

## This Week's Parshah - Parshas Mishpatim

Kindly take a moment to study MISHNAS CHAYIM in the merit of  
 Rochel *bas* Yehudah *a"h*

a fellow Jew who passed away with no relatives to arrange Torah study on behalf of her *neshamah*

### Every Dog Has His (Sabbath) Day

*The following is based primarily on R' Yitzkchok Zilberstein's accounts as recorded in the sefer V'ha'arev Na, Vol. 3 (parshas Mishpatim).*

The man knew that it would be a windfall for his friend, a very recent *ba'al teshuvah*. As the driver slated to take R' Chaim Kanievsky to a *simchah* in Yerushalayim the following day, he invited his friend to come along for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity: a full hour sitting next to the venerated sage. The guest would have him practically all to himself, to ask whatever he pleased.

In the car the next day, the eager (but novice) "student" got right down to business. He posed his first question to R' Chaim: "We have recently become observant and are slowly learning about the *mitzvos*. Our family has just started reciting Kiddush on Shabbos night. My question is: We have a dog that is most loyal and beloved, almost a member of the family. Does he also have to hear Kiddush?"

"There is definitely room for leniency here," R' Chaim answered patiently.

The questioner went right on to his next issue: "Concerning the *halachah* that one may not eat before he has fed his animals (*Berachos 40a*), does this apply to a pet dog, as well?"

"For this," the sage answered, "one should be stringent."

By this point, R' Chaim realized which way the wind was blowing (insofar as the content of today's questions was concerned). As a towering Torah figure, R' Chaim scrupulously avoids any hint of time-wasting activity. On the other hand, this great sage was equally mindful and concerned with the feelings of his eager companion.

To accommodate both concerns, R' Chaim came up with an idea. He turned to his son (who had accompanied them on the journey) and initiated a "game" of sorts. "Let's see," R' Chaim explained, "where does Talmud Bavli make mention of 'dogs?'"

And that is how they spent the remainder of the trip: Listing all of the places in maseches Berachos in which dogs are mentioned; then Shabbos; then Eruvin, etc.

### Purina... for *Shalosh Se'udos*

This latter issue (of placing food first before one's animal) actually carries some interesting ramifications with regard to Shabbos observance. The details emerge from a Mishnah that outlines the proper conduct in the event of a fire breaking out on Shabbos (when all persons have been properly evacuated and there is only a danger to property). The owner is only permitted to salvage a limited quantity of food from the premises, as the Mishnah states (*Shabbos 16:2*):

מצילין מזון שלש סעודות - הראוי לאדם לאדם, הראוי לבהמה לבהמה. כיצד. נפלה דלקה בלילי שבת, מצילין מזון שלש סעודות, בשחרית, מצילין מזון שתי סעודות, במנחה, מזון סעודה אחת.

“One may salvage three meals’ worth of food:”people-worthy” food for people and animal food for one’s animals. The actual amount may fluctuate: If the fire breaks out (at the beginning of) Shabbos night, then one salvages three meals’ worth (for the meals yet to come on Shabbos); if it breaks out in the morning, one salvages only enough food for the two remaining meals; in the afternoon, one salvages only enough for the one remaining meal (*shalosh se’udos*).”

The Tiferes Yisrael makes a salient observation. In speaking here of the amount deemed essential for proper Shabbos enjoyment – i.e., three meals’ worth – the Mishnah refers to both humans *and animals*. Since when are animals obligated to eat three meals on Shabbos like their human masters?

It must be, he concludes, that the Mishnah was mindful of the *halachah* mentioned above – namely, that *before* one sits down to enjoy a meal, he must serve food to his animals. The Tiferes Yisrael’s approach would give rise to a most curious practice. A dog may be accustomed to one meal a day. But when it comes to Shabbos, “Fido” is eligible for the same three Shabbos meals as the rest of the family (although exempt from Kiddush; see above).

The matter can actually be taken one step further. Not only is a pet owner encouraged (based on the above) to supply his animal with three square Shabbos meals, he may even be enjoined to provide higher quality fare in reflection of the special day.

When mentioning the Sabbath day, the verse in this week’s *parshah* states: “On the seventh day you shall cease work, so that your ox and your mule may rest” (*Shemos 23:12*). Rashi comments that the intent of the verse is to charge the owner with ensuring that his animals are given an opportunity to attain a measure of Shabbos pleasure of their own. Accordingly, the Chavos Yair records the practice of a certain pious individual who would supply his animals with an extra bountiful portion on Shabbos, so that they, too, could experience their “*Shabbos mechaye*” (*Mekor Chaim, Kitzur Halachos § 246*).

R’ Yitzchak Zilberstein was asked a question by a recent *ba’al teshuvah* who was also a dog-owner. He was thinking of serving his dog more expensive (tastier?) dog food on Shabbos but was unsure if this was a completely mistaken notion. Based on the above, R’ Yitzchak demonstrated that there may be a place for *oneg Shabbos* (experiencing special Shabbos delight) – even for dogs.