

כ"ז אלול ה'תשע"ח

BREADY OR NOT: בענין פת ישראל בעשרת ימי תשובה

T¹he עשרת ימי תשובה is a meaningful and important time for us to reflect both on the past year and the future, davening to הקב"ה for forgiveness from our iniquities, and to give us another chance to make amends and start anew. This being so, it seems awfully strange that during these days, we do something most of us never do otherwise, which seems to have no connection to this time period. There are those who always have a מנהג to be מחמיר to eat only פת ישראל, bread baked a Jew. During the עשרת ימי תשובה, the שולחן ערוך brings down the הלכה that everyone should be מחמיר in this regard. While we won't go into the פרטים of the problems involved with פת עכו"ם, it is nevertheless important to discuss the reasoning behind this very interesting הלכה.

Before discussing the ענין of פת ישראל in the עשרת ימי תשובה, we must first discuss the concept of פת ישראל in general. The first mention of פת עכו"ם comes up in the משנה³, delineating the permitted and forbidden foods of גוים. The גמרא there brings down that פת עכו"ם is אסור due to the חשש חתנות, meaning it was prohibited lest you come to enjoy the non-Jew's cooking and come to marry his daughter. The reason בית דין were גזר on certain items like bread, and not others, was because bread back then, and even now to a certain degree, was the main staple of man's diet. The גמרא later⁴ brings down a מעשה in which the ב"ד permitted oils created by non-Jews. רבי שמאלי said that if he was there when it happened, he would've permitted bread as well. His student, רבי יהודה נשיאה, said if they were to do so, they'd be called a "lenient בית דין", bringing a ראיה from a different מנעשה שהיה⁵. If this is true, how come many of us are מקיל in this matter? The ירושלמי⁶ said that another בית דין came and uprooted the original תקנה.

Another answer is given by רבי אלעזר בן צדוק and רבי שמעון בן גמליאל⁷. They want to suggest that since bread was the main staple of man's diet, many people wouldn't take on this תקנה, and any decree that the general public wouldn't be able to fulfill shouldn't be enacted in the first place. We see a similar מעשה in another גמרא⁸ where after the חורבן בהמ"ק, there was a thought by the רבנן to ban meat and wine all year, as they remind us of קרבנות. If this is so, replied יהושע, רבי יהושע, we should ban bread, fruit, and water, as they remind us of other קרבנות and events that went on in the בית המקדש. Through this, רבי יהושע was trying to show the רבנן that there סברא can't be narrowed down to just meat and wine, but to practically everything, and that banning meat and wine will be too much of a טירחא that would be impossible to keep. Similarly, we see that by איסור והיתר, we believe one witness to testify if it was חלב or שומן (fats that are אסור to eat and fats that are מותר to eat), as opposed to the normal requirement of two witnesses. If we didn't have this leniency, we would never be able to eat at restaurants, other people's homes, or even our own homes!⁹

The שולחן ערוך¹⁰ seems to hold that we should be מחמיר regarding פת ישראל, but also says

1 Credits to Rav Eli Zimble for providing the foundation of this דבר תורה

2 שו"ע אורח חיים תרגא

3 עבודה זרה לה:

4 שם לז.

5 עיין משניות עדיות ח.ד (גם הובא בגמ' שם)

6 ירושלמי שבת א.ד (ט):

7 עיין תוספות עבודה זרה לה: ד"ה "מכלל"

8 בבא בתרא ס:

9 רש"י יבמות פח. ד"ה "ואמר לי ברי"

10 שו"ע יורה דעה קיב.א

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people are מיקל in a שעת הדחק. The רמ"א¹¹, on the other hand, says people are מיקל even when פת ישראל is readily available. Being that there's lots of room to be מיקל, what's the whole idea behind being מחמיר during the עשרת ימי תשובה? I would like to offer 3 different answers to put this into perspective.

The ירושלמי¹² teaches that we should always try to eat "purely". However, for those to whom it is harder to do so, they should try to eat "purely" for the days from ראש השנה to יום כפור. Assuming one eats פת ישראל on שבת and יו"ט, and is not eating on יום כפור or צום גדליה, there's really only 5 or 6 days of truly deviating from the norm and being מחמיר. We all know that we can't "pull a fast one" on G-d. Therefore, what's the basis for a short-term acceptance of this חומרא? What can we take from it that will help us throughout the year to come?

When the ערוך brings down this הלכה, the רמ"א¹ brings down that during the עשי"ת, one should do a חשבון הנפש. How does that relate to being מחמיר with פת ישראל? When we do תשובה, we should focus on the everyday occurrences, as opposed to that which rarely or never happens. I know of someone who found out he was lactose intolerant, and changed his מנהג from waiting 3 hours in between meat and dairy to waiting 6. Since he will probably never eat dairy, this doesn't seem like it's such a big deal. However, something like trying to get up earlier every morning to get to שחרית on time is a big deal in the long run.

There is an ענין that during the holiest time of the year, we should take on things we don't normally do that purify ourselves. This is brought down by פסח on ורחץ¹³. We wash ורחץ because when produce come in contact with any of 7 liquids, one of which being water, they are now able to be מקבל טומאה. The hands, which if unwashed are a שני לטומאה, make the water on the כרפס a ראשון, which makes the vegetable a שני¹⁴. By washing on פסח, it's viewed as a "rectification" for not washing the whole year. The ט"ז believes that if on פסח we're being מחמיר on something we don't normally do, קל וחומר we should do something out of the ordinary on עשי"ת! Also, by being מחמיר, we're showing both הקב"ה and ourselves what we're capable of. If we ever feel like we're slipping, we always have some "high point" in our lives to come back to.

The רמ"א¹, when talking about חשבון הנפש, says a ספק עבירה requires more תשובה than a ודאי עבירה. This is because it's hard enough to admit when you're doing something wrong, קל וחומר when it could be looked at as possibly something right. The משנה¹⁵ brings a case that if a כהן were to marry a divorced woman, he can do the עבודה right away, provided he makes a נדר to divorce the woman. It's as if the מציאות of the נדר then took effect. We also see this by an apostate who committed to do תשובה being able to be an עד¹⁶, and by marrying a woman on condition that he's a צדיק, lest he had thoughts of תשובה¹⁷. The mere thought of תשובה is able to change one's status. This isn't to say that just thinking is good. The thought is meant to be a catalyst to motivate one to do complete תשובה.

רב קוק writes¹⁸ that when we learn תנ"ך, we sense the spirit of הקב"ה hovering over us. It's touching us, but it's not. In terms of תנ"ך, what רב קוק is saying that הקב"ה can't totally bring it down to this world, but we have to elevate ourselves a little. We can also apply this principal to תשובה. On the

11 שם ב

12 ירושלמי שבת א.ג. (ח:)

13 ט"ז אורח חיים תעגו.

14 לפרטים, עיין שבת יד. ומסכתות מכשירין וידיים

15 בכורות מה:

16 ש"ך חושן משפט לד.כב.

17 קידושין מט:

18 אורות התורה א.א.

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בתי כנסיות all of our שכינה comes down to the question is, are we willing to meet Him halfway? Are we willing to accept the עול מלכות שמים upon us? This is, in essence, the concept of sin. If one was aware that הקב"ה was in this world, he would never come to sin! May we be זוכה to discover both our true selves, and our true world, a world where הקב"ה is always involved in each and every one of our lives. Through the acceptance and practice of this, we should merit a , לאלתר, כתיבה וחתימה טובה, לחיים טובים ולשלום.