



CIRCLE TIME

AT YOUR
Shabbos Table

... FOR A Meaningful and Entertaining SHABBOS WITH YOUR CHILDREN ...

DVAR TORAH IN A STORY >>

TAHOR, TAHOR!

The Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 86a) relates the circumstances surrounding the final months of the life of Rabbah bar Nachmani.

Rabbah would gather the Jews in Bavel to learn Torah during the months of Nissan and Tishrei. He taught the *halachos* and *inyanim* of Pesach in Nissan, and of the *Yamim Nora'im* in Tishrei. He would gather huge crowds; over 12,000 people left their homes to hear the *drashos* of the great *talmid chacham*.

Torah study was not illegal in those days, but in the eyes of the government, keeping Jews away from home was a big problem. The local king sent tax collectors to every home in the kingdom to demand fees each month, and during the spring and fall, the Jews were not home and were nowhere to be found. The amount of taxes collected during these times were significantly lower, and the king was furious.

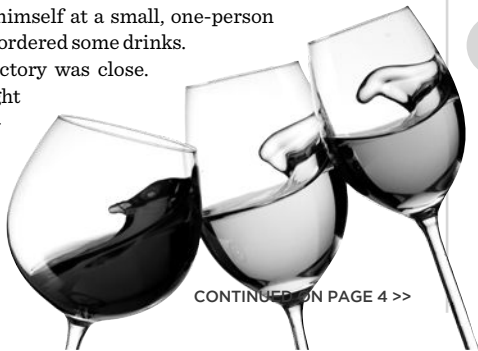
One insider, a spy, explained to the ruler that Rabbah bar Nachmani was responsible for the lack of taxes. The king believed the spy's claim that Rabbah was gathering Jews was to minimize taxes paid to the king because he was a revolutionary and was trying to bankrupt the kingdom! He put out a warrant for the arrest of Rabbah, sentenced him to death, and sent a marshal after him.

Rabbah heard about the decree and fled his native town of Pumpedisa. With the marshal in hot pursuit, Rabbah fled from town to town, city to city, always on the run—while the marshal followed in his tracks, always a step behind. Finally, with nowhere else to go, Rabbah returned to Pumpedisa. The marshal charged into town shortly after Rabbah, and looked for a hotel to spend the night before picking up the chase in the morning. Unbeknown to him, he chose the exact inn where Rabbah himself was hiding!

The marshal settled himself at a small, one-person table in the diner and ordered some drinks.

He could feel that victory was close.

The waiter brought him two strong glasses of wine, and the marshal quickly knocked them both back. The

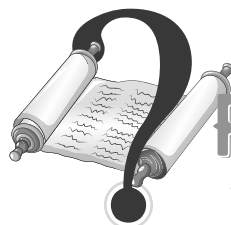


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פרשת תזריע- מצורע

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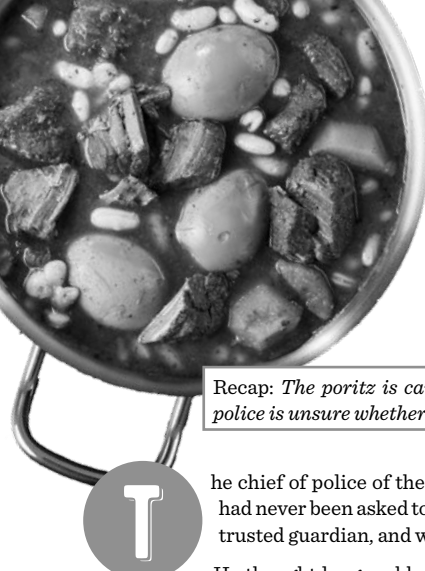
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PARSHAH RIDDLES

Answers to this week's riddles appear on page 3.

- 1 Can you find three words in our *parshah* that contain a pair of letters repeated twice in row (e.g., כַּאֲבָא)? How many other examples of this can you find in the Torah?
- 2 Can you find three different words in the *parshah* that each have a *gematria* of only 9? Can you think of any other words in the Torah with that *gematria*?
- 3 Where does the word תַּיִן appear in the Torah (5)?
- 4 Which mitzvah do Chazal say Klal Yisrael accepted with *simchah*? Which two *pesukim* of *simchah* apply to that mitzvah?
- 5 Rashi (*Vayikra* 13:46) implies that a *metzora* is not allowed to associate with anyone, even other *metzora'im*. If so, why were the four *metzora'im* in the *haftorah* together? And why were they out of the city altogether—Shomron does not qualify as a city they need to leave as it was not walled from the days of Yehoshua. Also, why was it important for Chazal to identify them as Geichazi and his three sons?



