

# THE COMMUNITY Parasha Sheet



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This week's Parasha Sheet is sponsored **Lehastslachat Harav Yitzckak Ben Moshe Hacohen veChol Mishpachto**

## RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

DIRECTOR  
TAL



### WHICH MITZVAH IS IT?

The Torah relates how at the end of days after experiencing tough times, Am Yisrael will repent returning to Hashem.

The commentators are baffled by a Pasuk that seems to follow on and mentions a special mitzvah. Am Yisrael are taught that: "this 'mitzvah' which I (Hashem) command you is not beyond your reach... It is not 'in heaven,' but ... it is in your heart and mouth." (30:11-14)

The question is, which 'mitzvah' is Moshe referring to?

The Torah doesn't seem to elaborate.

Ramban and others identify this mitzvah with Teshuvah -repentance- the subject of the previous ten verses. (The root of the Hebrew word Teshuvah appears seven times.) The text says the 'thing is very close to you', not necessarily easy. It is true that repentance, or returning to G-d (as hard as it sometimes is) is not dependent on external conditions. Many Mitzvot, one could argue, require the right setting, the right equipment, the right skills. But doing Teshuvah is purely a matter of individual

free choice. The additional phrases, "in your mouth and in your heart" support this view. Medieval Jewish philosopher Rabbi Yoseph Albo writes, "Teshuvah involves confession of the lips and remorse of the hearts" (Sefer Ikkarim).

However, the majority opinion considers this view too narrow. Moshe isn't referring only to Teshuvah when he says 'it is not in heaven,' and 'it is not too baffling.'

Rather he is referring to Torah study itself, or all of Torah, all of the Mitzvot are within our grasp. The entire Torah is meant for everyone and accessible to all. Traditionally, the Torah contains 613 Mitzvot, and the minutiae of Torah observance can often seem overwhelming. One might think, "I can't possibly fulfil all the commandments of the Torah, so what is the point of trying?" Moshe is therefore reassuring the Israelites, "No. It is simpler than you think."

Perhaps, this verse that refers to the whole of Torah as 'this mitzvah' is the inspiration to try and encapsulate all of Torah into one simple rule. According to the Rabbis (Makot 24a), the Torah can be condensed into a few, short, easy to remember principles. The Talmud relates how King David summed up the Torah into eleven principles, Micah summed up them into three. Yishaya is quoted summarizing the Torah in two principles and Habakkuk distilled the Torah into one.

The Rabbis tried their hand at it too: In the story of the proselyte who challenged the Rabbis to teach the whole Torah while 'standing on one foot', Hillel famously reduced the Torah to Judaism's version of ►

## > MAZAL TOV TO

Marco & Rachel Nissim, on the Brit of their son Yehoshua Yehuda Meshumar

## THE WEEKLY QUOTE

"The distance between your dreams and reality is called action"

## > UPCOMING EVENTS

TAL SEPHARDI UNITED SELICHOT

• 16<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER

• 23<sup>rd</sup> SEPTEMBER

(see more info online)



### DVAR TORAH

Which Mitzvah Is It?  
RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

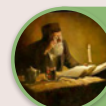
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the Golden Rule (stated in the negative) "What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbour. This is the whole Torah; all the rest is commentary. Go and learn it." (Shabbat 31a).

Interestingly the Chasidic Rebbe Zusya of Anipol reduced the Torah to five verses:

1. Be whole hearted with Hashem your God.
2. I set Hashem before me always.
3. Love your neighbour as yourself.
4. In all your ways, acknowledge God.
5. Walk humbly with your God.

These five Pesukim spell the word Teshuva. Hinting that when we follow this directive we are sure to repent and come as new in front of Hashem.

In fact, at the end of days (soon in our times), the Torah states that once Am Yisrael has experienced tough times then we will repent and return to the land of Israel:

"And it will be when the Berachot (blessings) and the Kelalot (curses) materialize ... then you will take it to heart (and repent)" (30:1).

Why does the Pasuk mention the Berachot here?

Surely, it is the fulfilment of the Kelalot that will spark off the movement towards Teshuvah?

