

## **A Knife, Is It A Dangerous Gift for Rosh Hashanah?**

*By: Bency Eichorn*

### **I. R. Nachman of Breslov's Position on Knife Giving**

As Erev Rosh Hashanah approaches, let me remind you of a popular trend some people, prior to Rosh Hashana, buy knives for their households, or as presents for others. Why all this enthusiasm? Some will explain that buying a new knife for Rosh Hashana is a popular *segulah* for livelihood. This *segulah* is so powerful that many wives insist that their husbands buy a new knife each approaching Rosh Hashana. This custom will be discussed in length in a different article. The topic that I wish to discuss here is the other extreme, the widespread superstition that people should avoid buying knives as presents for others, in the belief that possible dangers linger with the giving of a knife. This once very popular superstition has not diminished through time. Recently, I experienced this belief during a *simcha* of mine. I received many interesting gifts, yet one stuck out. It was a beautiful silver knife, with a single dollar. The giver explained that the dollar was meant to thwart the dangers which linger with the giving of a knife.[1] Immediately a famous quote of Karl Goldmark[2] was whispered into my ears: "Civilized people lose their religion easily, but rarely their superstitions."

The giving of gifts to friends, family members or the host of a happy occasion is part of our ancient customs. [3] It is found in the Bible as early as the story of Eliezer, the humble servant of Abraham, who is given gifts by his master to give when Eliezer finds a wife for Isaac. When Eliezer meets Rivka and realizes that she is the perfect wife for Isaac, he gives her gold, silver and garments, and to her mother and brother, precious things [Braishis 24:52].[4] This gift was a way of bridging a connection between two people who had no connection before. Then, soon after, Jacob gives Eisav a huge gift consisting of two hundred female goats, and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes, and twenty rams, thirty nursing camels with their colts, forty cows, and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys, and ten male donkeys [Braishis 32:13-20].

'The ritual of giving a present' is a very integral part of the Jewish culture today as well. [5] Often, gifts are exchanged at family occasions, be it at a *brit*, *bar mitzvah*, or wedding. A knife is a very common wedding gift, given its practicality as a kitchen utensil, or its significance as a Judaic piece. However, this gift is often avoided by many people as it is considered a danger in the world of superstition. After much research on this topic, this superstition does not seem to have any concrete basis in central Jewish religious belief.

The earliest Jewish source to mention the danger of giving a knife as a gift is an 18<sup>th</sup> century work, in the name of the great Chasidic Master, Rabbi Nachman of Breslov [1772-1810]. Reb Nosson, a disciple, recorded all the teachings which he heard directly from his teacher. In *Sefer Sichot HaRan*[6], R. Nosson quotes his teacher, R. Nachman, who in turn refers to a tradition from his great-grandfather, the Holy Baal Shem Tov [Rabbi Yisroel Ben Eliezer, 1698-1760, known by his acronym The Besh"t] and the founder of the Chasidic movement. "In the name of the Baal Shem Tov, that a knife should not be given as a present, which means one should not give his friend a knife for a present." [7]

Rabbi Nachman did not provide an explanation for this belief. Rather, he refers to it as a tradition that should be guarded and accepted. The fact that his ultimate source is the Besh"t indicates that this belief was not known to the public at large; rather, it was a tradition solely

of the Besh"t. Only much later, Rabbi Shabtzi Liphshutz writes in his *Shemira Mealyah*,[8] based on the Talmud in Baba Metzia 27b, "People do not generally lend a moneybag, a purse because people superstitiously believe [Rash"i there] that by doing so they transfer their good fortune to the borrower." Rabbi Shabtzi Liphshutz[9] explains that "for the same reason I have a tradition that one should not give his friend a knife for a present." An additional reason I recently saw states that knives are symbloic of one's livelihood, therefore one can forfeit his livelihood by giving another a knife.[10] After quoting the tradition of not giving a knife as a present, Rabbi Shmuel Hakatan[11] cites a Midrash,[12] where Resh Lakish told R' Yehudah, "take nothing from anyone, then you will not have to give anything to anyone." While sitting there, a woman came and brought him a slaver with a knife on it. He took the knife and returned the salver. Subsequently, a royal courier saw the knife, took a liking to it, and carried it away.[13]

