STANDING APART

Moshe Rabbeinu davened to HaShem that the Yidden should be distinguished from all the other nations, even during the time of golas. This is expressed even in mundane activities, as if Yidd stands apart from the nations around him.

The Midrash writes that the Yidden were redeemed from Mitzrayim in the merit of keeping themselves separate. They did this by holding onto their Yiddishe names, speaking a Yiddish language and wearing Yiddishe clothing.

The Torah states clearly, “In the way of their statutes you should not walk.” The Rambam explains that just as a Yid is different in his emuna and observance of Torah and mitzvos, so too, HaShem wants us to remain distinct in our dress and hair styles, and in the architecture of the shuls we build.

Sefer HaChinuch explains that the purpose of this mitzva is to ensure that we distance ourselves and despise the behavior of the goyim, even their clothing. The Shulchan Aruch paskens that one is not allowed to dress like the other nations or imitate their actions in other areas.

The Midrash writes that HaShem tells the Yidden, “If you are separate from the nations, then you are mine (and can live a life of geula), but if not, you will be delivered into the hands of Nievuchadnetzar, or others like him, and you will go into golas.”

DIFFERENT IN SPEECH

Throughout all generations, Yidden have had a language of their own and spoke differently from the nations around them. Generally, this was done by intentionally jumbling the local language, and adding many words from lashon hakodesh. (In fact some speakers of Yiddish call it not “Yiddish,” but “zhargon.”)

Some opinions consider speaking like the nations to be part of the Torah’s explicit prohibition against following chukos hagoyim, the ways of the non-Jews, while the Talmud Yerushalmi includes this practice among the decrees that Chazal instituted during the days of Hillel and Shamrai, to keep Yidden separate.

Some tzaddikim have explained that the language of a nation expresses its nature, and speaking that language influences the speaker.

CONSIDER

Is goyishe dress forbidden because it is inappropriate or because of the identity it gives us?

What constitutes goyishe language?

The Rebbe spoke about the importance of speaking Yiddish several times. Once at yechidus the Rebbe expressed surprise at the fact that in Russia no Yid would think of speaking in Russian among themselves, while in America it has been considered acceptable even among fluent Yiddish speakers to converse in the goyishe language...

Once, during the time of the zarist decree against distinctively Yiddische dress, the son of the Tzemach Tzedek, the Maharil, was walking in Loubavitch dressed in full chassidische levush, when he was stopped by a police officer. Attempting to tell him that he had paid the tax, the Maharil, who could not speak Russian, said, “I am one of the rebels.” (The Russian words for ‘tax’ and ‘rebels’ are somewhat similar.) The officer laughed and let him go.

A HOLY CALENDAR

The mashpiya Reb Volf Greenglass related:

When the Rebbe went to the Friederiker Rebbe’s Ohel for the first time, he looked around at the matzevis of anash that surrounded the Ohel. Upon seeing that some of them listed goyishe dates, he was very disturbed and expressed his displeasure.

The wealthy baron Reb Shimon Rothschild wished to fulfill the mitzva of writing a sefer Torah, and wanted it to be written by a talmid chacham and yerei Shasayim. He heard of a sefer from Russia who met his criteria and had him brought over to Germany, where he lived. Under Reb Shimon’s careful watch, the sefer began writing, and received payment in increments, enabling him to send funds home for his family’s support.

Finally, as the sefer Torah neared completion, Reb Shimon asked the sofer how much he still owed him. The sofer took out his notebook, where he had listed the payments according to the secular months. Seeing this, Reb Shimon was filled with anger: “You calculate according to the secular months? Someone like you should follow either the Yiddish months, or the parshiyos!”

He gave him the rest of the payment and sent him home... together with the sefer Torah.
**ICE CUBES ON SHABBOS**

May I make ice cubes on Shabbos?