SERIAL >> CHAPTER 16

CHOLENT STORY

A story told in parts, designed to get children to come back to the table for the main dish!

Recap: The *poritz* is caught trying to leave Prague with Efraim, but the chief of police is unsure whether to believe him or the Maharal.



he chief of police of the city of Prague had been in tough situations before, but he had never been asked to play Solomon. How was he to know who was the boy's true, trusted guardian, and who was a kidnapper?

He thought long and hard, and finally decided on a verdict. "Look," he said to the *poritz*. "I cannot allow this boy to leave my jurisdiction without proof of his parentage.

He will have to say here in Prague until you bring proof that you are his father. Please travel to Poland, gather his birth certificate and other necessary papers, and return quickly. We will be happy to apologize and grant you stewardship of the child with the necessary proof."

The *poritz* looked at the chief of police in disbelief. "You mean, you are sending me back empty-handed?" The expression on his face cycled from sadness to anger, disbelief to fury, indignance to pleading. He looked from the stony face of the police chief to the expressionless one of the Maharal, and realized he had no choice. He climbed back into the wagon, called to the horses, and flicked the reins. The wagon began to roll, moving away from the checkpoint, through the gates, and out of the city of Prague.

As the wagon disappeared from view, the Maharal turned to Efraim, embracing him in a warm hug. The chief looked on with a twinkle in his eye. "Take him home and take good care of this young man, Rabbiner," he said. "I don't think that fellow will be back."

As the Maharal and Efraim set off for the yeshivah, in the hills surrounding Prague, the black carriage rolled slowly and mournfully along the roads. Driving alone through the fields, the *poritz* drooped slowly and steadily into despair. He knew he had no proof to bring the police in Prague, because the boy was not his son. He had stolen him so many years ago from Reb Aharon and his wife. As he moved further from Prague, the realization sunk in that he would never recover Johann. He began to feel a tiny slice of the pain he had caused the Jewish couple when he stole their child, and he couldn't handle it. He knew his wife couldn't handle it either—she had already been sick for weeks, and when he arrived home without Johann, it would be the end for her.

While thinking all these miserable, depressing thoughts, the *poritz* lost focus on the road. Wrapped in his own misery, he never saw the cliff edge approaching. The black horses drove themselves right over the edge of the cliff, and the last memories of the *kishuf-macher*, the *poritz*, and his pursuit of Efraim were erased forever.

Meanwhile, the Maharal brought Efraim back to the yeshivah. Under his dedicated care, the boy soon recovered from his experiences with the *kishuf-macher* and the *poritz*. He returned to his studies with renewed energy and vigor and threw himself into Torah learning. He applied himself passionately and soon became one of the top *bachurim* in the highest *shiur* in the yeshivah. A brilliant student, with sterling *middos* and character, Efraim was liked by all. Peace had settled in his life.

But the Maharal was worried. He did not know what had happened to the *poritz*. He knew the man did not have any proof that Efraim was his son, but he did not know what else he had up his sleeve. For all he knew, the *poritz* and his men could come attack the yeshivah any day, looking to capture Efraim again, now that they knew where he was.

Day after day, the Maharal pondered the best course of action to protect Efraim. The young man was clearly showing potential to become one of the *gedolei hador*, and the Maharal knew that even if the *poritz* did not return, the *yetzer hara* was not through with Efraim.

He would be back.

DVAR TORAH >>

LITVAK, CHASSID, SEPHARDI

Three different angles on a *dvar Torah*, one each in classic Litvish, Chassidic, and Sephardic styles. Can your children guess which idea comes from which school of thought!

וְרָאָה הַכֹּהֵן וְהָיָה כִסְתָהּ הַצָּרַעַת אֶת כָּל בְּשָׂרוֹ וְטָהַר אֶת
הַנֶּגַע כָּלוֹ: הַפֶּךָ לְבָן טָהוֹר הוּא

"And the *kohen* shall see the *tzara'as* covering his entire body, and he shall purify the *nega*, he has turned totally white—he is *tahor*!" (*Vayikra* 13:13)

How can we explain the halachah that a small *nega* makes someone *tamei*, but if he is totally covered by *tzara'as*, he is *tahor*!



