

A morsel of fur-fetched halachic pilpul for purim people

Arthur E. Green

HALACHA: When the eve of Passover falls on the Sabbath, one must take care to clean one's Shtreimel of any *Hametz* which may have gotten into it at breakfast. (From a wall-poster by the Jerusalem Bet Din last year)

COMMENTARY: This matter is discussed at length in the *Kova' Yeshu'ah*, *simman* 98. There the learned author z"l raises a number of theoretical and practical issues worthy of our consideration. His basic concerns are the definition of the term "crumb", the question (long debated among *halakhic* authorities) as to whether one should wear a shtreimel at all during breakfast (or should remove it before herring), and the nature of the process by which a so-called "crumb" (as yet undefined) may be said to have "gotten into" a shtreimel altogether.

Dealing with the last question first, as is our custom, we would do well to make note of the *Mitznefet Bad*, folio 18a, which brings the famous tale of a certain *hasid* who was eating breakfast while turning ecstatic somersaults in front of the *aron qodesh* on the eve of Passover which happened to fall on the Sabbath. There, of course, the matter is discussed in an entirely different context, the primary question being that of order: Should he first remove the crumbs from his shtreimel or the herring juice from his eye? If he should choose to remove the crumbs first, being concerned with the passing of time and the approaching *zeman bi'ur* when *hametz* would be forbidden (in that year it was at 9:07 and 19¼ *halaqim*, but the more stringent forbade it, of course, after 4 A.M.), his vision while inspecting for *hametz* might be impaired by the herring juice which yet remains in his eye. In that case, do we consider his vision so impaired that we assume he may have missed certain crumbs, and thus declare his *shtreimel* to be considered *hametz* and forbidden during Passover? The commentator then discusses the varying difficulties in finding a *goy* in his Transylvanian town of Feresczobovolo (Flip) who was willing to buy a crumb-laden *shtreimel* on the eve of Passover, and suggests various alternatives. In any case, we see clearly how it is possible that crumbs of *hametz* might, G-d forbid, become involved with a shtreimel under even the most ordinary of circumstances.

As to the wearing of the shtreimel during breakfast, local customs seem to vary. The *Gedulat Levi*, by an ancestor of the present New Englander Rebbe, SHLIT" A, mentions that in revolutionary times the *hasidim* of Boston wore *shtreimelekh* constantly, except when selling Yahrzeit glasses at harbor tea parties, because of *mar'it 'ayin* and *darkhey shalom*. Needless to say, the Boston *Bet Din* records a more lenient opinion. The *Ahavas Ahim* of Philadelphia claims, however, that one is exempt from this requirement while attending compulsory Quaker meetings and while eating breakfast on the eve of Passover which falls on the Sabbath.

May the shtreimel be cleaned at all on the sabbath?

We leave the matter of the "crumb" and its definition for those with greater expertise in such matters; we understand that the organization of Orthodox scientists has engaged a team of research fellows to determine the minimal *shi'ur* for the status of a *halakhically* viable crumb. We have our own ideas on this matter, but we shall patiently defer to their learned opinion.

We would, however, like to turn our attention to a matter which, in our opinion, has not merited sufficient treatment by the *halakhic* authorities of our time. This is the question of the methods of *shtreimel*-cleaning which may be undertaken on the Sabbath. Brushing is of course out of the question, lest a hair be plucked out, R" L, and the Sabbath thus be desecrated. Similarly, wiping with a damp cloth is a suspect method, lest one inadvertently squeeze it to pluck out a persistent morsel, and wringing of the cloth ensue. The safest approach in these situations seems to be that of carefully turning the *shtreimel* over directly in front of one's face, and softly blowing the "crumbs" out from between the hairs. This should only be done, however, in cases where one is sure that the animals whose tails make up the shtreimel are quite thoroughly dead, lest one lead oneself into dangers, as happened in the case of that well-known Hungarian authority, the *Ta'us Sofer*, who was bitten by his own *shtreimel* on numerous occasions.

