



THE RICHMOND HILL COUNTRY SHUL

9225 Bathurst Street, Richmond Hill, Ontario, L4C 6C2, (905)709-SHUL

March 13th, 2010, 27th of Adar, 5770, Parshat Vayakhel-Pekudai,

SHABBAT SCHEDULE

Friday, March 12th, Erev Shabbat

Candle Lighting no later than	6:01 PM
Mincha followed by Kabbalath Shabbat	6:01 PM

Shabbat, Saturday, March 13th,

Shacharit	9:00 AM
Mincha	5:50 PM
Followed by Seuda Shelishit at Shul	
Maariv	7:02 PM
Havdallah (Gaonim)	7:02 PM
(Rabbeinu Tam)	7:34 PM

CLASSES

Rabbi Stern's class will take place on
Sunday at 8:30 PM at the Shul.

All classes are for both men and women
unless otherwise stated.

The Shul's website is now available for
viewing. Please visit it often as it remains a
work in progress and will be regularly
updated. www.countryshul.org.

THOUGHTS ON THE PARSHA

By Rabbi Yaacov Menken

"Moshe gathered all the congregation of the children of Israel, and he said to them, 'these are the things which HaShem has commanded [us] to do. For six days you shall do labor, and the seventh day shall be holy for you...' And Moshe spoke to the entire congregation of the children of Israel, saying, 'this is the thing which HaShem has commanded, saying, "take from yourselves gifts for HaShem; all with a giving heart, let them bring..." [35:1-2, 4-5]

As Moshe stands ready to instruct the Nation of Israel concerning the building of the Mishkan, the Tabernacle, G-d has Moshe take a sudden detour. He talks about Shabbos instead. It seems both out of its proper context, and also superfluous -- this Commandment is described in many other places. Why should it be necessary to repeat the Commandment to observe the Sabbath, and why must it immediately precede building the Mishkan?

To explain this, the Medrash offers a parable:

The king decided to build himself a new palace. But he wasn't satisfied leaving the job with others; rather, he called together leading architects and contractors to discuss how it should be built, and he gave them

instructions about every detail. Every waking moment was spent consulting with yet another expert, watching the workers lay the foundation, or simply dreaming about how this marvelous structure was going to look.

The queen noticed. Meaning, the queen noticed that the king no longer noticed her. So she came into the room during yet another discussion with one more leading architect, and complained to the King that she was being ignored.

The king (much to his credit, and the future of his metaphorical marriage) recognized that she was right. He immediately commanded that a party be held to honor the queen, the very next day. The queen was more important than his new building, and from then on forward he kept that in mind.

Similarly, HaShem cautioned the children of Israel not to forget the Sabbath in their excitement over building the Mishkan. Building the Mishkan was certainly a great Mitzvah, but nonetheless we could not lose sight of our basic priorities. Although some might otherwise have "lost themselves" building the Mishkan, perhaps even arguing that building it was more "meaningful" in terms of their own contact with G-d, the Torah tells us what we must do -- and not do -- in the service of G-d.

In Judaism, the Sabbath is a "basic priority." It is a sign of the unique relationship between Israel and the Creator. Even the building of an earthly home for the Divine Presence cannot take precedence over the Sabbath.

What is the difference between an idealist and a fanatic? Actually, it's very simple. An idealist is someone totally dedicated to ideas with which I agree, while a fanatic is totally dedicated to ideas with which I disagree. Perhaps you need a few more years of reading these classes to recognize that I'm

merely delivering a humble truth, but you should eventually come to see it that way.

You don't like that answer? Admittedly, when it comes to Judaism, there is a better one. An idealist is someone who observes Judaism and Jewish Law as meticulously and carefully as I do, while a fanatic is someone who observes Judaism more meticulously and carefully than I do. "Why do I do all of this? I'm an idealist, I suppose. But Reuven, on the other hand? Why does he go to all that trouble? He's such a fanatic!"

I think this parsha gives us a better answer. Both types of people are dedicated to making the world a better place, and both believe that specific objectives must be achieved to do this. But a fanatic loses sight of more basic priorities. Without even thinking about it, he concludes that "the ends justify the means."

The idealist realizes that preserving the forests is a good thing; the fanatic places metal pegs into trees in order to maim loggers.

The idealist works to reduce the number of abortions for convenience; the fanatic bombs family planning clinics.

The idealist works to establish peace in Israel; the fanatic replants olive trees and fills in roadblocks used by Arab terrorists.