CHAFETZ CHAIM,
RAV CHAIM KANIEVSKY:

When one has a small *nega*, he doesn't lose hope. He can hide it under his clothing and pretend to be healthy and normal. That is the most dangerous time: he is terribly sick but is behaving as if he is normal—asymptomatic! The Torah therefore orders him into isolation. But when he is completely covered with *tzara'as*, he can no longer hide it. Now, he is truly broken and humbled; he cannot hide his condition and must admit that he has a problem. People will be wary of him and he will get help, so the Torah does not have to create artificial isolation.



REBBE NACHMAN OF BRESLOV:

When one is at the lowest level, he has no place to go but up! He has already turned it around and is heading in the right direction. Someone going the right way is good, *tahor*, no matter how far from the goal he still may be. When one is at his lowest and most distant, in that moment, Hashem is often closest!



TORAH V'CHAIM:

When a person has a disease or problem, and just a little bit of it is visible on the outside, it is deep seated and dangerously strong on the inside. But once it spreads all over, it is no longer rooted inside. It is coming out, and that is part of leaving—the roots are dead already.

TO BE CONTINUED...

PERSONAL GROWTH AVODAH OF THE WEEK

This section views the procession of parshiyos and Yamim Tovim as a ladder for personal growth. It identifies a theme in the parshah and a related area that needs growth, and assigns a weekly mission based upon it.

Personal growth avodah of the week

The coming fourth week of Sefirah represents the middah of *Netzach*, or overpowering the *yetzer hara* through the strategies of the seven *midos*—one for each day. The week is represented by the right hand, or the stronger, more dexterous limb of the body. It's time to defeat some long-standing challenges.

Parshah summary

The *parshiyos* of the week focus on *tzara'as* and *tumah* caused by negative speech, poor interpersonal *midos*, and loss of potential for greatness.

Tzara'as is a deadly and highly contagious disease, forcing the afflicted into quarantine. So too is a

sharp, negative tongue and narrowed eyes. Both are toxic to a healthy society and must be banned until they can turn themselves around.

Parshas Tazria teaches basic *halachos* of childbirth and *bris milah*, before launching into the lengthy description of various types of *tzara'as* on the body or clothing and the procedure for determining which are *tahor* and which are not. It also teaches the *halachos* of the *metzora* during his various stages. *Parshas Metzora* concludes the *halachos* of *tzara'as* by detailing the procedures for exiting the state of *nega*-induced *tumah*. It also describes the procedure for *tzara'as* on homes, and the *halachos* of several types of *tumah* that stem from the living human body.

AVODAH OF THE WEEK:



1. Practice overpowering the *yetzer hara* in speech by biting your tongue once per day, for no reason other than asserting control over it. Choose your juiciest tidbit and resist saying it so you can defeat the *yetzer hara* and take yourself out of the conversation for a bit.
2. The *metzora* undergoes great embarrassment as a result of his lack of self-control. Things just get worse and worse throughout the *tzara'as* and *taharah* process. Once per day, allow yourself to suffer some shame in the name of standing up for what is right or avoiding confrontation.

RIDDLE ANSWERS:

