

THE COMMUNITY Parasha Sheet



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RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

DIRECTOR
TAL



NOT JUST ANY STONES!

There is never a dull moment in Israel!

Just this week a thief returned two archaeological treasures with a confession note - after apparently experiencing 20 years of bad luck. The 2,000-year-old sling stones were taken from the ancient city of Gamla in the Golan Heights in July 1995, the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) said.

They were returned in a bag to the Museum of Islamic and Near Eastern Cultures in Israel's southern city of Be'erSheva, along with a note from the thief.

The note in Hebrew read: "These are two Roman ballista balls from Gamla from a residential quarter at the foot of the summit. I stole them in July 1995 and since then they have brought me nothing but trouble. Please, do not steal antiquities!"

The thief did not elaborate on the nature of his or her bad luck. But it's interesting to note that the stones were used by Romans against the Jews who were trying to prevent the conquest of the hilltop city. Perhaps herein lies the key to this persons 'bad luck'.

Judaism views telling the truth very seriously.

The Talmud (Sotah 42a) says that there are four groups of people that do not merit greeting the Divine presence. One of them is liars. The Ben Ish Chai (Ben Yehoyada ibid) explains that the liar's punishment is measure for

measure: through lying they demonstrated that they sought to find favour in the eyes of men, and in doing so ignored the presence of the omniscient Almighty. Therefore, they do not merit being in His presence.

Parshat Matot relates the importance of speaking the truth.

"If a man makes a vow...he must not profane his word. He must do all that he expressed verbally." (30:3).

Along these lines the Talmud (Pesachim 113b) also says that there are three types of people that G-d despises and one of them is those that say one thing, while having completely different feelings in their heart.

On a very practical level it is clear that when a person accustoms himself to speaking truthfully, people come to trust him, as the verse (Mishlei 12:19) says: "A true tongue will be established forever." On the other hand, one who is a habitual liar will not be trusted, as the verse continues: "But a lying tongue, just for a moment". I.e. his believability is short lived.

In 1994 a Japanese scientist Dr Masaru Emoto had an idea to prove that spoken words have a direct and verifiable effect upon water. He conducted tests where cups of pure water drawn from a spring were positioned in rooms. People were then placed in different rooms with the water and told to make positive or negative statements. A small volume of the water was then frozen at -25 degrees for three hours, after which the frozen water was removed and examined under an extremely powerful microscope.

The results were awesome.

Positive statements such as compliments, words of praise or affection caused the formation of crystals in a clear and beautiful way. Whilst negative statements, insults, curses or angry words made the ice crystals form in a disorderly and bad looking manner.

Dr Masaru Emoto concluded "The world it shows is truth, and there is no doubt that many messages essential to our lives are hidden in it." ►

1st AV 5779

SHABBAT BEGINS: 8:29 PM

SHABBAT ENDS: 9:49 PM



THE WEEKLY QUOTE

"Change your thought and you change your world."

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DVAR TORAH

Not Just Any Stones!
RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

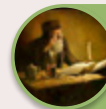
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How powerful are our words! They affect the whole world around us. We may not see it but deep beneath the surface something is happening each time we talk.

The Torah relates that when the Bnei Yisrael were to enter and conquer Eretz Yisrael, if they found that their house was hit with Tsarat (leprosy), then in certain circumstances the house would need to be disassembled and rebuilt.

Eventually the Canaanite-built houses that they occupied became plagued and the walls had to be dismantled.

If G-d was granting them the land as a blessing, why did they need to dismantle and rebuild so many houses?

The Zohar (3:50a) explains that when the idolaters built their houses, each stone was placed in the name and in honour of their gods.

Desiring to eradicate idolatry from the Land, G-d plagued the houses so that their deconstruction would purge the idolatrous impurity. When the Jews then

rebuilt their houses, they instead dedicated them in the service of, and as an abode for, G-d.

