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## COMMUNITY PARASHA SHEET

## KI TAVO

20<sup>th</sup> ELLUL 5776

Shabbat begins: 18:42

Shabbat ends: 19:41

This week's edition is sponsored  
Lehatslahat Moshe Ben HaRav  
Yitschak HaCohen Vechol Mishpachto



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL  
DIRECTOR, TAL

Catch Up!

Ki Tavo is always read just before Rosh Hashanah and it gives us good preparation for the days of Judgment.

As the year ends and we start to concentrate on a better future, we ask Hashem Tichleh Shana Vekileteha – may the year and all its curses end. Our Sages (Gemara Megila) state that it is for this reason that we read 98 curses in this weeks parsha – just before Rosh Hashanah.

The count of curses is 98 and it is equivalent to the word "tzacht" (shiny clean), and also to the word "selacht" "forgive".

The section dealing with the curses begins on a positive note, if we keep to the Torah we are promised much blessing.

Though; one statement seems to stand out; "the blessings will be upon you and they will reach you" (28:2).

Our Sages find difficulty in this Pasuk. If blessings are upon us of course they will reach us! Why the redundancy?

There are two answers I would like to share with you.

The Ben Ish Chai (Od Yosef Chai) explains with a fantastic Mashal. There was once a poor married couple who were finding it hard to survive. One Friday the wife heard that there was a special sale of fish going on in the market place. Tasty fish were being sold for half price. The husband was a simple man, he enjoyed his learning and never liked going out. Being Friday the wife

simple man, and tried to sell him a large fish, that, shall we say was a little bit past its sell by date. "Try this one sir, look how massive it is, how many people it can feed, and its half price today!" The simple man, might have looked simple but he took one smell and realised that the fish wasn't the most fresh. The seller implored him and spent a long time convincing him to buy the fish. After much persuasion and haggling, the man finally bought the fish at 20% of its original value. What a bargain!

He arrived home and slowly he realised his mistake. "My wife is not going to be pleased with this, she is going to realise that the fish is a bit old", he thought to himself. He decided that the only option would be for him to cook it himself, disguise the bad odour with some spices and sauce that he would concoct and serve it straight to his wife. As he took the knife to cut the fish, he realised that the skin was so tough that he needed a stronger knife. Eventually after much effort he managed to cut the fish. To his surprise, as he opened up the fish, he found a large gem. It was worth a fortune!

Here was a man, who never wanted to go to the market, yet ended up going. He never wanted to buy the fish, yet ended up buying it. He never really wanted to open the fish, yet ended up opening it. Here was a man, explains the Ben Ish Chai, who subconsciously ran away from the Beracha. Nevertheless due to Hashem's wish of him receiving the Beracha, the Beracha ran after him – Vehisigucha – and reached him.



asked him to go to the market and make the purchase – it was a once in a lifetime sale. After much persuasion the husband agreed and set out.

He arrived at the market, which was heavily populated with people searching for bargains. One fish monger noticed the



## Living with Mitzvos

1. Which is the only letter of the Aleph-Beis missing from Parshas Bikurim?
2. The Mishna in Bikurim notes that there is a difference between a rich and poor man when bringing bikurim. The rich man gets back his basket while the poor man forfeits his to the Kohen. Surely it should be the other way around?
3. The parsha talks about saying two viduyim: for bikurim and for maaser sheini. Why by bikurim does he say it out in a loud voice while by maaser he says it quietly, *'lifnei Hashem*?
4. When and why does the Baal Korei read Parshas Ki Sovoi some pesukim loudly and others quietly?
5. How does the gabbai in shul decide who to give the aliya of the curses?
6. Parshas Ki Sovoi contains the toichocho. We have another toichocho in Parshas Bechukosai. Why the need for two times curses? What is the difference between them?
7. What is the theme that links together all the eleven curses?

Answers On Page 3

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The blessings in this weeks Parsha, wont just be available to us on the outside. They will even run after us, they will chase us until they have reached their target.

The Degel Machaneh Efrayim, takes this idea a step further.

Noticing the ending of the Pasuk Ki Tishma Bkol Hashem Elokecha – all these blessings will chase you, when you listen to the voice of Hashem your G-d. He explains that the righteous person is reluctant to receive worldly blessings. They potentially stand in the way of his spiritual growth, and therefore he doesn't desire them.

