter is however only permitted if one obtains already made butter, but should one make cholov akum into butter, the butter would not be permitted. (Rema, Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 115:1)

21 November 2011 3.07 a.m.

CHALAV AKUM

What about a Keli Sheni?

Consider the following scenario: A person is invited to a house which uses cholov akum, He is offered a hot drink (without cholov akum) in a cup that has been used for hot drinks with cholov akum. May he use this cup? According to the Maharsha (Gilayon Maharsha, Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah, beginning of 113) cholov akum does not make a keli sheni forbidden. There are however Poskim who disagree with the Maharsha. I might add that nearly 50 years ago when I did a course on kashrus given by Rav Getsel Ellinson, he told us, and I have it written down in my detailed notes from the course, that cholov akum does not make a keli sheni forbidden.

21 November 2011 3.10 a.m.

WEARING A YARMULKA

Not in Secular Classes

The Hasmonean Grammar School for Boys is an Orthodox Jewish School in London, which was established in 1944 by Rabbi Dr. Solomon Schonfeld z"tl. In reminiscences by former pupils, Itzy Sabo wrote, "Hasmonean was started by Yekkes. In the German Jewish tradition, the 'capple' was used *exclusively* in religious contexts, e.g. praying. In the early years of Hasmo, the school rules required pupils to wear it during religious studies lessons, and *forbade* wearing it in secular contexts. Only pupils (typically of eastern European extraction) who brought a note from home saying it was their custom could wear one all the time." (see: http://melchettmike.wordpress.com/2009/10/24/hasmo-legends-xvi-1959-school-photograph/)

21 November 2011 3.13 a.m.

DAVENING IN A SHUL WITH A DIFFERENT NUSACH

Different Tachanuns

On Mondays and Thursdays, nusach ashkenaz begins tachanun with a very long "vehu rachum" and only after that there is nefilas apayim. In contrast, nusach sefard begins this tachanun with nefilas apayim. Consider a person who privately davens nusach sefard, but is the shliach tzibur in a nusach ashkenaz shul. Tefilos that he has to recite aloud, he would do in nusach ashkenaz, but silent things he could say in nusach sefard. Although he would say tachanun silently, it would look very out of place for him to begin tachanun with nefilas apayim.

21 November 2011 3.19 a.m.

DALED KOSSOS WHEN WINE GETS YOU SICK

A Nazir on Seder Night

A nazir, amongst other things, is forbidden to drink wine. Although today it is rare for a person to be a nazir, it does occasionally occur. One such case was Rav David Cohen z'tl (1887 - 1972) who was known as "Harav Hanazir". What did he do on seder night for the 4 kossos? I have been reliably informed that he used apple juice.

22 November 2011 8.36 a.m.

AMIRA L'AKUM

Non-Jew versus Time Switch

In the very cold weather, it is permitted to have a non-Jew light a fire on Shabbos for warmth. (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 276:5) However, today, one usually uses a time switch for this purpose, but according to a minority opinion, one should not use a time switch on Shabbos, (except possibly for lights). What is preferable in this particular case for a person who follows the opinion of not using a time switch – to have a non-Jew to light the fire or use a time switch?

22 November 2011 8.40 a.m.

CHAZAN REPEATING WORDS

Mix up of Modim and Modim D'rabbonon

I was once in a shul which had both a chazan and a choir. When it came to modim on Shabbos mussaf, the chazan sang the first few words of modim and this was followed by the choir singing the first few words of modim d'rabbonon. The chazan then sang the next few words of modim and the choir then followed with the next few words of modim d'rabbonon. This then went on throughout modim and modim d'rabbonon. I must say that it was cleverly arranged musically. However what the congregation in fact heard was a "jumble" of words. Is such a musical rendering problematic halachically?

22 November 2011 8.43 a.m.

SECULAR NAMES

Alexander becomes Jewish!

Out of gratitude to Alexander the Great, who had been positively disposed towards the Jews, the Jews decided to name every boy born the following year "Alexander" (or "Sender" for short). Thus since that time till this very day, Alexander, which was a Greek name, has been the name given to many boys at their bris. (see: http://www.jewishhistory.org/alexander-the-great/)

23 November 2011 7.11 a.m.

SECULAR NAMES

The Rambam's Arabic Name

The Rambam also had an Arabic name: Abū 'Imrān Mūsā bin Maimūn bin 'Ubaidallāh al-Qurṭubī. Another great Rav to have an Arabic name was Rav Abdullah Somech (1813 – 1889), who was the teacher of the Ben Ish Chai, and it would seem that Abdullah was the name he was given at his bris. The name "Abdullah" is of Arabic origin and means "Hashem's servant" and is a name commonly found in the Islamic world.

23 November 2011 7.14 a.m.

SECULAR NAMES

Yiddisher Names

There are many Jews today who have Yiddish names. In some cases, the Yiddish name is the Yiddish translation of the Hebrew name which precedes it, for example: Yitzchok Eizik – Eizik in an Anglicised pronunciation is Isaac; Shlomo Zalman – Zalman in an Anglicised pronunciation is Solomon. There are even many people who just have the name Zalman without Shlomo. There are also cases where a Yiddish name follows a particular Hebrew name, for example: Efraim Fischel - Fischel is a little fish, and when Yaakov blessed Efraim and Menasheh, he used the phrase "v'yidgu [from the word "dag", a fish] lorov..."; Yehudah Leib – Leib is a lion, and when Yaakov blessed Yehudah he used the phrase "Gur Aryeh [lion] Yehudah".

