

# THE COMMUNITY Parasha Sheet



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## RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

DIRECTOR  
TAL



### WHERE'S MY REWARD?

The Midrash Tehillim says that the Giants Og and Sichon were more formidable adversaries than Pharaoh and his army. Moshe had battled Sichon and won. Now he faced a war against the mighty Og.

Yet before this war, Moshe seems to be worried. Hashem has to reassure him – Al Tirah Otoh (3:2) – do not fear him, for I (Hashem) will place him and his people in your hand.

What was bothering Moshe? Surely a man of the spiritual status of Moshe should not fear Og?

Og was not a normal adversary. He was a Giant with a formidable history.

Og was called "Hapalit", the escapee. He escaped from the Mabul (Targum Yonatan), from the war of the four kings against the five kings (Rashi), and from the war waged by the Ammoni nation against his people (Rashbam). What was the secret of his longevity?

Rashi cites the Midrash, which explains that Moshe was concerned because Og had a special merit for doing a kindness to Avraham hundreds of years earlier. At that time, Avraham's nephew Lot was taken captive. Og ran to Avraham to relate to him the news. Og had intended that Avraham should go to battle against the Four mightiest Kings, where he would be killed, opening the way for Og to take Sarah (Avraham's wife) for himself. Nevertheless this relating of

news caused Avraham to save Lot's life and bring about a Kidush Hashem in the world.

Hashem rewarded Og with an additional 500 years because of this merit!

Now Moshe faced this formidable foe, and was worried, perhaps this merits reward was still standing in Og's favour.

Let us focus a moment on what is happening here. Og the despicable giant, has a bad intention, yet nevertheless is rewarded for his good actions? Has he not been rewarded enough? The Pesikta DeRabi Elazar brings down that he was rewarded by becoming the King of Bashan. How much reward does a man like this really deserve for a seemingly small and unintentional good deed? And surely Moshe the greatest prophet that ever lived, the True Servant of Hashem should not fear such a giant?

Before we answer let us turn for a moment to our current exile.

Chazal tell us that we find ourselves in the Galut Edom – the exile of Eisav. This exile has lasted for two thousand years. It is the longest exile of our people. But when will this exile end? The prophet Zechariya tells us exactly when! (2:12) Achar Kavod Shelachani. Rashi explains that the time will come only once the merit of Eisav has been removed. Which merit are we talking about? Eisav was well known to honour his father Yitzchak. He would be exemplary when it came to Kibud av Va Em. The Zohar (1:146b) states that it is that Kavod showed to his father, that gave him the merit to rule over us for thousands of years! Hence Zecharia states only after the Kavod has ended; only after that merit has ended will Hashem defeat the wicked.

We see that the ramifications of a good deed are long lasting.

Have you ever heard of Nebuchadnezzar? He was the mightiest Leader Babylon ever saw. ►

## > MAZAL TOV

Freddy & Alexi Kelaty  
on the bar mitzvah of their son



## THE WEEKLY QUOTE

*"If we wait until we're ready,  
we'll be waiting for the rest  
of our lives."*

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• 16TH SEPTEMBER FUN DAY

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### DVAR TORAH

Where's My Reward?

RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

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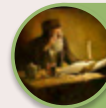


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A Person's Honour

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The Crown on Top of Sefer Torah Letters  
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### Q&A & STORY

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The Gemara relates that in his early days Nebuchadnezzar served as a secretary and scribe for a previous Babylonian monarch. Once, when Nebuchadnezzar was absent from work, other royal secretaries of the king drafted a letter to be sent to the Jewish king of Judah, Chizkiah. The letter began: "Greetings to King Chizkiah! Greetings to the city of Jerusalem! Greetings to the great G-d!"

When Nebuchadnezzar returned to work and discovered how the letter was written, he was furious. "You call Him 'the Great G-d,' Nebuchadnezzar protested, "and you mention Him last?!"

In an isolated moment of moral conduct, Nebuchadnezzar insisted that the letter be redone, and written as follows: "Greetings to the Great G-d! Greetings to the city of Jerusalem! Greetings to king Chizkiah!"

The problem was that the messenger had already been dispatched to Jerusalem with

the first version of the letter in his hand. So Nebuchadnezzar ran out to call the messenger back and redo the letter. How far did he need to run? Merely three steps before he caught the messenger to give him a second version of the letter.

Our sages see this episode as the ultimate cause for Nebuchadnezzar's royal success. In the merit of his taking three steps to honour G-d, Nebuchadnezzar received the crown of royalty for three generations!

This world is a physical world. Our sages note that Behay Alma – in this world there is no reward – no payment for good deeds done. The real payment is infinite and in the next world. Yet Hashem chooses to "reward" the wicked in this world in order to finish from them in the next.