Rabbi Yitzchok Yosef Lerner shlita"h, in his amazing work, *Shemiras ha-Guf veha-Nefesh*, writes, "There are those that don't give a knife as a gift to a friend." [14] This same religious belief is cited in several other contemporary works.[15]

## II. Potential Problems with this Custom

As we have discussed, the main danger associated with giving a knife as a present is the belief that this action can transfer one's good fortune, 'mazel,' from the giver to the receiver. However, it is difficult to apply the Talmud in Baba Metzia 27b, which appears to be limited to lending a purse or a money bag but not anything else. Assuming *arguendo* that this principle does apply to knives, the question that must be asked is why are knives singled out over any other present? It is worth stating at the outset that this entire belief regarding gifting knives may be nothing but a belief of the common folk, adapted from the gentiles of the times of the Talmud, who had an incredible influence on the Jews,[16] a point to which we shall return.

Another point to consider is that the earliest source for this belief is Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, who is claiming the source as the Besh"t. It is impossible that Rabbi Nachman heard about this belief directly from the Besh"t as he was not alive during the Besh"t's lifetime. Therefore, it must be that Rabbi Nachman heard about this belief from a family member, as they were descendents of the Besh"t, or that he heard it from a non-relative in the name of the Besh"t. Because Rabbi Nachman did not hear about this belief directly from the Besh"t, this already casts some doubt on its authenticity, or, at the very least, something was lost in the transmission of this custom. For example, it's possible that this belief was influenced by gentile practices that occurred in the Besh"t's lifetime, and then attributed to the Besh"t[17]. Or, it's possible that this belief is based on a one time occurrence, in which the Besh"t ruled not to give a knife as a present. This would explain why no other disciple of the Besh"t has recorded this belief.

This leads us to the obvious problem of why no one else before Rabbi Nachman record this belief, including any of the other disciples of the Besh"t. For example, Rabbi Boruch of Mezhbizh (1753-1811), a grandson of the Besh"t, and, according to many, his supposed successor, does not mention this superstition. To the contrary, Rabbi Boruch of Mezhbizh practiced the opposite of this custom. In a letter to Rabbi Menachem Mendal of Vitebesk he writes, "Please accept from me a minor gift a silver knife and fork, and it should be accepted as a good offering." [18] Another disciple, who lived a little while later, Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchak of Lublin, otherwise known as The Chozeh of Lublin, would distribute knives to his chasidim on Rosh Hashonah as a segulah for wealth. He is recorded as saying "he [God] 'cuts'

life for all living beings and as it says he opens his hands and the last letter of each word is the Devine name of wealth." [19]

Because of the previous point, Rabbi Pinchas Epstein zt"l, in his notes [20] on the *Shemira Mealyah*, limits the danger of giving knives as a present. He writes, "the reason that the Lubliner had no problem giving knives to his chassidim is because when the knives are brand new knives for the purpose of giving as a segulah, then there is no danger." Rabbi Epstein zt"l makes an important distinction between giving new and used knives as a present. [21] Although Rabbi Epstein zt"l asserts that "this distinction is very logical" this distinction is difficult to accept as no one else, including Rabbi Nachman and the *Shemirah Mealyah* make such a distinction.

### III. Iron in Jewish Thought

Perhaps, R. Nacham's version of the Besh"t's belief stems from the Biblical and Talmudic (mystical) concept that iron (and the like) should not be present in a place where blessing is found. This concept is based on a verse in Exodus (20:22) "And if you make for me an alter of stones, do not build it of hewn stones; for by wielding your tool you have profaned them," and on another verse in Devarim (27:5) "An alter of stones, do not wield an iron tool over them." The Mishnah in Midos (3:4) echoes this idea, "Brought thence whole stones upon which no iron (tool) had been wielded, for iron invalidates (the stones of the alter even) by contact ...they did not plaster them with iron trowel lest it touch (the stones) and render (them) invalid..."

