

Weekly Shiur from Maran HaRishon LeTzion HaGaon Rabbi David Yosef shlit"a, Motzaei Shabbat Parashat Chayei Sarah 5787, Shiur #375

English

Parashat Toldot

Using a Crockpot on Shabbat

Topics of the Shiur:
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Introducing Rav: HaGaon Rabbi Golan Aluf shlit"a, Dayan of the Ashdod Rabbinical Court

Shiur of Maran HaRishon LeTzion shlit"a:

Thank you very much and *yashar koach* to the honorable *dayan*, HaGaon HaGadol Rabbi Golan Aluf shlit"a, who for many years was truly attached to my father, Maran zt"l, for several hours every day. He was a Rosh Kollel with us and like a member of my father's household; he would sit with him for many hours discussing Torah, and my father would show him what he was writing and would discuss and debate every matter with him. Fortunate is he and fortunate is his lot. Today, *Baruch Hashem*, he displays his great strength in the Bet Din—a *dayan* who sits in the depths of halachah and judges with absolute truth. *Yashar kocho*, and may he rise ever higher in Torah and fear of Heaven.

The Plata and the Crockpot

Last week I spoke about warming food on an electric *plata* (hotplate), and I explained the difference between dry food and food with liquid. Now I want to emphasize something: the electric *plata* has existed for very many years, probably since electricity was invented. All those years it was a fairly simple appliance, with heating elements and a fixed level of heat—there is no knob to raise or lower the heat.

Today there is another appliance, which has already existed for decades—about 50 years, since HaGaon Rabbi Moshe Feinstein zt"l, who passed away in 5746 (1986), was already asked about it and discussed the subject. At first it was common only in America, and later it reached Eretz Yisrael as well: the electric slow cooker. Today it is a very popular appliance, and people love using it. Food does not burn in it quickly, and it allows the cooking to be done well, so the dish comes out very good. In English this pot is called a "Crockpot."

First, let us explain how the pot is built. It is a metal housing with heating elements inside, and in these pots the heating elements are usually not on the bottom but in the walls. They are completely covered, as on a *plata*, where the heating elements are also covered with sheet metal or iron. The pot itself is made of very strong ceramic that does not crack from the heat, and it is placed inside the metal housing. It touches the housing only at the upper rim: the walls and bottom do not touch the metal that contains the heating elements—there is a very small gap. A slow cooker has a knob, and it can be set to high or low, with several options.

Thermostats on Shabbat

Some pots have a heat regulator—a "thermostat": one sets a certain temperature, say 150 degrees, and when a pot is taken out or put in, the temperature drops slightly, and then the heating elements turn on or off. Sometimes they turn off and sometimes they turn on.

On Shabbat it is absolutely forbidden to use a thermostat. The prohibition here is not only because of cooking—although very often there is a cooking problem as well—but there are two additional *melachot* here: kindling and extinguishing. Regarding extinguishing, one can discuss whether it is *de'orayta* or *de'rabbanan*, but kindling is a real fire, and one who kindles a fire on Shabbat transgresses a Torah prohibition in the full sense. Therefore, wherever there is a heat regulator—what people call a "thermostat"—it involves kindling and extinguishing.

Refrigerators on Shabbat, Then and Now

This is not like the thermostat in a refrigerator. There too, one must know that the new generation of refrigerators is far more sophisticated, and in many refrigerators opening the door automatically starts or stops an electrical operation. In today's sophisticated refrigerators there is a fan inside, and when one opens the door it stops, and when one closes it, it starts again automatically. Therefore it is very important that anyone buying a refrigerator check whether it has a "Shabbat mode."

Today there are refrigerators for which several distinguished rabbis who understand electrical technology have devised all kinds of solutions, so that one presses a button and the refrigerator goes into Shabbat mode. If it is not in Shabbat mode, there is a problem. Even with the refrigerators of the past, which had a thermostat, if we say that it is permitted, the difference is that the thermostat in the old refrigerators did not start working immediately when the door was opened; it took time until the temperature rose, and only then did the motor start running.

