

THE COMMUNITY Parasha Sheet



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This week's Parasha is sponsored Lirfuat Rav Yona Ben Chava Betoeh Shaar Cholei Yisrael

RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

DIRECTOR
TAL



SMILE

It is every kid's worst nightmare and six-year-old Jaden Hayes (from Savannah, Georgia) has lived it - twice. First he lost his dad when he was four and then last month his mother died unexpectedly in her sleep.

What does one do if faced with such a terrible disaster? How does one cope, especially a young 6 year old child?

The world is full of trials and tribulations, and there are plenty of excuses to cause a person to be sad, but Jaden took on a different angle to his grief. A side he first made public a few weeks ago when he told his aunt, and now guardian, Barbara DiCola, that he was sick and tired of seeing everyone sad all the time. And he had a plan to fix it.

Jaden asked his aunt Barbara to buy a bunch of little toys and bring him to downtown Savannah, Georgia near where he lives, so he could give them away.

"I'm trying to make people smile," said Jaden.

Jaden targeted people who weren't already smiling and turned their day around. He aimed to affect 33,000 people, but since he started his campaign has gone viral and today millions are smiling because of him.

When Yakov Avinu blessed his children before he passed away, the following blessing was received by Yehuda. "The eyes will be reddened from an abundance of wine and the teeth whitened from an abundance of milk". Our Sages look deeper into these words and teach us

that there is a hidden message in this blessing. Yakov was hinting at how amazing Yehuda was and would be in encouraging others to smile. "The teeth whitened" represents that we should show people our white teeth when we greet them - a reminder to always smile at another person!

In fact, the Mishna (Pirkei Avot) teaches that one should always make the effort to be the first to greet others when encountering them. That's right! Every encounter is a race. The next time you see someone coming towards you, be sure to greet them before they greet you! When you smile at another person you illuminate your face, which in turn illuminates theirs - and perhaps illuminates their entire day. In our day and age with all the many stresses of life, whether in the home, at the office or any place else that takes their strain on a person - a smile, an illumination can truly have an effect on others.

This week's Parasha describes the ninety-eight Kelalot (curses) that G-d threatens to bring upon Bnei Yisrael should they disobey the Torah. At one point in this section, the Torah informs us of the particular cause of these calamities: "Tachat Asher Lo Avadeta Et Hashem Elokecha Be'simcha" - "on account of the fact that you did not serve Hashem your G-d with joy" (Devarim 28:47). Surprisingly, the Torah here does not refer to a generation that simply disregarded the Mitzvot; it speaks of a generation of Jews that are indeed loyal to G-d's laws, but begrudgingly, without joy and enthusiasm. The Torah demands not only that we obey the Mitzvot, but that we rejoice and take pleasure in the performance of Mitzvot. In other words, the Torah demands that we be happy.

This requirement is expressed in other contexts, as well. King David famously wrote (Tehillim 100:2) "Ivdu et Hashem Be'simcha" - "Serve G-d with joy." He didn't instruct simply, "Serve G-d," but rather than we must do so "with joy." ►

Elul 20th 5779

SHABBAT BEGINS: 6:46 PM

SHABBAT ENDS: 7:52 PM



THE WEEKLY QUOTE

"Today's accomplishments were yesterday's impossibilities"

> MAZAL TOV

Rabbi and Mrs Nissim
on the upcoming wedding of their son Naftali to Esther Benchimol

> UPCOMING EVENTS

- 28th SEPTEMBER
UNITED SELICHOT AT HEICHAL LEA
- 05th OCTOBER
UNITED SELICHOT AT OD YOSSEF HAI

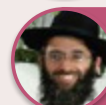
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DVAR TORAH

Smile
RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

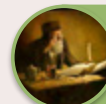
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The Gemara in Ta'anit presents the famous rule, "Mi'shenichnas Adar Marbim Be'simcha" – "When [the month of] Adar comes, we increase our joy." Conversely, we also read, "Mi'shenichnas Av Mema'atim Be'simcha" – "When [the month of] Av comes, we decrease our joy." These two passages work on the same basic assumption that a Jew must constantly live in a state of happiness. Halacha requires increasing or decreasing the level of joy at different periods of the year, but some level of Simcha (joy) must be maintained at all times. Rabbi Shimon Schwab compared the requirement of Simcha to a pilot light on a gas range. The flame must always remain lit, and one lowers or raises the fire as needed. Similarly, a Jew must live each day of the year with a certain degree of happiness, which he increases or decreases depending on the particular season.

