



Parshat Ki Tavo

No 1084:

20 Elul 5765 (24 September 2005)

STARTING POINT

Two Sets of Blessings and Curses - by Rabbi Amnon Bazak

This week's Torah portion describes the ceremony of the blessings and the curses, which was divided up among the different tribes. "These shall stand, to bless the nation, on Mount Grizim when you cross the Jordan: Shimon, Levi, Yehuda, Yissachar, Yosef and Binyamin. And these shall stand with the curses on Mount Eival: Reuven, Gad, Asher, Zevulun, Dan, and Naftali." [Devarim 27:12-13]. However, as the passage continues there is something that is not perfectly clear. What, in fact, are the exact blessings and curses? On one hand, right after the command there appears a list of "curses," recited by the Levites (27:14-26), which might be assumed to be the curses mentioned earlier. This is in fact the way Rashi and the Rashbam understood the passage. On the other hand, since at this point there is no corresponding list of blessings, it is possible to view a different passage which does list both blessings and curses, the "Tochacha" – reprimands - in Chapter 28, as the practical example of the blessings and the curses. This is the approach of Ibn Ezra. Perhaps a hint of this interpretation can be seen in the fact that in the beginning of Chapter 28 the word "blessed" appears six times (28:3-6) as does the word "cursed" (28:16-19), which evidently corresponds to the six tribes that stood on each mountain during the ceremony. In any case, it is clear that there are two sets of curses in this week's portion, one in Chapter 27 and one in Chapter 28. How are the two sets related, why are they both needed?

Evidently the two different sets represent two different approaches to the obligation of performing the mitzvot. The passage of the reprimand, which explicitly includes both blessings and curses, is an expression of the idea that fulfilling the Torah is the correct and proper way to live in this world: Observing the mitzvot will lead to blessings, while abandoning them will lead to curses and a great deal of suffering. This illustrates the link between following G-d's commands and worldly existence, which depends directly on the practices of Bnei Yisrael. It explains why the Torah places such an emphasis on the influence of observing the mitzvot and in parallel on abandoning them: "You will be cursed in the city and you will be cursed in the fields. Your basket and your bowl will be cursed..." [28:16-17].

The problem with the above approach is that it implies that man has the right to choose between a blessing and a curse. That is, it might be legitimate for man to accept the danger of curses and suffering if he wants to refuse to obey the mitzvot. But this is not true. The obligation to observe the Torah and

שבת

22/9

the mitzvot stems not only from the fact that this is the path that will lead to a full life. Rather, it is a consequence of the obligation of Bnei Yisrael to serve G-d, who redeemed them from Egypt and guarded over them in the desert. Thus, the first list of curses is meant to imply that even if one who observed the mitzvot would not be blessed, one who did not fulfill them would still be cursed. By answering "Amen," the people accept on themselves the obligation to fulfill the mitzvot, no matter if there is a reward for doing them or not. This also explains why the Torah does not give details of the curses but only uses a general description. Before the second passage, where Bnei Yisrael are given a choice between two paths, it is important to emphasize the basic obligation of observing the mitzvot, irrespective of whether there is a reward or not.

POINT OF VIEW

A View from "The End of the Earth" - by Rabbi Yisrael Rozen

"And G-d will scatter you among all the nations, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth" [Devarim 28:64]. "If your exile will be at the end of the sky, your G-d will gather you and take you away from there" [30:4].

This week's article is written far away, from a viewpoint at "the end of the earth." I have "disengaged" from the disengagement, which has occupied this column for the last few months from many different angles. I have gone to visit my family who are spending time in Melbourne, Australia, at "the end of the earth," and perhaps even at "the end of the sky." My son is the director of the "Torah Mitzion Kollel" in Melbourne, and he lives there with my daughter-in-law and grandchildren, who study in the local schools. They serve as educational messengers in the far away community.

This gives me an opportunity to look at a Jewish community abroad, as I have seen it during my visit. Obviously, this place is not the same as every other one, but rather every country and every community has its own characteristics. However, the different communities in the western world have much in common from the point of view of Zionism and their approach to the Zionist concept. Below I give some of my impressions of

To dedicate an issue
of Shabbat B'Shabbato
or to advertise
please call 212-465-9234
or e-mail sbs@rza.org.

this visit. For a change, this will be a very positive article without any criticism.