Besides that, running the motor in a refrigerator is not fire but an electric motor, and in the opinion of my father, Maran zt"l, an electric motor is a Rabbinic prohibition on Shabbat. Any electric motor without a filament that glows like fire is forbidden only *mide'rabbanan* (Rabbinically). This is also the view of *Minchat Yitzchak* and other *poskim* of the last generation. For this reason my father, Maran zt"l, held that it is permitted to tell a non-Jew to turn on the air conditioner when it is very hot or cold and people forgot to set it before Shabbat. Since it is an electric motor and only *de'rabbanan*, one may be lenient because of *shevut deshevut bimkom tza'ar* (a double Rabbinic prohibition in a situation of distress).

Some 70–80 years ago there was a lengthy discussion of this among the *poskim*, and the *Chazon Ish* addressed the subject. According to his approach, the refrigerator should be connected to a Shabbat timer so that it runs for half an hour and stops for half an hour, and while it was not running one could open the door. Everyone conducted themselves this way.

But back then, even before I was born, my father, Maran zt"l, wrote a major responsum on this subject (*Chazon Ovadia, Shabbat*, vol. 6, p. 119 and *Yabia Omer* 1:21; vol. 4, 26:5; vol. 9, 108:186), and his opinion was to be lenient *lechatchilah* (from the outset) with the refrigerators of that time. Yet I remember that throughout all the years he himself did not open a refrigerator on Shabbat; he would tell me to open it for him, and I would open it for him every time. This shows that he held it was permitted—for if in his view it were forbidden, how could he instruct me to open it?! He simply wanted to be stringent for himself alone. The main reason he wrote to be lenient is that when the door is opened, the motor does not start immediately, but only after some time.

Today, however, the situation is different. In today's refrigerators, besides the thermostat and all the sophisticated technology, there is, as I said, a fan inside the refrigerator, and the moment one opens the door it stops, and when one closes it, it immediately starts again. Therefore, when going to buy a refrigerator, one must check. Today most types of refrigerators have a "Shabbat mode"—this is very common in Eretz Yisrael and abroad as well. One must find out who gave the certification and make sure he understands not only Torah but also electricity (and sometimes one must also check that he understands not only electricity but also Torah…); he must understand both. When there are institutes that did this with the approval of true Torah giants, who examined the matter and determined that it is in order, one may buy such a refrigerator—and not just buy from anyone who comes along.

Slow Cookers and Ovens with a Thermostat

As I said, an electric slow cooker that has a heat regulator—a thermostat—is forbidden for use on Shabbat according to all opinions. When one opens or closes the pot and lifts it, one immediately activates something electrical. The same applies to an electric baking oven with a thermostat; today every oven that is not in Shabbat mode has a thermostat. In the past there were *poskim* who said that one could look from the outside and see the heating elements, but today there is no such thing. The appliances are so sophisticated that one cannot say it is *grama* (indirect causation) that will come only after a few seconds. Therefore one must know clearly: an electric baking oven or an electric slow cooker with a heat regulator—a thermostat—may not be used on Shabbat.

Warming Food on the Plata

Today there are ovens with a Shabbat mode, and this is marked on them. That means the heat level stays constant all the time and does not change whether one opens or closes the oven; the heat remains the same. The same is true of slow cookers, yet there is a halachic difference between them.

In an electric slow cooker it is absolutely forbidden to warm food on Shabbat, whether food with liquid or dry food. Even dry food that is fully cooked, which one wants to warm for just a few minutes, is forbidden. There is no way to be lenient with a slow cooker; it is not like a *plata*. On a *plata*, as I said, the heat level is constant, and it can be defined as not being a manner of cooking, as I explained last week. Therefore with dry food one may be lenient, and with food containing liquid one may be lenient when the conditions of *chazarah* (returning food to the heat) that I mentioned last week are met. For Ashkenazim there are five conditions for returning food with liquid to the *plata*: (1) a *plata*; (2) the food is fully cooked; (3) *odah beyado*—he is still holding the pot in his hand; (4) when he took the food off, he intended to return it; (5) it has not cooled down completely—for Ashkenazim this is more lenient than *yad soledet bo* (hot enough that the hand recoils), and it is enough that the food is still lukewarm. For Sepharadim there are four conditions: (1) a *plata*; (2) the food is fully cooked; (3) he did not put the pot down on the ground; (4) it is still *yad soledet bo*.

