

THE COMMUNITY Parasha Sheet



LONDON'S LEADING PLATFORM FOR STUDENTS AND YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

This weeks Parasha is sponsored Lirfuat Rav Yona Ben Chava Betoeh Shaar Cholei Yisrael

RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

DIRECTOR
TAL



SIXTEEN THOUSAND YEARS

In the age of big numbers we have recently witnessed an awesome but sad statistic.

An article in the Economist noted that the loony music video "Gangnam Style" surpassed two billion views on YouTube a few weeks ago, making it the most watched clip of all time.

At 4:12 minutes, that equates to more than 140 million hours, or more than 16,000 years!

To understand this major figure we can look at other achievements that might have been forgone in the time spent watching a sideways shuffle?

It took 50m man-hours to complete the "super-carrier" USS Gerald Ford last year. Had people not been watching this South Korean music video – they could have constructed three such ships. Alternatively, they could have built more than four Great Pyramids of Giza, or six Burj Khalifas in Dubai (the world's tallest building).

Sometimes we have 'time on our hands' and don't realise how powerful that time is. Imagine the achievement that could be garnered with the combined time we have.

Moshe Rabeinu understood that his time was fast approaching. As a great leader he wished to ensure that in his life time, the leadership would smoothly pass on.

Moshe spoke to the Lord, saying: "Let the Lord, the G-d of spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation, who will go forth before them and come before them, who will lead them out and bring them in, so that the congregation of the Lord will not be like sheep without a shepherd." (Bamidbar 27:15-17).

The Midrash explains that when the daughters of Zelophchad inherited from their father, Moshe argued: "The time is opportune for me to demand my own needs. If daughters inherit, it is surely right that my sons should inherit my glory." The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: "Whoever tends the fig-tree shall eat of its fruit; and he that waits on his master shall be honoured." (Mishlei 27:18) Your sons sat idly by and did not study the Torah. Yehoshua served you diligently and he showed you great honour. It was he who rose early in the morning and remained late at night at your House of Study; he would arrange the benches, and spread the mats. Seeing that he has served you with all his might, he is worthy to serve Israel, for he shall not lose his reward." (Midrash Rabah - Bamidbar 21:14)

Yehoshua was chosen as the next leader above the children of Moshe.

The Midrash emphasises his quality as a person who rose early and remained late at night, arranging the study hall for people to enjoy and learn from Moshe Rabenu.

What was so important about this act? Surely he did other acts that enabled him to be the next leader. Did he not show might, combat abilities or great vocal qualities? Why the emphasis on waking early and arranging benches?

The Gemara Succot (28) cites a Braita: It happened that Rabbi Eliezer spent the Shabbat in Upper Galilee, and they asked him for thirty decisions in the laws of Succah. Of twelve of these he said, "I have heard them" (and then he told them the decisions); of eighteen he said, "I have not heard." Rabbi Yossi ben Yehudah said: Reverse the words: Of eighteen he said, "I have heard them"; of twelve he said, "I have not heard them."

They asked him, "Are all your words only things of what you have heard?"

He answered, "You wish to force me to say something which I have not heard from my teachers?" [He then continued to tell them about his standards.] "During all my life, no man preceded me to the Study Hall; I never slept or napped in the Study Hall; nor did I ever leave a person in the Study Hall when I went out (for I was the last to leave); nor did I ever utter frivolous speech; nor have I ever in my life said a thing which I did not hear from my teachers." ►

23th TAMMUZ 5779

SHABBAT BEGINS: 8:40 PM

SHABBAT ENDS: 10:01 PM



THE WEEKLY QUOTE

"Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow."

> UPCOMING EVENTS

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DVAR TORAH

Sixteen Thousand Years
RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

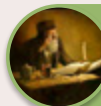
P1



DVAR TORAH

Women: The Pillars of Jewish Continuity
RABBI DANNY KADA

P2



OUR CHACHAMIM

RABBI MEIR YECHIEL HALEVI

P3



HALACHOT

The Obligation of Zimun Before Birkat Ha'mazon / RABBI ELI MANSOUR

P3



Q&A & CARTOON

P4

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

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This is a very interesting encounter.

The people in Upper Galilee had just asked the great Rabbi Eliezer many questions regarding the laws of Succah. He was able to answer some but left a few unanswered. They challenged him. He was after all a Tanna and had been learning for many years. How was it possible he didn't know these Halachot?

Rabbi Eliezer answered saying that he had replied to their questions with the knowledge he knew. He then went on to tell them a whole introduction to his life. It seems he was saying to them how great he was, but does this really have relevance over here?

