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Parshat Yitro

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## CAUSE AND EFFECT!

### RABBI SHAY TAHAN

\* S U B S C R I B E T O O U R N E W E M A I L N O W \*  
P A R A S H A D E L I G H T @ S H I U R E N J O Y M E N T . C O M  
S U B J E C T R A B B I S H A Y T A H A N

In the cold winter days, opening the front door of the house brings in cold air which causes the thermostat to start the heat. Can one open the door on Shabbat knowing that the heat will possibly turn on? Is it only permitted to open and close the door very quickly so that the heat wouldn't start, or can you leave it open as long as you wish? What about today that many houses have a smart thermostat which visibly changes the numbers on it showing the degrees?

Let us start with a different case which is similar; when one opens the door of an oven which operates with a thermostat, he may possibly cause the flame to ignite. Doing such a thing is prohibited by the majority of the Poskim (אורל"צ ח"ב עמ' קנד, מנוחת) משנה אהבה ח"א עמ' תקפד, שבה"ל, משנה הלכות ח"ה סי' מ ועוד הרבה דלא כדעת (האגר"מ ח"ד ע"ד אות כח opening it brings in cold air and also allows the heat stored in the oven to come out, making the oven's thermostat drop quickly and thus more likely to start the oven.

If we compare opening the door of the house to the door of the oven, we wouldn't be allowed to exit or enter our house. But when we examine this further we can learn some differences.

Another similar case is brought down in Shulchan Aruch (סי' רעו ס"א) who doesn't permit opening the door when a candle is behind the door, because it's likely that the wind will blow out the candle.

Now, the Poskim permitted opening the fridge which has the same concerns as the oven since opening the fridge door allows the cold air inside the fridge to come out

and warm air from outside to come in, possibly causing the fridge's ignition to go on and start the same way the oven does.

The question is then, what is the difference between them?

The (ח"ב עמ' קנד) explains that the case of the fridge is only d'Rabanan, because the fridge starts the engine indirectly, as we just open the fridge door and that results in the cold air rushing out, which causes the thermostat to start the engine, later we'll see more leniencies that apply d'Rabanan. Whereas opening the oven door is more direct since as soon as one opens the oven, it starts the fire, which is a violation of Shabbat d'Oraita.

Though the difference between the two still seems hard to understand, it's a bit more clear with the explanation of other sefarim, like the משנה הלכות who explains that the fridge is more like גרמא דגרמא which means that since

it's a big box, the likelihood of the engine starting immediately when opening the door isn't very big, and therefore it's permitted. But the oven is small and there is more of a likelihood of it starting the fire right away. Sefer Shmirat Shabbat Kehilchata (פ"א סב"ט) explains a bit differently, that in an oven opening the door most times would ignite the engine.

When opening the oven door the likelihood of the fire to start burning is high and it's considered in halacha a Shabbat violation because it's close to be Psik Reisha it's also considered to be Psik Reisha. (ביה"ל סי' רעו ד"ה שמא).

After learning the difference between the oven and the fridge, it seems like opening the house door would be more comparable to the fridge

*"In the cold winter days,  
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## CAUSE AND EFFECT!

and permitted, because the house is big and opening the door isn't very likely to start the heat.

There are a few more reasons to permit opening the door, and these reasons would allow leaving the door open for as long one wishes: (אבן ישראל ח"ח סי"ט):

1. When one opens the door he doesn't intend at all to cause the heat to start working.
2. The act of letting cold air enter the house and causing the oven to start is considered פסיק רישא שלא דניחא ליה, bringing in cold air is something which he doesn't want and therefore isn't prohibited.
3. He doesn't need the house to heat up right away as the

house doesn't get so cold right away.

Concerning today's smart thermostats which change the temperature every time one passes by it, and even more so when one opens the window or door, Rabbi Asher Weiss (מנחת אשר ח"א סל"ב) writes that a slight change that isn't visible or felt isn't a problem, and the numbers on the thermostat aren't prohibited because they don't fall under the category of מלאכת מחשבת, an important, meaningful Melacha that is forbidden. Others write that since the person has no benefit from this very small change it isn't prohibited (לא ניחא ליה).

## BODY LANGUAGE, FAMILY MATTERS

One of the most painful things one can do in marriage is to speak ill about his spouse's family. It doesn't matter whether they speak about the parents, siblings or anyone else; words about the other's family get right to the core of the heart, and feel like they cut with a sharp razor.