Regarding dry food, for both Sepharadim and Ashkenazim a *plata* is more lenient than a *gerufah* or *ketumah* (a stove whose coals were swept out or covered with ash); the *plata* is like placing food near the fire. Therefore one may take dry food out of the refrigerator—rice, or a dish with a thick sauce (not a clear liquid like soup) or a congealed sauce—and put it on the *plata*, provided it is fully cooked; then even if it boils, there is no cooking after cooking. For Ashkenazim there is a problem with congealed sauce, but this is not the place to elaborate.

The reality, however, is that people cook in a slow cooker, whereas on a *plata* people do not normally cook with it. Only a minority put the *hamin* on the *plata* when it is not yet cooked, and it cooks until the morning; but all the other dishes are already fully cooked and are usually eaten on Friday night. Therefore using a *plata* on Shabbat is permitted.

In the past, when people wanted to cook a dish that takes a long time, they used a *petiliyah*—a kerosene stove with thick wicks. Today too there are people who want food that cooks slowly and comes out excellent, not on gas, where one wants to finish cooking quickly. Patient people who want to eat a good dish cook it for a long time; so they came up with the clever idea of the electric slow cooker, in which one can cook slowly. Since it is a manner of cooking, there is no way to permit placing food in it, even when it is fully cooked and completely dry.

Raising the Pot Above the Heat

Someone who nevertheless wants to use a slow cooker has a simple solution: take an empty plate—preferably a metal one, so it won't crack—and put it at the bottom of the pot, and place the cooking pot on top of it. This is similar to someone who has a lit gas flame or a kerosene-stove flame and takes a metal sheet (people once used asbestos, until doctors said it causes cancer and is very dangerous, and they stopped using it) or a piece of tin, places it on the flame and puts the pot on it; then it is a covered flame and permitted.

The same applies to a slow cooker: one who places a metal sheet underneath raises the pot slightly, and it is visible that the pot is raised. The purpose of the sheet is both to serve as a reminder (*heker*) and to remove the concern of *shema yechateh bagechalim* (lest he stir the coals) and the concern of *mechzi kemevashel*—appearing to cook. When one places a small pot inside the slow cooker and sets the cooking pot on it, one may warm dry, fully cooked food on Shabbat. In other words, once he has raised the pot, the slow cooker has the same status as a *plata*.

Some *poskim* permitted using aluminum foil placed under the pot. But it seems to me that those who permitted it did not mean the very thin aluminum foil common today. Such foil changes nothing: it heats up within seconds and the heat will be the same heat. The pot will cook at the same speed, and sometimes even faster. Therefore aluminum foil does not help at all; it makes no difference whatsoever. However, one can take very thick aluminum, like real sheet metal, and that certainly helps. One can also take regular aluminum foil and fold it over and over until it becomes really thick, and put it inside the pot. One must know that it is forbidden to cut aluminum foil on Shabbat, so it must be prepared already on Friday.

Covering the Knobs

There is another discussion in the *poskim*: since the slow cooker has a knob, must the knob be covered? Likewise, with an electric oven that has knobs and is operating in Shabbat mode, would it help to cover just the knobs—and must they be covered?

