

# THE COMMUNITY Parasha Sheet



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Wishing you the biggest Mazal Tov!!

## RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

DIRECTOR  
TAL



### JUST SAY NO!

Imagine one of those typical days in London. The clouds are heavy, the wind is strong and the rain doesn't stop falling. You come into work after having fought with the wind, your umbrella broken and your coat drenched. Just then the door opens and a colleague of yours walks in. "What an awesome day it is today, the weather is great don't you think?"

What is your response? Two quick replies strike my mind.

The calm approach; "Interesting, I kind of thought it was raining and quite murky out there".

Alternatively you offer a more definitive response - "No!" you exclaim. "It's not great weather!" Then you begin to explain yourself. "Have you seen the weather? It's raining and cloudy and I was drenched this morning! How can you call this good weather?"

Which would you chose?

Let us take a look into the Parasha for some clues as to what you might be correct in answering. Yosef was sold as a slave to Potiphar - a great and mighty minister in Pharaoh's regime. Potiphar was married to a beautiful wife, but as soon as she set eyes on Yosef, she desired him. She approached Yosef constantly and tried to coerce him. Each time Yosef would resist. One day Potiphar and all the people in the house were out; the only two

people left were Yosef and Potiphar's wife. She took the opportunity to make her move.

Yosef, a single young lad sold into slavery, was being severely tested. He passed with flying colours. He first refused, and then went on to explain how he could never do such a thing to his trusted master. Finally after she moved in on him, he ran away.

When reading this episode from the Torah one comes across an unusual cantillation over the word Vayema'en - he refused (Bereishit 39:8). This cantillation is called a Shalshet and appears only three times in the book of Bereishit. Why is this cantillation used here? Furthermore there is a line representing a stop after the word Vayema'en, implying a pause. Why is this necessary?

Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz zts'l explains that Yosef was in no doubt that succumbing to her desires would be immoral. He was being severely tested, it was difficult, but his response to such a test was an emphatic NO!

The statement, "Vayema'en" (with a Shalshet and a Psik) implies that Yosef needed no process of logical deduction or calculation in reaching his decision.

The separation indicates that for himself, Yosef needed no explanation. Only in his response to Potiphar's wife did he feel the need to explain. For Yosef, the very fact that a given action is forbidden was sufficient reason to abstain. The way of the Yetzer Hara is to try and convince us to sway to his side of thought. He uses manipulation, conviction and coercion to try and make us sin. Our answer, explains Rabbi Yerucham must be an emphatic NO!

If possible, in our war against our Yetzer we should not try to get into a debate, we should be quick and certain to refuse at first. ▶

KISLEV 22<sup>th</sup> 5780

SHABBAT BEGINS: 3:35 PM

SHABBAT ENDS: 4:52 PM

### > MAZAL TOV

Special Mazal tov to Moshe Elbaz and Andrea Paul on their upcoming wedding



### THE WEEKLY QUOTE

"If you aren't going all the way why go at all?"

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#### DVAR TORAH

Just Say No!  
RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

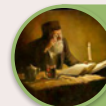
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This newsletter contains Divrei Torah and may contain Shemot - Please dispose of accordingly

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For once we open the door to doubt and debate with the Yester, and then we are playing on his ground and will find it harder to make a stand.

We find a similar idea when it came to burying Yaakov. The body of Yaakov was brought up from Egypt by all his sons. They came to the cave of Machpela to bury him and they were met by Eisav. He contested the fact that Yaakov should be buried there. The Tribes opened conversation trying to convince him that it was rightfully theirs. In the end they decided to send Naphtali (who was fast) to Egypt to bring the document that showed it belonged to Yaakov.

Chushim the son of Dan was also present at the time. He was deaf and couldn't follow the conversation. He asked what all the fuss was about; why were they not burying Yaakov? They explained to him the situation. He was very zealous for his grandfather Yaakov and couldn't bear to see his body lie without burial for so long. He took action into his own hands and simply went and killed Eisav.

Rabbi Chaim Shmulevits zts'l asks didn't the others feel for Yaakov. Why was it only Chushim that acted? He explains that once they entered into a debate with Eisav, then they were opening themselves up to manipulation. Eisav was able to buy time and try and conceive another way to cheat Yaakov out of being buried. Chushim on the other hand was deaf. He didn't hear the whole conversation. He still had that initial conviction and acted on it straight away. It was due to his conviction that Yaakov merited a quick and honourable burial.