Chazal prohibited crushing ice to produce water on Shabbos,1 and Rishonim offer different reasons why: (1) forming a new entity (borei),2 (2) the resulting liquid is nolad (a new entity which is mutzta).3 Taking ice out of the freezer and allowing it to melt on its own is not an active deed of producing water, though the resulting liquid is nolad.4 The Alter Rebbe advises being stringent except when there is a need.5

Placing liquid in the freezer also results in a new entity, ice, coming into existence in a passive manner. Some poskim write that since ice generally becomes water, but water doesn’t become ice at room temperature, ice is considered a new entity according to all opinions.6 Others write that it is the same as melting, and one should only freeze when there is a pressing need (i.e. food that will spoil if not frozen).7 A third opinion is that since ice doesn’t last, it isn’t considered a new entity at all, and can be created according to all opinions, (especially when the food item isn’t improved by freezing, e.g. all foods besides ices and ice cream).8

Chazay say that creating a mass of cheese on Shabbos is an offshoot of boneh, “building.” Poskim explain that ice is different since (a) there are no particles that need to pressed together, (b) ice has no lasting “structure,” unlike cheese or a building.9

In practice, the middle opinion is followed and liquid may be frozen in case of great need, such as food that will deteriorate, ice cubes on a hot Shabbos day, or ices for a children’s program (when one forgot before Shabbos).10 Freezing leftover food or soup to preserve their flavor is not considered to be preparing for after Shabbos, since it is standard practice to put away food after use to prevent it from deteriorating.11

Placing drinks in the freezer to chill is definitely permissible, and there is no concern that they will be left to freeze, (as the concern exists by warming liquids near a source of heat). The reason is that freezing is certainly not a Torah prohibition, and is even permissible according to some.12 One may also place liquid in the freezer even shortly before Shabbos so that it will freeze on Shabbos, since one did not do anything at all on Shabbos.13

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**REB ZALMAN ZEZMER**

Reb Zalman Zeezmer was of the greatest chassidim of the Alter Rebbe. He was an incredible maskil, used by the Rebbeim as a prime example for in-depth understanding of Chassidus. He travelled to many places to teach Chassidus, and served as Rav in the town of Zezmer and later in Denenburg and Krislava, where he is buried. One of his talmidim was the esteemed chossid Reb Hillel Paritcher.

A number of factors brought Reb Zalman to Chassidus. One of them was as follows:

Reb Binyamin Kletzker, a great chossid of the Alter Rebbe, once visited Reb Zalman’s town for Shabbos Zachor. As the parsha of Amalek was read from the Torah, Reb Zalman noticed strong emotions of hate and disgust on Reb Binyamin’s face, something that he had never witnessed before. Reb Binyamin’s davening also made a deep impression on him. After davening, he approached him and asked, “Could you tell me what evil Amalek caused you that you hate him so much?” Reb Binyamin said, “Our Rebbe explained what Amalek is all about.” “Could I meet your Rebbe?” Reb Zalman inquired. Reb Binyamin sent a letter with Reb Zalman to Reb Meir Refael’s asking him to accept the young man and send him to Liozna.

The Alter Rebbe would recite Chassidus for the older and newer Chassidim separately, and was very particular that neither group should attend the other’s Chassidus. Reb Zalman, already a seasoned chossid, wanted very much to attend the “yungeh Chassidus.” He asked his roommate in Liozna—a newer chossid—to notify him when he is called to a maamar so he could sneak in. That afternoon Reb Zalman was napping, and when he heard about the maamar, he rushed out without washing negel vasser.

When the Alter Rebbe entered the room he fervently exclaimed, “What’s this? Without negel vasser?!” Reb Zalman quickly escaped.

Someone once informed Reb Hillel about a certain Rav that wasn’t affected by his surroundings at all. Reb Hillel replied, “I knew extreme baalei mochin (great minds) like Reb Zalman Zeezmer, and even he was affected by his surroundings.”

Before passing away, Reb Zalman said that he could account for every moment during the previous seven years.

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**FREILICHE SOLDIERS**

Reb Yosef Yitzchok Pinson of Paris, France relates:

My parents had just survived communist Russia by the skin of their teeth, when they received a directive to move on shluchus to Morocco – culturally a different universe. My mother found it very difficult, especially since many others were moving to New York, and expressed these sentiments to Reb Binyomin Gorodetzki.

The Rebbe must have heard of their conversation, since she received a long letter from the Rebbe explaining why not to move to America. One line stood out: “If only others would follow my directive, ninety-nine percent of those here would pack their bags and leave.”

Indeed, my parents moved out, and seven years later were relocated to Tunis, an even harder shluchus.

Once, while in yechidus, my mother told the Rebbe, “We are the Rebbes soldiers!” The Rebbe responded, “Freiliche soldiers!”