The Torah does not explain how the alter is profaned by using iron to cut its stones. It was left to Chazal, who explained it in the Mishnah *ibid.* and Mechilta de-Reb Yishmael. [22]

As the Mechilta explains, the alter has the ability to lengthen a man's life (by way of atonement). It is therefore improper that iron, which is used to shorten man's life (when used as weapons), come in contact with the alter. [23]

That is was constructed without iron was the alter's perfection. Therefore, there are Rishonim who explain that if the alter came in contact with iron, the material that contradicts its essence, it was deemed profane. [24] There are Rishonim, however, who understood that when iron coexists with the *mizbeach*, it brings negativity and actual danger into the world. [25]

For a long period of time, iron symbolized the sword, a weapon used to shorten man's life. Therefore, people were careful not to associate iron with blessing, specifically with the blessing of long life. Many saw it as an actual danger.

In the medieval times this concept was applied to a knife left on the table, specifically during *Birchat Hamazon*. The table which people eat on is considered an alter. As the Talmud [26] explains in the name of Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Elazar, "when the Beis Hamikdash was around the alter would atone for Israel, but now the table of a person atones." Therefore, many laws associated with the alter and the concept of the alter's sanctity applies to today's table. [27] including covering the knife during *Birchat Hamazon*. [28] A knife, made of iron, and the antithesis of blessing, should not be exposed at the "*mizbeach* table," specifically during *Birchat Hamazon*, which is the epitome of blessing.

In the same vein, we find that a sword should not be brought into a shul, as prayer lengthens life and a knife shortens life. [29] This concept seems far extended from the original concept

which applies to iron on the *mizbeach*. However, as far extended as it may seem, the reality is that iron (sword/knife) is an antithesis to prayer and the two cannot coexist. It seems clear that the concepts of covering the knife during *Birchat Hamazon*, and not bringing a knife/sword into a shul, did not proceed medieval times.

The Besh"t extended the original law of not placing iron on the *mizbeach* even further. For example, he preferred not to use an iron mezuzah cover. This is recorded by Rabbi Abraham David Wahrman (1770–1840) in his *Da'as Kedoshim*.<sup>[30]</sup> "I heard in the name of the Besh"t that it is better not to place the mezuzah in an iron holder. It is comparable to what Chazal reasoned that it is improper that a thing that shortens one's life should be placed with a thing that lengthens one's life. The Torah states in the *krias shema* [Devarim 11:2] that it is in order to lengthen one's life, and Chazal said this is going on the mitzvah of mezuzah. Also with regard to any metal, one should be careful not to use it as the mezuzah holder."<sup>[31]</sup> The *Da'as Kedoshim* comments on this. "I don't know if the person that heard this from the Besh"t added the part about all metal, for from Chazal it seems that only by iron do we apply the concept that it is something that shortens one's life."<sup>[32]</sup>

Later, the concept of not placing a mezuzah in an iron holder was recorded in R' Shabtzi Liphshutz's *Segulas Yisroel*<sup>[33]</sup> and R' Matzliach Mazuz's *Abiah Segulos*,<sup>[34]</sup> both in the name of the Besh"t.

It seems that the Besh"t extended the prohibition of iron on the *mizbeach* to any circumstance involving iron and blessing (especially of lengthening one's life), explaining that the two should not coexist.

Therefore, one can understand why the Besh"t would prohibit giving a knife as a present. A knife, symbolic of shortening life, is not the ideal item with which to convey messages of love, peace, and blessing. As well, there is a concept of "*al tiftach peh sattan*."<sup>[35]</sup> We do not want the exchange of knives to rouse the Satan to act morbidly. In addition, there may be intrinsic danger in a transaction involving an item which symbolizes death (such as a knife). According to this belief, there is no difference between a new and old knife.