It is for this reason that we make a Chanukat Habayit - dedication of a house; whether one has built it, bought it or is even just renting it. Regardless of who the previous inhabitants were, we inaugurate our use of the house by purging it of spiritual impurities through expressing our thanks to G-d for giving us the resources to obtain a place to live, while simultaneously affirming our dedication to use our home as an instrument for doing His will.

We get rid of all bad influences that might have been present in the building. We eradicate the effect that bad speech by its previous owners might have had on those walls.

In this way, our dwelling truly becomes an abode for G-d.

Via the mouth, G-d has granted us a powerful tool to connect with him and influence the world around us.

The thief in Israel thought he was just stealing stones, but perhaps (just perhaps!) these stones had been affected by the people throwing them and by their surroundings.

The only time the Torah ever tells us to distance ourselves from something is in relation to falsehood. (Shemot 23:7).

In telling the truth we emulate our Creator regarding whom it says: "The seal of G-d is truth" (Shabbat 55a).

The Sefer Chassidim (Sefer Chassidim s. 47) writes that one who speaks only truth can actually change destiny by decreeing something to happen—and it will.

Remember words are free; it's how you use them that may cost you!

As we end the book of Bamidbar and enter the book of Devarim (words) let us think before we speak, enhance the words that come out into the open and enrich our surroundings and the world we live in.

■ **Shabbat Shalom**

RABBI BENJAMIN STONE - MAGGID SHIUR - MI K'AMCHO



TORAH – THE RECIPE FOR REAL SUCCESS

As the B'nei Yisrael stood on the threshold of their promised land the tribes of Gad and Reuven approached Moshe with a request. Given their exceptional wealth in terms of cattle ownership, they wished to be allotted the land of Gilaad, a land of extensive green pastures to live in rather than a portion in Eretz Yisrael proper. Here they could be sure that their cattle would flourish.

The Torah reveals an extended dialogue between Moshe and these tribes in which Moshe expressed concern at the possibility that the rest of the B'nei Yisrael might think that these tribes were too scared to conquer the land of Israel and thereby be put off themselves from entering the land. Moshe also stated his insistence that these tribes participate in the military conquest of the land prior to taking root in their chosen residence on the other side of the Yarden river.

One issue Moshe does not seem to address is the apparent ease with which these tribes took the decision to make their home outside of Eretz Yisrael. The Jews had lived a miraculous existence for the past 40 years whilst at the same time thirsting for the end of their sentence in the desert when they could enter the land destined

for them. It seems incongruous that after such trials and tribulations these tribes should not wish for a portion of the land they had dreamed of. Moshe who himself had been prohibited from entering the land despite his desperate wishes to do so must have found their lack of zeal unfathomable.

The midrash (Rabbah;22,7) uses this episode as a springboard to consider the true meaning and pitfalls of material wealth. In particular we are taught a lesson which is relevant to each and everyone of us and which could rightly be described as a terrifying one when contemplated properly.

The midrash tells us that "three gifts were created in the world. A person who merits one of these gifts acquires all the good things in the whole world. The person who merits wisdom has merited everything. The person who merits strength has merited everything. A person who has acquired wealth has acquired everything. When does this apply? When these gifts are gifts of heaven and come through the power of the Torah. If these gifts come through the strength and wealth of human endeavour they are worthless".

The midrash then goes on to state that when these gifts do not come from Hashem "they are destined to be withdrawn".

As evidence of this the midrash draws our attention to the case of the tribes of Gad and Reuven who sought to protect their money and take up residence outside of Eretz Yisrael. As a result continues midrash, these tribes were the first of the tribes to be sent into exile.

The Maharal (Netiv Haosher) offers a gripping explanation of this midrash. We are told famously (Bereishit Rabbah 1,2) that Hashem "looked into the Torah first and then created the world". The meaning of this statement is that the Torah was and is the blueprint for mankind. It contains within it guidelines for how one is supposed to lead his life effectively and prosperously. When one recognizes the existence of a creator and his interest in their daily lives, one becomes attached to Hashem. As a result one also enters the framework of the Torah and can benefit from the beracha of living life within that framework. Furthermore any benefits gained in this way are long lasting. The Torah is infinite and its berachot are similarly permanent.

