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And nowhere is this attitude more pernicious and more dangerous than when it comes to Religion and religious observance. For here too are we inclined to bring our worship of the big and dramatic and spectacular. Here too we may emphasize the great acts and cavalierly dismiss the trivial, to stress the glorious break-throughs of the spirit and demean the constant, slow struggle of the human heart and mind and soul to rise upwards. Thus do we American Jews tend to concentrate on the so-called High Holidays and overlook the less dramatic Shevuos -- we call it a "minor" holiday -- and certainly Shabbos. We hear of Adult Courses on "Customs and Ceremonies" which deal with the great turning points of life of birth and marriage and death, and which leave all imbedded forgotten and neglected. We begin to think that Judaism consists of Bris and Chuppah and Shivah, but that we may ignore such details as Tefillin and Talmud Torah

and Taharas Hamishpachah, which are marked by quiet dignity and unobtrusive modesty.

And it is to forewarn us against this concentration upon the big issues to the exclusion of the seemingly trivial that the Torah inserts the mention of LEKET & PEIAH imbetween the great festivals of Judaism. Remember, the Torah tells us, that no matter how important the big holidays are -- they are meaningless unless the Jew pays attention to the daily requirements as well, the simple things as LEKET & PEIAH. Yes, the themes of the MOADIM are world-shaking -- Revelation on Shevuot, Redemption on Passover, Judgment on R.H., Repentance on Y.K. Yet all of these lofty themes are to naught if the poor man remains outside, cold and hungry and forlorn, because you choose to neglect the prosaic and plain and paltry and petty mitzvah of LEKET & PEIAH. The great things are great indeed, the Torah means to tell us, but a man stands and falls on the small things. What determines the success or failure of the spiritual life of the Jew are not his grasp of the great theological concepts or even his participation in the synagogue festival service of High Holidays -- but his everyday LEKET & PEIAH, his daily Jewishness; not his rare splurge of kindness as much as his constancy in TZEDAKAH, not by his conduct in great public events, as much as by his tefillin and tefillah, even in the privacy of his parlor, by his consideration for wife and children and neighbors, by his kasjrut and his study of the Torah. In a word, the Torah counsels us to beware of the spectacular only and to concentrate as well on the substantial.

4. And O how history has proven the importance of the little things, the LEKET & PEIAH amidst the MOADIM. The generation of Noah was destroyed by the flood because, Tradition teaches -- of GEZEL PACHOS MISHAVEH PERUTAH, petty pilfering! The whole Egyptian exile began because of a mere 2 "slain" worth of silk which Jacob gave his favorite Joseph more than his brothers, thus incurring their jealousy. The founder of Christianity began with a tiny sin -- rejecting NETILLASYADAYIM. Reform started its career of truncating our Tefillah by eliminating only the Yekum Purkun.
5. Today we read from the Torah the ASSERESS HADIBROS, the Ten Commandments. There was a time, when the Temple was on Zion's heights, that they were recited daily as part of the service. Why do we not recite them thus today during our regular daily services? The Talmud answers that the Sages revoked this requirement, and actually forbade it because of TAAROMESS HAMINIM, because of the heretics -- they, the heretics, probably the early Christians, said they were going to observe only the big things, only the Ten Commandments, but that the rest was unimportant. Have you not heard that in our own day? "I'm religious enough -- I observe the Ten Commandments." Aside from the fact that Shabbos is one of the Ten Commandments, and usually not observed by people who are satisfied with only ten of the 613 commandments, this is a typically Christian attitude. It paly's up the big, and dismisses the trivial. Murder, adultery, stealing are acknowledged as evils. But what of the minor sins -- what of this wilful ignorance of Judaism? what of this unJewish diet and vocabulary and whole pattern of unJewish living? So what our Rabbis told us about the Ten Commandments that we read on Shevuos -- that better not to read them at all if that is going to be all of our Religion, that better no Ten Commandments if we are going to neglect less dramatic mitzvos, that is just what the Torah meant when after Shevuos in the list of Moadim it mentioned in the unglorious but extremely vital mitzvos of LEKET & PEIAH. The Yiddish writer Peretz put it in his own way: no man ever stubs his toe against a mountain. It's the little things that bring a man down. So it is with us friends. None of us will ever commit murder. But someone may casually wound the pride of a friend by a word of LASHON HARA. No one here will ever bow to an idol. But someone may deny a smile to a neighbor who is starved for friendship. No one here is going to rob a bank. But someone may neglect to provide the LEKET & PEIAH for a needy family. And it is these unspectacular little things, rather than the giant themes of the MOADIM or Ten Commandments, which ultimately decide our fate. That is why such seeming trifles are of such concern to the HALAKHAH -- for trifles make perfection -- and perfection is no trifle.



other examples

