

**Siyum Masechet Gittin**  
**Maimonides Kehillah – Jesse Hefter**  
**Shabbat Shoftim – 5783**

While Masechet Gittin provides an incredible volume of information about how to send and receive a document of divorce, the text departs in Perek Chamishi to discuss the matter of precedence in Aliyot – such as why the Kohen receives the first Aliyah, followed by the Levi, and then any other adult Jewish male. The text then diverts to discuss whether it is permitted to write a section of the Torah down onto a scroll say for the purpose of having a student learn his Bar Mitzvah section.

From this point, the Gemara then asks a fundamental question on Daf 60b. There is a pasuk in Shmot 34 that reads: *את הדברים האלה* followed by *כי על פי הדברים האלה*. Now the first phrase clearly instructs us (or Moshe at the time) to WRITE down the words and directives of HaShem to Klal Yisrael. The second phrase specifically states that our knowledge of the Torah shall be dependent on the basis (al pi) of speaking of these teachings, that is, oral transmission. The Gemara then attempts to reconcile these two segments of the Pasuk.

R. Yehuda bar Nachman, the Meturgeman of Resh Lakish, explained that those matters (dvarim) that were taught orally should not be expressed in writing and those matters that were written should not be expressed orally. Based upon this approach, it would seem that there are strict limits on what can be said and what can be written.

It could be that the position of Chazal based on this pasuk was that our Oral Tradition needed to stay oral and that our written tradition was fixed as it was given. However, based on the exigencies of life and history, and particularly on the adversities of an exilic existence, Chazal allowed for the expansion of the oral tradition through the writing down of that tradition. *Es la-asos laHashem, hayferu Torasecha*. The demands of maintaining a tradition across the globe demanded a change. The results were spectacular and we today are a part of the success story.

From a modern standpoint, who might have wondered when the Talmud was written that we would live in an age where every word can be recorded and transformed, in real time, into text. Who could have imagined that every Dvar Torah could, in theory,

become an MP3 or YouTube clip and then be instantly available to anyone in the world through the network. Clearly, these options were not within the purview of Chazal. However, the appropriate use of technology has augmented, animated, and expanded both our access to Torah and the Torah of Chazal.

The Torah takes a healthy approach to the institution of marriage by instituting alongside marriage the possibility of divorce. Although the Gemara suggests at the end of the Masechta that HaShem is crestfallen when a marriage ends in divorce, HaShem also in His full omnipresence and omni awareness recognizes what happens when a marriage ends. VaHoysaw l'ish acher – the former wife meets another man and remarries. The Torah is looking out for the best interests of both individuals.

What is written originally, the Kesuba, helps to form the Halachic union between the bride and groom. Their relationship is one of open and frank conversation and is not generally written down. The kesuba is witness to their marital bond.

If the relationship becomes degraded and the two individuals lose their connection, what was the oral interpersonal linkage becomes undone through a written document the “get”. The Get does not serve to represent their sum total of months or years of a spoken relationship. What is spoken is not written down. What is written down serves its purpose, whether a document that forms the marriage bond or severs it.

As we enter the month of Elul, we begin an intense period of reflection and introspection into our spoken relationship with HaShem. G-d doesn't write us letters and we don't email G-d. We speak to HaShem through Tefila and study and feel HaShem in our Neshama. We pray that HaShem WRITE for us and our community and the Jewish people everywhere all the blessings for an upcoming year and then we urge that HaShem SEAL that written word, as it were, as one would seal an envelope with a directive within it with a wax seal. That which is written is not expressed orally and that which we speak is not written down.

May the lessons of Masechet Gittin stay with us as we continue our study of the Masorah and continue to provide endless opportunities for reflection and awesome gratitude.