

THE COMMUNITY Parasha Sheet



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RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

**DIRECTOR
TAL**



WHY BOTHER COMING TO SYNAGOGUE?

Your feeling tired, it's been a long week and Shabbat arrives.

After a delicious meal you set your sights on bed and fall into a deep slumber.

Shabbat morning you awake grudgingly early in the morning to head out to the synagogue.

As you awake your conscious gets the better of you. There is an internal fight. One of the questions is, why do I need to go to synagogue to pray; surely G-d is everywhere and will hear my prayers even here at home. Let's stay home this week.

Good point!? So what is the purpose of gathering in synagogue and does it really matter?

Part of the answer lies in this week's Parasha.

Ki Tavo is commonly referred to as the Parasha of Tochacha - "rebuken." It is full of frightening threats of unimaginable punishment to be meted out to those who brazenly refuse to observe the Torah's laws (28:15). It is interesting to note that this is not the first Parasha which contains a lengthy rebuke. Earlier in the Torah (Bechukotai) we find a similar terrifying list of punishments which will befall those who fail to observe the Mitzvot (Vayikra 26:44-45).

This raises two questions. Why was there was a need to repeat the threats after they were already

described in gruesome detail in Bechukotai? Furthermore, at the end of the rebuke in our Parasha there seems to be no mention of consolation. The Torah seems to leave us with the ramifications of the curses, moving swiftly on to the next subject. In Bechukotai however, the Torah ends the curses with words of consolation. Why the difference?

A fascinating answer is offered by the Ohr HaChaim who notes that the curses detailed in Bechukotai are written in the plural, while those in our Parasha are expressed in the singular.

The Ohr Hachaim suggests that the punishments mentioned previously are national in nature and will only transpire if the entire nation engages in inappropriate activities. For this reason, they are written in the plural. Our Parasha, on the other hand, is expressed in the singular, as it addresses individuals who sin even at a time when the nation as a whole is behaving properly.

With this distinction, we now understand that the rebuke in Bechukotai ends with words of encouragement because it pertains to the entire nation. No matter how far they may stray, the Jewish nation is guaranteed a continued existence in the merit of G-d's covenant with our forefathers. Each individual within the community, however, isn't as fortunate. Since our Parasha discusses the case of the individual who sins, it doesn't conclude with words of consolation, as they have no such assurance.

The Alter of Kelm uses this concept to resolve an apparent contradiction regarding the nature of Rosh Hashanah. On one hand, it is considered a festive day, on which we dress in our finest clothes and eat enjoyable meals.

On the other hand, the tone of the day is solemn. ►

20 ELUL 5778

SHABBAT BEGINS: 19.35

SHABBAT ENDS: 20.36



THE WEEKLY QUOTE

"The best antidote to annoyance is act of love"

> UPCOMING EVENTS

- 3RD SEPTEMBER
ROSH HASHANAH SPECIAL TALK AND DINNER (Free)
- 8TH SEPTEMBER
UNITED SEPHARDI SELICHOT AT OD YOSEF CHAI
- 16TH SEPTEMBER
FAMILY FUN DAY
- 12TH OCTOBER
FRIDAY NIGHT BANQUET AT THE AVENUE

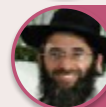
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DVAR TORAH

Why bother coming to synagogue?
RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

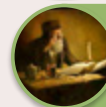
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Hallel isn't recited due to the fear and trembling which accompany the knowledge that the books of life and death are open on this day. The Alter explains that as a nation, we are confident in G-d's mercy and conduct ourselves with joy and optimism. At the same time, each individual is filled with dread and terror at the recognition that he has no such guarantee.

There is a wonderful idea brought down in the name of the Baal Shem Tov. The Torah states: Yaakov Chevel Nachalato - Yaakov is the measure of His [Hashem's] inheritance. (Devarim 32:9)

Chevel also means a rope. The students of the Baal Shem Tov draw an analogy from this verse.

A long rope descends from under the Throne of Glory of Hashem. Every member of Israel holds on to the rope according to their spiritual level. The higher one's level, the higher up the rope they are. But the rope is not attached to the throne in a physical way. The Throne of Hashem

sits where it sits. But as the actions of the leaders bring merit to Israel, they don't move up the rope but rather raise the rope and everyone holding on to it. Thus, all the lowest members of Israel, holding on to the bottom of the rope, receive a spiritual boost due to their leaders. The opposite is also true. If the actions of lowest members bring disgrace to Israel, they drag the rope down and everyone with it, including their leaders at the upper end of the rope.

We are one nation intertwined together.

When an individual stands alone they are susceptible to being judged alone, yet when they are attached there is safety in numbers.

It's for this reason that we call a congregation a Tsibur. The words Tsibur can be split up to stand for Tsadikim Benonim and Reshaim. When we all come to the synagogue to pray to Hashem, we are joined by many different people. Each one

brings a special touch to the Minyan and each individual will help the community rise.

Praying alone we miss out on attaching ourselves to the greater nation. When we join together we are much more powerful and grant real honour to the Almighty.