The Jews Have Gathered Together

I have nothing but praise for the institution of the "community," in spite of the traits of separation and isolation from all those who remain outside of the accepted circles. The positive aspects of this institution far outweigh any negative side, and there is not enough space in this short article to go into detail. In the last decade, the concept of a community has been introduced into Israel, with many cities adopting the format of a community as it is practiced in the Diaspora. I interpret the words of our sages, "the synagogues and Batei Midrash of Babylon will be moved to Eretz Yisrael" [Megilla 29a], not only as messianic vision. Introducing the community life style from abroad into Israel is a partial fulfillment of this prophesy, before the time when the actual synagogues and study houses will all be moved, including men, women, and children, like pigeons who come home to roost.

I was pleasantly surprised to find "at the ends of the earth" a Zionist community full of Torah-true life, including Torah study, regular scheduled meetings of groups of all ages, with full participation of young girls and women. Much of this spirit has been developed and is encouraged by Israeli visitors, many of them connected to the blessed Torah Mitzion Kollel institutions. These are run by graduates of Hesder yeshivot, with the aid of young women of the overseas branch of "Sheirut Leumi." And, speaking of the women, we cannot ignore the active participation of the women of the community in events related to Torah and culture in general. This type of activity has also been imported "from Babylon" and is becoming common in cities and towns in Israel, much to our great benefit.

The strong bond between the Australian community and Eretz Yisrael can be seen in what is almost an obligatory practice of a year of study in Israel, boys and girls alike, after they graduate from high school. A recent trend has been to stretch this time in Israel to two years. Those who return and do not make Aliyah in the end provide an Israeli link, made up of people that understand Hebrew and often speak it well. The bond to the people living in Zion can be seen in great compassion and in the finely detailed knowledge of what is happening in this small corner of the world on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. For example, the community of Melbourne regularly contributes to the "war effort" against terrorism by reciting Tehillim three times a day, a project that has existed for the four years of the latest intifada.

What I have described is evidently typical of many communities in the welfare states, which are close to the spirit of the Mizrahi. But I did not expect to find such close cooperation between the various sects of Orthodox Judaism. Who would have thought that it would be possible to have a joint Torah seminar including Mizrahi, Chabad, the yeshiva approach (Mir and Lakewood), and others, all in a building belonging to the general Zionists? Would you believe that the Kashrut was accepted by all the different sects, and that the seminar was sponsored by the Mizrahi? I have no reason to believe that these are unnatural facets of the Melbourne community, and I

assume that this can serve as a model for many other communities in the Diaspora. The important secret in developing such a community evidently depends on the personalities of the leaders and their desire for mutual cooperation.

I would describe this community, "at the ends of the earth," by the words of the prophet, "we heard songs from the edge of the earth" [Yeshayahu 24:16].

"And He Will Return and Gather You Together"

In spite of the above words of praise, we must not forget that this is the Diaspora. The passage of curses that we read in this week's Torah portion ends with the problems of exile, including the verse quoted above: "And G-d will scatter you among all the nations, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth." There can be no doubt that the exile of Australia is included in this phrase of "the end of the earth." The most serious problem of the exile in our times, in all the different lands, is the rising and frightening rate of intermarriage (the current worldwide rate is 56%, including the statistics for Israel). The willing self destruction of the Jewish nation is a clear curse of exile, and there are those who call it the "White Holocaust." As far as I am concerned, this is hinted at by the verse in this week's portion: "Your sons and daughters will be given over to another nation, and you will see this with your eyes and want them all day long, but your hands will not have any strength" [Devarim 28:32]. Just so!

However, together with the mention of the various exiles, "from one end of the earth to the other," we will read next week about what may be a different exile, "at the end of the sky." See the second verse quoted at the beginning of this article. What is the difference between the two places? We might say as follows: There might be an exile where the Jews are not harmed physically and without mixed marriages, a place which is hermetically sealed away from outside influence, where Torah and heavenly activities abound, a place which is not at "the end of the earth" but at "the end of the sky." Even so, such a place is still "exile." This is also a place from which "your G-d will gather you and take you away" (see above).