In conclusion, it would seem that Rabbi Nachman had a tradition (not to give a knife as a present) from the Besh"t that was unknown to the rest of his disciples.<sup>[36]</sup> What is certain is that this belief, as a Jewish custom, stems exclusively from the Besh"t. There is no mention of this belief, as a Jewish custom, prior to the Besh"t, and those that record it after his lifetime are all his disciples, or followers.<sup>[37]</sup>

#### IV. Non-Jewish Sources Regarding Gifting Knives

Amongst the non-Jews, the superstition of not gifting knives was very widespread and mention of it precedes the first Jewish source by a few hundred years. However, the reason given for this superstition differs from the explanations recorded in Jewish sources. Non Jewish sources, dating back to the year 1470, explain that if a knife is given as a present, it can "cut up," or destroy love and friendship.

The earliest non Jewish source to mention the already widespread superstition preceded Rabbi Nachman by over 300 years. The *Gospelles of Dystaues* records, "he that gyueth [gave] a payre [pair] of knues [knives] ti his lady paramour on newe yeres daye [on new years days] knowe that theyr loue shall ware colde [know[ing] that their love shall become cold [severed]]."<sup>[38]</sup> In 1578, Peter Bornemisza echoed this belief in his book, *On the Temptation*

*of the Devil*, as he writes, “one ought not to give one’s financee a knife.”[39] Soon after ,in the year 1611, Francis Davidson in *Peotical Rapsodi* writes,“a paire of kniues: Fortune doth giue this paire of Kniues to you. To cut the thred of loue if ’t be not true.” [40]

From its earliest source in the year 1470, this belief could be found in many different parts of the world, especially in England and America.[41] Eventually, around the year 1654,[42] this belief extended not only to knives but to any sharp [metal] tool or object as well, such as pins and scissors. Giving sharp objects as gifts, just like knives, was believed to carry danger, and, it appers that people accepted these "prohibitions." [43]

In the year 1707,[44] we find that the non-Jews thought up a solution to the danger of giving sharp items/knife as a present. This solution has been employed by both non-Jews[45] and by many Jews up to present day. [46] Specifically, the solution entails the recipient to give money or an item of value to the giver, in return for the knife. I assume that by giving money to the giver, it is considered as the recipient bought the knife, and the knife loses its status as a gift. There is no danger in buying a knife.

It is interesting to point out that this non Jewish belief is recorded in the general beliefs of the Iraqi Jews. They believed that one should not give his friend a knife as a present [for the reason given by the gentiles]. However, if the recipient gives the giver a minimal amount of money, then it is permitted.[47] I would assume that the Iraqi Jews were influenced by this very popular belief of the non Jews.

Although inconclusive, this widespread superstition of the Gentiles (not to give a knife as a present) may have played a role in the development of the Jewish belief. This claim is not definite; rather an assumption gleaned from the evidence at hand. Hopefully, with ongoing research on this topic, definite evidence will surface and prove the exact origins of this belief, practiced by many Jews.

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[1] See later in the article for a comparative study of non Jewish beliefs, which they believe by the receiver giving a dollar you can defend the dangers of such a present. It seems however this relative not only did she possess a non-Jewish superstition and protection(this way of protection does not have to be exclusive to non Jews for it just makes the knife as an acquisition instead of a present), she also mixed it up and gave me the dollar (I am not complaining!).

[2] Karl Goldmark (1830-1915), Viennese Jewish music teacher, composer, and conductor. His autobiography, was translated into English in 1927 under the title *Notes from the Life of a Viennese Composer*.

[3] Whatever the origin of this tradition is, according to one scholar, giving presents is one of the oldest, universal, acts in human history. Horst A. Wessel, *The Babylonian Laws*, Oxford 1968, pp. 311-13, 343, 377.

[4] See Richard Booker, *Here Comes The Bride: Jewish Wedding Customs And The Messiah*, (Houston: Sounds of the Trumpet, 1995), p. 78; Roni Weinstein, *Marriage Rituals Italian Style*, Brin: 2004, pp. 262-310. For the custom of the bride gifting presents to the groom see Hershavitz, *Otzar kol Minhagai Yeshurun*, p. 27; S. M. Lehrman, *Jewish Customs and*

*Folklore*, London 1949, pp. 143, 149. On giving present upon attending a wedding, see Hershavitz, *Otzar Kol Minhagai Yeshurun*, p. 30.

