



APRIL 25, 2026
8 IYAR 5786
PARSHAS
ACHREI MOS-
KEDOSHIM

FAMILY TORAH *Journal*

THE WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF
THE DALLAS COMMUNITY KOLLEL

TORAH PERSPECTIVES

RABBI MOSHE ROTHSTEIN



MOLECH

This week's parshiyos present us with a easy mitzvah: the prohibition of offering one's child to Molech—"You shall not pass your offspring to Molech." (20:1-5) According to Rashi, this commandment is violated when a father hands his child over to a priest of Molech, who then passes the child through fire as part of idolatrous worship.

The Rambam, however, understands a bit differently. He explains that the father would give the child to the priest, who would then return the child to him; the father himself would perform the ritual of passing the child through fire. (Whether the child was actually harmed in this process is itself a matter of dispute among the commentaries.)

What relevance does this mitzvah have for us today? The Torah is eternal—its teachings are meant to resonate in every generation. Yet in 2026, it seems far removed from our reality. While parents may occasionally feel overwhelmed especially after a long Yom Tov like Pesach, it is unthinkable that anyone would consider offering a child to Molech, so what is Hashem's message for us with this Mitzvah?

The Gemara in Sanhedrin presents a perplexing law: if a person were to offer all of his children to Molech, he would be exempt from punishment, because the Passuk says "...[he] who gives from his offsprings...". This seems counterintuitive. Surely such a person is deserving of the most severe condemnation—why would he be treated more leniently than one who sacrifices only some of his children?

To address this, Rabbi Daniel Glatstein connects us back to the story of Yaakov and Esav. The Midrash relates that Rivka experienced a turbulent pregnancy. What she thought was a single child reacted strongly to different environments: when she passed a מקום תורה, the baby wanted to exit; when she passed a place of idol worship, it reacted as well.

The Brisker Rav, citing the Chassam Sofer, explains that Rivka's distress stemmed from a profound concern: not merely the intensity of the movement, but its inconsistency. She feared raising a child who lacked clear values—one who would simply follow whatever influence was strongest at the moment. Such a

continued on page 2 >>>

Meaning — BEHIND THE *Minhag*



RABBI HILLEL MULLER

BOW AND ARROW

There is a Jewish custom in some communities that on the 33rd day of the Omer count, known as Lag BaOmer, children go out into the fields and play with bows and arrows.

The B'nei Yissaschar, (Ma'amarei Chodesh Iyar 3:4) explains this custom is that this day marks the passing of one of the greatest sages of the Mishnah, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. In addition to being one of the greatest Taanaic sages, he is also known as the author of the sacred kabbalistic work the Zohar, which contains the mystical interpretations of the Torah.

The sages proclaimed that no rainbow appeared in the sky during the lifetime of Rabbi Shimon. What's so great about that?

After the Great Flood in the days of Noach, a rainbow appeared in the sky—a symbol from Hashem that He would never again destroy the world by flood. The appearance of a rainbow is therefore a sign that the world, or portions of it, are deserving of punishment. Thus, the sages were proclaiming that during his lifetime, Rabbi Shimon's merit protected the entire generation and there was no need for a rainbow to appear.

The Hebrew word for "rainbow," keshes, refers to both the rainbow as well as the bow used in archery (in fact, the rainbow is called Gd's "bow"). To demonstrate that after Rabbi Shimon's passing there is now a need for the sign of the (rain)bow, many have the custom to play with bows and arrows on this day. The somewhat surprising connection between the rainbow and an ordinary bow is

continued on page 2 >>>

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life, defined by constant back-and-forth and imitation, was deeply troubling to her. Once she learned that she was carrying twins, two distinct children—each with a defined path—she was comforted.

Based on this idea, Rabbi Glatstein offers a striking interpretation. The individual who offers all of his children to Molech is undeniably wicked—yet he is consistent. His actions, though reprehensible, reflect a certain internal coherence. By contrast, the greater danger lies in spiritual inconsistency: constantly going back and forth, committed only when it is convenient or popular.

True growth begins with honesty. Why do I perform mitzvos? Why do I study Torah? Is it merely because of social pressure, or because we are genuinely committed to a life of purpose? The ideal is captured by the phrase תוכו כברו—that one’s inner self should align with one’s outward actions. Integrity means consistency (even when it’s evil).

