

HALOCHOSCOPE



This week's question:

May a grandfather attend a grandson's wedding that takes place on his father's *yahrzeit*?

The issues:

- A) *Yahrzeit* observances; Simcha, wedding attendance for a mourner or on a *yahrzeit***
- B) *Simchas chasan vekalah*, gladdening the bride and groom**
- C) *Tzrichin lo*, one who's presence is indispensable or essential**

A) *Yahrzeit* observance

The *yahrzeit* is not mentioned directly in the Talmud. (The word is not Hebrew, but Yiddish. According to one source, this is because the observance began in *Ashkenaz*. The *Sefaradim* call it *nachala* or *hilula*.) However, it seems to have been observed from earliest times. There are allusions to some observances and their possible meanings. The Talmud relates: Haman concluded that *Adar* was the best month for his plot to annihilate the Jews. He knew that Moshe Rabeinu passed away on the seventh of *Adar*, an ominous time for Jews. It is recorded that this day was adopted as a fast. It was probably observed from the first anniversary of Moshe's passing. The final section of *Megilas Taanis* lists dates of *yahrzeits* of great people, observed as fasts. A fast is a part of *teshuva*, repentance. The loss of body mass is like partial death. It takes the place of an animal atonement offering, which in turn symbolizes the death of the offerer. Fasts can also be for mourning, to stimulate *teshuva*, express grief and sorrow, and honor the soul of the deceased. The anniversary of the passing of a Jewish leader is ominous. On that *yahrzeit*, the entire nation repents and we mourn, lament their absence and honor them.

A child mourns a parent out of both grief and to honor the parent. In addition, the loss of the parent or any close relative indicates divine judgment. The *yahrzeit* is a day of judgment for the deceased. Merit may be gained in the next world through the actions of one's progeny in this world. The child is also judged on that day, as he is a part of the parent. *Reia mazlei*, his fortunes are in jeopardy. The Talmud mentions abstinence from wine and meat on the day of a parent's death. These restrictions are associated with mourning. Some communities derive from here the custom to fast on a *yahrzeit*. The poskim say it is appropriate to fast on the *yahrzeit* of a parent or of a *rebbe*.

This fast is not obligatory. One may choose to adopt it as a personal vow. Some justify the laxity in observing the fast. This is a time of *kaparah*, atonement, a good thing. However, the same argument is made to require fasting. *Kaparah* is needed, so it must be time to repent. The two sons of Aharon died in Nissan, yet the Torah connects their deaths to *Yom Kippur*, a fast for *teshuva*. A righteous man's death means the people need *kapara*. A parent's death means that the parent and child need *kapara*. A teacher's death means that the teacher and student need *kapara*. A common practice is to offer *tikun*, a

remedy for the departed soul. Food and drink are consumed. The *brochos* and the *amein* responses are attributed to the benefit of the soul.

Even if one is not observing a fast, he observes the mourning practices associated with festive gatherings. An *aveil* during the period of mourning observes more social restrictions. Merrymaking shows a carefree attitude to the judgment that has been visited on him. Accordingly, social events, pleasure trips in the company of friends, and festivities are somewhat restricted. The poskim add a restriction on inviting others to the home of the *aveil*, or accepting a social invitation to another home. Snacks are offered, but there is no *seuda*. Nonetheless, it is intended to be a light-hearted, small-talking, joyful, type of gathering. The same is applied to a *yahrzeit* observer. He may not participate in a wedding *seuda* on the night of his *yahrzeit*, or if he is not fasting, by day.

Simchas meraius is an exchange of friendly meals. Two friends invite and reciprocate socializing meals. The reciprocal meal is considered somewhat of an obligation. An *avail* for a parent, even if obligated, must wait twelve months to reciprocate. Many of these restrictions are applied to a *yahrzeit*, but somewhat reduced. He should not attend a wedding. The restriction is recorded by some, sometimes as a custom and sometimes as an institutionalized restriction. A minority view maintains that this only applies to the first *yahrzeit*, the culmination of the year of mourning.

