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SERVICE ENTRANCE: MAY ONE GO INTO A FOREIGN HOUSE OF WORSHIP?

Adapted from the writings of Dayan Yitzhak Grossman

CNN reports:

Britain's Chief Rabbi, Ephraim Mirvis, will walk to King Charles III's coronation, in keeping with Shabbat laws..."[The King and Queen] are being exceptionally gracious in order to make it possible for me to walk to [Westminster] Abbey on our Shabbat, because we don't go in vehicles," he told CNN's Bianca Nobilo in an interview on Friday. "So [they] have invited us to be their guests in St. James' Palace over the Sabbath..."

Mirvis's role in the ceremony marks the first time that faith leaders from all of Britain's major religions will be included in a coronation, which has traditionally been a solely Christian service.

While the Archbishop of Canterbury will conduct the ceremony and anoint Charles with holy oil, the Chief Rabbi said he will be part of the procession entering Westminster Abbey and will give the newly crowned king a blessing.

"After the religious service is over, I, together with four other faith leaders, will be forming a line, the king will stand in front of us, and we will give him a blessing and greetings," he said.

"He will acknowledge that. It's historic and is exceptionally powerful and much appreciated," Mirvis added...¹

(continued on page 2)

¹ Bianca Nobilo and Issy Ronald. UK's Chief Rabbi will walk to King Charles' coronation to keep Shabbat laws. CNN. <https://www.cnn.com/2023/05/05/uk/chief-rabbi-king-charles-coronation-intl-scli-gbr/index.html>.

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PARSHAS BEMIDBAR

LION'S MILK

Excerpted and adapted from a shiur by
Rav Yehoshua Sovo

Those who encamp to the front, at the east, shall be the division of the camp of Yehudah according to their armies...they shall be the first to journey.

Bemidbar 2:3,9

Why was Sheivet Yehudah first? Yehudah is king of the *shvatim*, compared by Yaakov to the lion (Bereishis 49), king of the animals. The king takes the lead and shoulders responsibility for the kingdom. To properly fulfill this role, Yehudah had to be in front.

The Shulchan Aruch opens with the directive that a person must awaken in the morning with the strength of a lion. A lion uses its strength for immediate and effective implementation of the tasks it must perform. And a person must awaken in the morning with the strength and determination to serve Hashem immediately.

One reason for eating dairy on Shavuot is because after *Matan Torah*, Klal Yisrael wished to celebrate immediately with food and did not have time to study the halachos required for eating meat, like *shechitah*

(continued on page 2)

O&A from the
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In Suspense

Q There is a hammock in my backyard, hanging between two trees. May we lie in it on Shabbos?

A Chazal forbade climbing on trees on Shabbos, lest one pull off a branch or a fruit and violate the *melacha* of *kotzeir* (Beitzah 36b). Included in the decree is using a tree in any way, including leaning on it (Mishnah Brurah 336:2), placing something on it, or hanging something from it (Shulchan Aruch *ibid.*).

If something is affixed to a tree, it is treated like the tree itself and may not be used (*ibid.* 13). A typical hammock may therefore not be used on Shabbos. But there is a manner in which it would be permitted: The Shulchan Aruch (*ibid.*) says that one may climb a ladder that is

(continued on page 2)

(continued from page 1)

The announcement that the Chief Rabbi would be entering Westminster Abbey—an Anglican church—aroused indignation online. A year ago, he attended a prayer service at St. Paul's Cathedral in London in honor of Queen Elizabeth II's 70-year anniversary on the throne.² Former Chief Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits, who served from 1967 to 1991, described his own practice as follows:

After consultation with the [London] Beth Din, my own practice is occasionally to attend Church services on royal and state occasions to represent the Jewish community. But I never actively participate, nor do I wear cap and gown. I find that my Christian hosts usually show understanding and respect for this attitude and its reservations.³

And elsewhere:

Naturally, I often face the problem of having to respond to invitations to take part in interfaith services, sometimes at the highest level for royal and national events. My attitude invariably is that I cannot take an active part in a religious service of any except my own faith, and this is always understood and respected. But I do on occasion attend such services as a representative of the Jewish community, though without wearing canonicals or "officiating" in any other form.⁴

The day after President Obama's inauguration, a National Prayer Service was held at the National Cathedral in Washington. As JTA reported at the time:

The main Modern Orthodox rabbinical association says a prominent member violated its rules by participating in the National Prayer Service.