24 November 2011 4.10 a.m.

SECULAR NAMES

Don't forget your Name!

Rav Yeshayahu Horowitz (c.1565 - 1630), also known as the Shelah Hakadosh, writes that in order that we should not forget our name on the Day of Judgment, before we say the (second) "yihyu lerotzon" at the end of each amidah, we should recite a posuk from Tanach whose first letter is the first letter of our name and whose last letter is the last letter of our name. Many siddurim, after the amidah for the weekday shacharis, give a list of such pesukim for men. I also possess a Rosh Hashanah machzor with Yiddish translation (probably intended for use mainly by women), which also gives a list of such pesukim for women. Incidentally, one can see from this list that many women were given only Yiddish names.

24 November 2011 4.13 a.m.

AMIRA L'AKUM

Shabbos and Yom Tov - yes; Chol Hamoed - no

There is something which is permitted on Shabbos and Yom Tov, but is forbidden on Chol Hamoed, namely having a non-Jewish contractor build a house for a Jew outside the techum. For a number of reasons, including "maris ayin" one may not employ non-Jewish workers to do work for a Jew on Shabbos, Yom-Tov and Chol Hamoed. Since one may not go outside the techum on Shabbos and Yom Tov, the question of "maris ayin" when a non-Jewish contractor builds a house for a Jew on Shabbos and Yom Tov outside the techum does not apply. However, since on Chol Hamoed, one may leave the techum, a Jew may not employ a non-Jewish contractor to build a house outside the techum on Chol Hamoed. (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 543:2, Mishnah Berurah 543:4)

27 November 2011 5.14 a.m.

SEUDAS PURIM

Seudas Purim on 16 Adar

During birchas hamazon at all meals eaten on Purim one adds in "al hanisim". When however Purim in Jerusalem (a walled city at the time of Yehoshua bin Nun and thus Purim is celebrated a day later) occurs on Shabbos, the seudas Purim is held on Sunday 16 Adar. On that day, one does not say "al hanisim" neither in the amidah nor in birchas hamazon. The question then asked is whether one should omit it even at the seudas Purim? On this, the Kaf Hachaim (688:48) writes that one should not say "al hanisim" in its usual place (between nodeh and ve'al hakol) since this would be a hefsek, but adds that it is good to say it as an additional harachamon.

27 November 2011 5.44 a.m.

TRYING ON CLOTHES BEFORE CHECKING FOR SHATNES

Shaatnez and 15 Tagin

A riddle – one can learn halachah from it: What is the connection between shaatnez and 15 tagin? On seven of the letters written in a Sefer Torah, there are three tagin on each of these letters. Five of these seven letters are the five letters of the word shaatnez. (Mishnah Berurah 36:12-13) Thus on the word shaatnez as written the Sefer Torah there are 15 tagin.

27 November 2011 6.26 a.m.

HAFTARAH

Same Haftarah two weeks running

There is a unique situation where the same haftarah is read two weeks running. This can only occur in a city where Purim is celebrated on Shushan Purim, and in practice the only place in the world today where this occurs is Yerushalayim. Should Shushan Purim occur on Shabbos, then the maftir is the leining for Purim and the haftarah is that of Shabbos Zachor. (Mishnah Berurah 688:16) The previous Shabbos was Parshas Zachor and the haftarah was naturally that for Shabbos Zachor, hence the same haftarah two weeks running. The custom in places which celebrate two days Purim because of a safek, is to read the haftarah for that Shabbos, and not that of Shabbos Zachor. (Mishnah Berurah 688:16) An exception is Baghdad and it would seem that there they would read the haftarah for Shabbos Zachor on two successive weeks. (Ben Ish Chai, First year, Parashas Tetzaveh, Hilchos Purim paragraph 14)

27 November 2011 6.39 a.m.

DRINKING ON PURIM

Once or all the time!

The Shulchan Aruch rules that on Purim one must drink "ad dlo yoda...". Suppose a person reaches this state on Purim and then later on the same day, he recovers from this state. Is he then obliged to drink to again reach this state? On this question there are different opinions. (see: Rav Moshe Harari, Mikroei Kodesh, Hilchos Purim, chapter 13, footnote 41)

28 November 2011 4.03 a.m.

KOSHER SWITCH: GLATT OR JUST KOSHER STYLE?

Use sticky tape

For six days each week, when going in and out of a room one almost automatically turns the electric lights on or off. By force of habit, one could accidentally do so also on Shabbos. A simple solution is before every Shabbos to put sticky tape over all the switches in the house.

28 November 2011 4.08 a.m.

SHABBOS HAGADOL

Two Sifrei Torah every Shabbos

Many shuls read a special haftarah on Shabbos Hagadol, but there is no special maftir, and so one reads from just one Sefer Torah. In contrast, in the weeks which almost precede Shabbos Hagadol, it is possible to have a situation where one reads from (at least) two Sifrei Torah on every Shabbos throughout a particular month. This occurs in Yerushalayim when 1 Adar (Adar Sheni in a leap year) occurs on Shabbos. That Shabbos will be parashas Shekalim; the following Shabbos – parashas Zachor; the following Shabbos will be Purim in Yerushalayim; the following Shabbos – parashas Poroh; and the following and last Shabbos that month will be parashas Hachodesh.