In Sefer Melachim I (8:66), the prophet tells that after the fourteen days of celebration for the inauguration of the Bet Ha'mikdash the Benei Yisrael returned home happy. What was the cause of their happiness? As Rabbi Avraham Pam noted, it could not have been

just the delicacies and fine wine they enjoyed during the celebration. Many among Benei Yisrael lived a distance of several days' travel from Jerusalem, and yet the prophet tells that they felt joyous upon returning home – long after the pleasure provided by the food and wine had subsided. They were happy because of the spiritual elevation they had just experienced during the inauguration of the Temple. As the Yalkut Shimoni remarks on this verse, they rejoiced "because they enjoyed the glory of the Shechina."

We live in a blessed generation. Whereas in the past, the land of Israel was desolate and barren, it is now thriving. In the past, it took weeks to travel to the Holy Land, yet now it takes hours in comfort. Water, fresh fruit and delicacies are abundant, and we generally live free of fear.

If our great grandparents would get out of their graves and see the lifestyle we live, they would ask "Why are you not smiling?"

Our eagerness in performing Hashem's Will shows a great deal of the sincerity in which we serve Hashem.

When we arrive early to the synagogue and leave late, we show that we are happy with our relationship with Hashem. When we happily go out our way to help another person, fast on Yom Kippur or build a Succah, we show that we are privileged and content at being G-d's servant.

The best way forward is not to keep that excitement inside, but rather share it with others. Let everyone see how happy you are that you are alive and able to connect with the King of Kings through performing Mitsvot. Let your inner content shine through and your "teeth whiten"!

Smiles are contagious, they light up the world. Like a candle, a smile can light many lights without itself being diminished. If you smile at 5 people, and they pass the smile on to 5 people and they pass it on to 5 more... then by the 15th passing on, you will have smiled at the whole world.

What are you waiting for? Let's start now!

■ **Shabbat Shalom**

RABBI YITSCHAK HAKOHEN TAWIL - MIR KOLEL, JERUSALEM



PARSHA INSIGHTS

"Today you have become a nation" (27:9).

The Torah describes us as being born a nation on the day that we accepted upon ourselves to be loyal and faithful to G-d's Torah! At this stage we were still a wandering nation roaming in the wilderness, with no land of our own and none of the natural physical means of existence demanded for a nation.

R. Shimshon Refael Hirsch notes how, in G-d's eyes, the Jewish nation doesn't begin from when we receive our country or adopt our own language. It begins when we accept upon ourselves the yoke of Torah and Mitzvot. Only once we have Torah and Mitzvot is Eretz Yisrael considered an additional asset, enabling us to reach even higher spiritual goals.

"Cursed is the man who..." (27:15-26).

Seforno comments that any and every sin committed is most definitely a cause for curse and sorrow. He asks, why then do we find in our Parsha that the Torah identifies certain specific sins in association with the curses. In what way are they different to all other sins?

Seforno explains that the sins that are singled out in our Parsha are either of the type that are normally performed in secret, or sins which are inside the mind, or sins which are performed by leaders and high officials. The Torah informs us that the associated curses are focussed specifically at the sinner himself because we do not observe the act of sin being performed, and in the case of the leaders we are usually not in the position to rebuke them because our words would not be influential. For other sins however, not only is the sinner to be cursed but also anybody who was able to rebuke the sinner and prevent him from sinning! By watching the sinner and remaining quiet, he displays that the act of sin doesn't bother him too much and he therefore also gets caught up in the curse!