SERMON BY A GUEST

"I Was a Child Four Years Old" – Praying During the High Holy Days with Agnon - by Rachel Ofer, Herzog College, Alon Shevut

The book "Yamim Nora'im" was written by Shai Agnon as something to be taken to the synagogue on the High Holy Days and looked at during pauses between the prayers. It contains a combination of Midrash and Agadda, customs, and Chassidic stories, all related to the holiday period. In the introduction to the second edition, Agnon discussed the quality of his work. "I did not add anything of my own, except as an artist who is given silk in order to make a garment, who adds some of his own threads." In this book, Agnon repressed his own creative nature and mainly compiled and edited existing works.

In spite of this, Agnon included in the introduction a short story which I think is beautiful and sensitive. It can be viewed

not only as a key to the subject of Yom Kippur in Agnon's work but more generally, to all of Agnon's work. In this short story, Agnon describes the experience of a four year old boy who remains within the protective range of his father's talit, feeling the holy atmosphere of Yom Kippur. When modern parents begin to wonder whether to take their small children with them to the synagogue on the holidays, they should keep in mind this small child and how significant the events of the day are for him:

"The sky was pure and the earth was quiet, all the streets were clean, and a fresh spirit could be felt in the world. I was a child at the age of four, dressed in holiday clothing, and one of my relatives took me to my father and my grandfather in the synagogue. The synagogue was filled with people wrapped in a talit with a golden band on their heads, dressed in white with books in their hands... The candles gave out a wonderful light and a good scent. An old man crouched before the ark, with his talit stretched to below his heart, with sweet and pleasant sounds coming from beneath his talit... I did not yet know how to express my thoughts in a spiritual way, and I did not understand the concept of holiness and glory, but I have no doubt that at that moment I felt the sanctity of the place, the sanctity of the day, and the sanctity of the people..."

The boy, who suddenly felt that this wonderful unity among all the people and between the people and the Almighty would not last forever, broke out in a heart-rending cry. According to the rest of the story, it seems that the boy, who had internalized the power of the prayers, had experienced a deep feeling of attachment to the holiness. This was a foundational experience which had an affect on his later life as an adult. In his other stories of Yom Kippur, Agnon describes other experiences of crisis and of difficulties in becoming attached to the experiences of prayer and sanctity. But the wonderful childhood memory returned to strengthen his soul, allowing him to reunite once again as an adult with the prayers and the sanctity.

TORAH, SOCIETY, AND GOVERNMENT

The Placenta - by Rabbi Uri Dasberg

The daily Talmud study of Daf Yomi a few weeks ago included a law that it is permitted to bury the placenta (on Shabbat) in order to maintain the warmth of a newly born child (Shabbat 129b). Why was special permission needed for this? What violation of Shabbat would be involved in burying the placenta? According to the Mishna Berura, such an act was considered by the ancients to "provide a magical benefit," but this matter is not clear to us at all.

However, there has been a recent new discovery which might help clarify this matter. Scientists have found that the umbilical cord includes stem cells that are the basic foundation for the life of man. If we would know how to maintain the umbilical cord for as long as the child lives, it might serve as a source for personal immunization or specific medicines (such as a way to fight anemia, Parkinson's disease, or Alzheimer's disease). As of now, there is a bank of "umbilical blood" that is being stored abroad. As soon as a baby is born (any slight delay cancels any possibility of using this blood), a sample of blood from the

umbilical cord is placed in a sterile bag, and this is saved under proper conditions to be used when needed.

What problem does this present on Shabbat? The act of gathering the blood sample requires the umbilical cord to be pierced, coloring the clear fluid in the sample bag with blood, closing the sample bag with a knot, pasting on a label identifying the mother and child, handling the bag (which might be forbidden because of the laws of "muktzeh"), and possibly an act performed on Shabbat in preparation for a weekday. We can assume that even if the sages understood the importance of preserving this special blood, they did not engage in the first few actions mentioned above. They were most probably concerned about the last issue, that of preparing on Shabbat for a weekday. This raises a good question: why is this in fact not a forbidden act of preparation on Shabbat?