[5] For the custom of giving gifts on Purim, Chanuka, and marriage occasions to the Rabbi's see Zohar Chai, Veyairah, Midrash Hanelam 115. For giving charitable gifts to poor by inviting them over Shabbos night, sponsoring candles and Torah covers to the synagogue, funding dowries, and hospital care see *Chazeres Hoatoroh*, Israel 2008, p. 48; Hershavitz, *Otzar Kol Minhagai Yeshurun*, p. 449, . In the Cairo Geniza we find all types of gifts given. See S.D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, (University of California Press: 1993) vol. III, p. 22 (gifts from a brother to his sister); *id.* pp. 167-68 (gifts from husband to his wife); *id.* vol. I, p. 167 (gifts amongst friends).

[6] *Sichot Haran* no. 9. First printed in 1798-99. *Maaglei Tzedek* pg. 3a. This tradition is also found in *Baal Shem Tov al Hatorah*, Parshas Re'ah in the Mevor Mayim Chaim, no. 6.

[7] This is not to say that Rabbi Nachman held that a knife had no good usages the world of segulah's. In *Sefer Hamidos*, Bayis II 8, R. Nachman is recorded as offering that upon entering a new house bring in a sword or knife. See also, *id.* segulah II 7, to one who got mute pass a knife... *Ibid* Segulah II 10, upon entering a new house bring in a knife or sword [See Shaul Mieslish, *Sefer Ani Mamin*, Israel 1996, pg. 9, brings the very same segulah].

Regarding iron being a positive source to fight off evil and evil spirits, see Joshua Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, New York: 1984, pp. 160, 258, 313 n.14. Frazer, *Folklore in the Old Testament*, vol. I, p. 521, ("It is said among high caste Hindoos of the Punjab, a Bridegroom on entering the bridal chamber always carries an iron weapon with him to drive away the evil spirits that haunt him."). Similarly, Trachtenberg, *id.* p. 174, cites a similar belief by some Jews. Frazer, *id.* p. 521, records that some brought daggers to drive away evil spirits.

[8] Notes on *Sefer Shemiras Hanefesh*, Yisroel Matisyahu Auerbach, Lemberg: 1871; *Shemiras HaNefesh*, New York 1992, Preisler ed. no. 153 p. 59.

[9] *Id.* no. 85 p. 59.

[10] *Segulos Habaal Shem Tov Vetalmidov*, Magen Yeshuos Yisroel, 1999, no. 81, in the name of the Sichos Hara'n, notes therein.

[11] Rabbi Shmuel Hakatan, *Tiferes Shmuel*, grandson of Rabbi Shmuel Kaminikar, New York 1926, p. 216.

[12] Braishis Rabbah, Vayishlach 87:12.

[13] As I wrote it is only an allusion because you can't prove from here that you should not give a knife as a present.

[14] *Shemiras Haguf VeHanefesh*, Jerusalem 1987, p. 304 siman 243:2

[15] *Segulos Yisroel*, [printed without name of author] Jerusalem 1998, p. 55. *Segulos Habaal Shem Tov Vetalmidov*, Magen Yeshuos Yisroel, 1999, no. 81. Mechon Zera Avraham, Chazeres Hoatoroh, Israel 2008, p. 344.

[16] See Tosfos there that asks why you don't transgress the prohibition of ... c.f. Reshash and Maharatz Chayos, Pischei Teshuvah Y.D. 179:3, and the Toras Chaim. See, Rabbi Yehudah Yudel Rosenberg, *Refael Hamalach*, p. 14 sub. Hatzlocha, that brings the Gemarah that one should be careful not to lend to his friend his wallet or money belt because by doing so, he will sell or give away his mazel. See also Shaul Mieslish, *Sefer Ani Mamin*, Israel: 1996, p. 97 also records this precaution.

[17] See *Baal Shem Al Hatorah* for many more segulos that originated from the Besh"t.

[18] See *Botzina Denehorah*, Jerusalem: 2007; *Igros Hakodesh*, p. 176. Yitzchok Warfel, *Sefer Hachasidus*, Tel Aviv: 1957 p. 10. See also Aron Surasky, Israel 2000, II pp. 73-74.