The Rashbam explains our portion in a different light. There are certain openly performed sins that are witnessed and can be judged and duly punished for by the Beth Din. The sins mentioned in our portion are usually performed in secret and remain unrevealed. The sinner mistakenly comforts himself with the feeling that nobody can see him, and heretically demonstrates his lack of appreciation that G-d constantly sees and is fully aware of all the sins that he performs, even in the greatest secrecy. In the absence of sufficient proof, Beth Din are unable to judge and sentence the sinner. The Torah informs us that we shouldn't even think for a moment that any sin is overlooked. This sinner who acts in secret indicates disbelief, making out as though he can hide from G-d and perform sin! The Torah informs us that such an individual deserves even greater form of punishment than a normal sinner does, and he duly receives a specific curse quite apart from the general curse for not keeping to G-d's Command!

■ **Shabbat shalom**

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OUR CHACHAMIM

RABBI AMRAM BEN DIWAN

It is always with a feeling of respect and awe that the Jews of Morocco evoke the holy name of Rabbi Amram Ben Diwan.

Rabbi Amram Ben Diwan was born in Jerusalem, and later he settled in Hebron. In 5523 (1743), he was chosen by the Rabbis of Hebron as an emissary to Morocco with the mission of collecting money for the yeshivas of the Holy Land. He decided to settle in the Moroccan town of Wazan, and there he founded a Talmud-Torah and a yeshiva where numerous students came to quench their thirst for study by drinking from the source of his words.

Rabbi Amram became attached to his students. His fatherly affection created a solid connection between him and his students. He provided for all their material needs, and spiritually directed them on the path that leads to the performance of G-d's will. By his rich and varied pursuits, he contributed to the elevation and dissemination of Torah in all the communities of Morocco. Rabbi Amram was also known for his miracles. His blessings always came to pass, and Jews would travel from all the towns of Morocco to urgently seek him in order to be delivered, through his merit, from their troubles. He occupied himself with the well-being of everyone in particular, and the well-being of the community in general. His home was always open to all the afflicted who came knocking at his door, hoping that the Tzaddik would be their staunchest defender before our Father, the Holy One, blessed be He.

After a long stay in Morocco, Rabbi Amram felt a great longing for the Land of Israel. He therefore interrupted his holy work. His students, to whom he had taught Torah, had themselves become great scholars over the course of the years. Thus he decided to return to the Holy Land. When he arrived in Hebron, he became friends with Rabbi Haim Bagoyo and Rabbi Avraham Gedalia, the Rabbis of the city. Together they studied Torah and penetrated many of its wondrous secrets, ascending day by day the rungs of perfection in Torah study and Divine service.

However, Rabbi Amram's stay in Hebron was short-lived. An unfortunate incident caused his departure, forcing him to take up the mantle of sojourner once again and return to Morocco. The following story describes what happened.

At that time, Jews were not permitted to enter into the tomb of the Patriarchs. However, for Rabbi Amram, this prohibition did not in the least quench his fervent desire to pray by the tomb of our Fathers. He therefore disguised himself as an Arab, and without being noticed he entered the cave with the rest of the Muslims that had also come there to pray. Imagine his emotions when he approached the tomb of the Patriarchs! As his face became drenched with tears, he quietly uttered his prayers, beseeching the Creator of the world to hasten the Final Redemption. No one doubted that this "Muslim", so absorbed as he was in his prayer, was nothing other than a Jew. Suddenly, as Rabbi Amram was preparing to leave, an Arab saw and recognized him. Immediately, he ran to the Pasha and informed him of the offense.

Rabbi Amram incurred heavy suffering for such a sacrilege. A friend of Rabbi Amram, who was also a servant of the Pasha, hurried to warn him that he intended to arrest him. In the middle of the night, Rabbi Amram, accompanied by his young son, Rabbi Haim, left their home. They feared returning to Jerusalem or a neighboring country because during that era Turkish power held sway over several

countries. He therefore decided to return to Morocco. As soon as he arrived in Fez, the city's inhabitants welcomed him with great honor. Many of the city's notable men quarreled over the merit of having him as their guest. He was finally received by Rabbi Menasheh Ibn Denan, one of the leaders of Fez's Jewish community.

