

# THE COMMUNITY Parasha Sheet



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## RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

DIRECTOR  
TAL



### ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE – THE WARNING THAT SHOOK THE WORLD

Have you noticed how the world is moving at an ever faster pace? Can you keep up?

It's busy out there. Technology was created in order to make our lives simpler, yet we all feel that the opposite has occurred. We are now accessible 24/7 and that has added unprecedented stress to our daily routines.

Our Parasha mainly focusses on the blessings and curses that may occur to Am Yisrael should they deviate from the path of the Torah.

We are warned not to delve from the right path and end up serving other gods "Velo Tasur – do not deviate from all the matter that I (Hashem) have commanded you today right or left, to go after other gods and serve them." (28:14)

The word Lasur in Hebrew means to deviate, even by a small amount.

When Moshe Rabenu was wondering in the desert and he came across the unusual phenomenon of the burning bush, the Torah relates that he said, "Asura Na..." – I will change path a little and go and see this great site.

The Midrash relates a debate amongst the Rabbis as to how exactly Moshe deviated from his path.

Rabbi Yochanan said he took five steps towards it, whilst Resh Lakish said he merely turned his face round to the direction of the bush and gazed. (Shemot Rabbah 5:6)

With a turn of the neck, face and a gaze a person has already deviated from their path!

Thus when the Torah warns us not to deviate from its path, it means even by the slightest amount.

Why? What is so bad about a small deviation?

Although the looming threat of nuclear war with North Korea is now on all of our minds, Elon Musk is warning that there's an even bigger danger.

In an open letter (Aug. 21), The SpaceX and Tesla boss joined a group of **116** AI specialists from **26** nations calling for the United Nations to ban the development and use of autonomous weapons.

The prospect of tanks, machine guns, and drones that think for themselves becoming widespread is making the tech luminaries anxious.

The letter says of autonomous weapons:

"Once developed, they will permit armed conflict to be fought at a scale greater than ever, and at timescales faster than humans can comprehend. These can be weapons of terror, weapons that despots and terrorists use against innocent populations, and weapons hacked to behave in undesirable ways. We do not have long to act. **Once this Pandora's Box is opened, it will be hard to close.**"

In their petition, the group states that the development of such technology would usher in a "third revolution in warfare," that could equal the invention of gunpowder and nuclear weapons.

Even the greatest technological leaders of our generation are proactively realising the potential threat should their very own creations could cause.

This is the meaning of our verse – it starts with a small deviation, he didn't really sin so much. However as time progresses the person ends up performing the worst sin – serving idols.

Similarly the Baal Shem Tov explained the Pasuk we say daily "Hishamru Lachem Pen Yifte Levavchem VeSartem.... – Vaavadetem Elokim Acherim – be careful not to let your heart turn as this will eventually lead to serving other gods. At the time it is unthinkable that one would stoop so low, but when we deviate a small amount away from the correct path, there is no limit as to how far down we can sink.

In Pirkei Avot (4:2) we read: "Ben Azzai said: Run to do even the slightest Mitzva and flee from all sin, for one Mitzva will lead to another Mitzva and one sin to another sin; for the reward of a Mitzva is a Mitzva and the recompense of a sin is sin."

Every action has an inner rhythm that pushes and leads to another, similar, action.

Questioning the first part of the Mishna, Rabbi Chaim Volozhiner, notes that it seems to contradict the principle of Free Choice. ▶

## > MAZAL TOV TO

Simon and Shira Lousky and family  
on the Brit of their son Yonatan

” THE WEEKLY QUOTE  
"Speak only when you feel  
that your words are better  
than your silence"

## > UPCOMING EVENTS

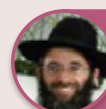
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### DVAR TORAH

Artificial Intelligence  
RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

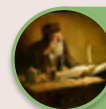
P1



### DVAR TORAH

Parsha Insights  
RABBI YITZCHAK HAKOHN TAWIL

P2



### OUR CHACHAMIM

RABBI ITZCHAK HADAD

P3



### HALACHOT

Shabbat : Using a Plunger, Detaching...  
RABBI ELI MANSOUR

P3



### Q&A AND STORY

P4

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If the individual must pursue Mitzvot, the implication is that, by default, Divine commandments are “running away,” or are not attractive. On the other hand, if one must flee sin, the implication is that ordinarily sin “pursues” man such that he must run away to save himself. Indeed, the human experience bears witness to this very point. Chazal additionally note that the Evil Inclination is placed within Man before the Good Inclination (Sanhedrin 91b, & Bereishit 6:5). Would it not be more consistent with the principal of Free Choice for Good and Evil to be equally desirable?

