

# THE COMMUNITY Parasha Sheet



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## TAL - BUILDING 4 LIFE!



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

DIRECTOR  
TAL



### THANKS TO HASHEM

Thanking G-d at every stage in your life is important.

In the olden days the Mizbeach (altar) represented the place in which a person could offer up thanks to Hashem.

At the end of this week's Parsha, the Torah tells us that Avraham built a Mizbeach upon which to sacrifice his son, Yitzchak. This is the fourth Mizbeach built by Avraham. In Parshat Lech Lecha, he builds one at his first stop in Eretz Yisrael, Shchem, where HaKadosh Baruch Hu informs him that his descendants would inherit the land. He builds a second one between Bet El and Ay. He builds his third Mizbeach in Chevron, after separating from Lot, when Hashem tells him, "Kum hithalech ba'aretz - Go walk in the land...for to you I shall give it" (Bereishit 13:18).

The second Mizbeach, built between Bet El and Ay, is significant in that it is the only Mizbeach to which Avraham Avinu returns. Why is it that he decides to return to this Mizbeach and what is the significance in such a return?

Let us focus on another episode in this week's Parsha that will enhance our understanding of the situation.

The people of Sodom and Gemora were very wicked and Hashem wished to destroy them. First He let Avraham know about this.

Avraham ran to their defence and started to pray vehemently to Hashem to have mercy on the people. He asked that if there were to be found 50 Tsadikim in the place then Hashem should have mercy and not destroy. Hashem agreed. Avraham saw that there were not 50 Tsadikim but still wished to ask Hashem further. He introduced his next prayer with the famous words "I am but dust and ash".

His prayer was successful and had Hashem found ten (the eventual number that Avraham managed to achieve) Tsadikim then Hashem would not have destroyed the area.

What a powerful prayer, what did Avraham mean by dust and ash?

Earth as a substance has very little significance; it is simply dust of the ground. But if one takes a seed and plants it in the earth, the earth nurtures the seed and enables it to grow into a beautiful plant or a tree. Thus, we might say that earth has little significance in the past, but great potential in the future.

Ashes are the opposite. In the future, they are useless. But if we were to examine the ashes' role in the past, we would likely find that they had at one point served an important function, perhaps warming a house, or perhaps they came from a vessel that had been used for many years and had finally worn down.

Avraham felt that he encompassed the negative qualities of both dust and ashes - he was like dust in the past, and like ashes in the future.

When approaching Hashem with a request, he understood that he was nothing, he deserved nothing, and that whatever the Creator wishes will be.

That is why his prayer was so powerful and effective! ▶

**CHESHVAN 17<sup>TH</sup> 5780**

SHABBAT BEGINS: 3:56 PM | SHABBAT ENDS: 5:01 PM

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**DVAR TORAH**

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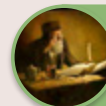
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This newsletter contains Divrei Torah and may contain Sheimot - Please dispose of accordingly

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In fact the Midrash (Bamidbar Rabah 9:15) relates that Hashem was so impressed so to speak, that He told Avraham, "Because you said, 'I am but dust and ash,' I promise you that your children will be given two great Mitzvot which are performed with dust and ashes. The ashes of the Parah Adumah (the red heifer, the ashes of which were sprinkled upon one who had become defiled through contact with a corpse), and the dust of the Sotah (the wayward wife, who is brought to the Temple and is given to drink a mixture consisting of water, earth (dust), and the letters of Hashem's name dissolved in the water)."

The Dubno Maggid, explains the above Midrash by means of a parable. Once there was a king who made a very large and exclusive banquet. Only the most important and influential people were invited. One of the invitees was a very special man, a wise and scholarly individual, who was highly distinguished among his peers. As expected, the king had set aside a seat for this special guest at the head table.

This guest, however, was also a very modest and unassuming person. When he arrived, he absolutely refused to be seated anywhere near

the head table. Instead, he chose for himself a simple place towards the back of the banquet hall. The king, seeing what had happened, repeatedly tried to get his distinguished guest to take his place at the head table. But to no avail. He absolutely refused to sit anywhere other than at his humble table in the back.

Then the king had an idea. He made his plan known to the others seated at the head table, and they immediately began implementing it. One by one they left their places at the head table, and found themselves a seat at the same table where the humble but distinguished guest was seated. His table had now become the "head table".