Many times a person "righteously" blames the other side's family, convinced without a doubt that the words are true, and therefore the spouse must agree with it; not realizing that because the harsh words might indeed be true, they actually hurt much more. But why does it hurt so much when a spouse speaks about family, whereas if the same words would be uttered by someone within the same family one might not even flinch? Let's try to answer this from our Parasha. We find mention in our Parasha about the severity of hurting one's feelings, as well as the pain one has when speaking about his people. At the end of the Parasha we learn about the construction of the altar, the מזבח. The altar must not be built with steps leading up to it, but rather a ramp—the reason given in the Pasuk is that the ערוה of a person shouldn't be exposed. Rashi explains that when walking up the steps, the Kohen's legs rise and his private parts might get a bit exposed which isn't respectful to the stones of the altar. Therefore, instead we must build a ramp where the Kohen doesn't need to raise his legs. Rashi concludes with a powerful lesson: that if the Torah was careful not to be "disrespectful" to stones—which don't have any feelings, how much more so the Torah wants us to be careful not to insult or degrade our friends, who do have feelings and do feel pain when they are hurt or insulted.

Stones don't have any feelings and therefore stay still in any scenario. Humans however react to their feelings and don't stay still, especially when they are being hurt or ashamed. This is clearly visible on their face, as Chazal tell us:

המלבין פני חבירו אין לו חלק לעולם הבא (בבא מציעא נחב), the Gemara explains that the face of a person turns colors when embarrassed. First the face turns red, and right after it becomes pale. This concept of changing facial color when embarrassed is repeated in Chazal at various places (see אבות פ"ג, יא וכן ברכות מגב).

We learn the way a person changes his facial

reaction from the beginning of our Parasha, which shows clearly the body language of the person when he is hurt.

"וייחד יתרו על כל הטובה אשר עשה ה' לישראל אשר הצילו מיד מצרים" (שמות יח, ט) רש"י: "וייחד יתרו -

וישמח יתרו; זה פשוטו. ומדרשו: נעשה בשרו חדודין חדודין מיצר על אי בוד מצרים, היינו דאמר אינשי: גיורא עד עשרא דרי לא תבזי ארמאה באפיה.

The Pasuk says that when Moshe Rabenu told his father-in-law, Yitro, about what occurred to the Egyptians and how Hashem saved the Jewish nation, he felt happy. But Rashi gives another explanation to the word וייחד—his skin became all wrinkled; this was because he felt grief and sorrow over the loss of the Egyptians.

Rashi concludes with a saying that "Don't degrade an Aramaic [man] in front of a convert."

Normally we view these two explanations as arguing, but in actuality they aren't. Yitro came to meet Moshe since he was happy to hear all of that has transpired to the Egyptians, but when Moshe Rabenu repeats the happenings again, this time around it surprisingly brought Yitro pain. Why was it that the same words that initially made him happy and excited, caused him pain now, when he heard them from Moshe Rabenu? It's only a question to those of us who were born Jewish, since we don't understand the feelings that a convert feels when we speak about non-Jews. But to a convert it isn't a question at all and to him it's very clear. When one speaks negatively about the nations in front of a convert, it causes him mixed feelings. On one hand, he knows it's true and he feels very happy to be part of the Chosen Nation, but on the other hand he feels pain, he's hurt to hear negative words about where he came from. Those mixed feelings are hard to bear and we have to be sensitive to those feelings. Moreover, a close observation of the holy words of Rashi (mentioned above) will teach us another important insight. Rashi said that Yitro was hurt when he heard about the Egyptians' downfall. Now, it would be understood that one would be hurt when hearing negativity about their nation, but why was Yitro—who wasn't from Egypt—pained when he heard



**BODY LANGUAGE, FAMILY MATTERS (CONTINUED...)**

about the Egyptians? Furthermore, why did Rashi say "Don't degrade an Aramaic [man] in front of a convert."? He should have said "Don't degrade an Aramaic [man] in front of an Aramaic convert." In other words, it seems like speaking about any Gentile would cause a convert pain, even though he isn't from that nation.

The answer is that a convert is extra sensitive about how other people view him, he is never sure if he is truly fully accepted, he always suspects that other people might be whispering things behind his back, saying he isn't really part of Klal-Yisrael. Subconsciously, it sends him a message that a Jew views the world such that there are really only two camps, one camp is Klal-Yisrael, and another camp is those who are not. The convert always fears to be viewed by others as from the other camp. That is the reason for Yitro's mixed feelings when he heard about Mitzrayim from Moshe, alt-

hough when he initially heard about it from a non-Jewish source he rejoiced, when Moshe tells him the very same story, since it's told by a Jew, it caused him pain that was very visible by the wrinkles on his body. That is precisely the reason Rashi tells us one shouldn't insult any Gentile nation in front of any convert even if the convert isn't from that nation.