Rabbi Chaim’s explains that the life spirit, the eternal aspect of the human being is the soul, in the words of the Kabbalists, “a piece of the Divine.” Naturally, the soul desires only the “cleaving to G-d” through the contemplation of the Divine accomplished through the study of Torah and the performance of Mitzvot, Divine commandments.

The word “Mitzva” is also derived from “Tzavta,” company, connection, as Mitzvot are all vehicles with which to connect to the Root of the Soul, the Creator of All. The body is merely a tool in which the soul is able to function in This World, having no independent existence at all. In light of this, the battle between Good and Evil would automatically be won in favour of the Good as this represents Man’s existential essence. In order to “even out the odds” and allow Man

to choose between Good and Evil and thus earn eternal reward, Hashem caused the psychology of Man to be such that Mitzvot appear at first less attractive and ‘Averot (sins) seem at the outset more desirable. Therefore, we are charged by Ben Azzai, “Run after Mitzvot!;” do not be fooled by the appearance of their initial unattractiveness for that is what G-d ordained concerning the human experience in order to provide challenge and choice. “Flee from sin!;” do not be taken in by its lure and promise of temporary satisfaction. Once one follows this path, the Mishna continues, this leads to a chain reaction. After the person follows the Good, has tasted spiritual pleasure and has overcome the desire to follow first appearances, one Mitzva follows another, and he is ready to move up a rung in the ladder of Divine Service whereby he sees Mitzvot as vehicles of eternal, transcendent pleasure and happiness. The opposite is true with sin. The more one pursues this path, the more “real” and seemingly lasting the fake pleasure of sin becomes, and the person becomes more greatly entwined in its web.

When we deviate we are not just deviating from one small matter, rather we are setting in motion a chain reaction that can have an everlasting and far greater affect.

Just like technology once unleashed is difficult to really control and no one, not even the Elon Musk’s of this world know where we end up.

In the words of the Rambam (Hilchot Teshuva)

“Every individual has good traits and bad; credits and sins ... A person should view himself at all times as if he is 50:50 : half guilty and half innocent. And the whole world too should be viewed likewise : half guilty and half innocent, balanced with precision. Just one sinful act and that person, indeed the entire world, will be determined as guilty and sentenced to destruction. Just one Mitzva and that individual along with the whole world will tip the balance towards the side of innocence , salvation and safety.” [3:1,4]

Hmmm! The power of a single act!

Lest we become despondent, lest we feel that we are simply a product of our prior decisions, lest we feel that it is hopeless, that we will never change, the Rambam has something else to say: “Everyone has the choice, the option. If one wishes to set one’s path to good - to become a Tzadik - the path is open. If one wishes to set ones path to bad - to become evil - that path is open too.” [5:1]

We choose. We can, at any moment, re-set our path. But don’t forget. Our choices have consequences. Always. ■

## RABBI YITSCHAK HAKOHEN TAWIL - MIR KOLEL, JERUSALEM

DVAR  
TORAH



### PARSHA INSIGHTS

**“Today you have become a nation” (27:9).**

The Torah describes us as being born a nation on the day that we accepted upon ourselves to be loyal and faithful to G-d’s Torah! At this stage we were still a wandering nation roaming in the wilderness, with no land of our own and none of the natural physical means of existence demanded for a nation.

R. Shimshon Refael Hirsch notes how, in G-d’s eyes, the Jewish nation doesn’t begin from when we receive our country or adopt our own language. It begins when we accept upon ourselves the yoke of Torah and Mitzvot. Only once we have Torah and Mitzvot is Eretz Yisrael considered an additional asset, enabling us to reach even higher spiritual goals.

**“Cursed is the man who...” (27:15-26).**

Seforno comments that any and every sin committed is most definitely a cause for curse and sorrow. He asks, why then do we find in our Parsha that the Torah identifies certain specific sins in association with the curses. In what way are they different to all other sins?

Seforno explains that the sins that are singled out in our Parsha are either of the type that are normally performed in secret, or sins which are inside the mind, or sins which are performed by leaders and high officials. The Torah informs us that the associated curses are focussed specifically at the sinner himself because we do not observe the act of sin being performed, and in the case of the leaders we are usually not in the position to rebuke them because our words would not be influential. For other sins however, not only is the sinner to be cursed but also anybody who was able to rebuke the sinner and prevent him from sinning! By watching the sinner and remaining quiet, he displays that the act of sin doesn’t bother him too much and he therefore also gets caught up in the curse!