See also *Siach Sarfie Kodesh*, Bnai Brak 1989, part 4, pg 141, num. 51, a story "where a great holy Tzaddik sent Rabbi Menachem Mendal of Kotkz a knife as a present. The Kotkzer would not accept the present and said even a one time acceptance can ruin a friendship. It was assumed that he didn't accept it because because it was not Toveled first. [However it could be explained that the reason he would not accept the present is because he knew of the danger of accepting a knife as a present].

See also Yisroel Wasertil, *Yeshua Verachamim*, p. 19, also in Kovetz Ohr Yisreol, Monsey 1997, p. 128, that Rabbi Moshe Mordechai Bidderman of Lelov would go out on Erev Rosh Hashanah and buy lots of knives and give each of his sons a knife for Rosh Hashanah.

[19] R. Mordechai Meneshchiz, *Rishfai Aish Hachodosh*, Jerusalem: 1997, *Kuntres Zichron Tov*, p. 72, no. 12. R' Avraham Yitzchok Sperling, Israel 1982 ed., Shabbath, pg. 118, Num. 246 Notes there.

[20] *Shemirah Mealyah* ibid. pg. 151.

[21] It can be assumed that because the giver never used the knife, his mazel is not associated with it, and therefore cannot be transferred when given over to another person.

[22] End of Parshas Yisro. See also *Toras Kohanim*, Kedoshim Perek 11 Halacha 9. *Yalkut Shemoni*, Kedoshim, no. 624. *Midrash Aggadah*, Jerusalem: 1971, p. 194 for a alternative reading.

[23] See James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, New York 1966, III, Taboo And the Perils Of The Soul, pg. 230, in which he writes "Amongst the Jews no iron tool was used in building the Temple at Jerusalem or in making an alter." See there in which he brings from early Gentiles sources that they too, held iron as a taboo.

[24] As explained in length by the Ramba"n and Tur Ha'oruch Al Hatorah Shemos ibid they write, "Sherak lehidur hamitzvah."

[25] See *Rabbeinu Ephraim Al Hatorah*, Jerusalem: 1992, Shemos ibid., After writing that iron should not be in contact with the *mizbeach* because the *mizbeach* lengthens a man's life and iron shortens ones life. Therefore one who brings weapons into a shul shortens his life. So it would seem that he connected these to rules for he saw an actual danger by iron being in contact with the *mizbeach*. See Joshua Trachtenberg, *op cit.*, p. 298 n.5, where he gives a new reason for the danger of a knife and applies it to the covering of a knife by *Brichat Hamozon* and to the prohibition of bringing a knife into a shul.

[26] Chagigah 27a, Menochos 97a. See also Zohar Shemos, Teruma, pg, 153b.

[27] Brought by Rabbi Nachman, *Sefer Hamidos*, Jerusalem p. 52. For a lengthy discussion on this subject see Daniel Sperber, *Minhagai Yisroel*, Jerusalem: 1994, p. 161.

[28] *Rokeach* no. 332, Shnersohn ed. Jerusalem: 1967, p. 230. *Sefer Chasidim*, Margolios ed. no. 102, p. 136. See also *Minhag Yisroel Torah* no. 167. For a lengthy discussion on this topic see the upcoming *Yerushosainu*.

[29] See *Kol Bo*, Avraham ed. Jerusalem: 2007, p. 334. R' Moshe of Pramamsla, *Mateh Moshe*, London: 1958 p. 118.

[30] *Hilchos Sta"m Hilchos Mezuzah* no. 289:1.

[31] The *Daas Kedoshim* ibid. concludes, "however, one does not have to be extra careful." See R' Dovid Sperber, *Teshuvos Afrakasta Deanyah*, Romania: 1940, p. 88, responsum no. 99 (explaining that this means that the proper thing is to be careful). The author asked Rabbi Chaim Kenevsky Shlita"h winter 2008, "Should one be careful not to have a mezuzah holder made of iron"? He answered "that there are those that are makpid, however I am not."