Only the type of *seudos* that have been singled out for the restriction are indeed restricted. These include a wedding. The poskim debate whether this applies to the *seuda* of a *bris milah* and a *pidyon haben*, if the *yahrzeit* observer is not the father, the *mohel* or the *Kohain*. The poskim debate whether a *Kohain* who usually fasts should not do so on the day he performs a *pidyon haben*. If an individual was invited to a *seudas mitzvah* on a day he observes *yahrzeit*, and he refused based on the *yahrzeit*, he might have adopted a new binding practice. Therefore, he should be clear that he means this *bli neder*.

To qualify as a meal, bread must be served. In former times, a convened *seuda* was called a *mesiba*. The parties would recline, rather than sit. In modern times they sit together, at least in one room, and likely at the same table. They are all served by the same people. To qualify as festive, there must be a reason to share joy with friends. Any meal that is convened by invitation, thus fits the definition.

The poskim debate whether the *avail* may join the waiting staff and eat with them, but not in the same room as the *seuda*, or only if the food is taken home. The prevailing practice is stringency in both. A *simcha* with a religious cause need not include bread or wine. For example, a *kiddush* for the birth of a girl, or a *shalom zachor* are considered *simchos*. Though some permit them due to the absence of bread, especially if there is no sitting down, *availim* refrain from attending these functions, for they are, by definition, joyous occasions. However, if there is a steady supply of cake and beverages in the house of celebration, some permit the *avail* to partake. These snacks are not offered as an 'event'. [See Eruvin 2a-23a Taanis 29a Nedarim 12a Megilas Taanis 13 (Perek Acharon) Megillah 13b Moed Katan 15a 19a 21b 22b Yerushalmi 3:8, Kesubos 103b Yerushalmi 1, Kidushin 31b, Poskim. Sefer Chasidim 231-232. Tur BY Sh Ar OC 568:1 7 8 9 580 YD 380:25 (Ar Hash), 385:1 3, 391:2 Rema 395:3 Rema 398 402:12 Rema 403 end, commentaries. Availus Bahalacha 44:23 32 33. Hanisuin Kehilchasam 15, 16:91-101,

notes. BHL 559:9. Moed Lechol Chai 1.]

B) *Simchas chasan vekalah*

A wedding is not held privately, but rather in the company of guests. This is part of the joy of the occasion. The guests have a part in the *simcha* as well, and are indeed obliged to attend and gladden. There are two parts to this *mitzvah*, (i) *hachnasas chasan vekalah*, the obligation to attend the *chupah*, and (ii) *simchas chasan vekalah*, to gladden the couple. Both are considered Rabbinical *mitzvos* connected to the Scriptural *mitzvah ve'ahavta lera'icha kamocha*, general furtherance of friendship and goodwill. In addition, there is a *mitzvah* to participate in a *seuda* at the wedding. The Scriptural aspect of these *mitzvos* is seen when one has a conflict between them and other *mitzvos*, such as destroying *chametz*, or studying Torah. In many instances, this *mitzvah* takes precedence.

Thus, a wedding couple's *halachic* rulings often extend to the party accompanying them. For example, on *Sukos*, one should spend his time in a *sukah*. A *chasan vekalah* are exempt from the *mitzvah*, due mainly to their preoccupation with their own *mitzvah*. The *shushbinin*, attending to them, and the *benai hachupah*, guests, are also exempt. Accordingly, we learn that such guests can and may assume the status of the bride and groom in other such situations. [The actual wedding feast takes place before *Yomtov*, because one does not hold weddings during a *chag*. The reference here is to the ensuing seven days of feasting. In practice, the poskim recommend that these groups should try to eat in a *sukah*, but should refrain from the *brocha*, *laishaiv basukah*.]

There are various levels of obligation that exempt one of other obligations at corresponding levels. The closest members of the party, *shushbinin*, are more exempt than regular guests. There is a term *benai hachupah* that seems to apply to those officiating and the family members, but might apply to all guests. Of the general party, there seems to be more leniency for those who are invited personally than for those who attend voluntarily for the sake of the *mitzvah*. Of those invited, some travel out of town for it, and some might leave their work in town for it. We follow the view that one not invited need not leave his work nor abandon his study for the sake of this *mitzvah*. However, the view that one should attend is taken into account in evaluating the enormity of the *mitzvah*.