One answer to the above question is given by the Magen Avraham, that the prohibition of preparing on Shabbat for a weekday is only relevant for an act that entails a large effort. One may be lenient with respect to this prohibition in a case where a person would be greatly upset or if there is a possibility of great loss. Now imagine how a person would feel one day if he discovered that he could not be cured of a malignant tumor because many years before somebody refrained from collecting a sample of his umbilical blood in order to avoid preparing on Shabbat for a weekday.

The preparation is not for a specific day of the week, rather in this case it is meant to prepare for the lifetime of the person involved. This includes about 14% of the time that is Shabbat. Some of the activities involved, mentioned above, can be postponed until after Shabbat (examples are pasting the labels on the sample bag and tying the bag closed). The bag can be handled "in an unusual or backhanded way," to avoid the problem of "muktzeh." Obviously, the sample will not be sent on Shabbat to a blood bank outside the country.

Reference: Rabbi Yosef Eitan, "Techumin," volume 25, pages 79-87

MOUNT MORIAH

Rosh Hashanah in the Temple - by Rabbi Yitzchak Levy, Yeshivat Har Etzion

Rosh Hashanah -- Divine Royalty in the Aspect of Time

On Rosh Hashanah, we take note of the revelation of Divine Royalty in the world. The date emphasizes the fact that the world was created, taking note of the beginning of the creation, as is said in the prayers: "This is the day when your activities began." The creation of the world marked the recognition by the world and by the creatures that the Almighty is the King of the Universe. There is an intimate internal link between the memory of the creation and the recognition of the Almighty as the ultimate King.

The special quality of the day of Rosh Hashanah is in the crowning of the Almighty. This is the day that the nation of Bnei Yisrael takes the initiative in order to declare that the Almighty is King. The significance of this crowning can be seen

in the declaration by the prophet: "You are my witnesses... and I am G-d" [Yeshayahu 43:10]. According to the Midrash, "If you will be my witnesses, I am G-d, but if you are not my witnesses, it is as if I am not G-d." It is as if the royalty of G-d depends on the nation of Yisrael. The Almighty is our father, our creator, and our G-d, due to the fact that He created the world, and He guides it and watches over it. But, on the other hand, His royalty depends directly on us. The reason for this is that royalty is not simply a title but requires subjects who are ruled. There can be no king if there is no kingdom that recognizes his majesty. The word "malchut," royalty, is from the same root as "melech," to rule. The subjects are what make a king into a ruler, and on Rosh Hashanah the task of Yisrael is to declare the royalty – to declare to the world that the Almighty is our King. Blowing the shofar is an act declaring that G-d is the King.

The Temple – Divine Royalty in Space

The Temple is the place where the Divine Royalty is revealed on the earth. This revelation first appeared in "Shirat Hayam," the epic poem sung by Bnei Yisrael at the Red Sea, when the nation followed the defeat of Pharaoh and his nation by declaring, "G-d will reign forever and ever" [Shemot 15:18]. This is the reason for the accompanying verse, "You have created a place where you will dwell, G-d, your hands have created a Temple" [15:17]. The sages added more about the link between the epic poem and the Temple. The verse, "This is my G-d, I will glorify Him" [15:2], is interpreted to mean, "I will build a beautiful Temple for Him." The verse, "You have used your strength to lead to your holy dwelling place" [15:13], has also been interpreted as referring to the Temple.

The fact that the Temple is the royal seat of the Almighty is also related to the fact that this is where the creation of the world began – from the "Even Hashetiya," the foundation stone where the creation started. The Temple bears witness to the creation of the world, and in this way it also bears witness to the Royalty of G-d.

Rosh Hashanah is the day that Adam was created. He was created at the site of the Altar. "He was created from the place of his penitence" – that is, from the place where a man can mend his ways and give a report of his actions to the Almighty, in order to justify his creation. Thus, this site is the place where the royalty of G-d is best recognized. Man, who was created at the position of the Altar, crowns G-d over the world, which was created at the Even Hashetiya. Thus, the Temple serves as the royal palace of the King of Kings. In the innermost room, there is a throne, the "Ark of the G-d of Hosts, who sits among the Keruvim" [I Shmuel 4:4]. We have been commanded to guard the royal palace because of the honor and glory due to the king who dwells there. The response to a blessing in the Temple is, "Blessed is His glorious royalty, forever." This also shows why the day in the Temple starts when the sun shines at the entrance, a way of recognizing the Divine royalty over the entire creation – "Let G-d reign forever, your G-d, Zion, will rule from generation to generation, Hallelu-ya." [Tehillim 146:10].