28 November 2011 5.16 a.m.

DRINKING ON PURIM

Ad dlo yoda in a Sofek Chomah City

In a city where there is a sofek whether it was walled at the time of Yehoshua bin Nun, one observes two days Purim (on 14 and 15 Adar). According to most opinions, all the laws of Purim should be observed on both days. (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 688:4, Mishnah Berurah 688:10) Does this include drinking "ad dlo yoda", also on the second day of Purim which is observed only because of a sofek. I have never seen this specific question discussed, but maybe

because of a sfek sfeika one could answer in the negative, namely according to some opinions one does not have to reach this state on Purim in any city, and even if one does have to, then maybe Purim for that sofek chomah city is not on 15 Adar.

28 November 2011 5.28 a.m.

KOSHER SWITCH: GLATT OR JUST KOSHER STYLE?

What about building an Eiruv?

Criticism of the "Shabbos Switch" have included that it is "zilzul Shabbos" or "akiras Shabbos". I have not studied the mechanics of the switch nor the halachic discussions regarding it, so I can pass no judgment on it. However I can make the following comment. Shabbos observance is based on not performing any of the 39 melochos. By using this switch, one could argue that one is largely "removing" mavier and mechabeh from the list of forbidden melochos, and thus it could be classed as zilzul or akiras Shabbos. However, likewise by building more and more eiruvs in cities all over the world, one is "removing" the melochoh of hotzoa from the list. Has anyone classed this as zilzul or akiras Shabbos?

29 November 2011 3.37 a.m.

WAITING BETWEEN MEAT AND DAIRY

Design a Clock!

It often happens that one has eaten a fleishig meal but does not note the time that one has finished eating the meat, How does one then know that 6 hours have passed so that one can now have milchig? A clock needs to be designed that one would set after eating fleishig and after 6 hours it would ring and/or show some sign that 6 hours was up!

29 November 2011 3.56 a.m.

HAFTARAH

Open or Closed

The Mishnah Berurah (284:12) writes that the Tanach from which the haftarah was read should remain on the bimah whilst the after berachos for the haftarah are being recited, but does not state whether the Tanach should be open or closed. If a comparison is to be made from reading from the Sefer Torah or from Megillas Esther then it should be closed. However in fact there are differences of opinion on whether the Tanach should be open or closed. (see: Piskei Teshuvos volume 284:13 and footnote 98)

HAFTARAH

Just that Haftarah on Klaf or Printed Navi Shalem?

When reading the haftarah, if one should have to choose between a klaf which has just that haftarah written on it (but not the entire Navi), or a printed Navi shalem, which should one choose? According to Rav Ovadiah Yosef, the klaf with just that haftarah is preferable. (Yalkut Yosef, Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 284:2)

29 November 2011 4.05 a.m.

TRYING ON CLOTHES BEFORE TESTING FOR SHATNES

Kosher Clothing Stores

Here is an extract from a news item which appeared on the website of Arutz 7 on 26 November 2011: "...the Jerusalem Rabbinate will be providing certificates of 'kashrut' to clothing stores in [Jerusalem].... When people buy a suit they have no idea where it comes from ... Suits today come from China, Hong Kong and various parts of the world. But even if they come from a factory in Israel they should be monitored.... Importers frequently put stamps on clothes that they are shatnez free despite the fact that no official body endorses the claim. Checking the shops we found many such 'shatnez free' garments containing shatnez...."

30 November 2011 3.26 a.m.

LECHEM MISHNAH FOR SEUDA SHELISHIS

Three Loaves

The mon in the midbar did not fall on Shabbos, but instead a double quantity fell on Friday. To commemorate this, one says hamozi over two loaves of bread on the Shabbos meals. According to some opinions the mon also did not fall on Yom Tov. (Tosafos on Beitzah 2b d.h. "vehoyoh") It could follow that if Yom Tov were to be on Friday or Sunday, then a triple quantity of mon would fall on the Thursday if Yom Tov were on Friday, or on the Friday if Yom Tov was on Sunday. One could thus possibly come to the conclusion that three loaves of bread should be used for hamotzi for the meals on such an occasion!

30 November 2011 3.50 a.m.

SEMICHUS GEULAH L'TEFILAH

All or None

Should one come into a shul late for ma'ariv and the tzibur are about to start the amidah, one says the amidah with them and only afterwards the shema with its berachos, (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 236:3) since saying the amidah with the tzibur overrides smichus geulah l'tefillah in ma'ariv. (Mishnah Berurah 236:11) There is another halachah that even if one completely "mixes up" the order of the bircos shema, the three paragraphs of the shema and the amidah, one has still fulfilled the mitzvah of davening. (Mishnah Berurah 60:5) Now consider the following scenario which often occurs: A person arrives in shul for ma'ariv when the tzibur are in the middle of the shema with its berachos. He has time to say, (for example) the two berachos before the shema and the first paragraph of the shema but no more, before the tzibur would reach the amidah. Should he say the aforementioned, followed by the amidah together with the tzibur, and then continue onwards from the second paragraph of the shema, or should he just wait till the tzibur begins the amidah and then say it with them, and afterwards say the shema with its berachos? It would seem from the wording of the Mishnah Berurah (236:11) that the second alternative is the one to be followed.