Every day we say in our prayers En Kelokenu En Kadonenu – there is no one like our G-d, no one like our Master. We continue and say Mi Kelokenu Mi Kadonenu – Who is like our G-d, who is like our Master?

Our sages ask why the prayer is in this order. Surely we should first state who is like G-d and then state there is none like G-d. Why do we say it the other way round?

Our Sages explain that a Jew has to build him/

herself up so strong that their first reaction in life is En Kelokenu – there is none like Hashem. He is our Father, He is our Leader and He is the Creator of the Universe. There is none like Him. It is only once we have this understanding that we can then go on and ask who is like Him.

So when your friend walks in the room and says what a nice day it is outside, and it clearly isn't, then by choosing to answer with a clear no, might not be such a bad response. It shows your sincere belief in what you are stating.

Our first point in life is to build up our belief in Hashem. Our response when faced with tough tests must be swift and clear. We must state emphatically – "Everything is Min Hashamayim". It is the strength and clarity in our belief that will lead us through all of life's tests.

## ■ Shabbat Shalom

## RABBI MASHIACH KELATY- RABBI OF STANMORE SEPHARDI KEHILLA



### THE TWILIGHT ZONE

This week's parasha contains four words that changed the course of history. We all know the story of Yosef's arrest and imprisonment. Shortly afterwards, two members of Pharaoh's Court were also thrown into jail.

We need to understand what it was like to be in jail with two officers of Pharaoh's Court. To give an analogy, this would be like having a two-bit drug dealer in jail together with two members of the President's cabinet. We are dealing with 'Cabinet level' positions in the Egyptian government—the person who brought Pharaoh's wine was a trusted individual. He was the wine taster, a person in whom the King had implicit trust. We are dealing here with people who could be compared to the Attorney General and the Secretary of State. They are sitting in jail with a Hebrew slave—the lowest rung of society, someone who is serving time for a petty crime. We can be sure that there was not a lot of camaraderie and social action between Yosef and Pharaoh's officials.

They had their respective dreams, which upset them. Yosef saw that they were depressed and asked them "Why are you depressed?" The "drug dealer" (Yosef) comments to the "Secretary of State" (Wine Butler), "You don't look so good this morning!" Because of that remark, because of those four words, what happens?

The dreams are related to Yosef. Yosef interprets the dreams. The Butler sees that Yosef has special powers. The Butler is eventually released from jail and, in the time-honoured tradition, gets put back on the 'Cabinet'. Years later, he remembers Yosef. Yosef is brought out of jail. He interprets the dreams of Pharaoh correctly. He becomes the second in command. He feeds the entire world including his own brothers and father. And the rest—as they say—is history!

Why? Because of four words: "Madua peneichem ra'im hayom?" (Why are your faces troubled today?)

What is the ethical lesson to be learned here? The lesson is that it is incumbent to be a "nice guy". Yosef was concerned about how they looked

and how they felt, even though we have to assume that these were people who did not give Yosef a second look. Merely saying a nice, kind word makes such a difference!

Four words changed history. Two words can change history—"Good Morning" "How are you?" "How are you doing?" "How was your holiday?" "How is your wife?" "How are your kids?" These are the types of words that can make a difference. They made a vast difference in Yosef's life and for Klal Yisrael's [The Jewish Nation's].

Earlier in the parsha, we learn about the incident of Yosef with the wife of Potiphar. She tried to seduce Yosef. Yosef refused—"...How can I do this terribly wicked deed?..." [Bereshit 39:9] Finally, when she cornered him alone and grabbed hold of his garment, rather than accede to her will, he fled and ran out of the house (va'yanos vayetze haChutzah).

There is a very famous Medrash in Tehillim on the verse "The Sea saw and fled..." [Psalms 114:3] The Medrash says that when the Jewish people came to the Red Sea, the Sea saw the coffin of Yosef and fled. In the words of the Medrash, "It fled because of the one who fled." In the merit of the one who withheld and did not succumb to his passions, the Sea split for Israel.

What is the connection between the merit of Yosef and the splitting of the Red Sea? If one looks in the parsha one will notice a peculiar thing. The expression "va'yanos haChutzah" (and he fled outside) is repeated four times in the narrative. What is the significance of this?