Moshe understood that there is an eternal payment for acts of good; he was worried that Og's merit still warranted him being alive. Therefore Hashem had to tell him, do not worry,

his time has come, he has enjoyed enough reward for his actions.

The reward granted to these wicked people for their good actions in this world seems massive. Og the giant gets long life, lives as a mighty ruler; Nebuchadnezzar receives the monarchy for generations. Wow all that for such a small action. Yes! Even small actions count. Yet we must note that the real reward for our deeds is in the next world. We must realise that Hashem guards each and every mitzvah we do, every Amen we say, every Shabbat we keep, every act of kindness, it is all there in front of Hashem.

From the reward these wicked people received for their seemingly small acts of good, we can fathom the reward that we will receive for every Mitzvah – Ah how lucky we are!

■ **Shabbat Shalom**

## RABBI YEHOATAM SALEM - SHALOM LAAM DIASPORA



### A PERSON'S HONOUR

This week we start reading the fifth book of the Torah – Sefer Devarim. Literally translated as "the Book of Words," it refers to the words of rebuke that Moshe Rabbenu reprimanded the Jewish People before he passed away. Just before their entering the Promised Land, our famed leader reiterated their failures and shortcomings during the forty years of wandering in the desert under his leadership.

Sefer Devarim is Moshe Rabbenu's mussar – disciplinary book. It is replete with ethics, values, character perfection, self-improvement, and how to repent. All of these are relevant not only to that generation, but also to every member of Israel forever.

Moshe Rabbenu's opening words recall all of that generation's shortcomings. Yet, he only hinted at them and did not spell them out openly. This was because Moshe was concerned for and cared about the honour of the people.

At this juncture in time, we are mourning over the destruction of our holy Temples, which were destroyed at this time of year, thousands of years ago. The Gemara (Gittin 55b) relates one of the causes of the destruction. There was a person who had a friend called Kamtza and an enemy called Bar Kamtza. When making a party, he told his servant to go and invite his friend, Kamtza. His servant mistakenly went and invited his enemy, Bar Kamtza. At the feast, the host saw his enemy sitting there, and ordered him to leave. Bar Kamtza, trying to protect his honour, begged his host to let him pay for his portion and be allowed to stay, so as not to have to endure the embarrassment of having to leave. However, the host would not hear of it, and even after Bar Kamtza offered to pay the cost of the entire event, his offer "fell on deaf ears." The host grabbed him and threw him out. Terribly embarrassed and seeking to take revenge, against his host and all those present who did not protest against his unfair treatment, he went to the king of Rome and fabricated a story that the Jews were rebelling against him. Eventually, the outcome of this story was the tragic loss of our holy Temple, when the Romans came and destroyed the Bet Hamikdash. The Gemara deduces from this episode the severity of undermining a fellow person's honour. Due to their gross negligence in this area, G-d allowed our holy Bet Hamikdash to be destroyed, as a lesson to all.

Why is it, as our Sages teach us, that if one embarrasses his friend in public, he loses his portion in the world-to-come? This is because each person is created in the image of G-d. Hence, if someone else undermines that image, it is as if he is degrading G-d Himself.

Moreover, in many places our Torah emphasizes the obligation to honour our fellow man. The root of this obligation is the requirement to honour the image of G-d in which each person is created.

Whenever I am in the presence of great Torah personalities, what strikes me the most about them is how they treat all the people in their vicinity with utmost honour and respect. No matter what their level, standing or age, everyone is made to feel like "a million dollars." Last week, my thirteen-year-old daughter wanted to ask a question to a Torah Sage. Not only did he accept her graciously, but he even gave her twenty minutes of his precious time!

■ **Shabbat shalom**

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## OUR CHACHAMIM

RABBI YITZCHAK ISAAC KRASILSCHIKOV - "COMMENTATOR OF THE YERUSHALMI"

Rabbi Israel Meir, the Chafetz Chaim, said: "When a man sets out to do something, he should not ask himself if he is capable of doing it. He must act and work with all his strength, and the Holy One, blessed be He, will help him to succeed in his undertaking so that his plan materializes."

This idea came to mind when I saw the first volume of Tractate Berachot in the Jerusalem Talmud, along with the commentary of Yitzchak Isaac, the Gaon of Poltava. It is a living example of this idea.

Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac, the author of the commentaries Toldot Yitzchak and Tevunah on the Yerushalmi (Jerusalem Talmud), lived in a virtually sealed apartment near the Kremlin in Moscow. It was there, in solitude and obscurity, that he wrote his marvelous commentary on the Yerushalmi. Of course, on many occasions he asked himself a terrifying question, "I lift my eyes to the mountains. From where will my help come?" (Psalms 121:1). Would he succeed in what he had set out to do? Could he hope that one day his commentary would be published? However he did not despair concerning G-d's help, and deep down he felt that he would be rewarded and that there was hope for the future. In the introduction to his book, he wrote: "When I prayed to our merciful Father, asking Him to take pity on me, I had steadfast confidence that He heard my voice and supplications, which came from the depths of my heart, and that He would come to my help, for 'My help is from the L-RD, Maker of heaven and earth' [Psalms 121:2]."