The Ktav Sofer explains that it is specifically when Yisrael are in the throes of the Kelalah, when they are in exile surrounded by enemies on all sides, that they are better able to appreciate the Divine

blessing that helps them survive. If, in spite of the seventy wolves that await the opportunity to devour the lamb (Yisrael), Am Yisrael does not succumb, rather even surviving with grace, then there can be no bigger testimony than this, that Am Yisrael are under Divine protection and not left to the pitiless laws of nature.

When they see how G-d "watches over them from the windows, and peeps through the cracks", that is what prompts them to do Teshuvah.

In a generation that is seeing an increase in hatred towards the Jew, we are nevertheless blessed with a thriving Judaism that is engaging and flourishing. ■

## RABBI JEFF BERGER - RAMBAM SEPHARDI SYNAGOGUE ELSTREE & BOREHAMWOOD

### DVAR TORAH



### BOOK ENDS

*'Life is what happens when you're busy making other plans.'*

John Lennon

It's easy to get lost in the *Book of Debarim* which is comprised of Moshe's final speeches to *Bnei Yisrael*, the generation - who unlike their parents - would inherit the Land of Canaan. Of the three lengthy orations given by Moshe, it's difficult to know where the first ends and the second begins; ditto for the second and third. Verses blend into an indecipherable amalgam. Even the repetition of the *mitsvot* seems to be in no particular order.

The only clue separating these commanding exhortations is the

appearance of the words '*These are the Mitsvot & Hukim...*'. Wherever they're repeated, we can infer Moshe paused and gave his audience time to do similarly. In this way, the first speech spans chapters 1-10, the second chapters 11-26, and the final speech from chapters 27-34.

If Moshe's first talk provided a retrospective look at Jewish history up until the present generation and his second charged *Bnei Yisrael* with the responsibility of obedience to the Almighty and to fulfilling G-d's Will, the third spelled out the abundant blessings (or terrible curses) resulting from their behaviour.

On that basis, *Parshat Nitsabim-VaYelekh* (29:9-31:30) follows the prophetic nightmare of *Ki Tabo*. It provides a more optimistic look at how *Bnei Yisrael* - despite expectations they'd turn to idolatrous practice and be unfaithful to Hashem - can find their way back into G-d's Presence through *Teshuvah* (returning).

*Parshat Nitsabim* famously presents the choice of 'life & goodness vs. death & evil' (30:15). Moshe implored *Bnei Yisrael* to choose life, to love G-d and follow the commandments. The reward was to inherit a land with all its blessings; the alternative was death and destruction.

Those sensitive to the Hebrew may notice *Nitsabim* uses *Hayyim* (Life) & *Tob* (Goodness) paralleling those same words in the first chapters of *Bereshith* (Genesis). It is as if the Torah, which began with the Goodness of Creation and the Tree of Life, wished to end the same way. Heeding G-d's words would be the key to humanity's success.

While it seems simple to opt for Life over Death, surprisingly many of our decisions defy expectation, perhaps because we're 'too busy making other plans'. With Selihot started and Rosh Hashana/ Kippur nearly around the corner, there's still time to make a choice for 5778. Tizku LeShanim Rabot! ■

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## OUR CHACHAMIM

**RABBI ELIMELECH OF LIZENSK ZATZAL**  
"THE NOAM ELIMELECH"

The author of Noam Elimelech performed many miracles during his lifetime, as well as after his death, for we know that Tzaddikim are greater after their deaths than during their lives. What follows are two stories of miracles that occurred to those who had prayed on the Tzaddik's tomb, miracles that took place on account of the Tzaddik's merit.

The Gaon Rabbi Moshe Teitelbaum of Ouhl, author of Yismach Moshe, had a son who fell gravely ill at the age of nine, to the point that his life was in danger. He prayed to G-d with all his soul in order to awaken His mercy. Realizing that his son was being threatened by this great danger, he sent pious individuals to pray on his behalf at the tomb of the Tzaddik Rabbi Elimelech of Lizensk. He commanded his envoys to make the following declaration when they arrived at the gate of the cemetery: "We make a vow to give this perouta to the Tzaddik for the soul that will go and tell Rabbi Elimelech that we have come to his grave to pray to G-d."