[32] The Magen Avraham end of *siman* 180, explicitly writes that the whole *hakpadah* is with regard to iron. R' Moshe Tzvi Landau, *Mezusas Melochim*, p. 42b, cites the Besh"t that one should be careful not to use a holder of iron, but is not clear that this custom should also apply to all metal and he continues that even regarding iron one does not have to be so stringent not to use it. See R' Uri Fievel Halevi Braudstien, *Mikdash Me'at*, where he argues that one does not have to be careful not to have a holder of iron. R' Yehuda Shienfeld, *Osrei Legefen*, Jerusalem: 2002, p. 393, responsum no. 551, asserting that the *hakpadah* is only with metal that you make a knife or sword, such as iron and even copper you should try to be careful not to use it, but other types of metal is fine to use. But see, R' Dovid Sperber, *Teshuvos Afrakasta Deanyah*, who asks that it would seem from the poskim that it is not so clear that it doesn't apply to the also to other metals and on the contrary it would seem it is also prohibited. See also Ohr Yisroel, Monsey N.Y. 2000, 5-1-(17), p. 147.

[33] R' Shabtzi Liphshutz, *Segulas Yisroel*, Jerusalem: 1993, p. 191.

[34] R' Matzliach Mazuz, *Abiah Segulos*, Tel Aviv: 2001, p. 19.

[35] See Joshua Trachtenberg ibid. pg. 56-57 to what extent people took to be careful not to give any ideas to the Sattan.

[36] An explanation to how the Lubliner and others had no problem to buy knives and give them out to others is because if it is for Rosh Hashanah or even a segulah or if it was a present to other for Shabbos Kodesh then there is no danger as the Mitzvah protects. Also it may be offered that if it was bought directly for others so it is like they bought it themselves.

[37] We find many instances where Jews gave a knife as a present without hesitation. See Avraham Yari, *Masoet Eretz Yisroel*, p. 476; see also Hagar Salomon, *The Hyena People*, California: 1999, pp. 43-44; David Biale, *Cultures of the Jews*, New York: 2002, p. 984. The people of the Beth Israel are recorded as giving a gift of knives to their Christian friends at the occasion of a wedding. These gifts carried particular symbolic meanings charged with hidden messages. The Manestricher Rebbe, Rabbi Yitzcok Yoel Rabinowitz zt'l although knowing of



the belief of the Baal Shem Tov he would still give silver challah knives as a present Lekovod Shabbos (as heard from his son). The present Belz Rebbi shlita”h often gives challah knives a gifts. [As heard from Chasidim]. When the author asked Rabbi Chaim Keneyevski Shlita”h Winter 2008 “Should one be careful not give a knife as a present and is there a source for this superstition “? He answered he never heard of such a thing.

[38] *Gospelles of Dystaues*, pt. 2 xx. (quoted in *A Dictionary of Superstitions*, Opie & Tatem, Oxford: 1989, p. 217). The Gospel was written around 1470 is an anonymous work that appears to have many contributors, in 1507 it was translated into English and published by editor Wynkyn de Worde.

[39] Quoted in Teklu Domotoc, *Hungarian Folk Beliefs*, Indiana: 1981 p. 62.

[40] *Poetical Rapsodie* 6, F. Davidson, 1611, *Minors Poems* 91:11.