As the Day of Judgment approaches, we may find comfort in this message. If we live in our own vacuums, we will be judged on our own merits on Rosh Hashanah, a scary thought. However, our Sages teach that if we affiliate ourselves with a community, becoming part of our synagogues and volunteering to help with communal projects and organizations, we will share in their collective merits. As a result, we will enjoy an inscription for a year of health, happiness, and blessing.

Join in and reap the benefits!

■ **Shabbat Shalom**

RABBI YITZCHAK HACHOEN TAWIL - MIR KOLEL, JERUSALEM



PARASHA 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!

■ **Shabbat shalom**

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OUR CHACHAMIM

RABBI AVRAHAM AZOULAY

Rabbi Avraham Azoulay was born in the town of Fez, Morocco in 5330 (1569). His father, Rabbi Mordechai, descended from a great line of sages among the Jews of Spain, and the Azoulay family was one of the most dignified and honorable in all of Spain. Rabbi Avraham the Elder (the father of Rabbi Mordechai) was one of Spain's greatest rabbis.

Rabbi Avraham Azoulay's parents and grandparents left Spain during the inquisition, on the ninth of Av 5252 (1492). The Gaon Rabbi Avraham the Elder was among those Jews expelled from Spain, and it was then that he embarked for Morocco with his entire family. During that time the king of Morocco was merciful and lenient toward Jews. He welcomed them with joy, knowing that they would be useful for the expansion of his kingdom, with their true value consisting of their abilities. Their innate talent for commerce, their skill in crafts and the sciences, their knowledge in numerous fields, and their wisdom would be judiciously used. A great number of exiles settled in Morocco and contributed to the expansion of the country. Some were eminent physicians, while others were counselors to the royal court or emissaries to foreign countries, such as Turkey, Holland, England, and a host of others. Thanks to their linguistic abilities and competence in political matters, Jews were called upon to exercise roles as ambassadors abroad.

Rabbi Avraham the Elder settled with his entire family in the town of Fez. All the residents of the town, Jew and non-Jew alike, esteemed him not only for his great scholarship in the revealed and hidden aspects of Torah, but also for his reputation as a worker of miracles, which always followed his blessings.

As a child, the grandson of Rabbi Avraham the Elder (who was named Avraham after him) set himself apart from the other children of his age by his great intelligence. Everyone saw in him a child prodigy who exploited his extraordinary talents solely for the study of the holy Torah. His reputation as a Gaon in the revealed and hidden Torah spread throughout the entire town and to its surroundings, yet despite this great reputation his behavior was marked by great humility. He addressed himself to everyone as an equal, and he never felt that he was as grateful as he should be toward others.

In 5360 (1599), the situation for Jews in Morocco deteriorated. Rabbi Avraham was 30 years old when the town of Fez, where he had lived and experienced peace and calm up to that day, was transformed into a city of destruction. In addition to the civil war that began, famine and pestilence added to the devastation of the Jews. Faced with all this suffering, Rabbi Avraham decided to leave Morocco and settle in Israel. He hoped to be able to devote himself to Torah study and find refuge among the holy Rabbis there, namely the wise disciples of the saintly Arizal.

Rabbi Avraham arrived in the land of Israel in 5370 (1609) and settled in Hebron. He yearned to live in peace, yet Heaven had decided otherwise. Having barely arrived in Hebron, an epidemic broke out and Rabbi Avraham was forced to leave the city and settle in Jerusalem, then in Gaza. In the introduction to his book Chesed l'Avraham, he describes his misfortunes and wanderings.

It was in the town of Gaza that Rabbi Avraham would write his commentary on the Tanach entitled Baal Brit Avraham, a book based on Pshat and Kabbalah. He would also write Chesed l'Avraham in Gaza.

A mystery surrounds the death of the Tzaddik. The story goes as follows:

One day, the Grand Vizier of Constantinople decided to make a pilgrimage to the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron, which was also a holy place for Muslims. When the Vizier arrived at the entrance to the tomb and knelt down, his sword fell to the bottom of the cave. He ordered one of his servants to go down into the cave and bring back the sword, and so one servant was attached to a rope and lowered down. When the rope was hoisted back up, the servant was dead. The Vizier ordered other servants to go down, yet one after the other came back up dead. The furious Vizier decided to call upon the Rabbi of Hebron, Rabbi Eliezer Archa, and told him: "I'm giving you 48 hours to get my sword back from the bottom of the cave, and if it's not returned to me by that time, I'll order the execution of all the Jews in the city."

All the Jews of Hebron assembled in its synagogues and recited prayers of penitence and lamentation, imploring the Creator of the world to save them from this tragedy. Rabbi Eliezer decided to draw lots, and the one chosen would go down into the cave of the Patriarchs to bring back the Vizier's sword.

As soon as morning prayers were completed, Rabbi Eliezer proceeded to draw lots in front of the whole community. The name of Rabbi Avraham Azoulay was drawn.

Rabbi Avraham immediately began to prepare himself with great, deep reverence. He immersed himself in the mikveh, donned white clothes, and began to study the secrets of Torah. The Kabbalists of the city accompanied Rabbi Avraham Azoulay to the entrance of the cave and blessed him so that Hashem would make him succeed in his undertaking without any harm coming to him. In the synagogues of Hebron, Jews united with prayers, tears, and moaning that tore Heaven apart.