The opposite also holds true. If one makes decisions and lives life not in accordance with the spirit of the Torah then he cannot benefit from the beracha of a Torah life. Any wisdom, strength or wealth that has been achieved outside the framework of the eternal Torah and will not have the power to endure.

Not all challenges that face us whether in business or in our personal dealings are clear-cut and each act we do needs to be carefully considered to clarify whether that particular act is within the "blueprint" of the Torah. The tribes of Gad and Reuven strove to build their wealth at the expense of the spiritual benefits of living in Eretz Yisrael and as a result their wealth proved short lived.

May we will merit to live our lives within the framework of the Torah and enjoy its continual and permanent benefits.

■ **Shabbat shalom**

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OUR CHACHAMIM

RABBI YITZCHAK EIZIK HALEVI • "THE AUTHOR OF DOROT HARISHONIM"

The son of Rabbi Eliyahu, Rabbi Yitzchak Eizik Halevi Rabinowitz was born in 5608 (1847) in Ivenets, near Vilna. His mother Rachel was the daughter of Rabbi Mordechai Eliezer Kovner, the author of *Karnei Re'eim*. While still very young, his father was murdered by soldiers. The little orphan Yitzchak Eizik was sent to live in Vilna, the city of sages and scholars, with his grandfather Rabbi Mordechai Eliezer.

At the age of 13 he was accepted as a student in the great Volozhin yeshiva, where he gained renown for his tremendous intelligence. The Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, was devoted to him with great affection. In fact many years later, when Rabbi Yosef Dov would write him a letter, he addressed him as "Friend of G-d, friend of my soul, and friend of all." He stayed in the yeshiva for only a year, and after returning to Vilna from Volozhin, he enclosed himself in his room and studied Torah day and night. He acquired a great understanding in all fields of Torah, becoming an expert in both Talmuds (Babylonian and Jerusalem). He often consulted the works *Mishneh LaMelech* and *Noda Bihuda*, once stating: "These books have enlightened the paths of my study."

At the age of 18 he married Elke Kovner, the daughter of his uncle Rabbi Shaul of Kovno. Several communities offered him a position as Rav, but his family convinced him not to use the Torah to earn a living. Thus he began to do business in the tea trade, a business that his wife ran as he studied Torah, all while devoting himself to the needs of the community. It was during that time that he wrote his first book, *Batim Levadim*.

Several years later, Rabbi Yitzchak Eizik Halevi held a very important position among the rabbis of Russia. At the age of 21 he was honored with the important role as Gabbai of the great Volozhin yeshiva. Only exceptional figures were crowned with this title. Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik once said, "There was only one Gabbai of Volozhin – Reb Yitzchak Eizik!" Thanks to this nomination, he became famous throughout the rabbinic world as one of its greats. Many rabbis addressed questions of Halachah to him, and his students in the Volozhin yeshiva sought him out with their requests for advice and guidance. When they arrived at the end of their studies, he tested their knowledge and gave them *Semichah*. Rabbi Yitzchak Eizik participated in the large gatherings that took place with the Gaon of the generation, Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan of Kovno. One time he was delayed and showed up late for a meeting. When he finally arrived, a community leader greeted him with the words, "Blessed be your coming, Rabbi Yitzchak Eizik. We have been waiting for you, since we have been unable to make a decision." In addition, Rabbi Israel Salanter wrote, "I discovered a great treasure in the city of Vilna – Rabbi Yitzchak Eizik Halevi!"