Our Sages explain that when the people in the Upper Galilee saw that he did not have all the responses, they gave him the benefit of the doubt. Perhaps you were not in the Bet Hamidrash when Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakai taught. Perhaps you had a hard day and were sleeping in, or came late. Maybe you were talking to someone whilst the Rabbi was giving Shiur and missed out on these Halachot. Rabbi Eliezer replied that he was attentive to every possible moment that Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakai was teaching.

"I opened the Bet Hamidrash in the early morning and closed it late at night. I didn't sleep even for a second whilst learning. I was never talking mundane things whilst learning. I have gone through the years and there is no possibility that something was being taught and I missed out."

That was the greatness of Rabbi Eliezer.

When Moshe Rabeinu went up to Har Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments, he was accompanied by Yehoshua.

Yehoshua did not go all the way up, but was closer to Moshe than the rest of the camp.

Our Sages ask why didn't Yehoshua return to the camp and come back after forty days to accompany Moshe on his return. Why did he wait alone, close to Moshe for all that time?

Yehoshua made sure he was there every second of the day to accompany and learn from Moshe.

He valued every second accompanying him and even waiting there.

He reckoned that if Hashem decided that Moshe should come back a bit early, he wanted to be there. He did not want to miss a second with Moshe and was prepared to

wait at the foot of the mountain for his teacher just so that he would benefit from those extra minutes with him.

That was why Yehoshua was chosen.

That's called Mevakesh, someone who seeks, doesn't want to miss out.

Yehoshua arranged the benches; he was looking out and taking care of his people. At the same time, he understood that every moment is divine and important. If Moshe would enter the Bet Hamidrash and the benches would not be arranged, this would take time and a few minutes of Moshe Rabeinu's Torah would be lost. He arose early and went to bed late in order to make the most of time.

All these were signs that showed his real personality, his inner desire to help and care for others, as well as to value time.

Next time you are 'bored' or figure you have 'time on your hands' imagine the combination of all this time and what it could achieve.

Time is of the essence, no time like the present!

■ **Shabbat Shalom**

RABBI DANNY KADA - WEMBLEY S&P COMMUNITY



WOMEN: THE PILLARS OF JEWISH CONTINUITY

In my role as Registrar of our unique Beth Din, I regularly receive applications for conversion from men or women whose fathers are Jewish but mothers are not. Frequently, the applicant has lived a Jewish life their entire existence and is integrated in the Jewish community but has recognised that they will be unable to fully integrate in the community without a conversion. Applicants of such extraction often find it difficult to accept the need to undergo a full conversion and prefer to refer to the process as a 'regularisation' of their status rather than a fully-fledged conversion.

The source that Jewish identity is determined by matrilineal, rather than patrilineal, descent is the Talmud¹, basing itself on a verse in the Torah². There are no dissident opinions³ and this law is clearly codified in the Halachic codes⁴.

But why is this the case? For what reason is Jewish identity different from Kehunah status which is certainly patrilineal?

King Solomon in Proverbs⁵ urges us: 'Hear, my child, your father's instruction, and do not forsake

the Torah of your mother'. It is most telling that we are instructed not to forsake the Torah of our *mothers* but are not instructed regarding the *Torah* of our fathers. For although it is the man who has an obligation to study and formally teach Torah to his son, it is the woman of the home who fleshes out the theoretical and abstract concepts of Torah and converts them into real life lessons. It is man who must study and understand the details of Torah from an intellectual perspective but it is woman who permeates the home with concrete and tangible Torah through the application of these details. Many a rabbi will tell you that although studying the laws of utensils becoming Taref⁶ and unusable in the kitchen (through prohibited mixtures) can take many months, a woman from experience and practice can often know the answer without needing to consult a rabbinic authority.

The concept that a woman amplifies and develops her husband's ideas can be found outside of Torah as well. Until the latter decades of the 20th century, it was the man who was the primary breadwinner of the home. Or perhaps a better term to use is the 'doughwinner'. Because although men brought home money, of what use were notes and coins when they could not be used to buy with them food, clothing, and other essentials of life. There is nothing *intrinsically* valuable in money – the only value money has is in what it can acquire and attain. It was the woman who took the potential of the money of her husband and converted it into tangible and concrete reality, making the house into a home.

Perhaps one of the clearest manifestations of this concept is a woman's rearing of her child. She takes a flash of energy of her husband and over a period of nine months, cultivates and nurtures a human being. An abstract drop is developed into a reality.