1. The *parshah* contains the words אֲדַמְדָּם, וִירְקָק, and יָמִים. Other examples include קָדְקָד, which appears four times; לְגִלְגָּלִית, which appears six times; and אֲבַעְבָּעֵת.
2. This week:
 - a) זאת תורת נגע צרעת בנגד הצמר או הפשתים (*Vayikra* 13:59)
 - b) ובא אשר לו הבית והגיד לכהן לאמר כנגע נראה לי בבית (*Vayikra* 14:35)
 - c) דברו אל בני ישראל ואמרתם אלהם איש איש כי יהיה זב מבשרו זובו טמא הוא (*Vayikra* 15:2)
 Other words in the Torah include חא, אוב, and באו.
3.
 - a) וַיִּמַת חָשֶׁם וַיִּמְלֶךְ מַחְתָּיו הַדָּד בֶּן בְּדָד (*Bereishis* 36:35)
 - b) כָּל יְמֵי אֲשֶׁר הִנֵּגַע בּוֹ יִטְמָא טְמֵא הוּא בְּדָד יֵשֵׁב מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה מוֹשְׁבוֹ (*Vayikra* 13:46)
 - c) כִּי מֵרָאשׁ צָרִים אֲרָאֵנוּ וּמִנְבְּעוֹת אֲשׁוּרֵנוּ הֵן עִם לְבָדָד יֵשֶׁבֶן וּבְגוּיִם לֹא יִתְחַשֵּׁב (*Bamidbar* 23:9)
 - d) ה' בְּדָד יִנְחֵנוּ וְאִין עִמוּ אֵל נִכְר (*Devarim* 32:12)
 - e) וַיֵּשְׁבֶן יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּטַח בְּדָד עַיִן יַעֲקֹב (*Devarim* 33:28)
4. Chazal say we accepted the mitzvah of *bris milah* with *simchah*. The Gemara in *Shabbos* 130a applies the *pasuk* (*Tehillim* 119:162) שֶׁשׁ לִיהוּדִים הֵיטָה אוֹרָה וְשִׂמְחָה (*Esther* 8:15) to *milah*, and in *Megillah* 16b it applies the *pasuk* (*Esther* 8:15) לִיהוּדִים הֵיטָה אוֹרָה וְשִׂמְחָה.
5. See Haftorah from the Headlines. Geichazi and his sons were cursed with the “*tzara'as* of Na’aman.” Na’aman was not a Jew, and therefore his *tzara'as* was medical, not spiritual. It is not *tamei*, but it is contagious. This is why they were sent out of Shomron. They were allowed to associate with each other because the only reason they were sent out of the city was because of contagion.

waiter withdrew the marshal's table, as was the custom in those times.

Suddenly, a scream rang out in the hotel diner. Something was happening to the marshal! His face was twisting, contorting! In a few minutes, his face turned inside out!

The hotel staff were terrified. They couldn't figure out what had happened, but they knew they would be blamed if they didn't get the marshal sorted out quickly. The king's men would soon be banging on the door of the hotel to drag them off to prison for poisoning a government official! With no choice, they ran to the room they had given to Rabbah bar Nachmani.

Rabbah listened carefully to the story. "We're sorry to ask you for help," the hoteliers wailed. "We know he's chasing you! But what can we do?! Please, save us from a terrible fate!"

"The problem was caused by the fact that you gave him two drinks," Rabbah said, explaining that, as was the case in those times, "anything done in pairs or even-numbered amounts is dangerous. It implies that one believes in a 'partnership' in creation, *chas v'shalom*, and leaves one vulnerable to the powers of evil, of *sheidim*. When my pursuer drank a pair of glasses of wine, he was immediately attacked by *sheidim*. Give him a third glass, and he will be fine."

The managers rushed back to the inside-out marshal, poured a third cup of wine down his gullet, and cleared the table again. Sure enough, the marshal returned to his normal self.

Once recovered, the marshal soon figured out what had happened. "No one else could have set me straight," he thought to himself. "Only Rabbah bar Nachmani himself, the man I have been chasing for so long, could have done this. He must be here, in this hotel!" He whipped out his marshal's badge and began searching the rooms of the hotel, one by one. Sure enough, before long, he discovered Rabbah in one of the rooms, and slapped a pair of handcuffs on him!

"Look," he said, "you saved me, so I won't kill you. But when the king's men find out that I'm off the case, they may catch me and torture me, and I will have no choice but to reveal your hiding place."

Sure enough, a short while later, the king's men were again after Rabbah. This time they caught him quickly and locked him in prison.

Rabbah began to *daven* to Hashem to save him, and the walls of the prison collapsed and crumbled all around him! Rabbah fled and hid in the stump of a big tree, where he stayed and learned Torah peacefully, hidden from all.

Meanwhile, a *machlokes* had broken out in the *Yeshivah Shel Ma'alah*. What is the halachah if a person gets *tzara'as*, but it is not known whether the skin turned white before the hair (which would be *tamei*) or the hair turned white before the skin (*tahor*). The *Yeshivah Shel Ma'alah* held that the man would be *tamei*, but Hakadosh Baruch Hu said he would be *tahor*. Who could they ask to *pasken*?

They decided to consult Rabbah bar Nachmani, who was the greatest expert in the laws of *tzara'as* in all worlds. In order to call him to appear before the yeshivah, the *Malach Hamaves* was dispatched to collect him!