Rabbi Avraham Azoulay was let down with a rope, and a few minutes afterwards the Vizier's sword shot back up attached to the cord, but without Rabbi Avraham. Several hours passed. Finally, the voice of Rabbi Avraham could be heard, and he was lifted out of the cave, his face beaming with great joy.

"I encountered the Patriarchs," he whispered to his close friends, deeply moved by the event. He also said that the time of his departure from this world had been revealed to him, and that the next day he was to render his soul to His Creator. During the night, he instructed the secrets of Torah to his students and friends. He had the appearance of an angel of G-d.

As soon as daybreak occurred, he immersed himself in the mikveh and dressed himself entirely in white. After prayers he recited Shema Israel, his face radiating with a light that was no longer of this world. One hour later, he rendered his soul to his Creator. It was the eve of Shabbat, Heshvan 24, in the year 5404 (1643).

Rabbi Avraham left behind a son and two daughters. His son Rabbi Itzhak, who was also a great teacher of the generation, was the father of the Gaon Rabbi Chaim Yossef David Azoulay (the author of Shem Hagedolim), who was known as the Chida.

In his book, the Chida evokes his grandfather, Rabbi Avraham, with great fear and respect. Up to our days, the name of Rabbi Avraham Azoulay is praised by all those who have the merit of tasting the delicate flavors that emerge from his holy books. ■



HALACHOT

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

THE PROPER ORDER WHEN WRITING THE PARASHOT OF THE TEFILLIN AND MEZUZOT

The Shulhan Arukh (Orah Haim 32) writes that the parshiot of tefillin must be written "kesidran," i.e., in the order in which they appear in the Torah. Therefore the parasha of kadesh li kol behor (1) must be written before the parasha of vehaya ki yevia'cha (2), followed by the parasha of Shema (3), and finally, vehaya im shamo'a (4), as that is the order in which they appear in the Torah. If the sofer writes the parshiot out of order, those parshiot are all invalid.

What if the sofer (scribe), incorrectly, wrote the parashot out of order? For example, if the first of the four parashot, kadesh li, was written last? The Poskim (see Magen Giborim 1) write that if he can find another copy of the first parasha, kadesh li, which was written in its proper order, before the next three parshiot, he may then connect this first parasha to the other parshiot (2-4). If not, the tefillin are invalid.

Interestingly, if the sofer is writing the tefillin of Rabbeinu Tam, in which the parshiot are placed in a different order, i.e. 1, 2, 4, 3, is customary to write the first two parshiot, leave a blank space, write the Shema (3), and then return and write the third parasha (4), in order to fulfill the requirement of "kesidran."

Regarding the order of the two tefillin, the Shulhan Arukh (32) rules that the shel yad should be written before the shel rosh. However, the Ari z"l insisted that the parshiot of the shel rosh should be written before the parshiot of the shel yad. That is the custom of those who follow the view of the Ari z"l. Either way, the order does not impact upon the validity of the tefillin. ■

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Shommer Shabbat

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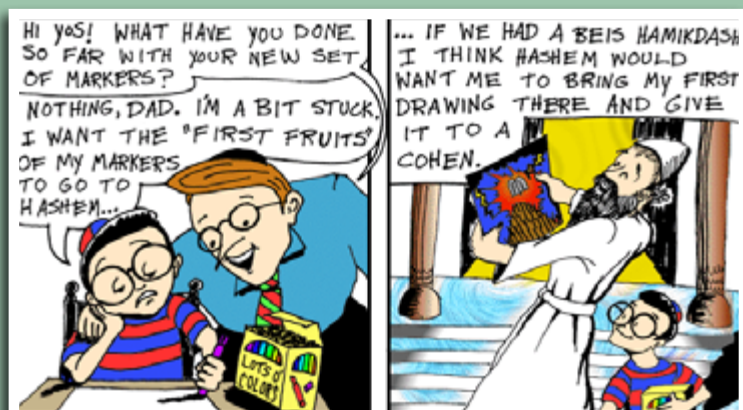
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TEST YOURSELF - Q&A

- 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 he sees the first fruit ripen on a tree, he binds a piece of straw around it to mark it as bikkurim. ❹ 26:4 - The kohen places his hands under the hands of the one bringing it, and they wave the basket together. ❺ 26:5 - Speak loudly.



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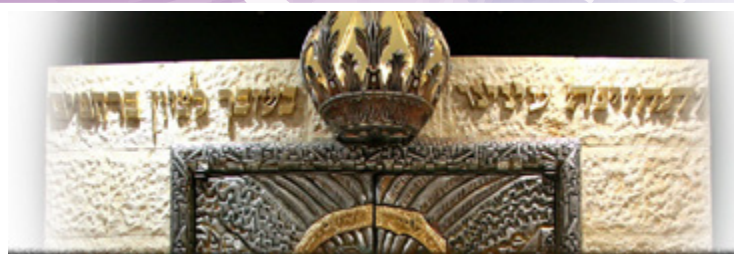
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* This price includes entry, shows and torah island

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