G-d indeed heard his prayer and sent him a man to preserve the fruit of his work, that man being the faithful Rav Tzvi Bronstein, President of the Al Tidom ("Do Not Remain Silent") Association. It was Rav Tzvi who loyally recovered his manuscript and published it so that the lips of its author could move in the grave, and so that future generations could know how to study Torah in utter destitution. This too is Torah, and it must be studied.

The history of the manuscript's rescue is quite moving. Rav Bronstein describes it in his own words:

"On the morning of Iyar 10, 5725 (1965), I found myself in the office of Rabbi Yehudah Leib Levine, the Chief Rabbi of Moscow. The Rav whispered in my ear, 'Hurry to the hospital. There you will find the Gaon Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac on his deathbed, for his time is short. You must leave immediately, lest you arrive too late.' Naturally, I immediately took a taxi to the hospital. The Rav was already very weak by that time. I approached his bed and told him who I was. A slight smile appeared on his pale lips, and with great difficulty he murmured, 'Good. It's good that you came. I need you now.' He opened his eyes and looked all around to see if anyone was watching, then turned to me again and whispered, 'Listen. These last years I have been working day and night on writing a complete commentary on the Yerushalmi. It contains thousands of pages on the Jerusalem Talmud, and it will make its study easier because it is clear and simple.' He told me where the manuscript was, and he insisted that I promise to do everything in my power to have it published, which I did. The next day, Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac rendered his soul to his Creator, and his burial took place one day later."

The manuscript that he entrusted him with was the second part of his book Tevunah. The first part had appeared in 5856 (1926), and it was the last Torah book ever published under the Communist regime in Russia. Rav Bronstein kept his promise, giving himself no

rest until he had found the manuscript of Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac's commentary on the Jerusalem Talmud, which was eventually published by the Mutzal Me'esh ("Saved from Fire") Institute under the auspices of the Al Tidom Association.

Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac, the son of Rabbi Dov Ber Krasilschikov, was among the last vestiges of Jewish orthodoxy in Russia. Born in 5648 (1888) in the small White Russian town of Kritchev, he studied in the Mir Yeshiva with the Gaon Rabbi Eliyahu Baruch Kamai, and it was from him that he learned the main part of his Torah.

Before the Communist Revolution in Russia, Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac was the Rav of Heditz, then the Rav of Poltava, the town from which he earned recognition as the "Gaon of Poltava." It was there that he printed the first part of Tevunah, which he had written when he was but 23 years old.

When those who studied Torah began to be persecuted by the communists, who vented their anger primarily against the great rabbis of Russia, he left the rabbinate and settled in Moscow, where he took a job as an accountant.

He lived with his wife in a modest little apartment, and after each day working for the government he returned home to immerse himself in Torah study during the night. It was there that the last rabbis of Russia came to hear the Torah emanating from his mouth. He ate only dry foods, for there was also a non-Jewish woman who cooked non-Kosher food in his kitchen (it was a communal kitchen, shared by those in the apartment complex). He did not cease wearing his rabbinic-style clothes, and throughout his life he acted like a Rav from a generation of long ago.

In his final years, he worked on his marvelous commentary on the Yerushalmi. Under such difficult conditions, while the fear of the regime gripped everyone in the apartment, for him the study of the Yerushalmi was a consolation. The verse, "Remember the L-RD from the distance and let Jerusalem come up in your hearts" (Jeremiah 51:50) was fulfilled in him. During the last years of his life, the Rav of Poltava lived in the Jerusalem of Heaven.

When an orphan prays by the grave of his parents, he recites Kaddish. He does not pray for himself or mention the terrible tragedy that has befallen him, but instead implores the Creator to rebuild Jerusalem. The Rav of Poltava stood by the grave of Russian Jewry and prayed: "Our Father, merciful Father Who takes pity, have pity on us and give our hearts the ability to understand, to discern, to listen, to learn and teach, to observe, to perform and accomplish all the words of Your Torah, the Babylonian Talmud and the Jerusalem Talmud." Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac's main concern was the Torah of Eretz Israel, the Yerushalmi, and the great Rav of Poltava will forever remain connected to the light of those who study it.