When *Chazal* spoke of *gerufah*, *ketumah* and the like, there was no electricity, so the matter of knobs is something new. Among the *poskim* of the last generation, some hold that the knobs must be covered: so ruled HaGaon Rabbi Shmuel Wosner zt"l in his time, as well as HaGaon Rabbi Moshe Stern zt"l, author of *Be'er Moshe*, and others. My father, Maran zt"l, however, concluded that we must follow what *Chazal* established—to cover the fire, not the knobs. Once you have covered the fire there is a reminder, and the reminder ensures that one will not move the knobs either. But even according to his view, it is certainly worthwhile to be stringent and cover the knobs. Today some put on a cover with the words "*Shabbat Kodesh*" written on it, so that people will be careful not to remove the cover as well. In practice, with a slow cooker there is a simpler method: plug it into the outlet and turn the pot so that the side with the knobs faces the wall, and then the knobs cannot be seen. If a person wants to move the knob, he will have to turn the pot around, and then he will certainly remember why he placed it that way. That is a good solution.

The Dispute of Chananya and the Sages on Shehiyah

A slow cooker has two more very serious problems: *shehiyah* (leaving food on the heat) and *hatmanah* (insulating food). Regarding *shehiyah*: as I said, a slow cooker is considered like a fire. I am not speaking about someone who puts aluminum or a plate to raise the pot, for then there is no question of either *shehiyah* or *hatmanah*, since it becomes like a *plata* and is permitted. But someone who wants to prepare *hamin* and simply puts it in a slow cooker must know that there are two problems here, *shehiyah* and *hatmanah*, since it is considered placing food on the fire on Friday.

What is the question of *shehiyah*? The Mishnah (*Shabbat*, chapter 3) opens with a dispute between the Chachamim and Chananya. Chananya permits placing on the fire food that is cooked enough to be eaten under pressing circumstances, or food that is already cooked and *mitztamek ve'yafeh lo* (improves as it continues to cook). That is, partially cooked food—*ma'achal ben Derusai*, eaten under pressing circumstances—which, as I explained in previous shiurim, means a third or half cooked. There is a dispute here: food that is fully cooked but improves, like *hamin*, which one wants to cook for a long time and which improves with cooking—according to Chananya it may be placed on the fire, but according to the Chachamim it is forbidden. According to the Chachamim, one may place on the fire only food that is not cooked at all—completely raw—or food that *mitztamek ve'ra lo* (is harmed by further cooking), like water that evaporates and is lost.

What is the halachah—like Chananya or like the Chachamim? Maran *Shulchan Aruch* writes the view of the Chachamim as the unattributed ruling (*stam*), and cites Chananya's view in the name of "*yesh omrim*" (some say). But there is a

major discussion among the great *Acharonim* whether Maran actually rules like the "*yesh omrim*" rather than like the *stam*, because the *Acharonim* found an implication in the *Shulchan Aruch* in the next *siman* (254:4) to be lenient. But it is not so simple, and some reject this proof; according to the explanation of the *Gra* there, there is no proof from it.

A Proof from the Shulchan Aruch for the View of the Chachamim

I have a proof that I searched for, and I saw that the *Acharonim* hardly addressed it, and I don't know why. Eventually I found that *Mateh Yehuda*, by HaGaon Rabbi Yehudah Ayash, brought this proof from the *Shulchan Aruch* (beginning of 254), in the law of *shehiyah* with roasted food, and it is a very strong proof that Maran *Shulchan Aruch* is stringent like the Chachamim and not like Chananya. That is, according to Maran there is a prohibition of *shehiyah* with food that improves as it cooks or that is not fully cooked. This is what emerges from the words of the *Shulchan Aruch*. I was very happy when I found this proof.

There is a rule: a person who walks on a straight path, the King's highway, meets people; if he walks on a crooked path, there is no one there and he is alone… Likewise, someone who comes up with a new idea in halachah and brings a proof—if he is the only one who brought it, he should very much check whether the proof is correct, because how can it be that no one else brought it?! Once I was sitting with several *talmidei chachamim*, great scholars, and I said a strong line of reasoning and brought a proof for it from *Tosafot*. I asked them their opinion. One of them smiled and said to me, "Of course you are right, because it is a proof from *Tosafot*—but it isn't you saying it, it's *Tosafot* saying it, and you haven't come up with anything new…" I told him: some people enjoy coming up with their own private novel idea, but one who learns halachah is afraid—if I come up with something and I haven't found anyone who says it, it is a little suspicious. It shows that perhaps I am mistaken, and one must check himself.

