



TorahActionLife

## COMMUNITY PARASHA SHEET

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Lelluy Nishmat Yedidya Ben  
Chorshit Z'L. Tihyeh Nishmato  
Betsurat Hachaim

## ACHAREI MOT

28<sup>th</sup> NISSAN 5776

Shabbat begins: 20:17

Shabbat ends: 21:29



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL  
DIRECTOR, TAL

## Leaving A True Legacy

Since the day Adam Harishon was created and then moved on to the higher worlds, a theory about life has been made. Everyday people take their lives for granted. But after they have faced mortal loss or life-threatening situations, their attitude towards life change.

They soon come to understand that the gift of life is to be appreciated and not taken for granted.

There may be no single thing that can teach us more about life - than death itself!

A person can live until 120 years of age—and die leaving no legacy, making it as if he never existed. A person can build monuments to himself, but they will only matter to the pigeons after he is long gone if what he started wasn't worth continuing. But a person can die young, G-d forbid, and

be eternal by leaving something eternal behind.

"For the living know that they shall die" (Kohelet 9:5): these are the righteous who in their death are called living ... "But the dead know nothing" (Shmuel 2:23:20): these are the wicked who in their lifetime are called dead. (Berachot 18a).

How can a person who is physically dead still be considered alive? Why would a person who is physically alive be considered dead?

It all comes down to what you consider to be life and what you consider to be death. The Torah defines both:

## אחרי מות

I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Therefore choose life that you may live, you and your seed, to love G-d your G-d, to listen to His voice and to cleave to Him. For that is your life and the length of your days, so that you may dwell in the land which G-d swore to your fathers, to Avraham, to

Yitzchak, and to Yaakov, to give them. (Devarim 30:19-20)

The creation of man testifies to the eternal life of the soul. The Torah says, "And the Almighty formed the man of dust from the ground, and He blew into his nostrils the SOUL of life" (Bereishit 2:7). On this verse, the Zohar states that "one who blows, blows from within himself," indicating that the soul is actually part of G-d's essence. Since G-d's essence is completely spiritual and non-physical, it is impossible that the soul should die. (The Chizkuni says this why the verse calls it "soul of **LIFE**!")

That's what King Solomon meant when he wrote, "The dust will return to the ground as it was, and the spirit will return to G-d who gave it." (Kohelet 12:17)

What brought death into the world in the first place? The distance created between man and G-d from the first sin back in the Garden of Eden. Separation from G-d is like pulling the plug of an electrical appliance out of an electrical socket. Won't it die?

Cleaving to G-d is life itself. But, not just the kind that keeps the body functioning, but the kind of life that allows a person to live beyond his physical limitations so that even after his body has expired his life has not. That is a person's true legacy.

The Torah informs us of Miriam's death immediately after enumerating the laws of the Para Aduma, (red heifer) whose ashes were used for purification.

### Living with Mitzvos

1. When else during the year are parts read from Parshas Acharei-Mos?
2. What is the significance in the two goats used in the Avoda of Yom Kippur being so similar?
3. What is the idea behind the Kohen Godol only being allowed to enter the Kodosh Hakodoshim on Yom Kippur?
4. What is the common theme that comes up in the parsha?
5. How many mitzvos are there in the parsha?
6. What are the two types of sacrifices brought on Yom Kippur?
7. The Parsha is often called "Acharei Mos", but sometimes the "Mos" is omitted. Which is it?

Answers On Page 3

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The Gemara asks why is the death of Miriam juxtaposed to the laws of the Para Aduma? To teach that just as the Para Aduma brings atonement, so too, the death of the righteous brings atonement. (Mo'ed Katan 28a)

In what way does the death of Tzadikim atone for the people?