The Rashbam explains our portion in a different light. There are certain openly performed sins that are witnessed and can be judged and duly punished for by the Beth Din. The sins mentioned in our portion are usually performed in secret and remain unrevealed. The sinner mistakenly comforts himself with the feeling that nobody can see him, and heretically demonstrates his lack of appreciation that G-d constantly sees and is fully aware of all the sins that he performs, even in the greatest secrecy. In the absence of sufficient proof, Beth Din are unable to judge and sentence the sinner. The Torah informs us that we shouldn’t even think for a moment that any sin is overlooked. This sinner who acts in secret indicates disbelief, making out as though he can hide from G-d and perform sin! The Torah informs us that such an individual deserves even greater form of punishment than a normal sinner does, and he duly receives a specific curse quite apart from the general curse for not keeping to G-d’s Command! ■

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## OUR CHACHAMIM

### RABBI ITZCHAK HADAD

Born in Algeria, Rabbi Itzhak Hadad was one of the most illustrious figures in the Jewish world. His numerous talents and immense scholarship allowed him to create works of great richness. He first went to settle in Jerba, Tunisia, and there he extended his stay to benefit from the wisdom of his teachers, the Gaonim Rabbi Nissim Hayat and Rabbi Avraham Hacoen. These teachers could foresee the exceptional destiny that awaited him, and they enabled him to grow in knowledge both to render Halachic decisions and to teach Torah.

From his youth, Rabbi Itzhak adopted a method that was unknown up to then in Tunisia. In order to preserve his Chiddushim (novel interpretations) of the Torah, as well as the knowledge that he received from his teachers, Rabbi Nissim had them printed.

The works of Rabbi Itzhak became famous. The first of his books, Karneh Re'em, presents the commentaries of Rashi and Rabbi Eliyahu Mizrahi on the Torah. It also contains a collection of Chiddushim entitled Zerah Itzhak. His original commentaries on Shas have been assembled under the title Toldot Itzhak.

Among the sages of Jerba, Rabbi Itzhak Hadad was the first to have his works printed in order to distribute them among his community.

Rabbi Itzhak's three sons, precious gems that adorned his head, were Rabbi Yaakov, Rabbi Shimon, and Rabbi Avraham.

The youngest, Rabbi Avraham, founded a synagogue that still exists to our day and which carries his name. There Rabbi Avraham kept a room for his father to allow him to study and resolve various community problems.

Another of his sons, righteous among the righteous, was motivated by a pure heart and benefited from the blessing of Ruach Kodesh. He once alerted his brother, the owner of a vineyard, that thieves were about to try and steal from it. Shocked, his brother armed himself and went running out to his vineyard. In fact, he did find thieves there, and imagine their surprise to discover the owner in his vineyard – armed! Overcome by fear, they took to flight.

The light of Rabbi Itzhak Hadad was extinguished on I Adar 9, 5515 (1755). ■



## HALACHOT

### RABBI ELI MANSOUR

#### SHABBAT : USING A PLUNGER, DETACHING A FASTENER & PINS FROM NEW CLOTHES, INSERTING NEW SHOE LACES

The Poskim discuss whether it is permissible to use a plunger to unclog a sink or toilet on Shabbat. The consensus of Hacham Ovadia and Hacham Bension is to prohibit doing so. Hacham Bension even implies that it may be an Isur D'oraita—a Torah Prohibition, since the sink and toilet are connected to the house and ground, it may constitute a violation of Boneh-constructing. Nevertheless, he allows instructing a non-Jew to perform the operation, since it involves Kavod Habriyot-human dignity and is a source of significant suffering.

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The Shemirat Shabbat K'hilhata (R. Yehoshua Y. Neuwirth, Jerusalem, 1927-2013) allows pulling apart a pair of new socks which are attached by the plastic thread. Doing so is not considered Tikun-the finishing act of forming the socks. They already exist independently and were only attached to prevent them from being separated.

Similarly, he permits removing the pins in a new shirt. They are only placed there to keep the creases in place; this is not considered finishing the garment.