30 November 2011 3.56 a.m.

SEMICHUS GEULAH L'TEFILAH

Baruch Hashem L'olam in Israel

Although the almost universal custom in Eretz Yisroel is not to say "baruch Hashem l'olam" at ma'ariv, I have seen it written that at the K'hal Adas Yeshurun shuls in Bnei Brak and Beitar they do say it. (see: www.kayj.org/forum/viewtopic.php?t=466&sid=e2e273793182296f226fc5ceddde13d2)

1 December 2011 4.13 a.m.

SEMICHUS GEULAH L'TEFILAH

Aloud or Silently

In many shuls, the shliach tzibur says the words "go'al yisroel" immediately before the shacharis amidah silently, and this has been criticised as having no source. However, in contrast, there are poskim who say that it is a nice minhag to say these words silently, and Rav Moshe Feinstein is quoted as saying that he recollects from the days of his youth that this was the custom in all the yeshivas. (see: Piskei Teshuvos, volume 1, 66:10 and long footnote 86)

1 December 2011 4.18 a.m.

DRINKING ON PURIM

Drinking and then Sleeping

The Rama writes regarding drinking on Purim, that after drinking one should go to sleep and whilst sleeping one would be in the state of "ad dlo yoda". However, what happens if a person does the drinking on Purim, but only falls asleep when it is already night. Has he fulfilled the mitzvah of "ad dlo yoda"? This question is discussed by Rav Moshe Sternbuch (Moadim Uzmanim, volume 2, chapter 190) and he writes that the main thing is the actual drinking and it is therefore in order if one only falls asleep when it is already night.

1 December 2011 4.25 a.m.

BARUCH HU U'VARUCH SHEMO

Say it Silently

Rav Avraham Dovid ben Asher Anshel Wahrman – the Eshel Avraham Buczacz (1770 – 1840) writes (Orach Chaim chapter 66) that when he was the shliach tzibur he would say the ends of all the berachos (boruch ato...) before and after the shema silently, so that the tzibur would not answer "baruch hu u'voruch shemo" since it was forbidden to answer with these words at this part of the service.

4 December 2011 3.23 a.m.

DRINKING ON PURIM

Bentching whilst Shikur

Consider the following scenario. At the seudas Purim a man drinks until he is shikur, to such an extent that he cannot speak before a king. Can he in that state say bircas hamazon? Although in such a state he would not be allowed to say the amidah, the shema and its berachos, we learn from the Yerushalmi (Terumos, perek 1, halachah 4) that he would be allowed to bentch. (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 185:4) However should he have reached the state of "shikruso shel Lot", he would be exempt from all mitzvos and this includes bentching (even assuming that he was still able to do so in such a state!).

4 December 2011 3.26 a.m.

ASKING TWO RABBIS THE SAME SHAILA

When not to rely on your Rabbi!!

There is an occasion when should not rely on one's Rabbi – and that only occurs on a Wednesday or Thursday! When the first day of (a two day) Yom Tov occurs on Thursday or

Friday, then on erev Yom Tov, namely Wednesday or Thursday, one makes eiruv tavshilin. Although the Rabbi of the city includes all the Jews in his city in his eiruv tavshilin, one should not rely on this but should make eiruv tavshilin oneself; it can even be problematic after having relied on the Rabbi on a previous occasion. So don't rely on your Rabbi on this particular Wednesday or Thursday!! (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 527:7)

4 December 2011 3.33 a.m.

HAFTARAH

Only One Shabbos with Yehoshua

Although there are numerous haftarahs read on Shabbos which come from the book of Yeshayahu, there is only one Shabbos haftarah which comes from the book of Yehoshua, namely the haftarah for parashas Shelach Lecho. (There are also two Yom Tov haftarahs which come from Yehoshua, namely on the 1st day of Pesach and Simchas Torah.)

4 December 2011 3.37 a.m.

HAFTARAH

Interrupting the Haftarah

There is an occasion when one interrupts the haftarah to insert a piyut. This is on the 2nd day of Shavuos (in Chutz La'aretz), when after the first verse of the haftarah, one inserts the piyut "yetziv pisgam". The authorship of this piyut is attributed to Rabbenu Tam (c1100-c1171), the grandson of Rashi.

4 December 2011 3.39 a.m.

TASHLICH

Tashlich Fish at Tisch

The Sadigurer Rebbe used to go to the Yarkon River in the Tel Aviv area for tashlich. Due to his advanced age, a few years ago, a pool was set up in his court into which three fish were put, and the Rebbe conducted tashlich there. Afterwards the fish were cooked and served at his tisch. (see: Mishpacha, English edition, 23 November 2011, page 57)

5 December 2011 4.19 a.m.

HAFTARAH

Why Gelila and not Maftir?

"What chutzpah! They promised me an aliyah and all they gave me was gelila, but Moishe who has protexia with the gabbai got maftir." This is a comment that one might well hear. But this is all wrong! Hagba and gelila are the best two mitzvos. (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 147:1; see: Piskei Teshuvos, volume 2:147, footnote 14 – Chazon Ish states that today we equate gelila with hagba) In contrast, maftir is "low" on the scale, so much so that a person receiving it is "compensated" by receiving amongst other things to be the shliach tzibur. (Megillah 24a)

5 December 2011 4.43 a.m.

FISH AND MEAT

Gefilte Fish only on Shabbos

When eating fish or meat on Shabbos, one must be careful not to remove the bones, since by doing this one would transgress the melochoh of borer. This is especially difficult with fish where there are numerous small bones. Therefore someone came along and invented "gefilte fish" which has become a Shabbos specialty. However maybe on Yomtov it is not such a specialty since on Yom Tov one may remove the bones from fish, and also from meat.