The same was true with Avraham. In his humility, he truly felt himself to be dust (hence its use in the mitzvah of Sotah, which comes to clarify something that has occurred in the past - i.e. whether the wife strayed from her husband or not) and ash (hence its use for the mitzvah of Parah Adumah, whose ashes are used in the future to purify one who has become defiled). "If you insist on being dust and ash," said Hashem, "then I will take dust and ash and create from

them beautiful Mitzvot, which will bring honour to you."

When Avraham returned from his short stay in Egypt, the Pasuk relates (13:2) that he was heavily laden with cattle, silver and gold. He had amassed great wealth. Yet he was afraid that this great wealth would steer him off the path. He was worried that it would affect his character, and people might think that he has now left the path of the righteous in order to follow the path of worldly pursuits. Thus the first thing he did was to go back to the place he had originally offered up an offering between Bet El and Ay, and again make an offering. This symbolised that just as he had gone down to Egypt as a righteous man, so too he had come up righteous and that he still acknowledged everything was from Hashem.

Avraham understood all his life that he was but dust and ashes, any wealth amassed was considered to him to be Kaved – heavy. Of course it was welcome, and he would use it for the best, but that was not the main purpose in life. He constantly held his humility and thus merited such a close relationship with Hashem.

## ■ Shabbat Shalom

## RABBI YEHOANATAN SALEM - SHALOM LAAM DIASPORA



### WELCOMING GUESTS

This parashah begins by telling us about our Forefather Avraham's exemplary kindness when welcoming guests. The Torah instructs us how to fulfil the commandment of performing chessed, kindness, when Yitro instructs Moshe Rabbenu (Shemot 18:20), "*Vehodahta lahem et haderech yelchu bah*," "And you shall let them know the way in which they should go." Our Sages deduce that "the way" refers to the way of bestowing kindness upon our fellow man.

The Torah refers to it as "the" way, i.e. the given path that our Forefather paved for us through his example. Let us delve into the story of this parashah, and observe Avraham Avinu's way of welcoming guests, so that we may come to emulate him.

On the third day after his circumcision, at the ripe age of ninety-nine, G-d came to visit

Avraham and ask about his welfare. Avraham was sitting outside at the time, looking out for someone whom he could invite into his home. When spotting three possible guests, who were actually angels in disguise sent by G-d, Avraham requested that G-d's Presence not depart while he invited his guests in. From here we see, firstly, that the mitzvah of welcoming guests is even greater than having an audience with the Divine Presence (Shabbat 127a). Avraham got up and ran towards his potential guests (notwithstanding the physical discomfort that he was in), convinced Delving them to come in, have a rest and eat something.

Avraham ensured that his "weary" guests had water with which to wash, and sat them down under a shady tree, until he was able to prepare food for them. Not wanting them to think that he was overburdening himself for them, he suggested preparing something small for them to eat. However, he prepared a sumptuous banquet for them, including a separate cow's tongue for each one of them.

However, since he did not want his guests to wait too long, everything was done as quickly as possible.

These are some of the ways of performing kindness that our Forefather Avraham taught

us. Additionally, Avraham made it into a family project, by involving his son, Yishmael, and asking him to bring water for the guests. It became an act of education for his whole family and everyone was involved in helping take care of the guests' needs. One of the things a person can learn from Avraham is that after one has warmly welcomed his guests and provided for them generously, he should see if they need to rest. (Sometimes the guest's need to rest may be more important to him than food.)

After their stay, one should make sure to accompany them out, and if necessary, show them the way. Having merited to be raised in such a type of home and seeing real hospitality, I can bear witness to the tremendous influence that true hospitality has on guests. Let us look for opportunities to bestow kindness upon others. Let us see to it that there is "organized hachnasat orchim" in our communities. Additionally, when inviting guests, let us try to emulate the exemplary ways of Avraham; if not all of them, then at least some of them. The more we can make our guests feel as if they are in their own home, relaxed, comfortable and cared for, the more we will be following the example of our Forefather Avraham.

## ■ Shabbat shalom

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**RAV SAADIA GAON**

## OUR CHACHAMIM

Rav Saadia Gaon was the Rosh Yeshiva of Sura in Babylon. He was very wealthy, but also merited teaching Torah to numerous disciples.

