

A Taste of Torah Rise & Shine

By Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

Chometz (leaven) is something that is usually discussed exclusively around Pesach time. After all, the only time chometz is banned is for the duration of that holiday, right?

Wrong. The fact is, chometz was permanently banned from being brought in the Tabernacle or Temple. There were, however, two exceptions: a Korban Todah (Thanksgiving Offering), which included leavened bread, and a special requirement, discussed in this week's Torah reading, to bring two loaves of leavened bread on the holiday of Shavuos.

Why was chometz brought specifically on Shavuos? The Kli Yakar (Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim Luntschitz [1550-1619]) explains that our Sages compare the Yetzer Hora (Evil Inclination) to leavening; just as leavening is an external agent which causes the dough to inflate, so, too, the Yetzer Hora is an external entity which causes one's ego to swell, leaving the desire to draw close to G-d in the dust. Although in our everyday lives we must struggle with the Yetzer Hora, we prefer to keep that which symbolizes evil far away from the apex of service of G-d, namely, the Temple. On Passover,

as well, the time when the Jewish Nation was born, we are given a special period when we are relieved from the unrelenting pressure of the Yetzer Hora, the chometz that has become so much a part of our consciousness; hence, all chometz is banned.

Shavuos, though, is different. Shavuos is the time when G-d gave the Jewish People the Torah. The Torah is not merely a book of laws that order us around; its study and observance allow us to rise above our lower selves, our Yetzer Hora, the base desires that pull us away from G-d. The Talmud tells us that G-d, as it were, states, "I have created the Evil Inclination, and I have created the Torah as its remedy." (Kiddushin 30b) Thus, Shavuos is a time when we are given the tools to deal with, and overcome, the Yetzer Hora. On that auspicious day, when we relive the power of the Giving of the Torah, we can bring chometz to the Temple.

As we approach that special day when G-d presented the Torah, His greatest treasure, to us, His Chosen Nation, let us renew our commitment to studying and living the only true means of overcoming our Yetzer Hora and moving towards spiritual perfection.

Ask the Rabbi e-Torah

Yoel Strimling of St. Louis wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Is one allowed halachically to delete e-mail that includes Divrei Torah [Words of Torah]? Can one rely on the fact that since it has no physical being,

it is not the same as a piece of paper that has [Words of] Torah written on it?

Also, Shammai Linsky of Brooklyn wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Stories For The Soul

Nothing But the Truth

As soon as Rabbi Aharon Kotler escaped to the United States at the beginning of World War II, he established the famous wartime Vaad Hatzalah (Rescue Committee), which helped sustain Jewish refugees in Europe, Russia and Shanghai.

At one point, he went to the American Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Morgenthau, a Jew, to ask for his assistance.

Accompanied by Mr. Irving Bunim who acted as the interpreter, Reb Aharon, speaking in Yiddish, pleaded with Mr. Morgenthau for government cooperation in the rescue work.

"If I am seen to favor my Jewish brethren, I will soon be out of office," replied Mr. Morgenthau.

To this Reb Aharon told the interpreter to reply: "Saving Jewish lives is more important than holding even twenty positions like yours."

At first the interpreter refused to translate these words. Noticing the argument, Mr. Morgenthau insisted that he be told what Reb Aharon had said, and the interpreter acquiesced.

Reb Aharon's reply so impressed him that he said, "If so, I will do my utmost and face the consequences."

As it turned out, Mr. Morgenthau's efforts proved invaluable in setting up the War Refugee Board, and he continued in office until after the death of President Roosevelt, who had appointed him.

When we reap our harvest, the Torah commands us to leave some of the crops remaining in the field, so that the poor can gather them for themselves (Leviticus 23:22). We learn

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Interpersonal Issues

Acceptable Signs for Identifying Lost Objects

The number of pieces is another means of identification. Four example, specifying the number of coins in the wallet would suffice. Again, a common number - such as ten pens in a package - would not be valid, since packages of

pens commonly contain ten of them.

Adapted with permission from "The Halachos of Other People's Money" by Rabbi Pinchas Bodner (Feldheim Publishers)

Ask the Rabbi

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What is the halacha concerning Torah which is stored on devices such as disk drives, etc.? Is it permissible to erase at will?

Dear Yoel and Shammai,

The Talmud lists seven names of G-d that may not, under any circumstances be erased - even if a scribe makes an error when writing a Sefer Torah. The Shulchan Aruch states that even *one letter* from these names may not be erased. Other Kisei Kodesh [Holy Writings] have less stringent rules, but are generally forbidden to erase.

An apparently similar question was posed to Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, zt'l, regarding erasing blessings and Torah from audio cassettes. He wrote that since the words are not stored in the form of 'letters', he can find no clear prohibition against 'erasing' them. One might reason, however, that 'letters' are in fact present on a computer monitor.

On the other hand, the letters are not directly written by human hand, and in fact are not written at all in the conventional sense. They are not a continuous form; rather they are comprised of flashing pixels of light as the screen is "refreshed" many times per second.

We presented these questions about erasing and deleting Divrei Torah from computer screens and software to Rabbi Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg, shlita. He ruled it is permitted to erase them and delete them in the normal manner.

Sources:

Talmud - Tractate Shavuot, page 35a.

Shulchan Aruch - Yoreh Deah 276:9.

Pischei Teshuva - Yoreh Deah 283, note Beis.

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Stories for the Soul

Continued from front

from here that we can never become so wrapped up in our business or careers, that we forget our responsibility to protect the lives and wellbeing of others.

We must realize that this is why Hashem gave us the resources that we have in the first place.

Adapted with permission from Shul-Week by Rabbi Boruch Lederman.