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The Poskim also discuss whether it is permitted to lace a shoe on Shabbat. Hacham Bension and the Menuhat Ahava (Rabbi Moshe Halevy, Israel, 1961-2001), concur that the Halacha depends on whether it is the first time the shoe is being laced. In a new shoe, the first lacing is considered part of the completion of the shoe, and is therefore prohibited. In an old shoe, which has been laced previously, it is not considering a finishing act.

#### SUMMARY

It is prohibited to use a plunger to unclog a sink or toilet on Shabbat.

It is permitted to pull apart a pair of new socks and to remove the pins in a new shirt.

It is prohibited to lace a new shoe, but it is permitted to lace a shoe that has been laced previously. ■

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- ❶ When historically did the obligation to bring bikkurim begin?
- ❷ Bikkurim are from which crops?
- ❸ How does one designate bikkurim?
- ❹ Who shakes the basket containing the bikkurim?
- ❺ What does “v’anita v’amarta” mean?

### Answer

❶ 26:1 - After the Land was conquered and divided. ❷ 26:2 - The seven species for which Eretz Yisrael is praised. ❸ 26:2 - When under the hands of the one bringing it and they wave the basket together. ❹ 26:5 - Speak loudly. ❺ 26:4 - The kohen places his hands

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## Kids STORY

Mmmm, what a yummy aroma. What is it Mom?

I just baked a fresh batch of chocolate chip cookies, Chaim. Here, you can taste the first one.

That is a wonderful offer, Mom, but I want you to have the first one.

Chaim, that is so sweet of you. Why do you want me to have the first cookie?

Because, Mom, you are the one who worked so hard on these cookies and you should be the first to enjoy them.

You're right, Chaim, I did work very hard mixing the dough and rolling out the cookies and baking them. However, I want you to enjoy the first one. Let's see. Does the Torah have an answer to the question of who should get the first cookie?

Mom, you must have read my mind. Our teacher told us a beautiful story today based on this week's parsha. Can I share it with you?

Of course, Chaim.

Imagine you lived long ago, in the days of the Beis HaMikdash. It is the beginning of the summer, a few weeks before the holiday of Shavuot.

Chaim and his mother close their eyes, and drift back in time.

Chana! Come out and look at this!

What is it Aharon?

Look, the first fig of the new season has grown on our tree!

Oh, Aharon, I am so happy! You worked so hard on that tree. You plowed the land around it, fertilized it, watered it, pruned it, and weeded it. Now you finally see the first fruit.

Chana, can you please call the children out to see this?

Children, come see what Abba has outside on the fig tree!

What is it Abba?

Look kids, the first fig of the year. What should we do with it?

Let's all eat it for dessert at the Shabbos table.

No, Abba you should eat it. You worked so hard for it.

Let's give it to a poor person to eat.

Children, those are all wonderful ideas. Let us hear what G-d tells us to do with the first fruits of the season. Chana, please bring me a piece of straw to tie around this fig. Now I must say this, "Behold this is the first fruit of the year." Next, we will wait until it ripens, and then take it, along with our other first fruits to the Beis HaMikdash in Jerusalem. There we will give it to the Kohen as a gift for Hashem.

Chaim that is such a beautiful story.

Wait, Mom, there is more. The teacher then explained to us the message behind **bikkurim** (first fruits). It is the first mitzvah in this week's parsha.

We all have a tendency to be very proud of our work. We get satisfaction seeing it finally finished. We naturally want to enjoy the fruits of our labor. After all, we worked hard for them. The Sefer HaChinuch (Parshas Mishpatim, Mitzvah 91)

explains why we bring our **bikkurim** to G-d. We must place G-d at the head of all of our happy occasions. We must remember that all of the blessings that we enjoy in this world come from Him. Therefore, we remember Him first, which shows our gratitude to Him.

Chaim, what a beautiful **Devar Torah**. But we still do not know what to do with the first cookie. They are not **bikkurim**, so we cannot give them to the Kohen. I want you to have the first cookie as a reward for being a good student, paying attention in class, and saying such a beautiful **Devar Torah**.

Mom, after a compliment like that, how can I refuse the cookie.

With that, Chaim takes the first cookie, and pronounces the blessing.

**Boruch Atto Hashem Elokeinu Melech Ho-Olam borei minei mezonos.**

Mmmm, these cookies sure are yummy.

Chaim, you first thought of G-d before you ate. You blessed Him for the food.

You're right Mom. Even eating is an opportunity to get close to G-d. As long as we remember to...

Remember Him First.