In *this* case Hashem does *not* do the bidding of the righteous. He does not deprive them, rather He blesses them. Why is this so? It is because "Ki Tishma Bkol Hashem Elokecha" - Hashem sends the

blessings to a person whom He knows that even after the blessings reach him, will still continue to hearken to Hashem's voice. Sometimes we cherish receiving a blessing and finally get it. Only to shortly forget its real value and Who sent it. The Tsadik receives enjoys and continues to serve Hashem with greater strength and is thus blessed.

A second understanding of our Pasuk is offered by Rabbi Schlesinger in Bet Av The ultimate blessing is to receive the benefit and be aware of it. Sometimes, Hashem showers a person with so much blessing- health, a fine family, abundant wealth - and still the person is not satisfied. What good are these blessings to him if they do not satisfy him? Rashi writes (Avos 4:1)

that a person can be the richest of the rich, but if he is dissatisfied he is no better off than the poorest of the poor. On the other hand, a person can have just a little bit, but if he is satisfied with it, he is blessed.

This is what the Torah means by the words "they will reach you." Even if all the blessings "come upon you," you will not be truly blessed if you are dissatisfied, if you do not appreciate what Hashem has done for you. Only if they penetrate, if "they will reach you," will you be considered truly blessed.

As Rosh Hashana fast approaches, let us take a look around us and concentrate on our blessings. Let us appreciate them and come to a realisation that everything around us emanates from Hashem.



RABBI MASHIACH  
KELATY  
Vampire Logic

We've all heard of vampires. Those mythical creatures that prey on hapless humans and drink their blood. The evil incarnate Dracula with his fangs at the ready. A whole enterprise was created because of these humanoid leeches. One legend about vampires is that they cannot exist in the light [this is probably based on the life of a bat, who only comes out at night]. Vampires have to resign themselves to pottering around in graveyards and sleeping in coffins. But woe is to the one who is caught out in daylight. He will wither and die [at the very least, it's not good for his complexion].

The verse in this week's parasha tells us "These shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people..and these shall on Mount Eval for the curse" (27:12,13). Six tribes were on one mountain, and six on the other. Rashi brings the Gemara in Sotah 37b which tells us that besides the 12 tribes split between these two mountains, the Cohanim and the Leviim were in the valley between them. They were to utter the curses and the blessings, and the tribes would answer Amen. But why mention the valley between the two mountains?

There is an important lesson to be learnt from here. Just like there is a definitive area between the mountains of blessings and curses, so there is a definite demarcation between good and evil. There are no grey areas. You can't say 'this is mostly a mitzvah' or 'this is mostly an aveirah'. Either it is 100% mitzvah or 100% aveirah. Whereas a vampire cannot exist in daylight, he thrives in the dark. But there is no twilight for them. It's either/or.

The danger begins when the boundaries are blurred. And that is where the human being comes in. Humans are very complex creatures. It's never black or white with us. Nothing is straightforward when it comes to mankind. But that's not the reality. The reality is that, like the vampires, evil can only exist in the dark. Light will vanquish dark, and kedusha will vanquish tumah. The two can never, and will never, co-exist. Which is the reason why, when a person does a mitzvah, at that moment he is a tzaddik. Nothing else in the world matters at that moment. His integrity cannot be impugned. He is a full blown, no holds barred, dyed in the wool tzaddik.

Isn't that in and of itself a tremendous and inspiring thought? Do a mitzvah – be a tzaddik! Keep doing mitzvot – keep being a tzaddik! What greater incentive does one need for teshuva! Bear this in mind during this virtuous month of Elul. Seize the opportunity for a mitzvah. And make sure to do it with enthusiasm...

The story is told about John the Russian soldier, who was enlisted by his unit to guard the weapons overnight. He did this with tremendous devotion to duty, in the perishing cold, until, during the middle of the night, he literally froze, and fell to the ground with acute hypothermia. His

comrades discovered him, and managed to defrost him (probably with hot towels and plenty of cognac).

You would think that this man would receive a hero's welcome. But he was in fact arrested for dereliction of duty, and made to stand trial in front of a military court.

John felt, at the very least, peeved and unappreciated. During his defence, he claimed that he had literally put his life on the line guarding the weapons cache, until he could stand no more. What else was expected of him?