We should all be familiar with the term "Vayotze oso ha'Chutzah" (and He took him outside). That terminology was used in Parashat Lech Lecha in the Covenant between the Pieces [Bereshit 15:5]. We find there that G-d took out Avraham—haChutzah (outside). The Midrash comments that G-d told Avraham, "Go out from your constellation"—go out from the normal forces of nature. "You, Avraham, are above nature. You are not beholden to the powers of nature. Even if by nature, you shouldn't have children, you will in fact be the father of great nations. You are bigger than nature."

Implicit in the words "Vayotze oso ha'Chutzah" is the power to overcome nature. That ability of a Jew to be superior to nature and nature's dictates was the attribute that Yosef employed over here.

When everything in nature would suggest that he had to succumb to the seductions of Potiphar's wife, Yosef was able to invoke the power of Avraham his great-grandfather, who was outside the power of nature and Yosef too overcame his particular nature and did not succumb.

Therefore, when his coffin came to the Red Sea, whose nature it is to flow, in Yosef's merit, the Red Sea split. Nature was suspended. The sea fled before the one who fled. The one who overcame nature has the power to suspend the nature of the sea.

The Shemen HaTov goes one step further. He brings a Sefer HaPardes who says a fascinating insight. (We are delving here onto the fringes of Kabbalah and we can only speculate what the Sefer HaPardes means.)

The Sefer HaPardes says that there are 112 verses in Parshas VaYeishev. Out of those 112 verses, every single verse begins with a vov, with the exception of 8 verses! [NOTE: The count of eight verses begins only after Pasuk 3 where the series of Vov verses actually begin. Do not count from the beginning of the parsha, but rather from Pasuk 3.] The Sefer HaPardes says the 8 verses that do not begin with a vov correspond to the 8 days between the birth of a boy and his circumcision. They allude to Milah, which is done on the 8th day.

The Shemen HaTov suggests that all the incidents of Parshat VaYeishev are one big vov. And this happened, and this happened, and this happened... It is all one big story—one event emerging from the other. It is all one big cause and effect.

The Torah tells us that this may be the way things work in the outside world. History is one thing leading to another to another. But the life of a Jew is above nature. The 8 verses correspond to Milah.

According to traditional literature, 7 connotes nature—the number of days in a week; while 8 connotes the property of being above nature. That is why circumcision is on the 8th day, because Milah is I'maaleh min haTeva (above nature). Jews are above nature, because that is what G-d told Avraham Avinu. He took him outside and told him "You are above nature."

The 8 verses that don't have the vov tell us something about the entire remainder of the parsha. None of it is a 'vov'. Nothing is just cause and effect. It is not just a story. It is not just natural happenstance. It is all above nature. There is, in effect, a grand plan. Nothing in history is just coincidence. Israel has no Mazal—we are above all that!

One does not have to be a genius to make the connection to the 8 days of Chanukah, which are also supra natural. We all understand that the miracle of the jug of oil was a miracle. But we also have to know that the miracle of the oil reveals that the victory in battle is also not nature—because nothing is nature.

The Jewish people live a miraculous existence, outside the forces of nature. It's the twilight zone. And it's the privilege of every Jew.

## ■ Shabbat shalom

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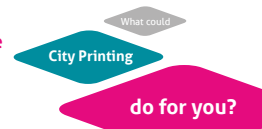
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## OUR CHACHAMIM

### RABBI ABDALLAH SOMECH

Enormously knowledgeable, never compromising, and conducting himself with humility that was proverbial, Rabbi Abdallah Somech was the teacher of the Ben Ish Hai. He was also the teacher of Rabbi Yaakov Chaim Sofer, the author of the famous work Kaf HaChayim, that monumental Shulchan Aruch and necessary reference book in all yeshivas and sacred study centers in Israel and throughout the world.

Rabbi Abdallah Somech was, without doubt, a Torah giant that the Jewish people can be proud of. The teacher of the Ben Ish Hai, he is part of the inestimable and everlasting dynasty of Babylonian Sages, whose wisdom clarifies every page of the Talmud.