The story is told that Rabbi Menasheh's children were all girls, and that another girl had just been born to him. Rabbi Amram advised him to name her Fedina, which means, "we have finished". In other words, we have finished giving birth to girls. And it was thus that after this girl, Rabbi Menasheh had only boys.

Not long after his arrival in Fez, Rabbi Amram and his son Rabbi Haim traveled to all the towns of Morocco in order to spread the teaching of Torah. He arrived in Sefru, where he lodged in the Elbaz home. Having no children of their own, they asked him for a blessing to have a son. Rabbi Amram blessed them and promised that in the following year, at the very same time of year, the wife would give birth to a son who would later become a great Torah scholar. The blessing of the Tzaddik came to fruition. The son who was born to the Elbaz family was given the name of the Tzaddik, Amram, and afterwards the name of Rabbi Amram of Sefru became famous as a Gaon and great Torah Scholar.

While Rabbi Amram was staying in the Elbaz home in Sefru, his son Rabbi Haim fell deathly ill. The doctors gave him no chance at recovering. Rabbi Amram prayed to the Creator of the world that He take his soul in place of his son's. His son, Rabbi Haim, recovered from his illness, and they continued on their journey to all the towns of Morocco. When they arrived in Wazan, Rabbi Amram himself fell gravely ill, and soon afterwards rendered his soul to his Creator.

The tomb of Rabbi Amram became a place of pilgrimage for all the Jews of Morocco. Each year on Lag BaOmer, thousands of Jews come to Wazan to make the pilgrimage to the grave of the saint. Numerous miracles are said to have occurred on his tomb: Incurable illnesses have been healed, the blind have regained their sight, the mute have found their voice, the paralyzed have returned home on their own, and infertile women have had children after having prayed there.

They tell that a French military sergeant had a son who remained paralyzed after a serious illness. This sergeant had a Jewish friend that advised him to take his son to the tomb of Rabbi Amram Ben Diwan in Wazan. At first, the sergeant was skeptical and refused, but then later promised that if a miracle were to happen and his son would be healed, he would build a road with his own money in order to facilitate access to the tomb of the Tzaddik. The miracle occurred: As soon as his son approached the tomb of Rabbi Amram, he was healed. The happy father kept his promise and constructed a road that leads to the tomb of Rabbi Amram.

The great poet, Rabbi David Ben Hassin, composed a liturgical poem especially in his honor, a song that is sung by the Jews of Morocco on the day of his Hilloula.

His son, Rabbi Haim Ben Diwan, continued his father's work. He traveled from town to town with the goal of instructing Torah. He died at a ripe old age and rests in the village of Anranz, south of Marrakech. His tomb has also become a place of pilgrimage for all the Jews of Morocco. May his merit protect us. Amen. ■



HALACHOT

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

CUSTOMS OF ELUL

There is a custom that originates from the Arizal (Rabbi Yishak Luria of Safed, 1534-1572) to pray during the month of Elul for peers or family members who have, Heaven forbid, strayed from Torah observance. As Elul is a time of divine compassion, when the Almighty is particularly receptive to our prayers, especially with regard to Teshuba (repentance), it is proper to pray during this month that God should bring those who have strayed back to the path of religious observance. The Arizal taught that one should insert this prayer three times a day during Elul in Shaharit, Minha and Arvit in the Beracha in the Amida that deals with repentance ("Hashibenu"). Just prior to the concluding blessing of that Beracha, meaning, before one recites, "Baruch Ata Hashem Harose Bitshuba," one should recite the following text:

"Yehi Rason Milefanecha Hashem Elokenu VElokeh Abotenu Shetahtor Hatira Mitahat Kiseh Kebodecha Leahazir Bitshuba Shelemah Lekhol Posheh Yisrael Ubichlalim Tahazireni Li [the persons name] Ben [the persons fathers name] Ki Yemincha Peshuta Lekabel Shabim." (Translation: "May it be the will before You, Hashem our God and God of our forefathers, that You shall dig an opening underneath Your Throne of Glory to bring all sinners of Israel back in full repentance, and among them bring back for me so-and-so son of so-and-so, for Your right [hand] is outstretched to receive those who return.")