5 December 2011 4.48 a.m.

LECHEM MISHNAH FOR SEUDA SHELISHIS

Wine for Seudah Shelishis

According to some opinions, the Rambam holds that one should make kiddush before eating seudah shelishis. The mekubalim also hold this opinion. (Aruch Hashulchan, Orach Chaim 291:10) Because of these opinions, it is customary to drink wine during seudah shelishis. (Mishnah Berurah 291: 21) At kiddush one has to drink a certain quantity of wine – kimlo lugmov. Does it follow that since drinking wine at seudah shelishis is in place of kiddush, one has to drink the same quantity of wine as for kiddush, or is just a sip sufficient?

6 December 2011 5.42 a.m.

HAFTARAH

Going Backwards in a Haftarah

In almost all haftarahs, one reads from the beginning to end without any omissions of verses. There are a few occasions where one jumps forward to another place in the novi and this is often to the following chapter. However, there is also a case where one goes backwards to the previous

chapter. This is in the haftarah of parashas Mishpotim. There the haftarah begins in Yirmiyohu, chapter 34 verses 8-27, and then ones goes backwards to chapter 33, verses 25-26.

6 December 2011 5.45 a.m.

HAFTARAH

Rosh Chodesh Maftir but not the Haftarah

One can have the situation where the maftir read is that for Rosh Chodesh, but the haftarah is not. This occurs when Rosh Chodesh Menacham Av falls on Shabbos. Since this is during the period of the "three weeks", each Shabbos of which has a special haftarah. (these haftarahs are known as the "shelosho d'puronusa"), the haftarah for Rosh Chodesh is overridden.

6 December 2011 5.47 a.m.

NEFILAS APAYIM WHEN THERE IS NO SEFER TORAH

No Tachanun in Lederman Shul

The questions regarding nefilas apayim rarely arise at the Lederman Shul! This shul can be considered as a world famous landmark in Bnei Brak. It was at there that the Chazon Ish z'tl and the Steipler z'tl davened, and today Rav Chaim Kanievsky davens there. When there is a ba'al bris (father of baby, mohel or sandak) present in a shul, tachanun is omitted. (Mishnah Berurah 131:22) Rav Chaim Kanievsky is a sandak almost every day of the year and so tachanun is rarely said in the Lederman Shul. (see: www.hamodia.com/inthepaper.cfm?ArticleID=569)

7 December 2011 4.25 a.m.

KIDDUSH LEVANAH

In a Windowless Room

Mishpacha (English edition, 30 November 2011, page 50) wrote about a man who was incarcerated in a prison cell and could not see the moon. He asked a Rav about saying kiddush levanah and the Rav replied that "if he knows for a fact that the sky is clear and the moon can be clearly seen outside, then as long as the time for kiddush levanah has not elapsed, he can make the berachah even if he's inside." However, it is not clear what the reasoning for this is, since although the Mishnah Berurah (sha'ar hatziun 426:25) rules that one can even recite kiddush levanah looking through a closed window, he clearly adds that one must be able to see the moon through this window.

7 December 2011 4.52 a.m.

MISHLOACH MANOS

Raw Foods for Mishloach Manos

Can one send an uncooked dish to somebody for mishloach manos? Rav Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin (the Netziv) (1816 – 1893), using a verse in parashas T'tzaveh (Shemos 29:26) shows that raw meat is called "manah", and thus by sending an uncooked dish one fulfills the mitzvah of mishloach manos. (Ha'emek She'eila on the She'iltos, 67:9)

7 December 2011 5.07 a.m.

KIDDUSH LEVANAH

Fly Above the Clouds

It happened that one year during the winter it was cloudy every night and it was not possible to say kiddush levanah. The Satmar Rebbe, Rav Yoel Teitelbaum z'tl, therefore hired an airplane and flew above the clouds in order to be able to recite kiddush levanah. (see: Meoros Hadaf Hayomi, volume 2, page 219)

8 December 2011 4.02 a.m.

MISHLOACH MANOS

Cross-examine the Shaliach

To fulfill the mitzvah of mishloach manos, the recipient must personally receive it before the end of Purim. (Aruch Hashulchan, Orach Chaim 695:16) Usually mishloach manos are sent by a shaliach, who is often a child. Maybe unknown to the sender, the recipient had gone away for Purim. The mishloach manos are thus left on his doorstep, and the shaliach does not inform the sender of this fact. To cover this eventuality, one should make a point of asking the shaliach whether the recipient personally (and not just a family member) had received the mishloach manos.

8 December 2011 4.05 a.m.

MATANOS L'EVYONIM

Don't investigate Bank Account

According to the Yerushalmi (Megillah, perek 1, halachah 4) and this is brought in the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 694:3), one does not investigate the financial situation of a person before giving them matanos l'evyonim, but one should give it to anyone who puts out their hand.

Needless to say, it is at least morally wrong for a person who is not poor to go around on Purim with a cupped hand, since in this way one could deprive genuine poor people of matanos l'evyonim.

8 December 2011 4.10 a.m.

KITTEL ON YOM KIPPUR

Only Two Kittels

In shuls all over the world, many of the worshippers wear a kittel during the services on Rosh Hashanah and especially on Yom Kippur. However in the Belz Shul in Jerusalem, which is probably the largest shul in Eretz Yisroel and seats many thousands of worshippers, only the Belz Rebbe and the shaliach tzibur wear a kittel. (see: Mishpacha, English edition, 28 September 2005, page 21)

11 December 2011 3.56 a.m.

KIDDUSH LEVANAH

Eclipse of the Moon

Kiddush levanah may be recited each month until precisely half way between the times of two average molads. An eclipse of the moon occurs precisely when there is a full moon. Such an eclipse can occur before half way between the times of two average molads. Both the Maharil (c.1365 – 1427) (Shut Maharil, responsum 19) and the Levush (c.1530-1612) (Levush Hachor, Orach Chaim, 426:4) hold that in such a case, the time of such an eclipse will be the latest time for kiddush levanah.