The principal benefit that comes from the death of Tzadikim is the spiritual and moral awakening that takes place after they pass away. When a Tzadik is alive, his acts of kindness and generosity are not always public knowledge. True Tzadikim do not promote themselves. On the contrary, they often take great pains to conceal their virtues and charitable deeds. It is not uncommon that we become aware of their true greatness and nobility of spirit only after they are no longer with us. Only then do we hear reports of their selfless deeds and extraordinary sensitivity, and we are inspired to emulate their ways. In this way,

the positive impact of the righteous as inspiring role models increases after their death. Our sages explain that this was the case in regards to the two sons of Aharon (Nadav and Avihu) that are mentioned in this week's parsha as passing away. The Torah presents a strange "conversation" between Moshe and Aharon (Parshat Shemini):

"Then Moshe said to Aharon, This is what G-d said: 'I will be sanctified in those that come near to Me (bi-kerovai ekadeish), and before all the people I will be glorified (ekaveid).' And Aharon was silent." (10:3) Moshe told Aharon that he knew something was going to happen on this auspicious day and thought that it would happen to himself or to Aharon. Only now did he realise how special Aharon's sons were, for it was them that were sanctified. It was only after they passed away that Moshe realised how holy they really were. This also helps explain the first Pasuk in our parsha where it says "And G-d spoke to

Moshe after the death of Aaron's two sons, when they drew near before the L-rd, and they died."

Why does the Torah need to mention the fact that they died twice? If G-d spoke to Moshe after their death, surely we don't need to be told "and they died".

Our Sages explain that there is the initial time when a person is told that someone has passed away, the myriads of thoughts and memories of that person enter one's mind. But then there is a further long term effect, where after a person has internalised all, he/she will hear so many stories and amazing events that the deceased was part of.

The death of the sons of Aharon was not just a normal death, it was a death that had a long term effect and the longer time went on the more people understood what amazing personalities the Bnei Yisrael had really lost. Always show appreciation. What's taken for granted will eventually be taken away. Then you end up missing most what you least appreciated.



RABBI BENJAMIN STONE

## Lessons From Terminal 5

Airport encounters can be strange. The gentleman sitting opposite me informed me that although he had emigrated to Haifa many years ago, he had returned briefly to his homeland in a remote corner of the United States to visit his ailing mother. As expected she had passed away during his visit and he had recently completed the *shiva* period.

The gentlemen in question ("Reuven") decided to play me a short recording which had been digitally sent to all of the family in which his son reminisced about holidays which he had experienced with his grandmother and funny things she had said and done. As Reuven listened to the recording tears flowed freely down his face. He told me that just before his mother died she said the words "*Ich gai shtarber*" which in Yiddish means "I am going to die". This comment might not necessarily have warranted too much attention if not for the fact that, according to Reuven, his mother

had never uttered a word of Yiddish in her life and had in fact never been religious.

A remarkable episode - but not one which should necessarily comes as shock.

We are an elevated people by nature with deep seated roots. This is greatly evidenced during the period in which we now find ourselves. The month of *Nissan* is a time for renewal on both a national and individual level - as *chazal* say - "During

our exalted nature as members of *klal Yisrael*.

In parashat *Tazria* and *Metzora* we learned how *Tzoraat* (leprosy) is diagnosed and the remedial measures one must take to cure himself. These laws are particularly significant and are dealt with in great detail because the appearance of *tzoraat* on one's body or belongings indicates the total breakdown of the value system of the individual whereby their focus on *avodat Hashem* has been lost. Instead they have chosen to focus on *themselves* and their lot in this world only, resulting in their speaking *loshon hora*, becoming arrogant and attaching disproportionate importance to money (see *Kli Yakar Vayikra*, 13:2). Once the *Metzora* offers the atoning *korban* relevant to him he is deemed to have set himself back on the correct path.

However it is in the *parasha* of *Acharei Mot* (and later in the *parasha* of *Kedoshim*) where we learn how to take matters forward and develop as *b'nei aliya*. A case in point is the prohibition of eating blood.

Now the prohibition of eating blood can surely not be classed within the same category as the prohibition of eating forbidden creatures. Creatures such as the camel or *chazir* are forbidden in their entirety. They are also described as "*Tamei*" (impure) in the *Torah* (*Devarim*, 14). Blood, on the other hand may have been the product of a perfectly permitted animal and is never described as "*tamei*". The above points lead one to believe that there is nothing inherently *tamei* or negative

On *Pesach* we freed ourselves from the constraints of our material existence and during the *omer* we are now climbing step-by-step, higher and higher towards the ultimate goal of readiness to accept the *Torah*.