The story that we shall recount occurred in the month of Nissan. There was much work to be done in the home of the Rav. As part of his duties, one of the Jewish servants journeyed to the river located at the other end of the city. He went there to immerse some cutlery in order to make them usable for Passover. In arriving by the river, he set down some precious crystalware, but before having time to immerse them, he saw a large wave arise from the river and carry them off into the depths. The servant looked on stunned as he saw them disappear, his heart filled with grief. However he quickly reassured himself by thinking, "Certainly no one will notice the loss of a few plates at my master's home. He has a great deal of cutlery, and who will think to look for these exact ones? Besides, even if someone notices that they're lost, why would anyone suspect me? It's better if I keep all this to myself and that I relate it to no one." He continued to immerse the rest of the cutlery, and when he was finished he went back to the Rav's. Several days passed, and no one figured out the servant's secret. He himself almost forgot the incident.

When the holiday of Passover returned the next year, he was again sent to immerse the cutlery in the river. Immediately, the incident of the previous year came to mind, and he was seized with fright that this should happen to him again. When he went down to the river, what should he see in the current but some crystal cutlery floating and making its way the shore, finally being tossed up onto land! The servant approached, and he saw that it was the same actual cutlery that had sunk into the depths the year before. What's more, not one of them was missing!

His joy was immense, but his surprise was greater still. He decided to recount everything when he went back to his master's. When he arrived at the house, he went to find Rav Saadia Gaon and admitted everything to him. At the end he added, "Apparently, success smiles upon the Rav. He has merited having everything of his recovered." Now instead of the joy that the servant expected, a large sigh escaped the Rav's lips, and his servant remained mute with astonishment.

Not long afterwards, Rav Saadia Gaon began to become poor, to the point that he no longer had anything to eat and had to resort to charity. When his house was seized, his servants found themselves dispersed, and the servant mentioned above went down to Egypt, where he settled and

established a flourishing business. One day, during the course of his travels, Rav Saadia Gaon arrived at the home of his servant in Egypt, who, appalled at seeing him in poverty, invited the Rav to stay there with him. The invitation came from the heart, and the Rav accepted. The servant gave him a special room and provided him with everything he needed, yet tranquility did not last. As soon as the next day, the Rav became sick with a grave disease, one that brought him to the threshold of death. The host cared to the utmost for the needs of his guest and called in the best doctors, but without success. One day, the doctors ordered that he should drink a very concentrated broth in which several fattened chickens were repeatedly cooked, concentrated to the point that it was boiled down to a single spoonful. Without discussing these instructions any further, the concentrate was prepared and brought to nourish the patient, his heart filled with hope. Yet at the exact moment that the spoon was brought to his mouth, a cobweb fell into it from the ceiling, and the solution that had been so carefully prepared was lost.

The residents of the house began to lament over having done all this work for nothing. The servant looked upon Rav Saadia with disappointment, yet there he was with a smile on his lips! At that moment, the servant recalled the previous incident – the Rav's sigh when he told him the story of the cutlery that had washed ashore. He could not contain his curiosity, and so he asked, "May the Rav explain two astonishing things to me: The first, why he sighed at that moment; and the second, why he is smiling now, when the precious solution has been lost."

The Rav answered, "I know that in the same way that riches are not forever, neither is poverty. When you told me the story of the crystal cutlery that the river had returned, I understood that this was a supernatural occurrence, and I feared that I had arrived at a summit of wealth and had benefited of too many good things. I realized that the wheel risked turning at any moment, and that is why I sighed.

"Now, however," continued the patient, "when the medicine was ruined after all the trouble we had gone to, I suspected that I had arrived at the height of my suffering and henceforth salvation would arrive. That is why I smiled."

This is effectively what happened, as the Rav was healed a few days later. He immediately got up and left for Sura, his city, and at the end of a short time he regained his exalted position, that of Gaon of Israel, of whom he was the glory. ■



## HALACHOT

**RABBI ELI MANSOUR**

### DOES THE BERACHA OF "SHE'HA'KOL" RECITED OVER FOOD COVER BEVERAGES?

The Poskim address the case of a person who recites a "She'ha'kol" over a piece of fish, and then some beer is brought to the table. The question arises as to whether he must repeat the Beracha of "She'ha'kol" over the beer, assuming he did not have any particular intention when reciting the Beracha that it should or should not cover other items.