11 December 2011 4.00 a.m

KIDDUSH LEVANAH

What about Motzaei Shavuos?

It is stated in maseches Sofrim (chapter 20, halachah 1) and is brought by the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 426:2) that one should say kiddush levanah only on motzaei Shabbos? Is this to the exclusion of motzaei Yomtov? One could thus ask that if Shavuos occurs on a Wednesday (and Thursday in Chutz La'aretz), should one say kiddush levanah on motzaei Shavuos, or should one wait till the following motzaei Shabbos? The Mishnah Berurah (426:5) states that the intention of maseches Sofrim is to include motzaei Yomtov, and thus one can say kiddush levanah after Shavuos and need not wait for the next motzaei Shabbos.

11 December 2011 4.04 a.m.

SHEMURA MATZAH

Brown Paper, no Metal nor Plastic

For many decades matzos have been hand baked in Komemius in Eretz Yisroel, and numerous chumros have always been incorporated into their preparation. These include: covering the tables with brown paper guaranteed free from starch; making sure that the flour and dough never come into contact with metal; that the jute fabric in which the wheat is delivered has undergone a thorough examination to ensure that it is free from chametz; and that no plastic utensil is to be found anywhere in the bakery. (Mishpacha, English edition, 7 December 2011, page 44)

12 December 2011 3.46 a.m.

GEBRUKTS

Glatt Kosher for Pesach

One often sees advertisements for holidays for Pesach which state that the cuisine is "Glatt Kosher". This term has meaning for the rest of the year, but for Pesach it is ambiguous. A place can offer cuisine with includes kneidalach and other gebrukts, and for those who follow the poskim who state this completely permitted on Pesach, it can be classed as Glatt Kosher. Furthermore, a place that follows the Sefaradi minhagim can have on their menu, rice and other kitniyos, and this can likewise be classed as Glatt Kosher. Therefore it is important for a place offering Pesach cuisine not just to state "Glatt Kosher" but also state whether they serve gebrukts and/or kitniyos. Furthermore, prospective clients must also check this point when choosing a place to stay for Pesach.

12 November 2011 3.59 a.m.

GEBRUKTS

The Vilna Gaon's Matzos

The Chafetz Chaim would not eat gebrukts on Pesach, (although he did not stop his family from doing so). When people said to him that the Vilna Gaon would eat gebrukts, he answered that were he to have the matzos of the Vilna Gaon, he would also eat gebrukts. (Ohr Yisroel (Monsey), Nisan 5759 (1999), year 4, issue 3 (15), page 142)

12 December 2011 4.01 a.m.

ASARA B'TEVES

Not even Water

After Yom Kippur, and Tisha b'Av when it occurs on a Sunday, one makes havdalah. Before making any havdalah during the course of the year, one is permitted to drink water. (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 299:1) This is, in particular, useful for women who are waiting at home for their husbands to come home from shul after these fasts. However, such drinking is not the case with kiddush, where even water is forbidden. (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 271:4) Therefore when Asara b'Teves occurs on Friday, the women who are waiting for their husbands to return from shul to make kiddush, cannot even drink water.

13 December 2011 3.36 a.m.

RETZUOS OF TEFILLIN

Narrower and Narrower

Every time one puts on tefillin, especially the shel yad, the retzuos are pulled, and over the course of many years they will, as a result, become narrower and narrower. Also the retzuos might start partially tearing across. A question to be asked is whether there is a minimum width for the retzuos and also whether the torn part can be included in such a minimum width? Some poskim rule that since no width requirement is mentioned in the Gemara, a minimum width is only a hidur, and if there are no other tefillin available, one may put them on and even say a berachah over them. (see: Sha'arim Metzuyanim B'halachah on Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 10:26)

13 December 2011 3.39 a.m.

RETZUOS OF TEFILLIN

Writing one's Name

In, for example, a school, where numerous pupils put on tefillin, and thus mix ups between the tefillin of different pupils can occur, it is desirable to be able to identify one's own tefillin. A question can thus arise whether one may write one's name (and other contact details) on the back of the retzuos. According to the halachah, one may colour the back of the retzuos with any colour except red. (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 33:3) Maybe one can learn from this, that one may write one's name on the back of the retzuos in any colour but red.

13 December 2011 3.41 a.m.

MISHLOACH MANOS

Don't hurry to get Drunk!

Although there is a principle to be zariz to perform a mitzvah, this could be problematic with the mitzvah of "ad dlo yoda". If a person should drink to such an extent and reach "shikroso shel Lot", he will then be potur from all mitzvos. So even if he succeeds in giving mishloach manos or matanos l'evyonim whilst in such a state, it would seem that he will not have fulfilled these mitzvos. The moral is - perform all these Purim mitzvos before drinking on Purim!

14 December 2011 3.49 a.m.

AUFRUF

Check Kashrus of Sweets

It is customary at an aufruf to throw sweets (candies) at the choson, and sometimes some of those attending bring their own sweets to throw. It could be that the kashrus of some of these sweets is questionable, or even worse. As soon as the sweets are thrown, children will rush to pick them up and by that time it will be well nigh impossible to retrieve and check them. Therefore the ba'alei simcha should try and find a tactful way to control which sweets are thrown.