When the envoys went and did this, all the souls there went rushing to announce their declaration to the Tzaddik, for the soul of someone is not always found near his tomb. However there, in the world of truth, it is a special thing for the souls of the departed to be able to "earn" a perouta that one gives for their elevation, which is why all the souls made haste. The envoys then went to the tomb of the Tzaddik, prayed for Rabbi Moshe's son, and carefully checked their watch to see at exactly what time they had prayed. The envoys had thus done everything they had been instructed to do.

The boy, who was confined to bed and almost in a coma, suddenly awoke and cried out, "Daddy, Daddy!" As his father approached, the boy said, "With G-d's help, I'll be better now. I just saw a Jew [he gave a description that corresponded to that of Rabbi Elimelech] who blessed me and promised that I would be healed." The father immediately looked at his watch, and later, when the envoys returned and told him at what time they had prayed by the tomb of the Tzaddik, it happened that the boy had awoken at exactly the same time.

The next story involves a simple man from Jerusalem who was in the throes of death. He suffered terribly, yet was not able to die. When people came to visit, he asked only that they should pray to G-d that He take his soul in order that his suffering stop. He would seem to be on the verge of death at one moment, but later on a little better, and then again near death. So on and so forth went his life. Among his visitors was someone who asked him to recount everything that had happened to him from his youth until that time. The man did not remember much, but ended by saying that at a certain period of time he lived in Lizensk. When the man mentioned this city, an idea came to the visitor, who asked the man if he had ever gone to the grave of Rabbi Elimelech of Lizensk. The man responded with astonishment: "Is it possible to live in Lizensk without going to pray by the tomb of the Tzaddik?"

"If that is the case," responded the visitor, "I understand everything now. Rabbi Elimelech wrote in his will that whoever would go and pray by his tomb would not die unless he repented. Therefore this is my advice to you: Confess your sins and repent!"

This is exactly what the man did, and he died immediately thereafter.

Rabbi Elimelech's Hilloula is on Adar 21. ■



## HALACHOT

**RABBI ELI MANSOUR**

### IS IT PERMISSIBLE ON SHABBAT TO WALK ON GRASS OR TO HAVE A PICNIC ON GRASS

The Gemara in Masechet Eruvin (100) discusses the issue of whether one is permitted to walk on grass on Shabbat, given the possibility that he may uproot blades of grass in the process, unintentionally violating the prohibition of "Tolesh" – uprooting plants on Shabbat.

The Shulchan Aruch (336:3) writes (listen to audio for precise citation) that one may, in fact, walk on grass on Shabbat, because Halacha follows the view of Rabbi Shimon who allows performing an act on Shabbat that might result in an unintentional Melacha (forbidden activity). So long as it is not certain that the Melacha will result from the given action, one may perform that action despite the possibility of a Melacha occurring as a result. Therefore, one may walk on Shabbat over grass of any kind, whether it is moist or dry. One may even walk on grass while barefoot, despite the fact that grass might stick to his feet and thus be detached from the ground. It should be noted, however, that if grass does stick to one's feet, he may not remove it by hand, since the grass is considered Muktzeh (forbidden to be handled on Shabbat). He is allowed to shake the grass off or rub his foot against a surface to remove it, but he may not remove it with his hand.

The Shulchan Aruch adds that although walking on grass is permissible, one who eats on a lawn may not wash his hands over the grass, given the prohibition against watering plants on Shabbat. Although the individual in this case intends merely to wash his hands, and not to water the grass, this is nevertheless forbidden, since washing one's hands over grass inevitably results in the Melacha of watering.

In any event, the Kaf Ha'chayim (by Rabbi Chayim Palachi, rabbi of Izmir, Turkey, 19th century) advises against eating outdoors in gardens on Shabbat, for a number of reasons. Firstly, as discussed, there is the concern that one may pour or spill water over the plants. Secondly, seeds might fall from one's fruits or vegetables and land on the ground, which could potentially violate the prohibition against planting on Shabbat. Finally, gardens very often are not surrounded by an Eruv, and thus carrying in these areas is forbidden. Therefore, it is advisable not to eat in gardens on Shabbat. When one must eat in garden areas, such as on Sukkot, he must ensure not to allow any liquid or seeds to fall onto the ground, and that the area is surrounded by a proper Eruv.

