

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION
ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

TALMUDIC METHODOLOGY

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**SHIUR #02: STATUS OF SHEVA BERAKHOT AS A REGEL FOR
THE CHATAN**

The *mishna* in *Negaaim* parallels the status of a groom during the week of *sheva berakhot* to the status of every Jew during a holiday. The *mishna* writes, "A *chatan* who sees a *nega* [a discoloration associated with *tzara'at*] is exempt from impurity just as one is exempt during the *chag*." Is this association made only regarding that particular instance, or does the week of *sheva berakhot* possess a status as a *chag* for the *chatan* in general? Is the *tuma* inspection suspended during *sheva berakhot* because the week is considered a *chag* for the *chatan*? Or is the suspension based on different factors, and the association made by the *mishna* only a comparison?

The *gemara* in *Mo'ed Katan* (7b) develops this exemption by searching for *derashot* to account for this rule. At first, the *gemara* cites a *derasha* of the term "*U-ve-yom heiro'ot*" [on the day that you inspect the *nega*] a *pasuk* which introduces the section describing the procedure of *metzora*. The *derasha* asserts, "There are days you should inspect [and possibly quarantine] while there are days in which the inspection process is suspended. Days of a *chag* or the seven days of a *chatan* qualify as days during which inspection is suspended." This *derasha* may very well reflect the status of the days of *sheva berakhot* as a quasi-*chag*. The *gemara*, however, considers an alternate *derasha*. The Torah describes a *kohen* delaying proclaiming a house as *tamei* to allow the articles of the house to be removed and thereby spared *tuma*. If *tuma* proclamation may be delayed for this purpose, it can certainly be delayed to facilitate a *mitzva*, such as *chag* or *sheva berakhot*. This *derasha* does not address the STATUS of the DAYS but rather the MITZVA that proclamation of *tzara'at* could ruin. The *derasha* results in a deferral of the *tuma* to enable the performance of the *mitzva*.

These two *derashot* provide very different readings of the nature of the *tzara'at* exemption for a *chatan* and could lead to some very interesting consequences. The Shulchan Arukh in *siman* 64 rules that a *chatan* may not work during the week of his *sheva berakhot*. In his comments, the Rema also writes that a *chatan* may not work. Most commentators question why the Rema included a *halakha* which the Shulchan Arukh explicitly asserted. The *Chelkat Mechokek* claims that they each are referring to different aspects of the *issur melakha*. The Shulchan Arukh described an obligation to desist from work to assure proper commitment to the obligation to rejoice with the *kallah*. The Rabbis instituted a "financial obligation from *chatan* to *kallah* to invest time and money in the wedding celebration. This obligation is collectible, and working during this period would impede the *chatan* from fulfilling his obligation. If the *kallah* were to waive her rights, the *chatan* would be exempt from this obligation.

In contrast, the Rema addressed a personal state of *regel* that the *chatan* must halakhically preserve. Working during this week of *sheva brakhot* is forbidden INDEPENDENT of his obligation to the *kallah* simply because the week is defined as his *chag*. Even if the *kallah* were to waive her rights, the *chatan* would be required to behave in a *regel*-like manner and desist from work. By repeating the *issur melakha* already noted by the Shulchan Arukh, the Rema was asserting an extra dimension to the prohibition against working.

Designating the *sheva berakhot* as a personal *regel* for the *chatan* may impose prohibitions beyond actual work. The *Pitchei Teshuva* (64:1) cites positions which prohibit the *chatan* from taking a haircut during the seven day period, similar to the prohibition of haircutting during an actual *regel*. (Some *poskim* trace this position to the Ra'avad in his comments to the Rambam in *Hilkhot Avel* 11:7.) Clearly, extending the prohibition to haircutting would almost certainly confirm the status of *sheva berakhot* as a form of personal *regel*.

An interesting *gemara* in *Ketuvot* (4a) may also suggest that the week of *sheva berakhot* is considered a *regel*. The *gemara* addresses a tragic situation in which a relative of the bride or groom dies immediately prior to the wedding. Delaying the wedding until after the burial and mourning period would waste the food already prepared and entail irrecoverable financial loss. The *gemara* instructs a delay of *aveilut* until after the *sheva berakhot* period has concluded.

Although this schedule certainly resolves the financial pressure, its halakhic appropriateness is somewhat questionable. After all, most believe that the first day of *aveilut* is Biblically ordained, and it should seemingly not be delayed by *sheva berakhot*, which most believe is a Rabbinic command. The Ramban confronts this question and responds that the Rabbis do indeed possess the ability to suspend *mitzvot de-oraita*. Faced with the prospect of stiff financial loss and inability to prepare future equivalent wedding celebrations, *Chazal* instructed a suspension of *de-oraita aveilut* in favor of rabbinic *sheva berakhot*.

A different solution may emerge from Rashi's comments. The *gemara* had instructed that the *chupa* and initial *bi'ah* (sexual relations) be performed prior to the burial. As *aveilut* only begins after burial, the *chupa* and initial *bi'ah* have effectively preceded the onset of *aveilut*. Rashi comments, "Since the wedding has already occurred, IT IS CONSIDERED HIS REGEL and *aveilut* cannot apply." Perhaps Rashi himself views the *sheva berakhot* as a personal *regel*. Once that *regel* has emerged – after the *chupa* and *bi'ah* - *aveilut* cannot develop. *Chazal* did not actively suspend *aveilut* by asserting prior celebration of *sheva berakhot*. Instead, they engineered the prior occurrence of a *regel*, which halakhically impedes the *aveilut* from emerging. This scenario is only sound if the *sheva berakhot* period mark a personal *regel* for the *chatan*. Under conditions of *regel*, *aveilut* may be impeded from developing. Rashi therefore seems to have adopted this theory of a personal *regel*.

As mentioned earlier, most opinions maintain that the seven day celebration of *sheva berakhot* is a Rabbinic institution and has no Biblical origins. The Rosh in *Ketuvot* cites a position in the name of Ravbenu Meir Halevi that the first day of *sheva berakhot* is indeed *de-oraita* based on the *pasuk* in *Shir Ha-shirim* chapter 3 describing "the day of his wedding and his heart's joy." Although *Shir Ha-shirim* is written as a metaphor describing the relationship between *Hashem* and His people, the reference to the day of the wedding is sufficient to grant this day its Biblical status. Without question, assigning a Biblical root to the *sheva berakhot* – even the first day alone - would significantly increase the chances that it is considered a personal *regel*. Even though the *regel* lasts seven days and stems from a Rabbinic legislation, BASING the *regel* on a Biblical precedent or basis is entirely reasonable.

A final source that asserts the *regel* status of *sheva berakhot* can be found in *Pirkei De-Rabbi Eliezer* in chapter 16. It states that a *chatan* is similar to a king – each is the subject of praise, dresses in elegant attire, conducts festive meals, does not walk in public alone, and possess a radiant glow. This comparison certainly ascribes A PERSONAL STATUS a personal status to the *chatan* which may border on an experience similar to a *REGEL* although the term *regel* does not appear explicitly in this text, the *midrash* certainly implies a halakhic status to a *chatan* beyond merely the obligation to generate joy for his *kallah*.