Here, on this subject, *Mateh Yehuda* wrote as I did, that this is what emerges from the words of the *Shulchan Aruch*, and it is worthwhile for everyone to check it. The *sugya* of *shehiyah* with roasted food is a very difficult and complicated *sugya*. There is a very difficult *Bet Yosef* there, and *Mishnah Berurah* wrote an enormous introduction to this *siman*. Someone who learns the *Mishnah Berurah* and reads it 5–6 times may still not understand everything. One must put things in order there and understand the whole progression of the views of the *Rishonim* on the subject.

In any case, after I learned, examined, checked and organized everything, I saw that according to the *Shulchan Aruch* the halachah does not follow Chananya but the Chachamim. According to this we have a problem: one cannot prepare a dish, for example *hamin*, and place it on an uncovered fire.

However, several of the great *Acharonim* have already discussed this subject, and there is an enormous responsum on it in *Yabia Omer*. My father, Maran zt"l, does not decide there what the *Shulchan Aruch*'s view is, but presents the dispute about it (see *Chazon Ovadia, Shabbat*, vol. 1, p. 45). It seems to me that one can decide that the *Shulchan Aruch* is stringent, but from his conclusion there one sees that he does not decide the matter. He cites several great *Acharonim* who testified that the custom has spread to be lenient like Chananya. Nevertheless he writes that it is proper to be stringent and use a *plata*, which is permitted according to both the Chachamim and Chananya. There he also explains his principle on the whole subject of the *plata*. This is not the place to elaborate (see at length in *Halachah Berurah*, vol. 14, pp. 2-18).

Hamin for the Next Day

In practice, since a slow cooker has the status of fire, one cannot simply say that it is permitted to put in it on Erev Shabbat a dish like *hamin*, which improves as it cooks. We would only be relying on the custom to be lenient. However, with *hamin* there is another very strong reason to be lenient. Several of the great *Rishonim*—the *Rid* and the *Riaz*—hold that the concern of *shema yechateh bagechalim* applies at night: someone who wants to eat the dish at night and is in a hurry to eat it, and sees that it is not yet cooked enough and has not reduced enough, might stir the coals to hurry it. But if it is meant for the next day, he knows there is plenty of time anyway, so there is no concern that he will stir the coals.

This is therefore an additional consideration. We have here a *safek sefeka* (double doubt): first, perhaps the halachah follows Chananya, since many *Rishonim* hold that the halachah follows Chananya and it is permitted even for the night meal. And even if you say it is forbidden for the night, perhaps for the next day it is permitted even according to the Chachamim. There is a *safek sefeka* to be lenient regarding food meant for the next day.

That is, someone who puts up *hamin* before Shabbat—if it is meant for Friday night, one may be lenient only under great pressure, relying on the custom and on several *Acharonim* who wrote that the custom is to be lenient like Chananya. But if it is for the next day, meaning for the midday meal, one may be lenient without difficulty, and turn the pot so that the knob faces the wall, so there is no concern that he will move it.

Partial Hatmanah in a Slow Cooker

The second question is the question of *hatmanah*. Since the walls heat up, it is not like a *plata*: on a *plata* it is hot only from below, at the bottom of the pot, while here it is the opposite—most slow cookers have no heating elements at the bottom; they are only in the walls. There is a question whether this is called *hatmanah bemiktzat* (partial insulation), when only part of the pot is insulated. Regarding partial *hatmanah*, Maran *Shulchan Aruch* forbids and the *Rama* permits. The great Ashkenazi *poskim* discussed the subject: HaGaon Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l argued that this is not partial *hatmanah* but full *hatmanah* in fire. When they showed the pot to HaGaon Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv zt"l and asked him, there were rumors in his name—some said he permitted and some said he forbade—but in the end, in his *Kovetz Teshuvot* (3:43), he himself writes explicitly that it is forbidden, exactly like fire. The two great *poskim* of the generation who sat in Yerushalayim ruled that this is *hatmanah* in fire, not partial *hatmanah*.