Despite this impassioned plea, he was pronounced guilty. The military council stated that if he had thought about the Czar and mother Russia, the heat would have literally made him sweat.

His crime? He didn't feel the heat!

It's not good enough for us to go through the motions and 'keep what our parents kept', in a soulless fashion, without any thought about what we are doing. We have to make ourselves sweat when we serve Him! Know your Maker, and know Him well. Feel the fire of Torah within your bones. Don't be caught sleeping on duty!

May we all feel the heat, and serve Hashem with a burning passion.

Tizku Ishanim rabbot, tovo une'imot.

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In the month of Sivan in the year 5484 (1724), the oldest son of Rabbi Yitzchak Zerahya Azulai and his wife Sarah was born in the old city of Jerusalem.

He was named Yosef, from the name of his maternal grandfather, and the names of Chaim and David were given to him to well. When later he became famous as an adult, people were content to call him "the Chida", after the initials of his complete name Chaim Yosef David Azulai.

The Azulai family was considered among one of the oldest and most respected of those in Eretz Israel. The Chida was a descendant of the famous Tzaddik Rabbi Avraham Azulai, author of Chesed leAvraham, who immigrated to Eretz Israel from the town of Fez, Morocco around the year 1620.

From his most tender age, one could discern exceptional traits in the young Yosef. Frail by nature, he nevertheless studied with great concentration and without respite from morning till night.

At the age of 8, following an epidemic, his mother rendered her soul to her Creator. This death tremendously affected Yosef. He

matured ahead of time and became serious for his age. He didn't play with other children, but rather put himself to studying our holy Torah day and night. At hardly 9 years of age his father enrolled him in the Beit Yaakov Beit Midrash, an institution renowned for the quality of its instruction, and from which the majority of Jerusalem's scholars emanated. It was in this house of study that the incredible talent of the young prodigy blossomed.

Already, at the age of 12, he put into writing some original laws concerning Kashrut and also composed responsum on some aspects of Halachah.

Moreover, the young boy revealed a brilliant ability as a speaker, appearing in public to give uplifting drashot.

Not long after his marriage in 5502 (1742), Jerusalem was visited by the extraordinary Gaon and Kabbalist Rabbi Haim ben Attar (known by his nickname Ohr HaHayim Hakadosh), who set up his Knesset Israel Yeshiva.

The Chida became a member of his Yeshiva, and this brief period was time enough for him to enter into a profoundly deep relationship with the Tzaddik Rabbi Haim ben Attar.

In the works that he wrote afterwards, the Chida very often cites the teachings and customs of Rabbi Haim ben Attar, whom he considered to be his teacher par excellence.

Soon after this period in his life, the Chida managed to become one of the disciples of Rabbi Shalom Sharabi, (the Rashash) in his Beit El Yeshiva. This Beit Midrash was the headquarters of great Tzaddikim and Kabbalists who, by completely consecrating themselves to Torah study, aspired to hasten the arrival of the Messiah.

The saintly Rabbi Shalom Sharabi and two of his disciples, the Chida and Rabbi Haim de la Rosa, felt that the time was right to hasten the final redemption. These three Tzaddikim, great men of their generation, removed themselves from all earthly matters and chose to live an ascetic life of fasting and self-mortification in order to sanctify and purify themselves.

The following story takes place in winter, when a thick blanket of snow covered the city of Jerusalem. These Tzaddikim rolled about in the snow, praying with incredible devotion and fasting afterwards for three consecutive days. At the end of the fast, they went to an isolated place and began to concentrate on the "Yehudim" in order to hasten the coming of the Messiah.

However, they were suddenly petrified by the sound of a heavenly voice: "My sons, you don't have the right to hasten the Geula [Final Redemption]. The hour has not yet come, and to prevent you from together attempting to do it again, one of you will be exiled abroad."

Since the heavenly voice did not declare who among them would suffer this fate, they drew lots and designated the Chida.

Without hesitation, the Chida accepted the verdict and put himself on route for a long exile, during which time he would meet the great men of his generation and travel to many countries, including Egypt, Italy, France, England, the Netherlands, Germany, Sicily, Crete, and Turkey.