In 5656 (1895), he was forced to leave Vilna and settle in Germany. His departure greatly affected Vilna, and many were those who regretted seeing their beloved leader leave. Rabbi

Yitzchak Ponevezher declared, "What are we without Rabbi Yitzchak Eizik? We are like orphans – without fathers." This Tzaddik was very distressed by having to leave Russia, yet in him was accomplished the verse, "Many designs are in a man's heart, but the counsel of the L-RD, only it will prevail" (Proverbs 19:21). His great accomplishments, his original book *Dorot HaRishonim*, and the founding of Agudath Israel all occurred after he left Vilna and settled in Germany, and everyone saw that this stemmed from G-d.

Not long after his arrival in Germany, he began to devote himself to the heavy problems that weighed on German Jews. With great courage, he fought against liberal rabbis who wanted to institute novelties into Judaism. Following his battle against various types of Maskilim, he decided to establish a worldwide organization of Orthodox Jews in each community, and he proposed that this new movement carry the name Agudath Israel. This organization would bring together all Orthodox Jewry and concern itself with the problems of all Jews. He managed to assemble all the Torah greats of Russia, as well as the great rabbanim and leaders of German Jewry, in the town of Kattowitz. It was there that Agudath Israel was founded, and Rabbi Yitzchak Halevi was justly crowned with the moniker "The Father of Agudath Israel."

Rabbi Yitzchak Eizik Halevi believed that all those who wrote about Jewish history during that era were distorting the Torah of Israel and introducing deliberate errors into the written and oral Torah. This was particularly the case of Isaac H. Weiss, with his book *Dor Dor Vedorshav*. Rabbi Yitzchak Eizik considered himself to be an emissary sent by Providence to defend sacred Jewish values. With great fervor he wrote the book *Dorot HaRishonim*, showing everyone that Moses is truth and that his Torah is truth, and he restored the sanctity of Jewish history to its rightful place.

His love for Eretz Israel was great indeed. He provided considerable help to those living in settlements in Eretz Israel, and he contributed to founding educational institutions for Jewish children there, an educational network that he called *Netzach Israel*. In 5673 (1913), *Netzach Israel* included 10 schools, 40 teachers, and 1,000 students. Rabbi Yitzchak Eizik once said, "There is nothing that I would not do for Torah in Eretz Israel."

Rabbi Yitzchak Eizik Halevi worked hard his entire life. One evening, as he was out taking his usual walk, he suffered a heart attack. The evening of Shabbat, Iyar 20, 5674 (May 15, 1914), he rendered his pure soul to his Creator. At his request, no eulogies were delivered at his funeral. However he was given a great honor at his passing: All those who accompanied the funeral procession traveled on foot from their home to the cemetery, and his body was placed in a coffin that had been made from the planks of the table on which he studied and wrote. ■



HALACHOT RABBI ELI MANSOUR

THE ABRIDGED BIRKAT HA'MAZON – THE MODERN-DAY RELEVANCE OF AN ANCIENT PRACTICE

The Shulhan Aruch (Orach Haim 191) writes that the Sages instituted an abridged version of Birkat Ha'mazon to be recited by workers who are being paid wages for a full day of work. Since their time belongs to the employer, the Rabbis allowed the workers to recite a shorter version of Birkat Ha'mazon. The workers recite the entire first Beracha, and then a brief combination of the second and third Berachot. The fourth Beracha, which to begin with does not constitute a Torah obligation, is omitted, and certainly the "Ha'rahaman" section is omitted, resulting in a significantly shorter text of Birkat Ha'mazon. This was done to minimize the amount of worktime taken away from the employer.

