

SIYUM SPEECH ON MESECHES BAITZAH

by Mitchell Rose, Cleveland, Ohio (216)381-5566 mitchrose51@gmail.com www.mitchellrose.us

I am sponsoring this siyum in honor of my having been reading this book for 3 months and in celebration of my finally completing it right now.

This is one of the 63 books of the Talmud. It contains discussions among rabbis who lived between the years 0 and 500, in their own words, regarding what activities we are prohibited from doing on Yom Tov (YT).

This book is entitled "**BAITSAH**", which means "egg". It got that name because the first subject it discusses is whether an egg that was laid by a chicken on YT may be eaten on YT.

One subject discussed in this book is why, after the Torah specified that each YT lasts 1 day, why in Israel does RH last 2 days, and why in the diaspora does EVERY YT last 2 days. This book explains the historical events that added a 2nd day to each YT; and also explains the uncertainty of how the 2nd day of YT is related to the 1st day -- whether the 2nd day is a continuation of the 1st day, or a separate entity independent of the 1st day -- and how that uncertainty (in characterizing the 2nd day) causes uncertainties in practical halacha.

Another topic discussed in this book is **OCHEL NEFESH**. As a general rule, all activities that are prohibited on Shabbos are also prohibited on YT. But YT is more lenient than Shabbos in one way - that any activity for purposes of food preparation is permitted to be done on YT. This food-related leniency is explicitly mentioned in the Torah. The rabbis 2000 years ago debated among themselves how far this food-related leniency can be expanded, to include, and permit, even activities that are only tangentially-related to food preparation.

Another concept discussed in this book is **GZAIRAH MISHUM MARIS AYIN**. This concept says that there are certain activities that Torah permits us to do on YT, but were prohibited by rabbis because doing them on YT in public might appear to our neighbors as though we are conducting business on YT.

Another concept discussed in this book is **ERUV TAVSHILIN**. This concept applies when YT falls on Friday. There is a rule that we may not cook and bake, on YT, food that is meant to be eaten on Shabbos, unless we first prepare an ERUV TAVSHILIN. An ERUV TAVSHILIN is prepared by setting aside, BEFORE YT starts, baked & cooked foods that will remain un-eaten throughout YT until Shabbos starts.

Another concept discussed in this book is **TECHUM SHABBOS**, which (explained in a simplified-down way) states that a Jew may not walk, on Shabbos & YT, more than 1 kilometer beyond the city limits.

Another concept discussed in this book is **MUKTZAH** – which essentially means un-anticipated. An item is called "MUKTZAH" if, BEFORE YT started, we did NOT ANTICIPATE we will want to use that item on YT. The rabbis decreed that such a MUKTZAH item may not be picked up or handled on YT. The rabbis argued on how UN-ANTICIPATED an item must be for it to be considered muktzah. In fact, some of the rabbis held that almost NO item in the world is muktzah.

Which brings us to the last page of this book, which discusses which types of animals are MUKTZAH. Most rabbis held that: WILD animals, which always live in the WILD away from humans, ARE MUKTZAH and may NOT be handled on YT; whereas FARM animals, which always live near humans, are NOT MUKTZAH. And an intermediate category, that I will call SEMI-WILD animals, which live sometimes in the WILD and sometimes on a farm (such as animals that are rustled up from the range each year cowboys and herded to a ranch), are MUKTZAH like WILD animals, according to most rabbis. But RabbiYehudaHanasi disagreed, and said SEMI-WILD animals are NOT MUKTZAH

It is customary in a SIYUM to recite the last few lines of Gemara in the original Aramaic and then translate them into English, which is what I will do now: "RabbiYehudaHanasi said to his colleagues, I (RabbiYehudaHanasi) do not believe ANY animal is MUKTZAH, but according to you rabbis who DO believe wild animals are muktzah, could you compromise and say SEMI-wild animals are NOT muktzah?" and his colleagues replied "No, SEMI-wild animals are like wild animals and muktzah."

And with that, this book ends.

I will now recite a prayer thanking Gd for having given me the opportunity & privilege of learning this entire book of the Talmud.

HADRAN...