When it comes to food products, it is clear that if a person recited a Beracha over a food, and then another food requiring the same Beracha is served, he does not repeat the Beracha (again, assuming he had no particular intention when he recited the Beracha that it should not cover other foods). In this case, however, the Beracha was recited over a food product, and then a beverage was served. The Mishna Berura (Rav Yisrael Meir Kagan of Radin, 1839-1933) writes (206:21) that in this case, the Beracha must be repeated. Since foods and beverages are completely different types of products, the Beracha recited on one cannot cover the other without specific intention that it should. This is based on the ruling of the Magen Abraham (Rav Abraham Gombiner, Poland, 1633-1683).

Hacham Ovadia Yosef, however, both in Halichot Olam (vol. 2, p. 87), and in Hazon Ovadia – Berachot (p. 180), cites a responsum of the Mahari Farachi (Rav Yaakov Farachi, Egypt, 1660-1730) disputing the Magen Abraham's position. He noted that the Shulhan Aruch writes plainly that a Beracha recited on one item covers another item requiring the same Beracha if there was no specific intent to limit the Beracha, and does not make an exception in the case where the Beracha was recited over food and then a beverage was served. If such a distinction existed, the Shulhan Aruch would have certainly mentioned it. The Shulhan Aruch's silence in this regard thus clearly indicates that even if one recited "She'ha'kol" over a food product, and then a beverage was served, the Beracha is not repeated, unless the person specifically intended for his Beracha not to cover other items. This is, indeed, the Halacha.

However, in the English edition of Yalkut Yosef – Berachot (vol. 2, p. 140), it is mentioned that one should preferably avoid this issue by having specific intention whenever he recites the Beracha of "She'ha'kol" that the Beracha should cover all "She'ha'kol" products eaten afterward. If the Beracha was recited with this intention, then according to all opinions the Beracha is not repeated when a beverage is brought to the table, and so it is preferable to have this intention in order to satisfy all opinions.

Summary: If a person recited "She'ha'kol" over food, and another food or beverage requiring "She'ha'kol" was then served, the Beracha is not repeated, unless the individual had specifically intended for the Beracha to cover only the original food. Preferably, whenever one recites "She'ha'kol" over food, he should have specific intention for it to cover all items requiring "She'ha'kol," in order to satisfy the opinions that the Beracha would otherwise not cover beverages. ■



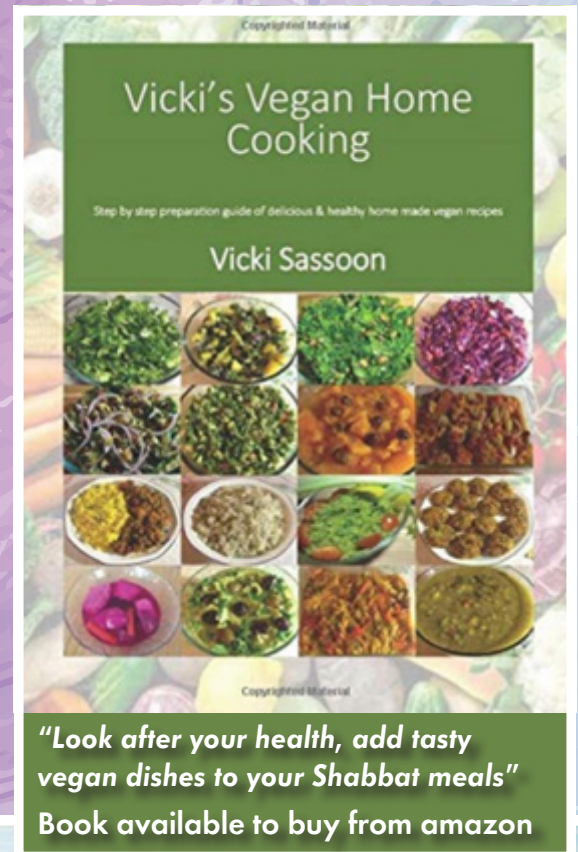


### YOSSEI & Co.



- ❶ Lot served the angels matza Why?
- ❷ Why did Lot delay when he left Sodom?
- ❸ Why were Lot and his family not permitted to look back at Sodom?
- ❹ Lot's wife looked back and became a pillar of salt. Why was she punished in this particular way?
- ❺ In what merit did Hashem save Lot?

Answer  
 ❶ 19:3 - It was Passover. ❷ 19:16 - He wanted to save his property. ❸ 19:17 - As they, too, deserved to be punished, it wasn't fitting for them to witness the destruction of Sodom. ❹ 19:26 - She was stingy, not wanting to give the guests salt. ❺ 19:29 - Lot had protected Avraham by concealing from the Egyptians the fact that Sarah was his wife.



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