



Parashat Ki Tavo  
21<sup>st</sup> Ellul 5775

Shabbat Begins 19:26

Shabbat Ends 20:27

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## COMMUNITY PARASHA SHEET



**Rabbi Jonathan Tawil**  
**Director TAL**

**SMILE!**

It is every kid's worst nightmare and six-year-old Jaden Hayes (from Savannah, Georgia) has lived it -twice. First he lost his dad when he was four and then last month his mother died unexpectedly in her sleep.

What does one do if faced with such a terrible disaster? How does one cope, especially a young 6 year old child?

The world is full of trials and tribulations, and there are plenty of excuses to cause a person to be sad, but Jaden took on a different angle to his grief. A side he first made public a few weeks ago when he told his aunt, and now guardian, Barbara DiCola, that he was

sick and tired of seeing everyone sad all the time. And he had a plan to fix it.

Jaden asked his aunt Barbara to buy a bunch of little toys and bring him to downtown Savannah, Georgia near where he lives, so he could give them away.

"I'm trying to make people smile," said Jaden. Jaden targeted people who weren't already smiling and turned their day around. He aimed to affect 33,000 people, but since he started his campaign has gone viral and today millions are smiling because of him.

When Yakov Avinu blessed his children before he passed away, the following bless-

ing was received by Yehuda. "The eyes will be reddened from an abundance of wine and the teeth whitened from an abundance of milk". Our Sages look deeper into these words and teach us that there is a hidden message in this blessing. Yakov was hinting at how amazing Yehuda was and would be in encouraging others to smile. "The teeth whitened" represents that we should show people our white teeth when we greet them – a reminder to always smile at another person! In fact, the Mishna (Pirkei Avot) teaches that one should always make the effort to be the first to greet others when encountering them. That's right! Every encounter is a race. The next time you see someone coming towards you, be sure to greet them before they greet you! When you smile at another person you illuminate your face, which in turn illuminates theirs – and perhaps illuminates their entire day. In our day and age with all the many stresses of life, whether in the home, at the office or any place else that takes their strain on a person — a smile, an illumination can truly have an effect on others.

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This week's Parasha describes the ninety eight Kelalot (curses) that G-d threatens to bring upon Bnei Yisrael should they disobey the Torah. At one point in this section, the Torah informs us of the particular cause of these calamities: "Tachat Asher Lo Avadeta Et Hashem

Elokecha Be'simcha" – "on account of the fact that you did not serve Hashem your G-d with joy" (Devarim 28:47). Surprisingly, the Torah here does not refer to a generation that simply disregarded the Mitzvot; it speaks of a generation of Jews that are indeed loyal to G-d's laws, but begrudgingly, without joy and enthusiasm. The Torah demands not only that we obey the Mitzvot, but that we rejoice and take pleasure in the performance of Mitzvot. In other words, the Torah demands that we be happy.

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1. Why are there only eleven curses and not twelve?
2. Which is the only letter of the Aleph-Beis missing from Parshas Bikurim and why?
3. What lies behind the order of splitting the shevotim on which six to go on which mountain?
4. What is the theme that links together all the curses?
5. Why do we make sure to say the curses of this parsha before Rosh Hashana?

Answers on Page 3

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This requirement is expressed in other contexts, as well. King David famously wrote (Tehillim 100:2) "Ivdu et Hashem Be'simcha" – "Serve G-d with joy." He didn't instruct simply, "Serve G-d," but rather than we must do so *"with joy."* The Gemara in Ta'anit presents the famous rule, "Mi'shenichnas Adar Marbim Be'simcha" – "When [the month of] Adar comes, we increase our joy." Conversely, we also read, "Mi'shenichnas Av Mema'atim Be'simcha" – "When [the month of] Av comes, we decrease our joy." These two passages work on the same basic assumption that a Jew must constantly live in a state of happiness. Halacha requires increasing or decreasing the level of joy at different periods of the year, but some level of Simcha (joy) must be maintained at all times. Rabbi Shimon Schwab compared the requirement of Simcha to a pilot light on a gas range. The flame must always remain lit, and one lowers or raises the fire as needed. Similarly, a Jew must live each day of the year

with a certain degree of happiness, which he increases or decreases depending on the particular season.