14 December 2011 4.07 a.m.

PRIORITIES IN TZEDAKAH

Responsibility for Tzedakah Money

When they were building an extra floor to Kollel Chazon Ish in Bnei Brak, Rav Nissim Karelitz would on every Friday climb up the scaffolding, examine the progress and then give the contractors a list of comments. When someone asked whether it was proper for a Torah scholar to engage in such activities, Rav Karelitz answered, "People have entrusted me with their money, and it is my responsibility to ensure that it is used for the purpose for which it was donated." (Mishpacha, English edition, 13 April 2011, page 46)

14 December 2011 4.32 a.m.

CHANUKAH GELT AND GIFTS

The Dreidel and Moshiach

It has been suggested that there is a source for the dreidel in sefer Yechezkel (37:16-17). There the Navi writes to take a stick and write on it "Yehudah" (to represent the Southern Kingdom) and on another stick write "Yosef" (to represent the Northern Kingdom) and join the two sticks

together to make one stick. This is an allusion to all the tribes returning to Eretz Yisroel in the days of the Moshiach. A dreidel was originally made from wood and the gematria of the letters on it – nun, gimmel, hey, shin – is that of Moshiach. However in Eretz Yisroel, one usually finds the letter pey instead of shin. But one can still have the gematria for Moshiach, since the gematria of nun, gimmel hey, pey, is "Menachem" or "Tzemach" which are also names for the Moshiach.

15 December 2011 4.44 a.m.

MINHAGIM

With a Berachah

The recital of hallel on Rosh Chodesh is a minhag and so Sefardim don't say a berachah over it. Another minhag is the lighting of Chanukah candles in shul with a berachah, and the Mishnah Berurah (671:44) specifically compares these two minhagim with regards to berachos. However in this latter case, Sefardim do say a berachah. Why the contradiction?! The Aruch Hashulchan (Orach Chaim 671:26) discusses this question stating that there are visitors and unmarried people who don't have a house and thus fulfill this mitzvah in shul, and even if this is not the case, then the main pirsumei nisa is today in the shul and thus one should say the berachah there.

15 December 2011 4.49 a.m.

TASHLICH

Where's the Body?

In Memphis Tennessee, over 50 people went near a cliff and while looking down at the river which lay about 5 metres below them, recited Tashlich. Suddenly a police car raced towards them with its lights flashing and its sirens blaring. Two policemen then rushed out of the vehicle shouting "Where's the body?" Apparently someone had seen a large group looking at the river, and thinking that they were staring at a floating body summoned the police! (Mishpacha, English edition, 9 November 2011, page 53)

15 December 2011 5.35 a.m.

SHATNEZ IN MATTRESSES AND CUSHIONS

The Steipler Stands

The Chazon Ish was trying to arrange a shidduch for his brother-in-law the Steipler, and he arranged for him to meet a young woman. The Steipler before this meeting stayed up all night learning, planning to catch up on his sleep on the long train journey to this meeting. After being introduced to each other, the Steipler fell asleep straight away, to the horror of the young woman.

What had occurred was that on the train there were padded seats and the Steipler was worried that they might be shaatnez and therefore stood up and remained awake for the entire journey and thus arrived very tired! (see: http://ohr.edu/ask/055.htm)

18 December 2011 00.34 a.m.

WEARING WOOL TZITZIS

Wool Tzitzis Beged on Shabbos

Although one may leave the eiruv wearing tzitzis on Shabbos, there are some limitations. If some (but not all) of the tzitzis are posul, one may not go outside the eiruv wearing such a beged. According to some opinions, if the beged is below the minimum size, one may also not go outside the eiruv wearing it. (Mishnah Berurah 13:2) What about a garment which is not made of wool and therefore one only has to attach tzitzis mi'drabbonon? On this Reb Mottel Tenenbaum, who is an expert on tzitzis and author of the "Hadar Tzitzis" series writes, "Some people wear a wool one on Shabbos so they don't have problems of carrying because that's a real beged, no question about it." (Mishpacha, English edition, 14 December 2011, page 78)

18 December 2011 5.52 a.m.

THE PROCEDURE FOR GETTING AN ALIYAH

3 Year Torah Cycle – Until when?

During the course of thousands of years in the past, a person receiving an Aliyah to the Torah in Eretz Yisroel would not have the same leining as for a person in Chutz La'aretz. Unlike Chutz La'aretz where the Torah cycle is just one year, in Eretz Yisroel until the conquest by the Crusaders at the end of the 11th century, the Torah cycle was 3 years. The Jews then fled to Fustat (Old Cairo) in Egypt and one of the shuls established there was the Eretz Yisroel shul where they continued the 3 year cycle. It would seem according to Rav Yissachar ben Mordechai ibn Susan, (Tikkun Yissachar, Venice: 5339 / 1579, page 33b) who lived in Egypt during the 16th century, that at that period, this 3 year cycle was still in force in this shul.

18 December 2011 6.00 a.m.

HAFTARAH

Haftarahs for 3 Year Cycle

For every Shabbos throughout the year there is a haftarah after the Torah reading. When the Eretz Israel 3 year cycle Torah reading was in force, there had to be three times as many haftarah readings as we have today. From various sources, we today know in which navi and from where in the navi, almost all these haftarahs came from. The main sources are: a) two manuscripts

which were found in the Cairo genizah. One of them gives about 70 haftarahs from Noach until the beginning of sefer Vayikra and the other manuscript gives some of those in sefer Devarim; b) the payetan Yannai who lived in Eretz Yisroel about the 6th century (exact century not known). He composed "kerovos" for the amidah of each Shabbos in accordance with the 3 year cycle and included in these kerovos is the first verse of each haftarah. Only some of these kerovos are extant today.