There is also an admirable custom to spend additional time each day during the month of Elul studying works of Musar (religious exhortation). Recommended works to learn include Hobot Halebabot by Rabbenu Bahya Ibn Pakuda (Spain, 1050-1120), Reshit Hochma, and the third section of Shaareh Teshuba by Rabbenu Yona Gerondi (Spain, 1180-1263). This section offers important religious guidelines and deals with the various Misvot and prohibitions regarding which one must exercise particular care, and it is thus especially relevant to the period of Elul. Some also advise studying the work Orhot Hayim, which is attributed to the Rosh (Rabbenu Asher Ben Yehiel, Germany-Spain, 1250-1327).

Summary: It is proper during the month of Elul to pray in the Amida on behalf of those who have strayed from Torah observance. This prayer should be added in the "Hashibenu" section of the Amida. It is also proper to spend extra time each day during Elul studying the classic works of Musar. ■



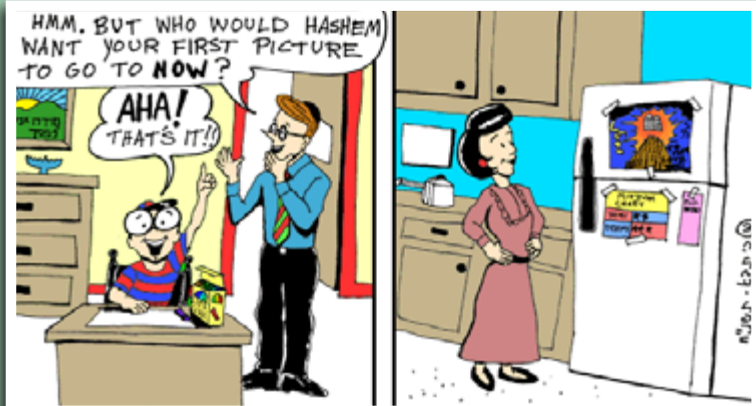
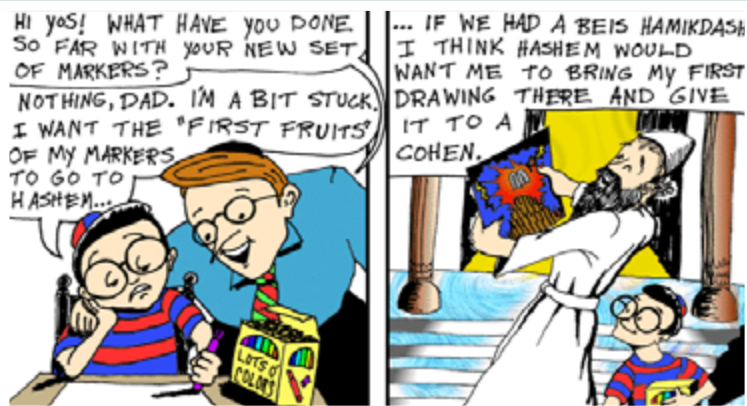
TEST YOURSELF - Q&A

- 1 Who "causes the blind to go astray?"
- 2 How does one "strike another secretly?"
- 3 Eleven curses were spoken on Mt. Eval. What is the significance of this number?
- 4 Why are sheep called "ashterot"?
- 5 How is the manner of expressing the curses in Parshat Bechukotai more severe than in this week's parsha?

Parsha the curses are mentioned in the singular.
 27:18 - Any person who intentionally gives bad advice. 27:24 - By slandering him. 27:24 - Each curse corresponds to one of the tribes, except for the tribe of Shimon. Since Moshe didn't intend to bless the tribe of Shimon before his death, he did not want to curse them either. 28:4 - Because they "enrich" (m'ashiro) their owners. 28:23 - In Bechukotai the Torah speaks in the plural, whereas in this week's Parsha the curses are mentioned in the singular.

Answer

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