Dedication to ideals doesn't make a fanatic - losing touch with more basic priorities makes a fanatic. You don't break the Sabbath, even to build a Mishkan!

HALACHA CORNER

By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Checking Our Mezuzos

All mezuzos must be checked periodically to verify their kashrus. Everyone who lives in a dwelling (whether he owns it or rents it) is required to check his mezuzos twice in seven years, or once every three- and-a-half years, since it is an established fact that over a period of time mezuzos are liable to become invalid. Age, humidity, rain, location, a paint job and/or other factors may ruin a mezuzah which was originally kosher. Even if one letter is smudged or cracked, the entire mezuzah may no longer be valid and often cannot be fixed. It is imperative, therefore, to check all mezuzos periodically and be prepared to buy replacements.

The three-and-a-half year time frame established by the Rabbis applies only to mezuzos exposed to normal conditions, not to mezuzos that have to weather harsh elements like direct sunlight, exposure to a sprinkler system, a paint job etc. Such mezuzos must be checked more often. [Indeed, some meticulous individuals check all of their mezuzos every Elul.]

Some people are lax about checking their mezuzos, claiming, among other excuses, that it is difficult to find a professional sofer or an examiner who will come to the house, remove all the mezuzos, check them, and re-affix them in short order. Since people are wary of leaving their homes without the protection of the mezuzah for any length of time - and justifiably so - checking mezuzos gets pushed off and sometimes neglected entirely. This should not be allowed to happen.

In a situation when a sofer or an examiner is not accessible, one should still not totally forsake the checking process. As explained earlier, the main purpose of checking is to find out whether or not a mezuzah that was originally kosher became ruined. Technically, anyone who reads Hebrew well and is familiar with the basic layout of a

mezuzah can check if the lettering has faded or if the letters are no longer whole and fully formed; no professional sofer is required for this. Of course, if a question were to arise about a specific letter, then one would need to refer to an halachic authority for a decision.

Obviously, this type of checking suffices only if the mezuzah in question was certified kosher by a professional sofer at the time of purchase. Before one places a mezuzah on his doorpost, he must have it professionally checked to be sure that it was properly written. [Unfortunately, buying a mezuzah from a Jewish-owned establishment is no automatic guarantee that the mezuzah is kosher.] Once, however, the mezuzah was certified as kosher, and a professional is not available, the checking can be done by a layman as described above.

In order to check a mezuzah, it must be removed from the doorpost. If it is removed for only the few moments that it takes to check it, there is no halachic obligation to replace it with another mezuzah. The mezuzah is removed, looked over carefully, and if no problem is found, it is immediately returned to the doorpost. One does not recite a blessing over the mezuzah when re-affixing it to the doorpost.

When mezuzos are removed overnight [and, according to many poskim, even when they are removed for more than several hours], a blessing should be recited when they are re-affixed. If all the mezuzos are re-affixed at the same time, one blessing suffices for all of them. The poskim argue as to whether one who replaced a mezuzah and forgot to recite the blessing can recite the blessing later on. One may conduct himself according to either view.

If the existing mezuzah is pasul and a new one is needed, a blessing is recited over it. The same halachah applies if the existing mezuzah was found to be pasul, but it was

able to be repaired. When it is re-affixed, the blessing is recited.

QUESTION: What can be done if the checking process will take a long time and the house [or room] will be left without a mezuzah?

DISCUSSION: Sometimes the checking process can drag on overnight or even a few days. In such a case, it is improper to leave the house (or any single doorpost) without mezuzos. According to some opinions, the people in the house may even have to move out while the mezuzos are being checked. Obviously, this is a terrible inconvenience and highly impractical.

To avoid this situation, there are some possible alternatives:

1. Buy [or borrow] an extra mezuzah which will replace the mezuzah that is being checked. A blessing would have to be recited when the replacement is put on. This

solution is not practical for a large house that has many mezuzos to be checked.

2. Renounce ownership of one's home for as long as the mezuzos are being checked. This procedure, called hefker, removes halachic ownership from the home and makes it an ownerless entity. Once ownership of the house is renounced, the obligation to put on a mezuzah is lifted. The residents are living in an ownerless property, and they are not obligated to put on mezuzos. [Before re-affixing the mezuzos, one should have in mind that he is once again becoming the owner of the house.]

The proper way of making an item hefker is to renounce ownership in the presence of at least three adults. The adults may be household members. [Some Rishonim maintain that the hefker is valid even when declared in front of one individual or even in front of no one at all. If three adults are not available, one may rely on this view.]

Shabbat Shalom