When one speaks about his spouse, it hurts a lot because of the reason we just explained. We psychologically tend to view ourselves as two groups; my original family and the new family with my new husband/wife. When we speak about the other's family, we categorize our spouse with their family, thus distancing ourselves from them. All of the above feelings of pain are felt at that time. This is indeed a very powerful lesson gleaned from the insights of the Parasha. Shabbat Shalom.

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**Our Parasha has the Mitzvah of Emunah, what exactly does this Mitzvah mean?**

The pasuk says:

"אנכי ה' א-לקיך אשר הוצאתיך ארץ מצרים מבית עבדים" (שמות כב, ב) "I am Hashem your G-d who has taken you out of Egypt, from a house of slavery." There is a known Machloket between our early sages (Rishonim) about the essence of this verse, whether it's a commandment (Mitzvah) to believe in Hashem, or merely a statement of fact. The majority of Rishonim hold that it is a Mitzvah. What is less known are the details of their opinions—which is important to know in order to fulfil this very important Mitzvah which our whole religion is based on.

Let's start with the basics. The Rambam (מצוה א' במנין המצוות) and the Raman (שמות כב, א) are of the opinion that this pasuk is a positive commandment to believe that there is a G-d. Arguing on the Rambam is the Bahag (בעל הלכות גדולות) saying that it's not possible to have any commandment, before we are actually informed that there is a Commander Whom we must obey. In other words, we can't have a commandment before there is someone commanding. Only after we know this basic fact that there is a Higher Power which created everything and controls all, may we be able to follow His list of Mitzvot. Thus, this verse is a statement that comes before all commandments in order to inform us that there is a G-d that commands us to fulfill the Mitzvot.

The Rambam and the Ramban add that this Mitzvah includes more details on top of the Mitzvah to believe in G-d; we must also believe that He created all and He does everything in the world.

**How am I actually able to fulfill this Mitzvah correctly?**

The Rambam seems to say different things concerning this Mitzvah. In one place he says we must believe there is a G-d (מצוה א' במנין המצוות) yet in other

places he says we must know (פ"א ממדע ה"א). There are two ways to answer this; the Ramban (ספר האמונה והבטחון) himself seems to address this, saying that our belief is stronger when it's built on knowledge, therefore one must learn well the topic of Emunah in order to correctly believe. Learning Emunah can also be done by observing the wonders of the creation, the human body, the perfect harmony of everything in the world etc. when one perceives all that, it builds an Emunah, a belief through knowledge. Rav Chaim Soloveitchik of Brisk (הובא באבי עזרי לרב ש"ך) explains that the foundation must always be the knowledge, but since our mind is limited, therefore for whatever is beyond our understanding we must believe.

**Can this Mitzvah be fulfilled by regular people in the same manner as the great Torah scholars?**

Believing is a strong feeling in the heart and mind of a person, and one can strengthen his belief all the time. Actually, the Ya'avetz (בספר אור החיים) writes that at the horrific times of persecution, the regular people stood stronger than the scholars to the test of Emunah, and sacrificed their lives quicker in order not to assimilate.

**Should one think of this Mitzvah even when he is in the bathroom?**

In the beginning of the Sefer Mishna Berura, the Biur Halacha lists 6 constant Mitzvot and one of them is the Mitzvah of Emunah which is constant without any stop. Furthermore, a person who thinks about this Mitzvah at any given moment in his life, is given tremendous reward.

Rav Shlomo Kluger (הג' חכמת שלמה או"ח סי' פה) dealt with the question of whether one can think of Hashem in the bathroom, and the Sefer (ה"א ס"א) wrote about this in length concluding that it's better not to, since that will cause him to think of things that are certainly forbidden.

Therefore, the Mitzvah to think constantly must mean constantly—only when it is permitted.



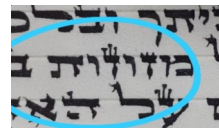
כ ת י ב ה ת מ ה

The letter "ז" lechatchila must have the leg coming down from the middle of the head. According to Kabbalah the head shouldn't lean towards one side more than the other (ב"י (הובא בשער הציון אות זי"ן).

Moreover, if the head extends much more to the left than the right, it might appear as a "ד" (שעה"צ שם).

If the head extends to the left enough to cause in our mind a doubt whether the letter is still a "ז" or it changed to a "ד" we must ask a kid who already learned the shape of the letters but can't yet read whole words. If he reads it as a "ד" it will be

pasul and it can't be corrected. The example in this picture is exactly such. The head leans more to the left than the right, but it's not so much to determine it's a dalet, therefore this letter should be shown to a kid.



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