A Rabbinical Council of America official told JTA that Rabbi Haskel Lookstein, the religious leader of Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun in New York City, broke the organization's rules by participating in the service Wednesday at the National Cathedral on the morning after Barack Obama's inauguration.

"The long-standing policy of the Rabbinical Council of America, in accordance with Jewish law, is that participation in a prayer service held in the sanctuary of a church is

prohibited," the RCA said in a statement. "Any member of the RCA who attends such a service does so in contravention of this policy and should not be perceived as representing the organization in any capacity."

The RCA said that Lookstein's participation was problematic both because the service was held in the sanctuary of a church, which Orthodox Jews are prohibited from entering, and because it was an interfaith prayer service, which the RCA discourages.⁵

Although an absolute prohibition against entering a foreign house of worship does not explicitly appear in the Gemara, the existence of such a prohibition is generally accepted. The Rambam writes (in his *Peirush Hamishnayot*, not in *Mishneh Torah*) regarding a house of idol worship that "it is virtually prohibited for us to see it, and *kal vachomer* to enter it,"⁶ and the Shulchan Aruch rules that "It is a mitzvah to distance oneself four *amos* from a path of idolatry."⁷

One basis in the Gemara for such a prohibition is the following anecdote:

R' Chanina and R' Yonasan were traveling on the road, and they reached two diverging paths. One path opened onto the door of a temple of idol worship, and one opened onto the door of a brothel. One said to his friend: Let us go on the path that opens onto the door of a temple of idol worship, for its *yeitzer hara* has been slaughtered. The other one said to him: Let us go on the path that opens onto the door of the brothel, and we shall subdue our *yeitzer hara* and receive reward.⁸

Tosafos comments:

From here we may derive that it is customary to distance oneself from the entrance of a place of idol worship to the extent possible, because it is written, "and do not come near the entrance of her house"⁹—which the Gemara above interpreted as referring to idol worship—for he preferred to go by the path that led to the entrance of the brothel rather than the one that led to the entrance of the place of idol worship.¹⁰

Although Tosafos only infers that distancing oneself from the entrance of a place of idol

⁵ Jacob Berkman, Orthodox group: Rabbi violated rules by joining National Prayer Service, Jan. 21, 2009, <https://www.jta.org/2009/01/21/politics/orthodox-group-rabbi-violated-rules-by-joining-national-prayer-service>.

⁶ *Peirush Hamishnayot*, Avodah Zarah 1:4, cited by Shach Y.D. siman 149 s.k. 1 and Ba'er Heitev ibid. s.k. 1.

⁷ Shulchan Aruch Y.D. 149:1.

⁸ Avodah Zarah 17a-b.

⁹ Mishlei 5:8.

¹⁰ Tosafos ibid. s.v. Neizil.

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(continued from page 1)

leaning on a nail affixed to a tree, as the ladder is separate from the tree. So if you hammer a peg into a tree and tie the hammock rope to the peg, you could lie in the hammock on Shabbos.



RAV ARYEH FINKEL

(Tying a second rope to the existing rope is not a viable solution, because the second rope would be viewed as part of the hammock; see *Shmiras Shabbos Kehilchasah perek 26 n. 58*.) The hammock must be hung before Shabbos, as hanging the hammock on the peg is considered direct use of the tree (*Mishnah Brurah* ibid. 60). Only a solid tree that doesn't shake when you lie down may be used, because moving the tree this way is considered direct use of it (*Mishnah Brurah* ibid. 63).

According to some *Rishonim*, a visibly dead tree is not subject to the prohibition, because there is no concern of *kotzeir* (*Mishnah Brurah* ibid. 1). But the halacha follows those *Rishonim* that don't differentiate between them (*Shulchan Aruch* ibid. 1).

worship is "customary" and does not assert that it is absolutely forbidden, and in any event, the inference from the Gemara's anecdote is not entirely straightforward,¹¹ the halachic consensus is that entering a place of idolatry is forbidden.

In a follow-up article we will *iy"H* survey the positions of recent *poskim* regarding this prohibition, in particular on whether there is any basis for leniency in coronations, presidential inaugurations, and the like, where there may be the opportunity to develop and improve relations with non-Jews by attending, or conversely, the danger of injuring such relations by not attending.

¹¹ See *Maharam Lublin* ibid., *Shu"t Yabia Omer cheilek 2 Y.D. siman 11* os 1.

(continued from page 1)



and *basar bechalav* (Rama, O.C. 494). Why

should what we eat on Shavuot be determined by the fact that Klal Yisrael wanted to eat immediately? The answer is that

here too, we are highlighting the importance of taking immediate action.

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