*Nissan* we were redeemed and on *Nissan* we will once again be redeemed (*Rosh Hashana* 11)". On *Pesach* we freed ourselves from the constraints of our material existence and during the *omer* we are now climbing, step-by-step, higher and higher towards the ultimate goal of readiness to accept the *Torah*.

The *parshiot* which we have read during these weeks similarly focus specifically on



about blood itself. Rather there is a special reason for our being forbidden to eat it (similar to the prohibition of eating *Chelev* (fats) and the *Gid Hanashe* (sciatic nerve)) This is perhaps why the *meforshim* seem to go to great lengths to seek out what the reason is.

Animals certainly have a soul, writes the *Ramban*. This is shown clearly in their ability to sense and run from danger and show affection to their masters. The existence of an animal soul is part of the reason why the blood of an animal - which represents its soul - may not be eaten by us; it is improper for one soul to feed on another soul.

Furthermore, the consumption of animal blood would have extremely negative consequences. The Jewish soul is of a totally different quality to that of an animal and if one were to consume animal blood one would essentially be importing the animal soul into his own. The *Ohr Hachaim* goes as far to suggest that the mingling of the animal soul and the Jewish soul would cause the Jewish soul to become detached from the heavenly source which provides its nourishment. Such a diminution of one's spiritual standing would be catastrophic and for that reason the punishment for the consumption of blood is conveyed in unprecedentedly strong language (17;10) with the prohibition itself being repeated in *Devarim* (12;23).

The theme of the supremacy of the Jewish soul also underpins the next *mitzvah* in the *parasha* - that of *Kisui Hadam*, whereby we are commanded to cover the blood of wild animals or birds once they have been slaughtered. We find in *parashat Bereishit* (1;24) that both the body and soul of the animal were formed from the earth. In contrast we find that only the body of man was formed from the earth, with his soul being blown into him directly by *Hashem* (ibid. 2;7). The *mitzvah* of *Kisui Hadam* serves to remind us of the differing origins of the human and animal soul. By covering the blood of the slaughtered animal or bird with dust we are signalling that its soul is indeed of lesser quality, having originated from the dust and that the animal or bird soul should take its place once again in the earth without influencing us (Rav S.R.Hirsch).

Given the lofty status of the Jewish soul, which is emphasized by the *mitzvot* surrounding the treatment of animal blood, it is perhaps not surprising that even Jews far

removed from religious practice should at times find it impossible to hold back their *neshama* from shining forth - as was clearly the case with Reuven's mother.

## Living with Mitzvos

1. On Yom Kippur in the morning the reading comes from the beginning of Parshas Acharei-Mos. The end of the parsha is read on Yom Kippur by Mincha.
2. They represent the two identical pathways that start off the same and how one branches to the good and ends up connected to the Kodosh Hakodoshim while the other goes to the bad and ends up killed thrown down a mountain. This is the bechira, free choice, given to a person which pathway he takes.
3. This reflects the nature of the day. It is a time when we can reach to the highest inner spiritual levels (seen in access to the Kodosh Hakodoshim) not freely open to us the rest of the year.
4. A common theme that comes up in the parsha is the punishment of Kores. The majority of mitzvos that come with this punishment appear in Parshas Acharei Mois, most notably those of aroyois.
5. The Sefer Hachinuch counts 28 mitzvos in the parsha consisting of two positive mitzvos and 26 negative mitzvos. Virtually all these mitzvos apply nowadays and the majority of them apply equally to women and they mainly deal with aroyois.
6. There are the sacrifices brought on behalf of the entire community and there are the sacrifices brought that come only from the Kohen Godol.
7. In the chumoshim it is called Acharei although people usually refer to it as Acharei-Mos. Perhaps this is because it is more descriptive being synonymous with the deaths of the Bnei Aaron that acts as an introduction to Yom Kippur which is the day when life and death are decided.

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