On the other hand, HaGaon Rabbi Moshe Feinstein zt"l (quoted by *39 Melachot*, p. 633) permitted it. In his time this pot had already been invented and people were using it in America, and he permitted it with regard to *hatmanah*. HaGaon Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l (*Minchat Shlomo*, vol. 2, 32:5) writes very forcefully that even in America, where the custom was to be lenient, the custom should be abolished and it should be forbidden. But some claim that at the end of his life they came and brought him proofs—and perhaps not. As I said, HaGaon Rabbi Moshe Feinstein permitted it. Several other important *poskim* said that this is not even partial *hatmanah*, such as HaGaon Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch (*Teshuvot VeHanhagot* 3:106), the *Shevet HaLevi* (9:52), and several other *poskim*. But the whole discussion of the *poskim* about whether this is partial *hatmanah* or not was said for Ashkenazim. For Sepharadim, seemingly Maran is stringent about partial *hatmanah* in any case, so if this is partial *hatmanah*, for Sepharadim it should at the very least be forbidden.

However, on this subject too, since one puts the food in the pot for the next day, there is no concern of partial *hatmanah*, because we have a *safek sefeka* to be lenient: perhaps partial *hatmanah* is permitted; and even if you say it is forbidden, perhaps this is not partial *hatmanah* at all, because it is not simple to define it as partial *hatmanah*, since the ceramic pot does not touch the walls at all. And since it is for the next day, we add the *Rishonim* who hold that for the next day there is no problem at all, neither of *shehiyah* nor of *hatmanah*; for regarding *hatmanah*, too, several *Rishonim* hold this way. (See *Halachah Berurah* 257:33.)

Therefore, the conclusion is that one may put *hamin* in a slow cooker for Shabbat lunch. If it is for the night meal, one may be lenient under pressing circumstances, relying on the custom, but it is preferable to put something underneath to raise the pot. To warm dry food in a slow cooker, one must put something underneath; here one cannot be lenient at all, and it is completely forbidden to place the food inside this pot unless it is raised.

Electric Ovens in Shabbat Mode

Regarding an oven with a Shabbat mode, as for the knobs, I have already explained that it is proper to cover them but not obligatory. "Shabbat mode" means a constant heat all the time, and the question is whether there is a problem of *mechzi kemevashel*, since an oven is an appliance normally used for baking. Therefore the only way to be lenient, in my opinion, is as HaGaon Rabbi Ben Tzion Abba Shaul zt"l (*Ohr LeTzion*, vol. 2, 17:4) writes: place an empty utensil inside the oven and put the food on it. This makes almost no difference in terms of heating, but the main thing is that there be a reminder: even though Shabbat mode is a constant heat and the heating elements cannot be seen, one must make a reminder.

Today there are aluminum trays, called by all sorts of names, and one can take such a tray, turn it upside down and place the dishes on it. When one places an empty, upside-down utensil, there is a reminder, and then one may certainly use an electric oven.

A Test After the Akedah

In this week's parashah, the parashah opens with Avraham Avinu arriving: "And Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and to weep for her" (*Bereshit* 23:2). He cannot find a grave for Sarah.

Chazal say (*Bava Batra* 16a) that in the verse in *Iyov* (1:7), *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* asked the Satan, "From where do you come?" The Satan replied, "From roaming the earth and walking about in it." The meaning is: Master of the Universe, I went around the world and did not find anyone like Avraham Avinu. You told him, "Arise, walk through the land, through its length and its breadth, for I will give it to you" (*Bereshit* 13:17), yet when he wanted to bury his wife he could not find a grave, and he did not question Your ways—Avraham Avinu did not

question *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*.