Rosh Hashanah in the Temple

"With trumpets and the sound of a shofar, give praise before G-d, the King" [Tehillim 98:6]. "On Rosh Hashanah, the shofar blast is longest and the trumpets are short, because the main mitzva of the day is the shofar" [Rosh Hashanah 26b]. Only in the Temple, directly in front of the King, are both the shofar and the trumpets blown together, combining the man-made trumpet with the divinely-made shofar. This combination is a hint of the essence of the Temple. It is the site of the revelation of G-d and also the site where man can mend his ways.

"When Rosh Hashanah occurred on Shabbat, the shofar would be blown in the Temple but not in the rest of the land" [Rosh Hashanah 29b]. There are two reasons why the shofar would be blown specifically in the Temple, even on Shabbat. First, those in the Temple knew exactly when the new year had begun, since this was established by the Sanhedrin, who sat in the Temple. In addition, this was the site of the sacrifices, where man showed his insignificance in relation to the royalty of the Almighty. According to the Talmud Yerushalmi, the fact that the shofar is blown in the Temple on Shabbat is based on strict halacha, stemming from the fact that the Temple is the site of Divine royalty. Just as the Temple is an expression of the Divine royalty in space, so does Shabbat express the Divine royalty in terms of time. On Shabbat, we refrain from any act of creation, thus demonstrating the royalty of G-d.

Let us pray that we will succeed in our judgment this year for all the nation of Yisrael, and that we will be found worthy of the return of the Divine Shechina to Zion and the service of the sacrifices in Jerusalem.

A LESSON FOR THE CHILDREN

The Spark of Judaism - by Rabbi Yikhat Rozen, Merkaz Neria, Kiryat Malachi

This is a story that began at a time when many Jews came to our country from Morocco. As is well known, it is a great privilege to be buried in the holy land, and those who came here wanted to transfer the bones of some righteous men who had died years earlier and were buried in Morocco. The problem was that the Moslems of Morocco knew that these were especially holy graves, and if they had any idea that the Jews wanted to take the bones with them they would have harmed the Jews. In order to avoid tragic events, the Jews carried out their task in strict secrecy. They removed the bones from the graves in the middle of the night, hiding them in unusual types of wrappings and then smuggled them in a roundabout way into Eretz Yisrael.

Thus, the young man Chaim Pinto found himself carrying a very heavy black suitcase on a boat going towards France. From there, he took a train to a transfer point where he would be able to sail for Eretz Yisrael without too many searches along the way.

Chaim rode on the train, until he saw that Shabbat was approaching. The train stopped at a small French village, and Chaim saw that he would not reach the next stop before Shabbat. What could he do? Where would he spend Shabbat?

Chaim left the train without knowing where to go. He did not know anybody in the village, and when he stopped people to ask they could not tell him where there was a Jewish community. With no alternative and with a heavy heart, he left the suitcase in the baggage storage of the station, and sat down on a bench to say the Shabbat prayers, not knowing what he would do next.

Suddenly, he heard a voice in the dark, behind him: "Chaim?" He turned around, startled. It was Rosa (not her real name), who had lived in his home city in Morocco many years before. She was a young girl at the time, and she had fallen in love with a Gentile and married him. Her family and the rest of the community had refused to have any contact with her, and she left the city with her Gentile husband. Since then, she had disappeared from their lives.

Quickly, Rosa understood what had happened to him, and she invited Chaim to visit her at home during Shabbat. The house is very close, she told him, no more than half an hour ride in the local trolley. He refused politely, but Rosa was not about to give up on the kindness that had come her way. She begged him and offered to walk with him to the house. He finally agreed, and they walked for about two or three hours to Rosa's house. Her husband, who accompanied them at first, made a sour face, but he did not say a word. He rode on the trolley.

All during Shabbat, Rosa gave Chaim a very pleasant time. Her husband, on the other hand, almost ignored him completely. At the end of Shabbat, Chaim thanked them and left, and he returned to the train. He continued his trip and arrived safely in Eretz Yisrael with his precious cargo.