This Halacha does not apply nowadays, because, as the Poskim explain, employers today – thankfully – are not so strict that they refuse to allow their employees the several minutes needed to recite the complete Birkat Ha'mazon. The Aruch Ha'shulhan (Rav Yechiel Michel Epstein of Nevarduk, 1829-1908) goes so far as to say that even if the employer explicitly stipulates that he hires the worker on condition that he does not recite the full text of Birkat Ha'mazon during work hours, this condition is not binding. Since the accepted practice today is to treat the full text of Birkat Ha'mazon as an outright obligation, the employer is not halachically permitted to make such a stipulation. Therefore, even if an employer makes this demand, the employee recites the full text of Birkat Ha'mazon. (Birkat Ha'mazon is similar in this regard to the evening Arvit prayer, which, strictly speaking, is optional, but has been accepted by the Jewish Nation as an obligatory prayer, and it must therefore be approached as an outright obligation. The same applies to the full text of the Birkat Ha'mazon, which has been accepted as obligatory and may thus not be substituted by the abridged version.)

Although this Halacha is not actually practiced nowadays, it nevertheless yields – albeit indirectly – a vitally important practical lesson. The Talmud Yerushalmi raises the question of why the Rabbis instituted a special abridged version of Birkat Ha'mazon, instead of simply allowing workers to recite Birkat Ha'mazon while working. Rather than have the workers skip portions of Birkat Ha'mazon, the Rabbis could have enacted that after reciting the first Beracha, workers should resume working and recite the rest of Birkat Ha'mazon as they perform their work. The Yerushalmi answers that it is improper to engage in any activities while reciting a Beracha, and so the Rabbis did not want to allow employees to work while reciting Birkat Ha'mazon.

The Mishna Berura (Rav Yisrael Meir Kagan, 1833-1909) finds it very significant that the Rabbis preferred having employees skip portions of Birkat Ha'mazon altogether rather than have them recite those portions while working. If these are the only two options, they felt it is better to arrange an abridged version of Birkat Ha'mazon. This shows us, the Mishna Berura writes, the extent to which the Rabbis deemed it improper to engage in any sort of activity while reciting a Beracha. This means, for example, that one should not begin reciting "Asher Yasar" after using the restroom while washing or drying his hands; he should begin the Beracha only after finishing drying his hands. Another common example is clearing the table while still reciting Birkat Ha'mazon. This is improper, as while reciting a Beracha one should not be doing anything else. This is crucial not only to ensure that one concentrates on what he is saying, but also as a sign of respect for the Beracha, showing that he considers it important. A doctor treating a patient should give the patient his full attention; engaging in other matters while tending to the patient would be very disrespectful to the patient and would show a gross disregard for his duties as a physician. Likewise, engaging in other activities while reciting a Beracha is disrespectful. Therefore, whenever we recite a Beracha, we must give the Beracha our full attention, and not be doing anything else.

Summary: In ancient times, workers were allowed to recite an abridged version of Birkat Ha'mazon, because employers did not allow them the time to recite the full text. Although this Halacha does not apply nowadays, nevertheless, the fact that the Rabbis preferred instituting an abridged text rather than allow employees to recite Birkat Ha'mazon while working shows us the importance of refraining from all activities while reciting a Beracha. ■



TEST YOURSELF - Q&A

- "We will build sheep-pens here for our livestock and cities for our little ones." What was improper about this statement?
- During the conquest of the Land, where did Bnei Gad and Bnei Reuven position themselves?
- What promise did Bnei Gad and Bnei Reuven make beyond that which Moshe required?
- Why does the Torah need to specify the boundaries that are to be inherited by the Jewish People?
- What was the nesi'im's role in dividing the Land?

1 32:16 - They showed more regard for their property than for their children.
 2 32:17 - At the head of the troops. 3 32:24 - Moshe required them to remain west of the Jordan during the conquest of the Land. They promised to remain after the conquest until the Land was divided among the tribes. 4 34:2 - Because certain mitzvot apply only in the Land. 5 34:17 - Each nasi represented his tribe. He also allocated the inheritance to each family in his tribe.

Answer

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STORY

LIFE'S JOURNEY

Chaim, where have you been? I haven't seen you for two weeks.

My family went on vacation Avi.

That sounds great. Where did you go?