Here there is a difficult question. From the words of the Gemara we see that this was a test for Avraham Avinu. *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* told him, "Arise, walk through the land," and he cannot find a grave for Sarah, yet he does not question the ways of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. As is known, all this took place after the *Akedah*. What sense is there in testing Avraham after the test of the *Akedah*?! If he withstood the test of the *Akedah*, could anyone imagine that he would not withstand an easier test? Moreover, when one wants to test a person more and more, one raises the level each time; if it is an easy test that he has already passed, there is no need to test him again. But here we see that this is a very great test. Indeed, if we sit and reflect, we will see that it is not at all like the test of the *Akedah*, but a test from an entirely different direction.

A Person Is Known by His Distress

Chazal said: "A person is known by his pocket, by his cup and by his anger" (*Eruvin* 65b). By his pocket—whether he is stingy or not. By his cup—when he drinks, wine goes in and secrets come out. By his anger—in a moment of anger a person's head does not work properly, and sometimes he reacts in a way that reveals his inner self.

One must know that *Chazal* did not mean anger alone, but distress. Anger and distress seem similar, but anger is forbidden, while distress is something that happens to a person—sometimes he suffers pain and has distress. A person's reaction in a time of distress proves who he is.

When you ask a person what was the greatest distress in his life, anyone who has lost family members or close friends will say that hearing of their passing was the greatest distress, beyond description. It is a terrible pain for anyone who has gone through it. I remember that when my father, Maran zt"l, passed away, we were all in the room—the whole family and many others close to him—and the weeping there was terrible. No one could hold back the terrible weeping of all of us. It is very natural that at such a time a person cries.

The time of terrible distress can be defined precisely: from the passing until the burial. It is not for nothing that *Chazal* established that an *onen* (a mourner before the burial) is exempt from mitzvot. A person who has not yet buried his dead and wants to eat may not recite a blessing—neither the blessing before nor the blessing after, not even *Birkat HaMazon*, which is *de'orayta*. When the time for tefillah arrives, he may not pray. Only on Shabbat, when he can do nothing for the burial, is he obligated in mitzvot; but on a weekday he is exempt. Why? Because it is a time of great distress, a person is not settled in his mind, and what he wants to do at that time is cry.

Crying When One Must

Some years ago I saw a man who had been IDF Chief of Staff, whose son was killed. Someone praising him related that when they came and informed him that his son had been killed, and afterward when the person stayed close to him the whole time, he did not cry. There were those who looked at him and said, "A hero! A hero!" But I tell you, *rabbotai*: that is not a hero. That is a person who has a flaw in his soul. How can a person not cry over his son?! Are you trying to overcome it?

The *Radbaz* writes explicitly in the name of the *mekubalim* that a person who loses a son and does not cry—it is a sign that his soul is flawed. What does it mean not to cry?! *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* created weeping and tears for man. We are not animals, we are human beings; we know how to laugh, and we also know how to cry. When one needs to cry, one cries.

When we sat *shivah* for my father, Maran zt"l, I sat there and did not stop crying; I couldn't stop. People would come to comfort us and speak, and one person approached me and said, "It isn't nice for men to cry so much." I told him: I am not looking at whether it is nice or not nice. If I am in pain, I grieve and I cry. When a person is hurting, he needs to cry.

In *Tehillim* it is written: "A *maskil* of David, when he was in the cave, a prayer," and David HaMelech says: "With my voice I cry out to Hashem; with my voice I plead to Hashem. I pour out my speech before Him; I declare my distress before Him" (*Tehillim* 142:1–3). When a person is in pain, he cries and calls out. It hurts him! When he has great distress, he cries.

First the Burial, Then the Weeping

With Avraham Avinu we see that he lived with Sarah for very many years. It does not say how many, but they were together already in Charan, and Avraham was 137 when Sarah passed away, and he left Charan at age 75, so they were married for at least 62 years and more.