Many years passed. Rabbi Chaim Pinto became famous (today he is the rabbi of the city of Kiryat Malachi), and many people come to his house asking to be blessed. One day, a strange woman appeared at his house, with an appearance of a religious woman – dressed modestly, with a look of kindness on her face.

"Don't you recognize me, Rabbi?" she asked. "I am Rosa. I had many different experiences in my life, but the turning point was that Shabbat long ago when you visited me. After you left, my husband was very angry and he yelled at me. 'Why did you bring a dirty Jew here as a guest? Haven't you abandoned your stupid religion yet?' I tried to defend myself and to explain that I was simply trying to help someone who had a problem, but he would not listen to me. In the end, that weekend led to our separation and to my full return to Judaism. I married a religious Jew, and we have decided to move to Israel and live here."

The link to righteous men of old had rekindled the spark of Judaism in this woman's soul and helped her to repent completely.

(Source: Told by Rabbi Chaim Pinto, Kiryat Malachi)

THE WAYS OF THE FATHERS (Pirkei Avot)

Chapter 3 Mishna 9 - by Rabbi Yehuda Shaviv

"Rabbi Shimon says: One who is going along a path and studying but stops his studies to declare, How nice is this tree and how nice is this field, is considered by the verse as if he were worthy of death."

This Mishna not only praises Torah study but implies that it is unique, and that all other values are insignificant when compared to it – including values that have an intrinsic worth, such as showing appreciation for beautiful divine creations. Only the study of Torah justifies the existence of man, and anybody who does not take this into account is worthy of a punishment of death.

This declaration is very suitable for Rabbi Shimon. When he was occupied with study, he would not even stop in order to pray (see Shabbat 11a). When he left the cave where he had studied with his son for twelve years and saw people occupied in worldly matters, he wondered how they could "put aside eternal life and occupy themselves with temporary matters" [ibid 33b].

However, the theme of this Mishna is still in need of some clarification. Rabbi Y. Dadon quotes the approach of Rabbi A.Y. Kook (in his collection, "Sichat Avot"): "One who looks at the world that the Almighty created, without any connection with his studies, and says, how nice is this tree, not in relation to the Torah but as a pause in his study, thereby separating between the creation and the Torah – such a person is worthy of death. This is true because the beautiful tree is an act of G-d, and He created good trees so that people would benefit from them, as a way of achieving the love of G-d, as the Rambam explained (Hilchot Yeshodei Torah 2:2). It is wrong to see this as separate from the Torah. Rather, from within the influence of the Torah, he should say, 'How beautiful this tree is.'" This idea can be traced to the sayings of Chassidic rabbis.

THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

Yisrael are Responsible for Each Other - by the Department of Education, World Mizrahi

In these days of a crisis that threatens to destroy the unity of Israeli society, it is important to strengthen and deepen the methods of struggling against current challenges. At a time when there are many different opinions together with arguments and disagreements, the role of the educational system should be to help bring about a public discussion that is managed with tolerance and mutual respect. Today, more than ever, it is important for us to show friendship and unity among all sectors of the nation. The very fabric of society will be tested by its ability to forge paths of communication and to increase the mutual responsibility of different sectors of the public. As a means to accomplishing these objectives, World Mizrahi has taken on a project of distributing school bags to children who need help.

Two thousand school bags with notebooks and writing implements have been given to children living in hotels and

other temporary residences who were expelled from Gush Katif with their families. The operation was initiated and organized by World Mizrahi together with the newspaper Hatzofeh.

A letter of introduction to the students was written by Mr. Kurt Rothschild, Chairman of the worldwide center of Mizrahi, Mr. Eliezer Shefer, chairman of Amit, and Mr. Solly Saks, general manager of Mizrahi, stating that Mizrahi together with tens of thousands of households in Israel and in the world want to show the students their appreciation as pioneers who helped build settlements in Katif and in the Shomron. Mizrahi as a movement is extremely upset that they were expelled from their homes and wishes that they will be able to build new homes in Eretz Yisrael and to rebuild the educational institutions where they studied.

