

THE COMMUNITY Parasha Sheet



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This week's Parasha is sponsored Lirfuat Rav Yona Ben Chava Betch Shaar Cholei Yisrael

RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

DIRECTOR
TAL



TWO WIVES!

Are you married? No? What you waiting for, join the club!

Yes – for how long? Has it been a while since you were under the chupa with your spouse to be? How's married life treating you?

When we are young we all desire to settle down with the perfect spouse. Yet when we hear adults talking about married life, it doesn't seem all that desirable. In a generation of high divorce rates and many singles around, how can we put the impetus back into marriage?

This week's parsha relates the law of a man who married two wives. The Torah hints that in such a case, one of the wives will be loved and the other despised. It's not an ideal situation.

The Torah continues to discuss the laws of the children of these two wives. When both these wives have children and the father wishes to give his inheritance to the Bechor (first born), it is to the first born of the despised wife - Vehaya Ben Habechor LaSenia. The Torah does not say 'Im' – if the first born is born to..., rather it states 'Vehaya' – the first born will be born to the hated wife.

What is the Torah teaching us?

Hashem is Kel Rachum Vechanun, a merciful G-d. He is a G-d full of love and care. We are taught VeHalachta Bedrachav – that we should emulate

His deeds, just as He is loving and merciful so too should we be. Hate should not exist between us, especially between husband and wife.

The Sefer Tomer Devorah is relatively small yet it is embalmed with potent words of wisdom. The Sefer authored by the Sainly Rabbi Moshe Kordovero is built on the 13 attributes of mercy mentioned at the end of Micha. (Mi kel Kamocha). The Tomer Devorah explains that the twelfth mida is Asher Nishbata Lavotenu – The Merit of our Forefathers - Zechut Avot. Hashem looks down towards us with certain aspects of mercy. There are times that we are not worthy, and all we have going for us is the Zechut Avot. Our forefathers merits' have weight until today, and help carry through even those that are not worthy.

We are taught to emulate Hashem's attributes. Thus we are also obligated to view others, (even if we think they are not worthy) as worthy. For they carry the merit of their fathers. This is how Hashem's mercy extends towards us and this is how we should view others. When we don't like a certain person, when we think that they are worthless, we should remember that they too descend from Avraham Yitzchak and Yaakov, they too carry this merit and we must love them as Hashem loves them.

There exists a further attribute of mercy. The Thirteenth attribute is Mimei Kedem.

What does that mean? Mimei Kedem refers to the early years. Observing children can be fun. They are so cute and innocent. Their early years and limited understanding cause us to look favourably upon them. It's difficult to really punish a cute kid.

Hashem says, when you sin, I don't punish you straight away, I take into account your youth. I remember your cute early years – when you were relatively innocent and free from sin. ►

Elul 13th 5779

SHABBAT BEGINS: 7:02 PM

SHABBAT ENDS: 8:08 PM

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DVAR TORAH

Two Wives!

RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

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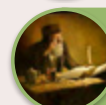


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This newsletter contains Divrei Torah and may contain Sheimot - Please dispose of accordingly

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Similarly we too are taught to look favourably at others. To remember that not long ago in the early days of our relationship we viewed them differently.

Do you remember the first date? The man probably got out of the car and opened the door for the lady. He listened to every word she had to say that night. She was so excited to speak to him. They saw the potential of building a great family together. That potential several years later still exists and should be close to reality.

Hashem deals mida keneged mida (Sanhedrin 90). In the same way as we judge others, we will be judged. Thus, when we look favourably upon others, Hashem looks favourably upon us.

When we get into an argument with our spouse, children or friends, do we look at them with the eye of these attributes. Do we remember their Zechut Avot, does it enter our minds at the heat of an argument to remember that these are holy individuals who were once free from sin (mime Kedem).

Does a husband remember the days when his wife followed him with trust of his every move.

Does he remember the difficulties she went through to serve him and respect his every wish. Does he recall the pain of pregnancy. Does the wife remember the way the husband turned his timetable upside down to please her, how he spent his monthly salary delighted to please his wife?

These are the Yemei Kedem. This is the way Hashem deals with us. It's difficult, but it's not impossible. If we look at people with a different light, then many of the futile arguments and problems fall aside.

When Yaakov was conned into working seven years for Rachel, the Torah states (Bereishit (29:20)) they were in his eyes like yamim achadim – they passed by quick with his love for her.

Our sages are surprised by this statement. If you love someone and are told you have to work seven years, then time passes by very slowly, it should have said that the years were like forever for Yaakov who was eager to get married. Why does it say they passed by quickly?

The answer is that for Yaakov, due to his love of Rachel, seven years for him were a cheap price to pay for such a wonderful kalla! He appreciated her so much that the time was worth it and passed by quickly.

Rav Dessler Ztsl used to give sound advice to every Chattan and Kalla. So long as you think about giving to the other person, your marriage will be constantly steady and successful. The moment either side thinks about taking that's when the challenges come.

In an age where singles are the norm and marriages need fortifying, let us take the message from the Torah; let us emulate Hashem. Open your eyes, remember that first love, remember the merit of our forefathers, respect our spouses and build wonderful families for the next generation. Let us shine new light on our marriages and may Hashem deal with us in kind. Amen.