They were together all the time—she a great *tzaddeket* and he a *tzaddik*—and a son was born to them, and they are so happy and raise him. Suddenly Avraham is told that Sarah has passed away. What does he want to do at that moment? To cry, to cry! "And Avraham came to eulogize Sarah and to weep for her"—he wants to cry. And then he sees: What are you going to cry over now? You need a grave! There is no grave!

He goes to look for a grave and finds Efron the Hittite, whose name has the numerical value of *ra ayin* ("evil eye," stinginess), and begins to bargain. Efron wants cash, not on credit and not as a loan—immediately. Avraham gives him 400 shekels of silver, counts out the money for him, and only then: "And afterward Avraham buried Sarah his wife" (*Bereshit* 23:19).

Avraham Avinu could have said at that moment: Master of the Universe, let me cry! This is a time of such distress—at least give me this hour! You promised me, "Arise, walk through the land, through its length and its breadth, for I will give it to you." This land is mine, and I don't have a grave in this land?! Is this what You meant when You said this land is mine?!

About this the Satan says to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* that Avraham Avinu did not even question His ways. That is, not for a split second did he have the thought: Master of the Universe, why?! This isn't fair! Avraham Avinu, with composure, knows that he will be able to cry later; now he must restrain himself and buy a grave. He does not question *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* even for one second.

This is truly a great test, a test in its own right, very different from the test of the *Akedah*. One cannot say which is greater and which is lesser, because it is an entirely different test: a test of boundless faith in *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. At such a time he stands and says: the time will come; first we will buy the grave, and afterward we will cry.

Not Questioning His Ways

We must learn a great deal of *mussar* from this: *ma'aseh avot siman labanim* (the deeds of the fathers are a sign for the children). Through the *Akedah*, Avraham Avinu instilled in his descendants, the Jewish people, *mesirut nefesh* (self-sacrifice): Jews gave their lives rather than convert from their religion; they gave their lives for Judaism.

In the story of Sarah's burial, Avraham Avinu taught us what it means to be complete in our faith in *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*—not to ask questions. It is permitted to ask questions, but to ask ourselves: Why did *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* do this to us? What sins did we commit? What do we need to correct? What do we understand and what don't we understand? But to come, *chas veshalom*, with complaints to the Master of the Universe—why did You do this?—that is forbidden to us. This we learn from Avraham Avinu, who did not question the ways of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*.

Esav Hates Yaakov

We are in great distress, at home and abroad. We see how the enemies of Israel are growing stronger all over the world. Some once said that in the United States they love us, and today we see that in America too they hate us. This is the hatred of the nations of the world: "Esav hates Yaakov." We ask: Why do they hate us? But that is how it is. We must make our efforts so that they will not hate us, but on the other hand we must know that we will not succeed in overcoming it. We will not succeed in eradicating antisemitism and hatred; that is clear. On the one hand one must make the effort, and on the other hand know that it is not entirely in our hands, and certainly it cannot be eradicated completely.

On the other hand, we see the hatred about which *Chazal* said that the hatred of the ignorant for *talmidei chachamim* is greater than the hatred of the nations of the world for Israel. When we see how they speak to us in a discourse of hatred—before the elections and after them—it is terrible and dreadful! How they speak ill of those who learn Torah, attach derogatory names to them and try to stamp these derogatory names on them until they become their title, a stigma, so that insults are written on their foreheads. And we have to defend ourselves, as it were, against them.

We feel distressed. Who among us does not feel pain?! This situation is very painful. But we must strengthen ourselves in faith in *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, try to serve Him more and more and increase our Torah study. Let there be no *bittul Torah* among us—to sit and learn and grow in Torah and fear of Heaven.

May we hear and receive good tidings. I bless everyone participating here in the shiur, and also everyone listening to us on Radio "Kol Berama" and through other means, who, *Baruch Hashem*, give me the merit of spreading Torah. Thank you very much to them. May *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* fulfill the wishes of everyone's heart for good and for blessing, Amen, *ken yehi ratzon*.