Dozens of volunteers joined the "school bag for every student" project, packing the bags and distributing them in 19 hotels and dwelling sites in Jerusalem, Ashkelon, Chafetz Chaim, Shaalavim, Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh, Be'er Sheva, and the city being built near Netivot.

THE CHAIN OF HALACHA

What is Forbidden Before Havdallah? - by Rabbi Yosef Tzvi Rimon, Rabbi of Southern Alon Shevut and a teacher in Yeshivat Har Etzion

Before reciting Havdalah, it is forbidden to do any work and to eat. This is the simple meaning of the passages in the Talmud, specifically in Shabbat 103b and Pesachim 50b and 105a. It also corresponds to the ruling of the Rambam: "When the day is over, it is forbidden to begin to eat and drink or to do any labor or taste any food before one recites the Havdalah" [Hilchot Shabbat 29:5].

The reason that work is forbidden is simple, since labor is forbidden on Shabbat, and this continues even after the stars have come out as long as one has not recited the Havdalah and ended the Shabbat (Mishna Berura 299:33). With respect to the prohibition of eating, perhaps the reason is a fear that one may become busy and forget to recite the Havdallah. While in general it is permitted to eat something small before the time to do a mitzva has come, in this case it is forbidden to eat anything at all or to drink anything but water. Perhaps the rules of Havdalah were made especially stringent. The Mishna Berura understood that the sages specifically forbid a person to taste anything at all, not because of a fear that he might forget (299:6), and he therefore writes that even a small taste of something is forbidden. Why is this so? Perhaps the reason is that the sages wanted to have the first thing tasted after the end of Shabbat to be the Havdalah wine.

The Talmud writes that one who eats something before Havdalah will die a painful death but notes that the wise men of Rabbi Ashi's house allowed one to drink water before Havdallah (Pesachim 105a). This corresponds to the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch: It is forbidden to eat or drink before Havdallah, but it is permitted to drink water. "It is forbidden to eat anything, or even to drink wine or other drinks except for water, starting from when it becomes dark, until the Havdallah

is recited" [299:1]. Some rabbis have written that one is not even allowed to drink water (Aruch Ashulchan 299:1).

In the Shulchan Aruch, it is also clear that one who started eating on Shabbat is permitted to continue eating even after it is dark. Thus, one who starts the "seudah shelishit" before sunset can continue even after dark. This ruling is relevant only for a meal, but one is required to stop drinking if this is not part of a meal, either because drinking is not considered an important activity (Rashbam and Meiri, Pesachim 105), or because every drink is considered by itself and a series of drinks is not treated as one long event that spans the time of sunset. It is not clear if eating pieces of cake is considered a single meal or separate snacks in this sense. One should probably be stringent about this unless there is a strong need for leniency.

After reciting "Atta chonantanu" in the shemonah essrei or after reciting the words "Blessed is He who separates between the holy and the secular," it is permitted to perform work (Shabbat 150b, Shulchan Aruch 299:10). Thus, one who has not yet prayed Maariv should be reminded to say, "Blessed is He..." before doing any work, including lighting the Havdalah candle. The Magen Avraham notes that it is permissible to do work in this case, but that it is still prohibited to eat anything until the Havdalah itself has been recited (299:13).

A person who has no wine: If he expects some wine to arrive, he should wait for it until Sunday at noon (Mishna Berura 186:19) and not eat until it comes. If this is very difficult for him, he should eat right after reciting the blessing in Maariv (Mishna Berura 296:17, 296:21). A person who believes that he will not obtain any wine (at least until Sunday at noon) may eat right away. If and when he obtains some wine, he should recite the Havdalah (as long as it is before sundown on Tuesday – see 299:6).



This publication is distributed by the RELIGIOUS ZIONISTS OF AMERICA - MIZRACHI and by THE ZOMET INSTITUTE OF ALON SHVUT. It is an extract from SHABBAT B'SHABBATO, a weekly bulletin distributed in hundreds of synagogues in Israel and has been translated by Moshe Goldberg. If you are interested in sponsoring an issue of Shabbat B'Shabbato, contact the RZA Mizrahi office at 212-465-9234 or mizrachi@rza.org.

**Vote for
the
Soul
of Israel**



REGISTER NOW

<http://www.VoteTorah.org>