■ **Shabbat Shalom**

RABBI YEHONATAN SALEM - SHALOM LAAM DIASPORA



BRINGING HOME

In this parashah (Ki Tetze 22:1-4) the Torah instructs us that if we see that a fellow Jew's ox or sheep has lost its way, we may not turn a blind eye. Rather, we must take the necessary steps to return the animal to its rightful owner. Even if this requires effort on our part, we must ensure that our brother's property is returned to him.

The Chafetz Chaim derives an important lesson from here. If we are commanded to return a lost animal to its owner, then, all the more so, we must return it if it is carrying cargo. And if its cargo is valuable, then we must surely do so. If its load is not just expensive but also indispensable, such as medicines that are to be used to save people's lives, then we would definitely say that they must be returned to their owner.

If all this is incumbent upon us, when seeing our brother's physical assets or even his life in

jeopardy, how much more so is it imperative upon us to help our brethren re-track when we see them straying from the correct path in life, and endangering their eternal existence. We must do all we can to help return their spirituality to them. By helping our brethren who are straying to return to their roots, we are enabling them to have a meaningful stay in this world and a good portion in the next world.

There are many different life situations which may cause people to stumble and stray from our rich and meaningful way of life. It may be due to persecutions, exiles, difficult or stressful situations, a lack of education and example, or even an off-putting experience, or a bad or empty way of life that may have been practised. It could even be that levels of commitment slackened with time and eventually dwindled to nothing. Most certainly, at the end of the day, everyone is responsible for themselves, and must ensure that they live a life committed to the Torah and its mitzvot. However, each one of us also bears the responsibility to do their utmost to impress upon and encourage every fellow Jew to live a life committed to the Torah, its mitzvot, values and ways. This is every Jew's duty towards his brethren.

Our generation bears witness to a worldwide surge of people looking for meaning in their lives. Fed up with the emptiness of just feeding their physical desires and pleasures, people understand that there must be more to life than that. Physicality is only a means so that our bodies can keep on going, but our main goal should be to sustain our real essence – our souls. Our souls are nourished by keeping the Torah and its way of life, and when a person is exposed to the taste and sensation of living with Hashem, his whole life changes.

I feel very privileged to be involved in the movement to encourage people and teach them about the real way of life. In all the decades of my involvement, I have never encountered any antagonism, only interest and good will. The biggest kindness that I, as a committed Jew, can do for others is to pass on the truth of the Torah's way of life to my fellow brethren.

In our generation, where there is so much divine inspiration for people to "return home," let us give of ourselves and help to return lost souls to their rightful owners.

■ **Shabbat shalom**

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OUR CHACHAMIM

RABBI SHLOMO HACHOHEN OF VILNA

Rabbi Shlomo Hachohen, the dean of the Vilna Rabbanim, served as a Rabbi for nearly 40 years. He was famous throughout the Diaspora for his commentary Cheshek Shlomo on the Talmud and his responsa Binyan Shlomo and Atzei Beroshim, which deal with concrete problems in all areas of our holy Torah.

Rabbi Shlomo Hachohen was born in Vilna ("the Jerusalem of Lithuania") in 1828. He was the son of Rabbi Israel Moshe Hachohen, whose lineage dates back to the priests of Eli Hachohen's family. Rabbi Shlomo's father was great in Torah and the fear of Heaven, and he devoted himself to his son's education. As Rabbi Shlomo himself recounts, he studied the written Torah, the Mishnah, and the entire Babylonian Talmud with his father, and by the age of 17 he had finished the entire Talmud.

Still a boy, at the age of 12 he had already begun corresponding with the great Torah scholars of his generation on questions of Halachah, and everyone predicted that he would become a great Torah scholar himself. He was extremely diligent and did not leave the tent of Torah study during his entire life. He amazed everyone who witnessed his exemplary behavior, for he was just, upright, and fled from honor.

Rabbi Israel Meir (the Chofetz Chaim), who had been friends with him from his youth, had the habit of recounting how incredibly assiduous Rabbi Shlomo was. He would say, "His love for Torah reached the level of self-sacrifice" and described how, when Rabbi Shlomo was 13 years old, doctors had cautioned him against studying, for his heart was fragile and his nerves were frayed. Since the study of Torah demands great effort and is exhausting, the doctors stressed that the boy would certainly die if he failed to listen to them. When Rabbi Shlomo heard this warning he responded, "If I don't study Torah, I'll die of sorrow, for I cannot live without it. Better to die from Torah study than from its absence!" As a result, he did what he wanted and continued to study diligently. And by the grace of G-d, he got better. When the Chofetz Chaim would recount this story, he was very moved and would passionately repeat Rabbi Shlomo's words several times: "Better to die from Torah study than from its absence!"

After being healed of his illness, he began to study Torah with great scholars. He first traveled to the famous Gaon, Rabbi Yitzchak Shirwitz, who was among the greatest Rabbis

of Vilna. Next he entered Rabbi Yaakov Brit's Beit Midrash, where he studied for several years and went through all the Arba'ah Turim with the Shulchan Aruch and its commentators, ancient and more recent, to the point of knowing them all by heart. With the passing of Rabbi Yaakov Brit, his student Rabbi Shlomo Hachohen continued to give lectures there for many years.