**Summary:** One may walk on grass on Shabbat, but one may not wash his hands over grass on Shabbat. It is advisable not to eat in gardens on Shabbat; if one must, he should ensure not to allow any liquids or seeds to fall onto the ground as he eats, and that the area is surrounded by a valid Eruv. ■

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- ① What two cities were destroyed along with S'dom and Amarah?
- ② How do the earth and sky remind us to keep the mitzvot?
- ③ Which of Moshe's statements to Yehoshua was later contradicted by Hashem's command?
- ④ What function does the song Ha'azinu serve?
- ⑤ What is the difference of opinion regarding the placing of the Torah scroll which Moshe gave the levi'im?

### Answer

① 29:22 - Admah and Tsevoim ② 30:19 - The earth and heavenly bodies, although receiving neither reward nor punishment, always obey Hashem's will. How much more should we, who stand to receive reward or punishment, obey Hashem. ③ 31:7 - Moshe told Yehoshua to share his leadership with the Elders. Hashem later commanded Yehoshua to rule alone. ④ 31:21 - It warns what will befall the Jewish People if they abandon Torah. ⑤ 31:26 - Whether it was placed outside but adjacent to the Ark, or inside next to the Tablets.

## Kids STORY

What a wonderful boat ride, Avi. Smell the salt air. Look at the beautiful view. The gentle ocean breeze and the rocking of the boat are so calming.

Chaim, I'm glad you told me about this. It was a great idea. It's so quiet out here.

Suddenly the noise of an electric power tool shatters the calm. Zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz.

What's that noise, Avi?

I don't know Chaim. It sounded like an electric drill or saw.

Zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz.

There it is again. It's coming from over there. Farther back on the boat. Let's go see what it is.

The two boys go back to investigate and see a very strange sight. Crouching under one of the seats is a man holding a power drill. He is drilling a hole under his seat through the bottom of the boat.

Avi, can you believe it? That man is drilling a hole in the bottom of the boat! This whole boat will sink and we'll have to swim back to shore. This is dangerous business. We had better tell the Captain.

Wait a minute, Chaim. Let's talk to the man first. He probably doesn't realize what he is doing. When we tell him, I'm sure he will stop. Excuse me sir.

Yes. What do you want?

I'm sorry to disturb you. I just wanted to point something out to you. You probably don't realize that if you continue drilling like that,

you will put a hole in the bottom of the boat.

Listen young man. I know exactly what I am doing. What I do under my own seat is of no concern to you. I paid full fare for this seat and it is mine for the duration of this trip. You have no right to tell me what I can or cannot do under my seat. Now leave me alone.

You're right Avi, let's go to the Captain.

The boys run to the Captain and report the man. His drilling is stopped before he can put a hole in the boat.

Boys, we don't know how to thank you. You saved the whole boat. I'm going to see to it that you get free passes on this boat ride whenever you want. We owe you a real debt of gratitude. That man was very strange. How could he think that because he bought a seat, he has the right to drill a hole under it? Didn't he feel any connection or responsibility to the other passengers?

Mr. Captain, sir. It's funny you should bring that up. We were just learning about that in school this week.

Really? What class teaches you about boat passengers?

Our class on the weekly Torah portion. Three thousand five hundred years ago, our ancestors were about to enter the Land of Israel. One of the last things they did before entering the land was to form a pact pledging mutual responsibility to one another. Every Jew became responsible for every member of the Jewish people. The deeds of each

person, would affect all of the others.

What does that have to do with the boat passengers?

To put it figuratively, since that time the Jewish people have all been in the same boat together. When one of us does something good, we all benefit. On the other hand, if any one of us does something wrong, we all suffer. If any member of our nation violates the Sabbath or eats non-kosher food, he is not only hurting himself, he is hurting the Jewish people as a whole. He might think that observing the mitzvot is his own private business. They are not. They are everyone's business. Just like the man on the boat. We would all suffer from his foolish deed.

Boys, I truly admire you and your people. Communal responsibility is a very important thing. People who bind together can accomplish great things. Much more than separate individuals.

Mr. Captain, sir, we have accomplished great things. The next time we take this boat ride, we can tell you all about our amazing 3500 year history.

Boys, it will be my pleasure. You can sit up in the main cabin with me. People who took the responsibility to save the boat deserve the best seats. I want to hear all about the 3500 year boat-ride of the Jewish people.

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