We took an auto trip down the East Coast. We started from northern Maine and drove all the way down to South Florida, stopping and seeing all of the sights along the way.

It sounds like an action-packed vacation, Chaim.

It was Avi. The whole family was together and we all have lots of good memories.

Family memories are a great thing. Years from now, you can look back on them.

I have this road map of our itinerary. It reminds me of all of the places that we visited.

"These are the journeys of Chaim's family."

Ha ha. You sound like you are quoting this week's Torah portion. It begins with the words, "These are the journeys of the Children of Israel."

I am quoting it Chaim. The Torah listed all of the encampments of the Jewish people during the forty years of wandering in the desert.

I always wondered about that, Avi. Why did the Torah take the trouble to make such a complete list? These places have already been mentioned earlier in the Torah. We all know that the Torah does not waste words.

Excellent question Chaim! The great Bible commentator by the name of Rabbeinu Bechaye answers your question. He explains that G-d wanted to strengthen the faith of the Jewish people. Therefore, He mentioned those places to remind them of the miracles that occurred during those years. The Jewish people were miraculously sustained by the manna and the water well of Miriam. The clouds of glory miraculously protected them from all dangers. Remembering and reviewing these wondrous events help them to remember and have faith in G-d, the One who cared for them.

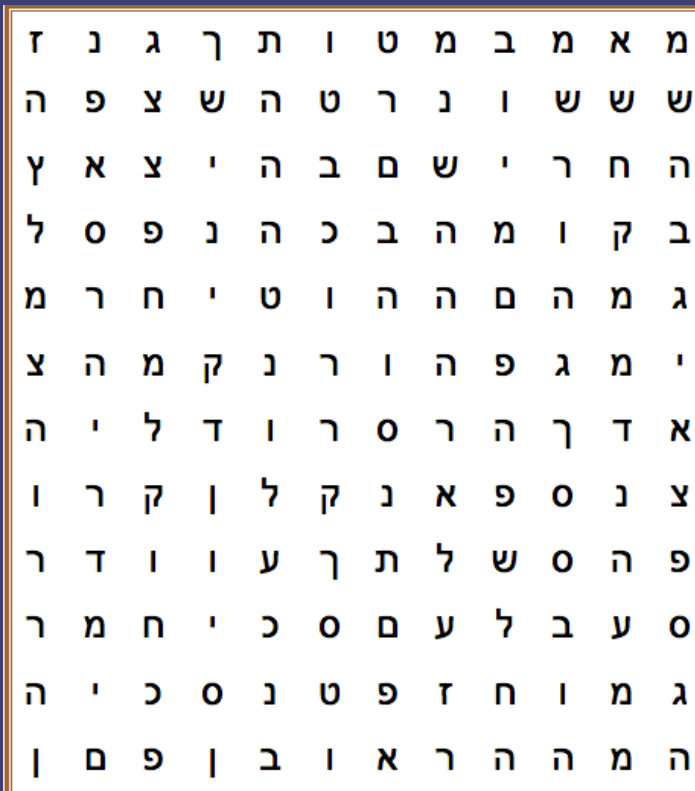
Wow, Avi. I never realized the significance of those travels. Can I share with you something that I just thought of?

Sure, Chaim.

We can do this very same thing in our own lives. As we look back, we can sometimes piece together events and see G-d's hand guiding us along the way. Something may have looked very bad at the time it happened. A few years later, when we have time to look back and reflect, we see that the event was not bad at all, but a step on the way to something very good. Reviewing these acts of kindness that G-d has done for us in our lives will strengthen our own faith in Him.

Chaim, this piece of wisdom is a major stop on the road map of my life. I don't need to look back to see how important it is. You have given me the key to seeing things in perspective. Stop. Think. Put things together. See the big picture.

FIND THESE WORDS!



משה	אסרה	החריש	היצא
מגפה	אלעזר	נקמה	הפרם
מנשה	גד	ראובן	מלקוח