

METHODOLOGY

There is a fundamental difference between learning *Halacha* from a *sefer* that summarizes the *halachic* requirements and learning *Halacha* from its source in the *gemora*.

The electrician, who knows how a building is wired, has superior knowledge over the electrician who only knows where the lights are turned on and the doctor, who is familiar with the human heart in its minutest detail, has superior knowledge over the one who barely knows where to feel the pulse.

In these shiurim we too, intend to study the make up and structure of the *Halacha* to give us a more profound and deeper understanding of the subject.

Objective Of The Shiurim

Our objective is to guide the learner how to learn the *Shulchan Aruch* with all its *mefarshim* – *poskim* who may explain, annotate or disagree. Our aim is not to pasken *Halacha L'ma'ase* for every given scenario – which are endless, and where deeper knowledge and understanding together with *shimush chachamim*¹ are required. Our aim is to understand how the *Shulchan Aruch* and the other *poskim* arrived at their *p'sak*.

We will be quoting from many other *poskim*; the *Elia Raba* (one can usually find him in the back of the *Shulchan Aruch*), the *G'raz* (haRav Zalman of Laddi), also known as the *Ba'al HaTania*), the *Chazon Ish*, HaRav Moshe Feinstein, Harav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach and many others. We will attempt to get an inside view of their understanding of the different *halachik* concepts.

¹ Learning directly from great Rabbis and seeing how they pasken.

Halachik Structure

Halacha is based on the *Mishna* and *Gemora*. The *Rishonim*² explain the *Gemora*, each one, according to his own understanding, commenting on the *halacha* derived there from.

The *Achronim*³ paskened according to their understanding of the *Rishonim*.

Halacha L'ma'ase for us today is based on how the latter *Achronim* (*G'ra*, *Mishna B'rura*, *Chazon Ish* and others) understood and weighed the opinions of the *Rishonim* and the earlier *Achronim*.

Shiur Structure

The shiur will present the blueprint behind the *halacha* as stated by the *Shulchan Aruch* – the *Mechaber*. First we will translate the *Shulchan Aruch* and *Rama* without explaining terms and concepts. We will then quote the source in the *Gemora* where there is one, mention the main *Rishonim* (usually quoted by the *Bais Yosef*), and mention the main *Magen Avrahams* and *Tazes*, followed by the *Mishna B'rura*. Other *poskim* will be mentioned where necessary.

We will P.G. explain *halachik* terms and clarify difficult passages and elucidate disputes amongst the *poskim* etc.

Getting The Most Out Of The Shiurim

To get the most out of the shiurim first read (in Hebrew) the entire *Mechaber* and *Rama* followed by the English translation to make sure that you understand the Hebrew.

Next begin learning the shiur in English, a few points at a time, referring back continuously to the Hebrew text. Remember, we are not *translating* the sources rather presenting the *p'shat* (the essence of the text). You must be able to read and understand

² Including many; Rashi, Rambam, Ramban, Rashba, Ritva, Tosefos, Rosh, Tur and many others. They lived around the year ad 1000-1500.

³ Beginning with the *Bais Yosef* – the author of the *shulchan Aruch*, he based most of his rulings on what he wrote in his work the “*Bais Yosef*”. Also the *maharshal* (R' Shlomo Luria), *Rama* – the source of most Ashkenazic halachos and customs - *Taz*, *Magen Avraham*, *Elia Raba*, *P'ri Megadim* and many others.

the *p'sbat* from the Hebrew text being quoted before moving on to the next source in the shiur.

Read the next source in Hebrew and then in English until it is understood. Continue this process until you have finished the shiur.

Review several times all the Hebrew sources using the English shiur to aid your comprehension. As we advance, your grasp of the concepts will improve and your reliance on the English will diminish.

For further reviews you may rely on the English shiurim. Carry them with you and go over them whenever you are able. Even a ten-minute review of some of the material is worthwhile. The more you “live it” the more you’ll know it.

Questions are welcome at all times.

R' Dovid Ostroff

Key For The Shulchan Aruch

Bold lettering – Mechaber

Italics – Rama

(1) – Taz

2) – Mogen Avraham

(...) Parenthesis – My addition for clarification

P’ri Megadim

The *P’ri Megadim* commentates on the *Taz* and *Magen Avraham*, and can be found at the back of the *Shulchan Aruch*. His lettering corresponds to the same lettering as the *Taz* and *Magen Avraham*.

His commentary on the *Taz* is named “*Mishbetsos Zahav*” (the *Taz*’s initials are *Turei Zahav*, so the *P’ri Megadim* named his *Mishbetsos Zahav*. We will use the initials *M”Z*.

His commentary on the *M”A* is named *Eishel Avraham* (also introducing the word Avraham). We will use the initials *E”A*.