In Sefer Melachim I (8:66), the prophet tells that after the fourteen days of celebration for the inauguration of the Bet Ha'mikdash the Benei Yisrael returned home happy. What was the cause of their happiness? As Rabbi Avraham Pam noted, it could not have been just the delicacies and fine wine they enjoyed during the celebration. Many among Benei Yisrael lived a distance of several days' travel from Jerusalem, and yet the prophet tells that they felt joyous upon returning home – long after the pleasure provided by the food and wine had subsided. They were happy because of the spiritual elevation they had just experienced during the inauguration of the Temple. As the Yalkut Shimoni remarks on this verse, they rejoiced "because they enjoyed the glory of the Shechina."

We live in a blessed generation. Whereas in the past, the land of Israel was desolate and barren, it is now thriving. In the past, it took weeks to travel to the Holy Land, yet now it takes hours in comfort. Water, fresh fruit and delicacies are abundant, and we generally live free of fear.

If our great grandparents would get out of their graves and see the lifestyle we live, they would ask "Why are you not smiling?"

Our eagerness in performing Hashem's Will shows a great deal of the sincerity in which we serve Hashem. When we arrive early to the synagogue and leave late, we show that we are happy with our relationship with Hashem. When we happily go out our way to help another person, fast on Yom Kippur or build a Succah, we show that we are privileged and content at being G-d's servant.

The best way forward is not to keep that excitement inside, but rather share it with others. Let everyone see how happy you are that you are alive and able to connect with the King of Kings through performing Mitsvot. Let your inner content shine through and your "teeth whiten"! Smiles are contagious, they light up the world. Like a candle, a smile can light many lights without itself being diminished. If you smile at 5 people, and they pass the smile on to 5 people and they pass it on to 5 more... then by the 15th passing on, you will have smiled at the whole world.

What are you waiting for? Let's start now!



**Rabbi Alan Garber**  
**Shenley United Synagogue**

## THE ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE (PART 2)

In the last article I wrote for TAL, I described an issue which is at the heart of being a Jew: the attitude of gratitude. Our very name, Yehudim – Jews, means *"those who thank"*. An examination of our Siddur (prayer book) shows it to be mainly concerned with expressions of gratitude. The first words we utter when we wake up in the morning are *Modeh Ani – I am grateful!* Let's see how this theme is found in this week's sedra.

The Midrash at the beginning of our sedra makes a strange statement: *"Through the merit of bringing the bikurim (offering of the first fruits), we would enter the Land of Israel."* How could we bring our first fruits unless we were already living and working on the Land!? The answer lies in mindset behind the mitzvah to bring the bikurim - *attitude of gratitude*. By having this attitude we would merit to inherit the Land. It was after 40 years of wandering through the desert that we had finally learnt this lesson. When we accepted the negative report of the ten spies, we were punished *"40 years of desert wandering for the 40 days that the spies had wandered the land"*.

Rabbi Chaim Leib Shmuelevitz, (1902–1979) asks that on the surface, the 40 year punishment doesn't seem fair. The actual sin of the spies occurred on one day, the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av when they came back and delivered their negative report and we accepted it. Surely we should have been punished one year's wandering for one day of bad speech! The answer is that for the 40 days the spies walked

The text then goes on to describe a mini history of the Jewish people; the fact that we went down to Egypt, few in numbers, God then increased our numbers; we become slaves; but then God saved us with amazing miracles and wonders and then he brought us to the wonderful Land which flows with milk and honey.

Introducing this declaration the Torah states *"Vanitah Vamartah – you shall answer and say"* (to the Cohen, to whom you are presenting the basket of fruit). Why does the Torah need to write that we need to state that we should both "answer" and "say" to the Cohen? The Ohr HaChaim Hakadosh (1696-1743) says that the word *"vanitah - to answer"* also has the meaning of *"oni - to impoverish"*. He suggests that when bringing the bikurim we were asked for a moment to do a mental exercise of impoverishing ourselves, to imagine that we have nothing; no home, no family, no national history no sense of community. After putting this through our mind, we then bring these things back one by one and see and appreciate all the positives and all the blessings that we have.