Rabbi Abdallah Somech - '7' was born in Baghdad in 1813. He was the son of Rabbi Abraham Somech, himself a descendant of Rabbi Nissim Gaon, head of the famous Babylonian yeshiva at Nehardea, as well as the author of the Vidui (confessional) prayers for Yom Kippur. The sons of Rabbi Nissim Gaon were Yehoshua, Yosef, and Yehezkel. Yehoshua named his first and second sons Abraham and Abdallah, respectively, names that one finds in the family from generation to generation, including today. As for the family name Somech, in Hebrew it means "support", "backing", and it probably comes from the fact that one member of the family, Yehezkel, was a Somech (assistant) of the synagogue's Chazan (Cantor) during Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

From his earliest youth, Rabbi Abdallah Somech had been entrusted by his father to one of the greatest teachers of the era, namely Rabbi Yaakov Harofeh. He therefore didn't stop studying Torah day and night, year after year, until he himself became an uncontested teacher for generations of students. One among them, Rabbi Shlomo Bechor Chotsin, wrote as follows: "If I were to praise him, even just the slightest bit, all the pages in the world would be insufficient. What's more, this would no doubt displease him, for he was extremely humble and wanted nothing less than fame."

Besides the Shulchan Aruch of his student, Rabbi Yaakov Chaim Sofer, we owe to Rabbi Abdallah Somech a great number of rulings, particularly in matters of Shechita (ritual slaughter) and Treifot. All these rulings have been published in the work Zivchei Tzedek. As soon as they were disseminated, no one dared to turn aside from them by one iota, exactly as if they had come from Mount Sinai.

As we have seen above, Rabbi Abdallah Somech was the teacher of Rabbi Yosef Haim, the Ben Ish Hai. When the latter began to give public lessons in the great synagogue of Baghdad, Rabbi Abdallah Somech would come and attend, each time that he could, specifically to hear his student. Another mark of this Torah giant was that when his student, the Ben Ish Hai, made his entry into the synagogue, he would rise before him, just as all present would. Because of

the manner of the teacher, everyone understood the greatness of the student.

One day, policemen came to bring him to the walli (governor), who desired to speak with him after he had dismissed a dayan (rabbinic judge) who had proven to be unsuitable for his position. Yet when the policemen had hardly entered Rabbi Somech's home, they froze in seeing him seated among bearded scholars who were listening to his teachings. He himself appeared to them like an incarnation of an angel come from heaven, and this site impressed them so much that they hastened to turn around and leave the premises. To the governor who asked them why they had not brought Rabbi Somech, the policemen replied, "Do you know who you sent us to get? The prophet Moses himself!"

The governor therefore dispatched persons of honor to Rabbi Abdallah to persuade him to go back on his decision. Rabbi Abdallah replied, "My decision was made in accordance with the Torah of Moses. I therefore cannot change it."

The governor perfectly understood this point of view and agreed. It goes without saying that this incident only added to Rabbi Abdallah's prestige.

It was on the eve of Shabbat on the 18th of Elul, 1889 that Rabbi Abdallah Somech left this world. However, astonishing events weren't late in occurring around his tomb, events whose echoes rang out not only in Iraq, but all the way to Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul) and even to London and Paris. For example, following an outbreak of leprosy, the mayor of El Krach decided to forbid the burial of Rabbi Abdallah next to Rabbi Yehoshua ben Yehotzedek, who had been a Kohen Gadol (High Priest). Infuriated, the Jewish community (who, naturally, disregarded the prohibition) requested the help of Baghdad's mayor, a man who didn't hide his sympathy for the Jews. This had the result of dividing the population into two camps: Jewish and Arab. Certain Muslims had, in fact, falsely accused the Jews of having struck them. The anti-Semitic mayor of El Krach took advantage of the situation to imprison several Chachamim (Sages), and the local Jewish community therefore sent delegations to influential people in Constantinople (to the Sassoon family), to London, and to the Alliance Israélite Universelle in Paris. At the end of it all, the anti-Semitic mayor was fired from his position. All this took about a month. Nevertheless, in order to ease people's nerves, the Jewish community resigned itself to exhuming the remains of the deceased illustrious Rabbi. Several Rabbis descended into the tomb and asked mechila (forgiveness) from Rabbi Abdallah. However, they were utterly astonished when they noticed that the body of their revered teacher had remained completely intact, exactly as on the day he died.

His Hilloula is Elul 18. ■



## HALACHOT

### RABBI ELI MANSOUR

#### WITHIN HOW MUCH TIME MUST ONE EAT A "KE'ZAYIT" FOR A BERACHA AHARONA TO BE REQUIRED?

The Shulhan Aruch (Orach Haim 210) rules that a Beracha Aharona is required after one eats a "Ke'zayit: of food within the time-period of "Kedeh Achilat Pareess" - which means the average amount of time needed to eat three "Ke'beitzim" of bread. If a person eats a "Ke'zayit" or more, but over the course of a longer period than "Kedeh Achilat Pareess," he does not recite a Beracha Aharona, or, in the case of eating bread, he does not recite Birkat Ha'mazon.