[41] Notes and Queries Feb 8, 1890, p. 117, From Two Wise Men and All the Rest Fools, A Comicall Morall, 1619, attributed to George Chapman: Levita: ‘what! Knives? O, I will not take them in any wise: they will cut love.’ See also John Gay, Sheppards Week 26 [Tuesday II 101-102], quoted in a Dictionary of Superstitions and in N&Q Feb. 8, 1890 pg. 117, I quote ‘But woe is me! Such presents luckless prove, for knives; they tell me, always sever love. See Dictionary of superstitions *ibid.* with many source See North Carolina Folklore, Frank Brown, North Carolina 1961, vol. 6, pg. 632 num. 4650, pg. 473-4 num. 3578-80 [brings may different sources from north American recordings]. Also see Funks and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, 1972, pg. 584. See also A Dictionary of English Folklore, Jacqueline Simpson & Steve Roud, Oxford University Press 2000, pg. 205. See Notes and Queries, Sept. 16, 1893. pg. 231. N&Q. July 22, 1893, pg. 78, Rev. Samuel Bishop, head master of Merchant Taylor’s School 1783-95. wrote the following line on the subject, on presenting a knife to his wife: ‘a knife, they say, dear girl, cuts love, mere modish love it may, for any tool of any kind, can separate what was never joined.’ [A very interesting exclusion to the superstition and a very light look by Bishop of such a known belief]. J.S.T.O.R., Superstition from Oregon, Donald M. Hines, pg. 6 of 14. giving a knife as a gift is bad luck as it cuts friendship. Also Superstition and Maxims from Dutchess Count, N.Y. by Gertuse Barnes 4 of 7, you must not thank any one when given a knife or a pin or anything sharp it will cut the friendship.

[42] See Dorthy Osborne, letter 13-15 Jan. 1654, quoted in a *Dictionary of Superstitions* p. 345 (“Did not you say once you knew where good French tweezees were to be had? Send me a prayer, they shall cut noe love”). Also in 1707, letters from Elizabeth Wentworth quoted *id.* (“Dearest brother, I give you a grate many thanks for the sizzers you sent me by Mr. Shokman. I gave him six spences for fear that should not cute love one your side: but for mine ‘tis well grounded to fear ather sizzers or knife cutting of it”). Also in 1711 in *Spectator* July 14, quoted in *ibid* pg. 309 I quote: ‘This very old women had a reputation of a witch... There was not a maid in the parish that would take a pin of her, though she should offer a bag of money with it. See *Connoisseur* 20 Feb., 1755, quoted in *A Dictionary of Superstitions* *ibid* I quote: ‘neither would on any account run the risk of cutting love, by giving or receiving such a gift as a knife or a pair of scissors.’

[43] See a *Dictionary of Superstitions* *id.* and p. 309, 345, with many sources. North Carolina Folklore *ibid.* pg 634, num 4651-4653, and pg. 474, num 3579-3580. N&Q Feb. 24., 1912, pg. 157. A Dictionary of English Folklore *ibid*, Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore *ibid.*

[44] See Letter from Elizabeth Wentworth [Wentworth Papers ed. Cartwright, 76] Feb, 1707, quoted in A Dictionary of Superstition *ibid* pg. 345. I quote 'Dearest brother, I give you a grate many thanks for the sizzers you sent me by Mr. Shokman. I gave him six spences for fear that should not cut love one your side...See also Grose, Provincial Glossary, superstition 63. brought in a Dictionary of Superstitions *ibid*. pg. 217 and in a dictionary of English folklore *ibid*, I quote: ' it is unlucky to gift a knife, scissors, razor, or any sharp or cutting instrument, to one's mistress or friend, as they are apt to cut love and friendship. To avoid the ill effects.. a pin, a farthing, or some trifling recompense, must be taken.'

[45] See A Dictionary of Superstitions *ibid*. pg. 217 and pg. 345 pg. 309. North Carolina Folklore *ibid*. pg. 473 num 3578, a Dictionary of English Folklore *ibid*, Funk and Wagnalls standard dictionary of folklore *ibid*, N&Q May 15, 1858 pg. 391, and in Dec. 14, 1889 pg. 469. Feb. 24 1912 pg. 157. J.S.T.O.R. The Journal of American Folklore vol 36. by Martha Warren Beck [Superstitions collected from American College girls] pg. 4. num. 36, Some West Sussex Superstitions 1878 [lingering in 1860] collected by Charlotte Latham pg. 12 9<sup>th</sup> of 63, num. 43.

[46] For an example, I saw brought down that Reb Tzvi Aryeh Rosenfeld said over that once he went to visit Reb Avraham Sthernhauz zt"l a previous leader of Breslov, and he gave Reb Avraham a challah board and knife. Reb Avraham agreed to accept the board but not the knife until he paid for it.

[47] *Otzar Hasegulot*, Avraham Ben Yaakov, Jerusalem 1991, pg. 124.