Even someone who has fallen to the lowest depths can ultimately transform, precisely because they possess clarity and conviction. The greater challenge is overcoming a fragmented identity—living without a firm sense of direction. As Eliyahu Hanavi rebuked the false people: “Choose whom you will serve. Either go after Baal [all the way], or go after Hashem [all the way]” Going back and forth itself can be more spiritually corrosive than outright error.

This message resonates powerfully during the days of the Omer, when we mourn the loss of the תלמידים of Rabbi Akiva and celebrate his legacy (the Torah of his student Rebbi Shimon Bar Yochai). Rabbi Akiva himself famously said that until the age of forty, he harbored deep hostility and animosity toward Torah scholars. Yet he ultimately became one of the greatest figures in Jewish history.

How did such a transformation occur? Perhaps it was precisely his intensity and conviction that made it possible. The same כח that once fueled his opposition was later redirected toward Torah, enabling him to achieve unparalleled greatness.

This idea brings everything together: what matters most is not only where a person stands, but how firmly and honestly, they stand there. With clarity, integrity, and commitment, even the most distant individual can find their way back and build a life of אמת and purpose. Going where the wind blows you, may be an even bigger sin than evil itself. ▲

Meaning Behind the Minhag >>> continued from front

made by the Ramban’s commentary on the Torah. He explains that the rainbow is a sign of peace because it shows a weapon, the bow, in a harmless state pointing away from the earth and with no bowstring (Bereshis 9:12)

The Passuk in Dvrei Hayamim (1, 8:40) “And the sons of Ulam were mighty men of valor, shooters of bows and had many sons, and sons’ sons.” Based on this verse, Rabbi Nachman of Breslov teaches that playing with bows and arrows is a segula for having children.

Legend has it that the Rebbe, Rabbi Yehuda Tzvi of Starin, would go to the forest with his Chassidim to shoot bows and arrows on Lag Ba’omer. Once, he shot an arrow in the direction of Vienna. It is said that this arrow made its way to the royal palace and pierced the heart of a known enemy of the Jews who was heir to the Austrian throne. This evidently saved the Jewish people from many evil decrees and hardships. Cited in Nitei Gavriel; Pesach 3 pg. 289. ▲

DID YOU KNOW?



RABBI BINYAMIN SCHIERMEYER

PARSHAS ACHREI MOS-KEDOSHIM

That the two goats, one that was sent to Azazel and the one for Hashem, had to be same in appearance and size? (Mishna in Yoma 62a)

1

2

That there was no need to do “Kisui Hadam” – “Covering of the blood” in the desert because the birds came down already slaughtered. (RM”A Krum in explanation of the Bosesem Mordechai on the Medrash Pliah). However, Rabbi Yaakov Chaim Sofer learns from Tosafos in Chullin that Bnei Yisrael could have used the dirt in the desert, since that dirt was also fit for planting.

3

That the reason behind “Urlah”- “leaving a fruit for its first 3 years on a tree” is because that fruit would be damaging to a person’s body. (Ibn Ezra and Ramban)

4

That the concept of shaving started amongst the non Jews when one of their kings was unable to grow a beard, so out of respect for the king all of his officers shaved as well, and then the rest of the population followed suit. (Chasam Sofer)



SIX HOURS

Only the Jewish people can come up with 5 definitions for the term “6 hours”. Whether you translate it simply as 6 hours or you fudge it a bit to be 5 and a half hours or even less, the question is bound to trouble you. Where do all these variations of presumably the same minhag come from, and which is correct?!

The Gemara in Chulin daf 105 is clear, “one who ate meat may not eat cheese”. However the Gemara doesn’t explain much regarding this law. Both the reason for this and the length of the prohibition are