There is considerable discussion among the Poskim as to the precise length of this period, "Kedeh Achilat Pareess." The Kaf Ha'haim (Rav Yaakov Haim Sofer, Baghdad-Israel, 1870-1939) experimented by eating this volume of bread on several occasions to determine the duration of "Kedeh Achilat Pareess," and he found that eating this amount of bread takes approximately 4-4.5 minutes. Accordingly, Hacham Bension Abba Shaul (Israel, 1924-1998) ruled that a "Ke'zayit" needs to be eaten within four minutes for a Beracha Aharona to be required. Hacham Ovadia Yosef, however, based on the writings of Rav Haim Palachi (Turkey, 1788-1868), reached a different conclusion, ruling that the "Ke'zayit" must be eaten within a period of 7.5 minutes for a Beracha Aharona to be required.

The definition of "Kedeh Achilat Pareess" has other ramifications, as well. For example, at the Shabbat meal, one is required to eat a "Ke'zayit" of bread within this time-frame. Some people eat a very small piece of bread at the beginning of the meal, when the Beracha is recited over the bread, and then eat some more later on. This is incorrect; one must ensure at the Shabbat meal to eat a "Ke'zayit" within a period of 7.5 minutes.

Hacham Ovadia added that although in general one can follow the definition of 7.5 minutes, when it comes to Torah obligations to eat, one should endeavor to eat the "Ke'zayit" within four minutes. On the first night of Sukkot, therefore, when we are required by force of Torah obligation to eat a "Ke'zayit" of bread in the Sukka, one should try to eat this amount within a period of four minutes. This applies also on the first night of Pesach, when the Torah requires eating a "Ke'zayit" of Masa. One should try to eat the "Ke'zayit" within four minutes.

There are instances where Halacha requires eating a "Ke'besa," which is twice the amount of a "Ke'zayit" (generally assumed to be 2 oz.). For example, after washing Netilat Yadayim with a Beracha, one should eat a "Ke'besa" of bread. When a "Ke'besa" must be eaten, we simply double the duration of "Kedeh Achilat Pareess." Therefore, after washing Netilat Yadayim with a Beracha, one should eat 2 oz. of bread within a period of 15 minutes. On the first night of Sukkot, when it is preferable to eat at least 2 oz. of bread within the shorter definition of "Kedeh Achilat Pareess," one should try to eat this amount within eight minutes.

Another application of this rule is the Halacha requiring one to recite Birkat Ha'mazon if he ate four "Ke'besot" - or eight "Ke'zetim" - of "Mezonot" food. This Halacha applies if a person ate this quantity of "Mezonot" food (such as cake or cookies) within a time-frame of about an hour (8 \* 7.5). If it takes him longer to eat 8 oz. of "Mezonot" food, then he does not recite Birkat Ha'mazon, and instead recites a Beracha Aharona (assuming he had eaten a "Ke'zayit" within 7.5 minutes).

Summary: One who ate a "Ke'zayit" of food within a period of 7.5 minutes recites a Beracha Aharona (or, in the case of bread, Birkat Ha'mazon); if it took longer than this amount of time, one does not recite a Beracha Aharona. After one washes Netilat Yadayim for bread with a Beracha, he should ensure to eat a "Ke'zayit" of bread within 7.5 minutes. On the first night of Sukkot, one should eat a "Ke'zayit" of bread within four minutes, and on the first night of Pesach, one should eat a "Ke'zayit" of Masa within four minutes. One who eats 8 oz. of "Mezonot" food within an hour recites Birkat Ha'mazon, instead of "Al Ha'mihya." ■



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## TEST YOURSELF - Q&A

- 1 Why does the Torah relate the incident with Potiphar's wife immediately after the incident of Yehuda and Tamar?
- 2 How did Potiphar "see" that Hashem was with Yosef?
- 3 Who in this week's Parsha pretended to be sick?
- 4 Why were the butler and the baker imprisoned?
- 5 For how long were the butler and the baker in prison?

1 39:1 - To teach us that just as Tamar acted with pure motives, so did Potiphar's wife. 2 39:3 - Yosef mentioned Hashem's name frequently in his speech. 3 39:11 - Potiphar's wife. 4 40:1 - The butler was imprisoned because a fly was found in the king's goblet, and the baker was imprisoned because a pebble was found in the king's bread. 5 40:4 - Twelve months.

Answer



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