Non-orthodox views on these matters

For those interested in a more liberal point of view, it might be mentioned that the Rabbinical Assembly Law Committee, after long debate, has decided that the matter is one of individual conscience. Female rabbinical students at the Hebrew Union College have protested against the *shtreimel* (now beginning to appear among certain "right-wing reform" students in Cincinnati) as an article of sexist adornment. Male members of the Farbrengen community in Washington have responded by shaving their heads and donning the *sheitel*. All of these matters will hopefully be discussed

in the next volume of *The Jewish Catalogue*, which plans to include a section on Jewish fox-hunting and the preparation of a contemporary *shtreimel*. Most liberal Jews, however, are awaiting some word from our leading theologians. Professor Fackenheim is said to be busily at work on a new book entitled: *Six-Fifteen – Shtreimel-Cleaning in Epoch-Making Times*. Elie Wiesel has recently been telling more and more tales of Jews who went mad while cleaning their *shtreimelekh*, while Richard Rubenstein has recently given a lecture which he called *Chasing crumbs into the apocalypse*.

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Organizing ourselves to fight handism

In an attempt to combat this grievous inequity in Jewish life, we Jewish lefties have formed ourselves together to work toward a new consciousness. We have already organized the Jewish Leftyist Organization (JELLO), whose symbol is an upraised right arm with fist clenched, wearing *t'filin*, and the Society for the Manifestation of Lefties (SMOL), whose slogan is "Left on!" These groups are totally committed to the eradication of handism, that pernicious discriminatory doctrine which had grafted itself onto the living heritage of Judaism.

We have already encountered some progress in our struggle for equality for Jewish lefties, as well as some setbacks. The Union of American Hebrew Congregations has agreed to consider the application of a congregation of lefties for membership, and several prominent Orthodox shuls have consented to separate lefties' *hakafot* on Simchat Torah. However, the Rabbinical Assembly Law Committee has so far been willing only to endorse the principle of counting lefties in a minyan and giving us *aliyot*, but not allowing us to lead services. *Commentary Magazine* is said to be preparing a symposium on "Appeasement, Detente, and Left-Handedness", and *Sh'ma* is believed to have accepted an article on "Facing my leftyness: dilemmas and rewards" by a Jewish woman from a small town of homosexuals. Rabbi David Bleich is also reportedly preparing a lengthy summary of *t'shuvot* on the halachic attitude toward lefties for the summer issue of *Tradition*.

We will not be silent, however, until plans for affirmative action against handism have been adopted by all major Jewish organizations, and until lefties are fairly represented in rabbinical schools, on synagogue boards, as Federation executives, and as *Rashei Yeshivot*. Until then we will remain steadfast in our commitment to justice, mercy and lefteousness!

T'fillin the blanks

Kerry Baker

Our Purim version of a well-known party game, in

which one player reads out the categories, fills in the other players' answers (the obscurer the better), and then reads the product . . .)

. . . And the king's servants said to him, _____ (expletive), Haman is _____ (verb, present participle) in the court. And the king said, Let him come in. So Haman came in. And the king said to him, What shall be done to the man whom the king delights _____ (infinitive)? Now Haman thought in his _____ (noun), Whom would the king delight _____ (infinitive) more than myself? And Haman answered the king, For the man whom the king _____ (verb, present t.) to do honor, let the royal _____ (noun) be brought which the king has _____ (verb, past t.), and the _____ (noun) that the king _____ (verb, present t.) upon, and on the head of which a royal _____ (noun) is placed; and let this _____ (noun) and _____ (noun) be _____ (verb, past part) into the hand of one of the king's most _____ (adj.) _____ (noun, plural), that they may _____ (verb, present t.) the man whom the king _____ (verb, pres. t.) to do honor, and bring him on horseback through the _____ (noun) of the _____ (noun), and _____ (verb, pres. t.) before him, Thus shall it be done to the _____ (noun) whom the king delights to _____ (verb).

Attempting to title contemporary temples

Danny Freeland

The current trend toward small havurot, which replace or are part of larger congregations, has created an urgent need for new synagogue names. Here are some recommended new titles, all based on traditional models:

Temple Beth Or, Karen Or, Heidi Or, Sylvia
 Temple Bette Midler
 Temple Rodeph Kesef
 The Shil Shul
 Congregation Shaari Lewis
 Temple Rodeph the Red-Nosed Reindeer
 Temple Torah, Torah, Torah (of Tokyo)
 Congregation Agoudah Cheese