In 5625 (1865), Rabbi Shlomo was named as Rav and leading Posek of Vilna. He was known the world over as a master of Halachah, and throughout the Diaspora people began to send him their questions to resolve. Authors addressed him with requests for his approbation on their books, and today we still find hundreds of works bearing the approbation of Rabbi Shlomo of Vilna. Happy was the author who obtained it, for Rabbi Shlomo was not content with giving his approval to a book just to please its author; he went through almost every book and added his remarks and comments on the subjects being dealt with. We find his approbations not only on works of Halachah and Aggadah, but also on biographies and stories concerning great figures of the Jewish people.

People say that when Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan Spektor, the Rav of Kovno, reached the age of 75, all the great men of Israel sent him their best wishes. Rabbi Shlomo, who was one of his good friends, also sent him a letter, albeit a short one. In it he wrote: "The blessing of the Cohen to the Cohen." Such a statement astonished all who read the letter, for everyone knew that Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan was not a Cohen! However Rav Yitzchak, who understood Rabbi Shlomo's style, said to those close to him: "I'm surprised that you don't understand this blessing from my good friend Rabbi Shlomo Hachohen! The numerical value of cohen is exactly 75. What Rabbi Shlomo wants to say is extremely simple: 'The blessing of the Cohen to the Cohen' - meaning to someone who is 75 years old."

Rabbi Shlomo Hachohen was not active in the affairs of the community, but instead was always enclosed in his four cubits of Halachah. His greatest pleasure in life was studying Torah and rejoicing in it with all who came to see him - and many people came! Whoever came, be it a Rav, a Talmid Chacham, or a simple yeshiva student, experienced the pleasure of spending time with him and listening to his Torah words. He welcomed everyone pleasantly, and spoke with people as much as they wanted. ■



HALACHOT

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

THE BERACHA OVER COOKED FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

As a general rule, fruits or vegetables that are commonly eaten either raw or cooked require the same Beracha regardless of the form in which they are eaten. Yalkut Yosef gives the example of quinces, which people sometimes eat raw and sometimes first cook them. The Beracha would thus be "Haetz" regardless of whether it is eaten raw or cooked. Another example is the chestnut, which in some places, is eaten even raw. Hacham Ovadia Yosef thus rules that in such places, one recites "Haetz" over a chestnut regardless of how it is eaten. If, however, an item is commonly eaten only cooked, and not raw like the chestnut in most places then if it is eaten raw, its Beracha is "downgraded" to "Shehakol," since it is eaten in an unusual manner. Conversely, if a fruit is normally eaten raw, then the Beracha is "Haetz" only if it is eaten raw; if it is cooked, then its Beracha is "Shehakol." One example is citrus fruits, such as oranges. Since oranges are normally eaten raw, one who cooks an orange and eats it recites "Shehakol."

Yalkut Yosef makes an important exception to this rule, based on the Ben Ish Hai (Rav Yosef Haim of Baghdad, 1833-1909), in Parashat Pinchas (7). Namely, if a fruit or vegetable is normally eaten

raw, but it can be enhanced by boiling it in water together with another item such as sugar, or meat then it maintains its original Beracha even after it is cooked. Since cooking in this manner has the effect of enhancing the food, the Beracha is not "downgraded" to "Shehakol," despite the fact that it is normally eaten raw. An example is nuts which are normally eaten raw, but can be boiled with a glaze of honey or sugar. The Beracha over such an item would be "Haetz," despite the fact that the nut is more commonly eaten raw.

Summary: If a fruit or vegetable is normally eaten raw, then one who eats it after it is cooked recites "Shehakol," instead of the normal Beracha of "Haetz" or Haadama." A common example is citrus fruits. Conversely, if a food is normally eaten cooked, then one who eats it raw recites "Shehakol," and "Haetz" or "Haadama" would be recited only if it is eaten cooked. An example would be a chestnut (except in places where it is eaten raw). A food which is eaten either cooked or raw such as a quince requires the same Beracha in either state. If a nut is normally eaten raw, but it can be enhanced by being cooked with sugar, honey or some other food, then it requires "Haetz" even after it is cooked. ■

KidsTime



TEST YOURSELF - Q&A

- 1 Although the Egyptians enslaved the Jewish People, the Torah allows marriage with their third-generation converts. Why?
- 2 Why is causing someone to sin worse than killing him?
- 3 If one charges interest to his fellow Jew, how many commandments has he transgressed?
- 4 What is the groom's special obligation to his bride during their first year together?
- 5 When is a groom required to fight in a non-obligatory war?

Answer
 1 23:8 - Because they hosted Yaakov and his family during the famine. 2 23:9 - Murder takes away life in this world, while causing someone to sin takes away his life in the World to Come. 3 23:21 - Three; two negative commandments and a positive commandment. 4 24:5 - To gladden her. 5 24:5 - When he remarries his ex-wife.

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