It is no surprise then, that Jewish identity is determined by one's matrilineal descent. Far from being solely an academic and abstract pursuit, Judaism is a religion of practice, habit and custom. Without a Jewish woman in the house, Jewish continuity in terms of practice cannot survive. It is the Jewish mother who ensures our beautiful Torah and glorious customs and traditions are passed on to the next generation.

Let's take our hats off to our women!

■ **Shabbat shalom**

¹ Babylonian Talmud, Kiddushin, 68b.

² Devarim 7:3-4.

³ See the opinion of Yaakov of Naburaya in Jerusalem Talmud, Kiddushin 3:12. But this individual seems to have been known for his foolish ideas – see Midrash Rabbah, Bereishit 7:2 and Kohelet Rabati 7:47 where he is referred to as a sinner.

⁴ Shulhan Aruch, Eben Ha'Ezer, 8:5.

⁵ 1:8.

⁶ Non-Kosher.

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OUR CHACHAMIM

RABBI MEIR YECHIEL HALEVI - "THE TZADDIK WHO FASTED FORTY YEARS"

Rabbi Meir Yechiel was born in 5612 (1852) in the small town of Savin, near Krakow. From his youth no teacher was found that was competent enough to answer his questions, and when he was 10 years old his father brought him to see Rabbi Elimelech of Grodzisk.

Arriving at the court of the Rebbe of Grodzisk, the boy overheard a question that nobody could answer. Everyone tried to come up with a response, but all efforts proved useless. However an answer sprang to the boy's mind, but he was too embarrassed to state it publicly. He therefore took some chalk and wrote the answer on the door of the Beit Midrash. Afterwards, when those who were studying in the Beit Midrash saw this answer on the door - an answer written with a child's handwriting - they realized that it was indeed the solution to their difficult question. News of this spread quickly, and when it reached the ears of the Rebbe of Grodzisk, he told the boy's father to leave him with him, for he would personally take care of him.

His father Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak thus returned to Savin while the young Meir Yechiel remained in Grodzisk. From day to day he rose in the rungs of Torah learning and the fear of G-d, until he became renowned for his sharp mind and great knowledge.

When Rabbi Meir Yechiel was 17 years old, he married in the small town of Worka and lived in the home of his father-in-law. There he studied Torah in holiness and purity until he attained a great level of scholarship and piety. He once enclosed himself in a room during the four weeks that separate Purim from Passover, and there he studied the entire Talmud, completing it on the eve of Passover.

The Rabbi of Ostrowiec took it upon himself to fast. He would pray and study during the entire day, yet did not eat during that time. At night he ate some crackers and had a glass of tea, then continued to fast. Rabbi Yechiel fasted like this for 40 years, until his passing. His family tried to persuade him to abandon this lifestyle, but he refused to heed them, and when the Rabbi of Ger tried to convince him to interrupt his fast, he replied, "You have the merit of your fathers. Your father was the Sefat Emet, and your great grandfather was the Chiddushei HaRim. Your ancestors had already fasted for you. However I am the son of a baker, and I don't have the merits of my ancestors, so I must fast for myself."

He fought with extraordinary resolve for everything that was holy in Israel, yet he never neglected to listen with a heart that was filled with mercy for every Jew.

A traveling Jewish theater group once came to Ostrowiec, where it planned to hold a show on Shabbat. Despite all his efforts, Rabbi Meir Yechiel was unsuccessful in preventing the performance. What did he do? A short time before the start of the show, he arrived at the hall and sat down in the first row. The people that arrived for the show noticed the Rav in the first row and were ashamed to be seen by him, so they hurried to leave. Naturally, the show did not take place. At the end of Shabbat, Rabbi Meir Yechiel called the directors and paid them out of his own pocket for the losses they incurred due to the cancellation.

Rabbi Meir Yechiel's wife, the Rebbetzin, once brought Yaakov the tailor (who was a tenant in the Rav's house) to court because he failed to pay his rent. Because she did not want the court proceedings to take place in her husband's presence, she told him that he didn't need to go with her. However Rabbi Meir Yechiel replied, "I will be defending Yaakov the tailor." When they came before the rabbinic court, the Rav formulated a very simple defense: "The house does not belong to me. The chassidim and distinguished members of the community purchased the house and gave it to me as a gift, and I do not want that this gift should be the cause of problems for a poor Jew with a large family." The tailor was thus acquitted. The Rav left court content, reciting a verse from Ecclesiastes: "I returned and contemplated all the acts of oppression that are committed beneath the sun: Behold! Tears of the oppressed with none to comfort them" (Ecclesiastes 4:1).