We end with the words of the Gaon Rabbi Yosef Shalom Eliashiv of Jerusalem. In his approbation to Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac's commentary he wrote: "May this man of action be blessed, the Rav Tzvi Bronstein, who devoted himself to him [Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac] and succeeded in rescuing his manuscript from the furnace and publishing it. In this way he proved and demonstrated his kindness to the deceased during his lifetime, enabling the name of the Gaon to become known, whose writings he left as his heritage. This too was an act of kindness to the living, for it gives those who study Torah an important work on the Yerushalmi." ■



## HALACHOT

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

THE CROWN ON TOP OF SEFER TORAH LETTERS:

### IF A CROWN IS MISSING

When writing a Sefer Torah, Tefilin or Mezuzah, the Sofer must write the letters with Kavana (intent) for the Kedusha of the writing. The question is whether writing the Tagin (crowns) on the tops of the letters also requires this Kavana. The Poskim write that since even if he would omit the Tagin altogether the writing is kosher, it is not critical to write the Tagin with Kavana. Hacham David adds that nevertheless it is praiseworthy to be Mahmir (strict) and write the Tagin with Kavana.

Based on this assumption that the Tagin are not critical, Rabbi Mazuz suggested a Hidush that if one discovered that one of the Tagin was missing, he may insert it using black ink from a regular pen! He must just be certain that the ink does not contain traces of non-kosher ingredients, since the Torah requires ink which could be consumed.

### SUMMARY

It is not critical to write the Tagin with Kavana nor with special ink. ■

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# KidsTime



## TEST YOURSELF - Q&A

- How do we see from the beginning of Parshat Devarim that Moshe was concerned for the Jewish People's honor?
- How much time elapsed between leaving Mt. Sinai and sending the spies?
- Moshe rebuked the Jewish People shortly before his death. From whom did he learn this?
- Why did Moshe wait until he had smitten the Amorite kings before rebuking the Jewish People?
- What were some of the achievements that resulted from the Jewish People "dwelling" at Mt. Sinai?

### Answer

1:1 -- Moshe mentions only the names of the places where the Jewish People sinned, rebuked his sons shortly before his death. 1:4 -- So that no one could say, "What right has he to rebuke us; has he brought us into any part of the land as he promised?" 1:6 - They received the Torah, built the mishkan and all its vessels, appointed officers, Sanhedrin, and appointed officers.

## FIND THIS WORDS!

אדר	ירדן
כלב	יהושע
אשדת	זמזמים
משה	מנחםאב
מואב	סיחון
הרמן	תשמעון

## STORY

### A MAN OF WORDS

You look a little nervous, Chaim.

You are very perceptive, Avi. I am nervous.

Is everything okay?

Thank G-d, everything is fine. I have to give a Devar Torah today in front of the whole class.

Wow, that's wonderful. What are you going to speak about?

Each week someone speaks about the weekly Torah portion. This week it is my turn. The problem is that I am not a very good public speaker. The words do not come easily.

The words . . . the words . . . the words . . . These are the words.

What words?

These are the words that Moshe spoke to all of Israel.

Those are the first words of the parsha, aren't they?

Yes, Chaim. Moshe Rabbeinu, our teacher Moses, spoke very eloquently to the Jewish people.

He must have been a phenomenal public speaker.

He was. He taught them the whole Torah. Do you remember what he said over forty years earlier, when

G-d asked him to go to Paroh to free the Jewish people from slavery?

"I am not a man of words."

Right you are Chaim. You have a great memory. The Torah refers to Moshe Rabbeinu as having a "heavy mouth" and "heavy speech".

How did a person who had such a problem speaking manage to teach the whole Torah to the Jewish people?

Excellent question, Chaim. The Medrash relates a dialog between G-d and Moshe Rabbeinu that goes something like this:

"Go and I will send you to Paroh."

"But I am not a man of words. In Paroh's palace are people who can translate seventy languages, so that everyone can come to speak in his own language. I will come as a messenger of G-d, and I will not be able to speak to them. They will laugh at me and say, 'This is a messenger of the creator of the world?'"

"I taught Adam, the first man, how to speak seventy languages. Do you question that I can teach you how to speak well?"

And so it went Chaim. The same mouth, whose speech was heavy, taught the whole Torah to the Jewish people.

But how did he do it? How did he become such a good speaker?

The Medrash answers that question also, Chaim. The words of Torah heal the tongue. That is what Shlomo HaMelech, King Solomon, wrote in Proverbs "The tree of life (Torah) is a healing tongue." If you want to cure speech problems, either slowness of speech or loшон hora (slander), speak and learn words of Torah. This is what cured Moshe Rabbeinu. He learned and taught the whole Torah. This cured his speech problem.

I am feeling more confident already, Avi. Can I use this as my Devar Torah for the class today?

You certainly may, Chaim. Just go over it and learn it well. When you get up to speak, have confidence. You are teaching words of Torah. G-d will put the words into your mouth.

Avi, with you help, I will become a man of words.

With G-d's help and with the Torah's help.

Amen.