The *Malach* arrived at Rabbah's tree, but he was busy learning without stopping. The *Malach Hamaves* is powerless against someone busy learning. Rabbah understood that the *Malach* had come for him and continued learning intensely.

Desperate for a distraction, the *Malach* blew a wind into the trees and rustled the branches. Rabbah did not pause from his learning, but he did think the noise was the king's marshals, back on his trail! He decided to give up the chase. "Better be taken by the *Malach Hamaves* than the king's marshals," he said, and he allowed himself to be summoned to the *Yeshivah shel Maalah*. In his final breath, he *paskened* the *she'eilah*: "*Tahor! Tahor!*" he said.

Did you notice that the story of the haftorah, besides relating to the depth of the parshah or day, usually sounds like it is right out of current events?

HAFTORAH FROM THE HEADLINES

BACKGROUND TO THE HAFTORAH

Elisha's *gabbai*, Geichazi, was not a straight person. When Elisha cured the chronic *tzara'as* of Na'aman, the chief general of Aram, he refused to take money from him in order to maximize the *kiddush Hashem*. But Geichazi chased after Na'aman and claimed that Elisha had changed his mind and wanted the money, intending to keep it for himself. Elisha punished Geichazi and his sons, cursing them with the *tzara'as* of Na'aman.

A terrible famine struck the city of Shomron, capital of the king of Yisrael, Yehoram. To make matters worse, King Hadad of Aram laid siege to the city with a massive army. People were starving to death by the minute and were eating literally anything—the price of a donkey head was 80 silver coins, and bird dung was 5 silver pieces. King Yehoram blamed Elisha for the famine and tried to kill him, but Elisha convinced him to do *teshuvah*. As soon as he did so, Hashem sent him a *nevuah* that the famine would end the next day, and the price of food would plummet so steeply that a *se'ah* (13 lb.) of flour would go for a shekel, and a two *se'ah* of barley would go for the same price. One of Yehoram's officers jeered at the astounding prediction, and Elisha pronounced: "You will see it, but you will not get any!"

HAFTORAH SUMMARY

Loitering outside the city in their *metzora* state, Geichazi and his sons realized they had nothing to lose by trying to get some food from the Aramean army. They were starving to death anyway, and even if they broke quarantine and entered the city of Shomron, there was no food there either. The four of them approached the camp of Aram and were shocked to find it deserted! The entire army had fled in the night, leaving enormous stores of food, clothing, gold and silver, horses, and stock. Hashem had made the soldiers hear the phantom sounds of an approaching army, and they had fled in panic. The four *metzora'im* raided two tents, stuffing themselves with food and looting as many valuables as they could, before they thought to tell the people in Shomron about the windfall. How many people died of starvation in the meantime?

When they finally notified the king, he worried that it was an ambush, and that the Aramean army was hiding in the fields outside the camp. He sent two horsemen to try to spring the trap—but there was none. The scouts found clothing and valuables strewn in a long trail behind the fleeing army.

Word spread quickly, and the Shomronites charged out of the city and fell upon the food and riches. The price of flour and barley indeed fell, as Elisha had prophesied. And as he had said, Yehoram's officer was trampled to death on his way out of the city. He saw the bounty but did not get to taste it.

CONNECTION TO PARSHAS TAZRIA-METZORA

The *parshah* talks about the process of recovery from *tzara'as*, which is triggered by *teshuvah*. One of the causes of *tzara'as*, defined by the Gemara in *Yoma*, is stinginess and greed. Geichazi and his sons were cursed with incurable *tzara'as* because of their greediness, and as we see in the *haftorah*, they did not learn their lesson, remaining instead with their *tzara'as*. The lesson that *teshuvah* can bring relief from intense suffering in an instant is brought forward sharply in the story.

RIPPED FROM THE HEADLINES

As the United States government runs up trillions of dollars of deficit spending, talk of inflation and rising prices abound. All this was triggered by a contagious sickness, like *tzara'as*. The lesson, of course, is that all the problems—a crashing economy, runaway inflation, and terrible disease—are solved by *teshuvah*.





WUP FOR DISCUSSION

See this week's *Circle* magazine for the full comic story and halachic dilemma.