As we approach Rosh Hashanah we wish each other a *'Good and Sweet New Year'*. What's with the superlative sweet that is not conveyed in the word good? An explanation is that a 'good' year refers to all the good that G-d wishes to bless us with in the year ahead and the 'sweet' is the attitude and the ability to be able to *see and appreciate* all the blessings. May we and all our families be truly blessed with a good *and sweet* New Year! Shabbat Shalom

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around with a negative and ungrateful attitude, unappreciative of the miracles that G-d was performing for them, and at the opportunity they now had to enter the Holy Land.

Part of the procedure of bringing Bikurim was to make a declaration. The text which is of which forms the main part of the Haggadah; *"An Aramean tried to destroy my father . . ."*

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## TOYS & GAMES ON SHABBAT (SERIES)

### Ball Games

The Shulchan Aruch prohibits playing with balls on Shabbat as they are muktzeh (a number of reasons are given for this prohibition, the primary one is that a ball cannot be considered a "keli" and is therefore muktzeh. For more detail see the Mishna Berurah and Kaf Hachaim 308:45) and since Sephardim follow the pesak of the Shulchan Aruch the position has always been to consider them muktzeh and therefore not to allow children over the age of 4 or 5 to play ball games on

Shabbat. Rav Bentzion Abba Shaul, Rav Yitzchak Yosef and Rav Moshe Halevi (in his work Tefilah Le'Moshe) rule that this is still the case today.

Ashkenazim are, however, allowed to play ball games on Shabbat as the Rama noted that the tradition in Ashkenaz was to be lenient in this regard and this is the consensus amongst the modern Ashkenazi poskim.

For those that do play ball games on Shabbat, one may play on paved ground or on a ping-pong table, both indoors and outside, providing there is an appropriate Eruv. Any game that doesn't involve rolling the ball along the ground is also allowed to be played on grass (such as catch). If a ball becomes stuck in a tree it cannot be removed on Shabbat whether by hand or by using a stick.

Shemirat Shabbat KeHilchata rules that it is permissible to blow up inflatable balls on Shabbat provided that they had been previously inflated and the air is kept in using a stopper of some kind; if the opening is usually tied to stop it deflating the ball is muktzeh. There are other poskim who are stringent and do not allow the inflation of balls on Shabbat as it is an Uvda De'chol (Rav Elyashiv, et al.). Rav Simcha Bunim Cohen (Children in Halacha p.139) quotes some poskim who allow blowing up a balloon on Shabbat for a young child but the majority opinion appears to be stringent.

## QUICK QUOTE...

**BE YOURSELF**  
BECAUSE AN  
ORIGINAL IS  
WORTH MORE  
THAN A COPY  
UNKNOWN

...Hmmm

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1. Rashi (27:24) brings that one curse paralleled each tribe. However, sheivet Shimon was not counted since they were also not included in the blessings.
2. The letter Samech since the amount to give for bikurim is one sixtieth (Baal Haturim).
3. The sons of Leah and Rachel were to be placed on the mountain for the blessings while the sons of the maidservants were to be placed on the mountain for curses. However, since there were only four from the maidservants, the oldest and youngest of Leah joined them – namely Reuven and Zevulun.
4. They 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.
5. It is in order to finish the curses before the year is over to have a fresh positive start to the new year. (Gemora Megilla 31b)

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## Dear Rabbi,



I was wondering what Judaism say about man being born evil.  
Thank you for your answer. Regards.

No, man is not "born evil."

The Torah says that "the inclination in man's heart is evil from his youth." (Genesis 8:21) The Talmud explains "youth" here to mean from the time of birth. However, this evil inclination is external; it is not intrinsic to a person's pure soul. Our pure soul is given to us even earlier, at the time of conception.

So, Judaism sees man as basically good, created in G-d's image, but with temptation towards evil. While the evil inclination is strong, Judaism believes that a person can choose to overcome it. This is the concept of free choice, which is basically the purpose of our existence: To choose good over evil.

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