A *chasan* is compared to a king. For example, some invoke the verse, 'the multitude of people is glory for the king', in requiring everybody possible to attend. This can be applied to both parts of the *mitzvah*. The Talmud makes it quite clear that it applies to the first part of the *mitzvah*. Indeed, one should interrupt Torah study to ensure a larger crowd. Certainly, those invited contribute to the joy and honor of the *chasan*-king and his *kalah*-queen. The poskim debate whether an *aveil* for relatives other than his parents, observing *Shloshim*, may attend the *chupa* but not the *seuda*. [See Brochos 6a 62b Megillah 3b 29a Sukah 26b Kesubos 7a-8b 17a etc PDRE 17, Poskim. Tur Sh Ar OC 640:6 EH 65, commentaries. Hanisuin Bahalacha 15.]

C) *Indispensable and essential guests*

During his initial mourning period, a *mohel* may perform a *bris milah*. The immediate family may participate, including a father and mother. After the initial mourning period, an essential member of the party may attend as well. Unlike a *bris milah*, a wedding can be delayed. Therefore, one should not get married during *Shloshim*. The Talmud

says, if the wedding had been prepared when a death occurred, burial is delayed until after the wedding. The couple observe their wedding week and then the mourning period is observed. The reason is the irretrievable loss. Some poskim compare emotional stress to irretrievable loss as well, as we shall see.

After the initial mourning period, they may marry. The poskim debate which close family members may participate in a wedding, even during the twelve month period of mourning a parent. Some say it applies to parents only. Hosting the wedding for their children is their *mitzvah*, as well as that of the couple. Some permit them to attend during *Shiva*. They should not eat together with the guests, to show that they are in mourning. Their attendance is emotionally irretrievable.

Others apply it to other members of the immediate family, including siblings and grandparents, after the *Shloshim*. They are not the hosts, nor is the event their *mitzvah*. The reason to include them in this dispensations is their special status. Since the couple, and for that matter the parents as well, would not enjoy their *simcha* as much without them, their presence is also crucial. Their presence is not essential. The question seems to be whether they can be considered indispensable. Some distinguish between close siblings and others. For example, if they eat together every day, they should attend the wedding. In some circles, grandparents also eat together with the larger family. In some circles, they all live in the same compound. These are very close relatives. However, the case may be made for a distant grandparent to attend. The grandchild only gets to see him at these one-time events. In fact, the uniqueness of the event is considered a reason to relax the *availus* restrictions for the grandparent as well.

If a *chasan* or *kalah* observes *yahrzeit*, the poskim discourage arranging the wedding on that day. It is not a day of good *mazal*. Regarding other relatives observing *yahrzeit* on the wedding day, there is a consensus to permit close relatives to attend. They do not distinguish between those who live together or not. They may also eat, even if they usually fast. Furthermore, even though the Talmud mentions refraining from meat and wine, this does not apply on *Yomtov*. For the wedding party, it is a *Yomtov*. [See Refs to other sections. Moed Katan 23a Kesubos 3b-4b, Pokim. Tur Sh Ar YD 342 391 392 (Ar Hash end 10) 395:3 402:12, commentaries. Igros Moshe YD:II:169 171. Even Yaakov 56. Hanisuin Kehilchasa 16:94-96 112, notes. Nitei Gavriel Availus II:22:1-13, notes.]

In conclusion, the grandfather should attend and participate.

On the parsha ... *Yaakov cooked the lentils for a mourner's meal for his father Yitzchok. On that very day Avraham had passed away, five years early. He lived to 'good' old age, and never witnessed his grandson Eisav going off in the wrong direction. [See Rashi 25:30] Even Yitzchok did not know about Eisav's behavior. Yet, Avraham might find out about it. The development of one's grandchildren is so precious to the grandfather, that Hashem shortened the life of Avraham. He spared him the pain. A grandfather, especially one living near his grandson and teaching him Torah, would suffer an irretrievable emotional loss on missing his wedding.*

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