It is not without reason that the Chida acquired a reputation, while still alive, as a man possessed of supreme holiness, towards whom everyone looked. It is not only through his numerous praiseworthy books that he gained perpetual renown. He



## Living with Mitzvos

1. The letter Samech since the amount to give for bikurim is one sixtieth (Baal Haturim).
2. R' Leib Lopian zt"l answers that the rich man brings his bikurim in an expensive basket and therefore wants it back. The poor man brings it in an inexpensive basket. However, since he does not have too many fruits to give and does not want it to look miserly therefore he stuffs the bottom with stuffing to look full. Imagine if the Kohen would need to return his basket and would empty its contents in public how embarrassed the poor man would be? In order to save the poor man from this the Kohen kept his basket.
3. The vidui of bikurim is said aloud because it talks about the greatness of Hashem. However, the vidui of maaser talks about a person's actions and therefore is said quietly. (This same idea is seen by the Yomim Noiroim. R' Shlomo Kluger explains that the reason why during these holy days we can say the davening out loud is because they are days of "Hamelech" where Hashem is closer to the world as King. Since these tefillos focus on the greatness of Hashem, therefore they can be said aloud. However, the rest of the year a person must daven quietly since these davenings are full of personal requests.)
4. These curses are read by the Baal Korei quietly while the pesukim that deal with comfort, like those remembering the covenant, is read loudly. The rise and lowering of voice expresses our fear and hope. (See Kitzur Shulchan Oruch 78:4).
5. The gabbai usually calls up the Baal Korei for the curses in order that no one should think that the curses should be placed on a different person who is being called up for them. (See Mishna Berurah 428:17.)
6. The toichocho is mentioned twice in the Torah – here in Parshas Ki Sovoi, and again in Parshas Bechukosai. The Ramban (26:16) explains two main differences. In Parshas Bechukosai it describes them in the first person and it is said in the plural. These curses happened during the churban of the first Beis Hamikdash. The toichocho in Parshas Ki Sovoi is spoken in the third person and is said in the singular. The punishments mentioned here happened by the churban of the second Beis Hamikdash and in the following exiles that continues even until today.
7. These curses all deal with things that a person does in secrecy and therefore only Hashem sees and punishes the sinners. Two of the curses can sometimes be done publicly and therefore with those the possuk adds the word "beseiser", that here they are done secretly.

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bat Blima Freida Myriam

was a truly complete man, one who with remarkable harmony combined in himself traits and virtues that are rarely found in a single person.

Certainly, with the Chida everything was exemplary: His eminence in all domains of Torah, the influence he had on his contemporaries, the depth of his knowledge in worldly matters, and the prestige he garnered that commanded the respect and esteem of the great men of the nations. And yet his most remarkable trait was, incontestably, his characteristic humility.

We have a faithful witness in his journal, entitled Ma'agal Tov, in which the Chida recorded his personal observations as a keepsake, without any intention of publishing it. The following can be found in his journal.

"As for myself, the least of the inhabitants of the Jerusalem and Amsterdam, G-d made me find grace in the eyes of the ministers and deputies – me, the least of my brothers. I praise G-d, blessed be He, Who made my name grow even though I am devoid of all abilities."

This is but an infinitesimally small portion of the thousands of entries abounding in his personal journal, entries that attest to his great modesty. Looking over his works, when we examine the greatness of the Chida's genius we are left breathless before the abundance of talent that Heaven bestowed upon him. It is almost impossible for us to evaluate this spiritual giant by our own gauge. He had acquired a mastery of character that he constantly used to elevate himself in the scale of perfection.

The Chida wrote more than 100 books. One can hardly imagine how so many quality works could have been written by a single man, a man that was otherwise constantly devoted to so many other things.

The Friday night of Shabbat Zachor, on the 11th of Adar 5566 (1806), Rabbi Chaim Yosef David Azulai rendered his pure soul to his Creator. May his merit protect us. Amen.

בס"ד

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## WOW!! TAL GALA DINNER SEP 21 2016

TAL would like to thank the 370 guests that joined in its Inaugural GALA Dinner.

We were blessed with a fabulous atmosphere; words of wisdom from S&P Sephardi Community Senior Rabbi Joseph Dweck, music by the TAL choir and Eli Tamir as well as delicious food from Ezri.

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We are grateful to Hashem and pray for Am Yisrael's enduring success.

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Wishing you a Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Jonathan Tawil

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