GLASS IN THE NIGHT

Poskim discuss whether one is obligated to go out in the night to remove a hazard. Most authorities (See *Tur* C.M. 396:2) maintain that one is obligated to remove the hazard. Even those who maintain that there is no obligation to do so (*Yam Shel Shlomo*, B.K. 6:2) agree that it is preferred to remove the hazard so that no one should become injured. Therefore, it is proper to clean up the glass, even during the night.



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Bris milah is one of the few mitzvos that override the *halachos* of Shabbos; both Shabbos and *milah* are an “os,” a sign. This special relationship is hinted in the leading *pasuk* of each *parshah*:

וַיְכַלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל צָבָאָם (Vayikra 12:3) has the same number of words, letters, and letters per word as:

וַיְכַלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל צָבָאָם (Bereishis 2:1)

(*Baal Haturim*)



THIS DATE IN JEWISH HISTORY



On the 5th of Iyar 5559, Napoleon Bonaparte gave up his attempt to capture Akko. It was only the second time the great French emperor lost a battle, and it caused him to retreat to Egypt and give up his dreams of capturing Eretz Yisrael from the Turkish Ottoman Empire.

Eretz Yisrael was ruled by Turkish forces for hundreds of years. The local governor was called Jezzar Pasha, and his chief general was a Jew by the name of Chaim Farchi. Napoleon had treated Jews well in the European countries he had captured and there were rumors that he planned to let the Jews control Eretz Yisrael when he won it. Some even said he was going to allow the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash. These may have been rumors Napoleon spread to convince the Jews living there to join his side. Chaim Farchi, for one, did not believe them, and he led the battle against Napoleon. He was the Pasha's top adviser and right-hand man, and without him, the battle would have been lost.

The hill outside Akko on which Napoleon's troops camped is still called Givat Napoleon, and Akko has the only Napoleon Street in modern Israel.



HALACHAH

Music during Sefirah

What is the source of the *minhagim* of mourning during the period of Sefirah?

The reason for the aspects of mourning during the Sefirah period are not specifically defined, although the Gemara does report that 24,000 *talmidim* of Rabbi Akiva died during the period from Pesach to Shavuos. Other tragedies that occurred during this time are the Crusades of 1096 and 1146, and the Cossack massacres of 1648–1649 (*Tach and Tat*). These events caused the deaths of thousands of Jews and the destruction of over 700 *kehillos*, including the famous ones at Mainz, Speyer, and Worms.

What *halachos* of mourning were instituted?

The original decree of mourning included only a ban on weddings. The custom to refrain from haircuts was added later, and the *Acharonim* speak of a prohibition against dancing, possibly as part of the ban on weddings, or in the spirit of avoiding joyful experiences.

What is the source of the custom to avoid music?

There are two approaches to the ban on music. One notes that music and dance are considered similar and linked; therefore dancing is forbidden without music, as is music without dancing. Singing does not count as music. Another view is that music is forbidden because it sweeps one into dance and may cause dancing. According to this approach, slow music, which does not lead to dancing, would be permitted, while spirited singing would be forbidden.

Is there a difference between live and recorded music?

Although prerecorded music is not nearly as exciting as live music, a large percentage of *poskim* agree that it does constitute an expression of joy and causes joy and would be forbidden according to both approaches.

Is a cappella music any better?

Sounds of joy, or dance-inducing music, is problematic, no matter what the source may be. Recorded singing altered by computer to

produce lively effects is certainly no different than instrumental music in this regard. Harmonies and melodies that sound like singing, including *chazzanus*, choir music, or recorded *kumzitzes*, are permitted. Instrumental sounds produced with hands and mouth are of doubtful permissibility.

Are there any circumstances in which music is permitted?

Music that serves a function, rather than creating freewheeling joy, is permitted. An anxious or depressed person who may get relief from music is permitted to listen to it. One may play music to entertain young children, even when adults cannot avoid hearing—and enjoying—the music. A driver who needs music to concentrate may listen to it. Some allow a person to play music while exercising. There is no particular restriction on entering malls, lobbies, or doctor's offices during Sefirah, even if ambient music is playing. A Jewish business may also play soft background music, and an office may also play piped music to increase employee productivity. Background or dramatic music on video clips is not included in the prohibition.

THE LAST WORD

A one-liner worth remembering

"THERE IS NOTHING MORE WHOLE THAN A BROKEN HEART."



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