conspicuously left out. Regarding the reason for issur we have a machlokes Rishonim. Rashi explains that when you eat meat its flavor remains lodged in your throat for an extended time. The Rabbanan therefore prohibited the eating of milk during this time as a safeguard- a way to further separate our eating of milk and meat. According to the Rambam, the reason we may not eat milk after meat is because meat often gets stuck in the teeth, thereby creating the possibility that it’ll be swallowed together with milk. To be clear, Rashi agrees that meat stuck in the teeth is a problem, in fact more so than the Rambam. Since the Rambam holds that this is the reason for the waiting period he therefore holds that whenever the waiting period ends the meat in the teeth is no longer problematic- it lost its significance. However, Rashi holds that meat in the teeth will always be problematic, the whole waiting period just removed the taste lodged in the throat. L’halacha we pasken l’chumra like both opinions. In terms of the length of this prohibition we’re seemingly left in the dark. However, the Gemara gives a clue. It relates the statement of Mar Ukva who says, “I am like vinegar the son of wine in comparison to my father. My father would wait a full 24 hours after eating meat prior to eating cheese whereas I only refrain from cheese during that meal, at another meal I eat cheese”. The Gemara brings no dissenting views so we follow Mar Ukva, and wait until the next meal. Yet, the ambiguity is left unexplained – what is this mysterious amount of time “from one meal to another”? The Rambam writes that one must wait around six hours. The Lechem Mishnah explains that the Rambam derives this from the Braysa (Shabbos 10a) which says that the first Seudah of the day for a Talmid Chacham is at the sixth hour in the day. The next meal would then be six hours later at the end of the day. Mar Ukva who was a noted Talmid Chacham must’ve been referring to these meals, hence the six hour waiting period from meal to meal. Tosfos has an entirely different view. Tosfos understands that the meal here isn’t referring to the morning meal until the evening meal, rather it’s merely a separation of meals to differentiate between meat and milk. As long as the meat meal has been entirely finished, one may immediately begin eating milk. Tosfos only mandates that one “remove” or clear the table and recite Birkas Hamazon, which together end the meal completely. Afterwards, one is free to eat his cheesecake or the like. Other Rishonim maintain a similar opinion, putting the requirement on properly cleaning out the mouth instead of ending the meal. This assumes that the need to wait until the meal is over is only relevant in cases where one didn’t clean his mouth. Regardless, these Rishonim along with Tosfos would mandate no waiting period at all, unlike the Rambam who requires around six hours.

Having such vastly different views in the Rishonim lends itself to the numerous variations we find of this minhag. The Shulchan Aruch (Y.D. siman 89) paskens quite clearly like the Rambam. In fact in paraphrasing the words of the Rambam, the Shulchan Aruch removes the term “like six hours” and simply mandates a full six hours instead. Still the Rambam’s terminology never goes unnoticed and thus we have different applications of the idea of “like” six hours. Some wait the full six hours like the Shulchan Aruch prescribes. Others wait five and a half since we have a concept that rubo k’kulo, the majority of something is like the whole thing. Waiting a drop more than halfway through the hour can be considered having waited the whole sixth hour. Finally, there are those who fulfill the opinion of the Rambam by waiting into the sixth hour- just a bit more than five full hours. By doing so they deem it as having waited “around” six hours.

For the Sefardim the buck stops here. The Shulchan Aruch follows the Rambam, even removing the leeway of “like six hours”, and thus Sefardim wait a full six hours. The Ashkenazim have things a bit more complicated. The Rema (also Y.D. 89) writes that many took on to make a compromise between the two Rishonic worlds- to make sure to bentch and remove the tablecloth in addition to waiting one hour. The later Poskim understand that in reality this is just relying on Tosfos and adding some waiting. The Rema doesn’t take issue with this minhag, seemingly paskening meikar hadin like Tosfos. He does however write that it is proper to wait the full amount of time like the Rambam.

Summing it all up it seems that the Mechaber and the Rema disagree regarding who we pasken like meikar hadin. However, even though the Rema seems okay with those who act in accordance with Tosfos, he certainly seems to prefer the Rambam. The later Ashkenazi poskim such as the Shach and the Taz strongly prefer waiting 6 hours, writing that anyone who has a reyach of Torah should wait the full time even though we can’t protest those who rely on Tosfos’ more lenient opinion. The last of the prevalent minhagim is that of those who wait three hours. Unlike the other minhagim, this one doesn’t easily fit into the opinions of the Rishonim. They neither wait six hours nor eat immediately after finishing their meat meal. Still, they too pasken like the Rambam in the sense that they wait the amount of time between meals. However, they decide their wait time based on the general gap in meals in their countries which is around 3 hours. This was common since they were accustomed to eating smaller but more frequent meals throughout the day.

At the end of the day, for Sefardim it’s pretty clear- six hours is the minhag. For Ashkenazim the general consensus is that unless a family minhag is clearly otherwise one should certainly follow a version of the six hour minhag. ▲



RABBI ELI PERLMAN



HOW DOES THIS SCENE

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