Rabbi Meir Yechiel loved all Jews as a father loves a son, sharing in the misery of each Jew with all his heart and soul. During the First World War, his prayers lasted hours, and the floor upon which he stood was drenched with tears.

Rabbi Meir Yechiel remained as the Rav of Ostrowiec for 40 years. He created a new method of learning in Poland, the method of mental acuity. He had thousands of students who spread his Torah throughout the world.

Near the end of his life, his system could no longer tolerate solid food. He had withered to the point that his body was but skin and bones. His doctors said that it was only by a miracle that he was alive. Because his body no longer generated any natural heat, he was always in bed covered with a warm blanket. He was pure, and the skin of his face shined brightly. ■



HALACHOT

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

THE OBLIGATION OF ZIMUN BEFORE BIRKAT HA'MAZON

When three people eat bread together, they are required to recite the introductory Zimun before Birkat Ha'mazon. The concept of Zimun is that we prepare ourselves for the Misva of Birkat Ha'mazon. When it comes to other Misvot, we prepare for the Misva act by reciting a Beracha. For example, we recite a Beracha before putting on Tefillin, and we recite a Beracha before shaking the Lulab. The Misva of Birkat Ha'mazon, however, is itself a series of Berachot, and so we need something else to prepare us. We therefore conduct a Zimun to prepare ourselves for the Misva of Birkat Ha'mazon.

Different customs exist as to the precise text of the Zimun. The accepted text (as practiced by Hacham Baruch Ben-Haim) is that of the Ben Ish Hai (Rav Yosef Haim of Baghdad, 1833-1909), according to which the leader begins by announcing, "Hab Lan Ve'nibrich Le'Malka Ela-ha Kadisha." The others then respond, "Shamayim." The leader declares at that point, "Bi'rshut Malka Ela-ha Kadisha," and the others again respond, "Shamayim." Then the leader proceeds with "Nebarech She'achalnu," and if ten people are reciting Birkat Ha'mazon together, he recites "Nebarech Elo-henu She'achalnu." On certain occasions, the leader makes certain additions after he announces, "Bi'rshut Malka Ela-ha Kadisha." On Shabbat, he adds, "U'bi'rshut Shabbat Malketa"; on Yom Tob, he adds, "U'bi'rshut Yoma Taba." On Sukkot, he adds the name of that day's Ushpizin.

At a Sheba Berachot, the leader says, "Nebarech Elo-henu She'ha'simha Bi'm'ono..." Interestingly, the Yam Shel Shelomo (Rav Shlomo Luria, 1510-1574) considered instituting this addition also at a Siyum Masechet, but he ultimately changed his mind, and so this text is not recited at a Siyum.

Summary: When three or more people ate bread together, they are required to recite the introductory Zimun before Birkat Ha'mazon. The proper text is as follows:

Leader: "Hab Lan Ve'nibrich Le'Malka Ela-ha Kadisha."

Others: "Shamayim."

Leader: "Bi'rshut Malka Ela-ha Kadisha."

Others: "Shamayim."

Leader: "Nebarech She'achalnu..."

Others: "Baruch She'achalnu..."

If ten or more people recite the Zimun, the word "Elo-henu" is added after "Nebarech" and "Baruch." ■



TEST YOURSELF - Q&A

- 1 Why did the decree to die in the desert not apply to the women?
- 2 What trait did Tzlofchad's daughters exhibit that their ancestor Yosef also exhibited?
- 3 Why does the Torah change the order of Tzlofchad's daughters' names?
- 4 Tzlofchad died for what transgression?
- 5 Why did Moshe use the phrase "Hashem of the spirits of all flesh"?

Answer

1 26:64 - In the incident of the meraglim only the men wished to return to Egypt. The women wanted to enter Eretz Yisrael. 2 27:1 - Love for Eretz Yisrael. 3 27:1 - To teach that they were equal in greatness. 4 27:3 - Rabbi Akiva says that Tzlofchad gathered sticks on Shabbat. Rabbi Shimon says that Tzlofchad was one who tried to enter Eretz Yisrael after the sin of the meraglim. 5 27:16 - He was asking Hashem, who knows the multitude of dispositions among the Jewish People, to appoint a leader who can deal with each person on that person's level.

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MONDAY NIGHTS

WISDOM & KNOWLEDGE

8th July

Entering the three weeks and the journey of the soul

22nd July

JERUSALEM how important is it to us?

29th July

Tisha B'av Why mourn, it's so long ago?

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