19 December 2011 4.17 a.m.

WEARING A GARTEL FOR DAVENING

The Snake Gartel

One morning, Rav Eliahu Hakohen Haltamari of Izmir (c.1659 -1729) got up whilst it was still pitch dark, dressed and put on his gartel. That day his gartel felt thicker and stiffer than usual and he found it more difficult to put on. He started learning when suddenly the gartel started coming loose and moving and it then slipped off and landed on the floor. He looked down and saw that it was in fact a poisonous snake. He realised that it was a great miracle that he had not been harmed at all by this venomous snake. To commemorate this miracle, he wrote the book entitled "Eizor Eliyahu" – ("eizor" is the Hebrew for gartel). (see: Mishpacha, English edition, Junior section, 18 Kislev 5772 [14 December 2011], page 3, who acknowledged that it was adapted from the book "Aleinu L'shabeiach" by Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein)

19 December 2011 4.24 a.m.

SEUDAS PURIM

3 days Seudas Purim

Almost everybody has just one seudas Purim on 14 Adar (15 Adar in a walled city). In a "doubtful city" namely one which celebrates Purim on both 14 and 15 Adar, because of a doubt on whether it was walled at the time of Yehoshua bin Nun, one has 2 days seudas Purim. (Mishnah Berurah 688:10) When Purim of a walled city falls on Shabbos, to keep all opinions one has a seudas Purim both on the Shabbos and on the Sunday. (Mishnah Berurah, Sha'ar Hatziun 688:30) In such a case, a "doubtful city" will have a seudas Purim on the Friday, Shabbos and Sunday - namely 3 days seudas Purim.

19 December 2011 5.01 a.m.

THE PROCEDURE FOR GETTING AN ALIYAH

Israel Leads

A man goes to shul in Chutz La'aretz on a Monday and receives an Aliyah to the Torah and the leining is from parshas Korach. On the following day he flies to Eretz Yisroel and on the

Thursday he requests and gets an Aliyah so that he may say birchas hagomel, but he notices that the leining comes from parshas Chukas! What has happened?!! The answer is that that year was a leap year and the 8th day of Pesach was on Shabbos and so the leining was that for Pesach. However in Eretz Yisroel (where there is only one day Yom Tov) that Shabbos was the day after Pesach and so the leining was that for a Shabbos. As a result, Eretz Yisroel leads Chutz La'aretz by one parashah. The equalisation comes when the parshios Matos and Masei are separated in Eretz Yisroel, whereas in Chutz La'aretz they are joined together. (This is the most extreme example of a difference in the parshios between Eretz Yisroel and Chutz La'aretz and lasts for about three and a half months. There are also other cases which are of much shorter duration.)

21 December 2011 3.48 a.m.

ERUV TAVSHILIN (PRACTICAL)

Fat on the Knife

The norm is make eiruv tavshilin using meat, fish or an egg. But one is by no means limited to these foods. According the Gemara (Beitzah 16a) and it is brought in the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 527:6), one can even use the fat scraped from a knife. So in the days before having to make an eiruv tavshilin, scrape off the fat from a knife until you have an accumulated amount of fat which is the size of a kezayis! However, needless to add, it is more respectable for this mitzvah to use meat, fish or an egg!

21 December 2011 3.52 a.m.

THE PROCEDURE FOR GETTING AN ALIYAH

Maximum Days

What is the maximum number of consecutive days that one can follow "the procedure for getting an Aliyah" – or in other words what is the maximum number of consecutive days that one can have Krias Hatorah? In Eretz Yisroel the answer is 10, and it occurs when Chanukah begins on a Friday or Sunday. In such a case one has the 8 days of Chanukah plus the day before and the day after the festival. In Chutz La'aretz, one can go even higher and have 11 days. When Succos begins on a Tuesday, one has the 9 days of the festival plus the day before (Monday) and the day after (Thursday) the festival.

21 December 2011 3.58 a.m.

DRINKING ON PURIM

Bachurim - no Liqueurs

In the north-east of England is the town of Gateshead. In the Jewish world this town is famous for its Yeshivah and other Torah institutions, and the entire Jewish community there is shomrei

mitzvos. The Rav of this town was concerned that the bachurim were overdrinking on Purim and he therefore made a number of takanos to solve this problem. One of them was that the bachurim were not permitted to drink anything but wine. (Mishpacha, English edition, 4 May 2011, page 43)

22 December 2011 4.30 a.m.

ERUV TAVSHILIN (PRACTICAL)

Put Translation on Hebrew side

When making eiruv tavshilin, one makes the declaration "bahadein eiruva yehey ...". The language of this declaration is Aramaic, because that was the language people then spoke, and it is essential that those making this declaration in eiruv tavshilin understand what it means. (Mishnah Berurah, Sha'ar Hatziun, 529:55) In practice, however, probably the majority of people have no idea what it means! The following suggestion would surely help solve this problem for one who is using a siddur with the translation on the opposite page. In all siddurim, the translation (for example: English) of this declaration appears, as with all the prayers, on the English translation side of the siddur, and therefore a person using such a siddur will not take any particular notice of the translation of this declaration. Let this declaration appear in English on the same side as the Hebrew text, directly under the declaration in Aramaic, with a note in English stating that the person should read it in English. (A similar thing can be done with the declaration following bedikas chometz.)

22 December 2011 4.35 a.m.
