

THE COMMUNITY Parasha Sheet



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RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

DIRECTOR TAL



PURIM AND THE DEDICATED COMMUTER!

How long does it take you to get to work?

Are you one of those suffering the increase in tube congestion?

How many passengers do you think the London Underground carried last year?

Just over 1.2 billion journeys were made!

A decade ago, the number was much less at roughly 900 million and life seemed much more spacious commuting to work.

Some people take the bus; others have the luxury of the car.

Increasingly, it has become fashionable to circumvent the commute by having an office in the house.

A fascinating story emerged a few weeks ago. James Robertson, a 56 year old man from Detroit, found himself in the headlines.

For the past decade, he has been commuting by bus and foot and walks a whopping 20 miles a day to get to work.

Originally he had a car, but it broke down and was too costly to fix. He decided to make his way through the wintery rain and snow on foot.

What would you do if you heard this story?

Our Sages state (source?): "Ezehu Chacham? Halomed Mikol Adam" Who is a wise man? One who learns from every person.

Looking at James, we get Chizuk (strength). If this is the conviction that someone shows in order to fulfil his

mundane job, how much more so should we put in the effort through tough times in order to fulfil our job of serving G-d.

But just learning lessons from this is not enough - we need to act.

And someone did!

Evan Leedy, a 19 year old university student, heard this story and acted with superb effect, launching an online fundraiser highlighting James' walk. People saw and reacted kindly by donating, and raised a whopping \$330,000 for James within a week!!

I know what you're thinking. If only something like that would happen to me. After all, I also have it hard.

Maybe you do, but I would like to share my view as to why this person merited such special assistance.

Purim is one of the most fun packed festivals. Great food, drink, presents, charity for the poor and of course fancy dress!

Two thousand years ago in Persia arose an evil man - Haman with the power and decree to destroy and annihilate the Jewish people in ONE day.

The Jews were in trouble and didn't know how best to deal with the situation.

A few years earlier, they had attended the king's banquet, against the will of Mordechai (the righteous Jewish leader) and now they needed his advice more than ever. Could they approach him? Could they now tell him they were sorry? Surely that wouldn't go down well with their ego!

Nevertheless, they put their arrogance aside and accepted every word of advice Mordechai gave. They repented and fasted praying to G-d for three days and were eventually answered with the saviour of the Jewish nation.

You and I are around today due to their gallant decisions.

Over 300 years ago, King Louis XIV of France asked Blaise Pascal, the great Christian philosopher, to give him proof of G-d. His answer was astonishing: "The Jews, your honour, the Jews".

We Jews have faced a tough history, which unfortunately we seem to be feeling more frequently nowadays. Nevertheless we have survived with great accomplishment. ►

> MAZAL TOV TO

Yael Massias & Bar Konvisser
on their wedding



THE WEEKLY QUOTE

"Be somebody who makes everybody feel like a somebody"

> UPCOMING EVENTS

- FRIDAY NIGHT DINNER AT HGSS
16TH MARCH
- YMC FIRST AID COURSE
21ST MARCH



DVAR TORAH

Purim and the dedicated commuter!
RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

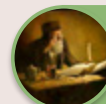
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This newsletter contains Divrei Torah and may contain Sheimot - Please dispose of accordingly

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Persistence in the face of adversity is what leads to success.

We live in a generation blessed with choice.

We enter the supermarket and are engulfed with row after row of products from across the globe.

Send a guy that hasn't been to the supermarket for years in to buy a product and he will certainly get lost. Which row? Which product? Which brand?

From toiletries to food, the rows are filled seemingly with the same product, in different coloured/branded wrappings.

Knowledge is king, but deciphering that knowledge and knowing how to process and allocate it, is really the key.

Two people enter a game and are given a task to buy a chocolate from the local supermarket. One dashes off, before the judge finishes speaking. The other waits.

The judge continues: "There will be several chocolates to choose from. Make sure that the one you get contains no peanut content and comes with a special red label."

The first goes in to the supermarket, tracks down the first chocolate he lays his eyes on and rushes back home easily beating his opponent. The second takes his time, looks for the correct aisle, goes through all the rows until eventually he finds the one product that is without peanut content.

He arrives twenty minutes later, but he is the real winner.

When James Robertson went to work, he did so because he loved his work. Through thick and thin, he would march gallantly to work.

He had a goal, chose a path and happily followed, successfully achieving his aim.

The world saw and reacted.

Now he has been blessed with the ability to fulfil his goal in better standards.

Purim is a time that we celebrate our persistency. As a nation, our primary goal is to believe and serve G-d Almighty.

Throughout our history, we have faced seemingly unsurmountable challenges, but through our belief we

remained steady and firm, eventually triumphing in celebration.

In 1899, Mark Twain wrote: "The Egyptians and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendour, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away. The Greek and Roman followed, made a vast noise and they are gone. Other peoples have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out and they sit in twilight now or have vanished. The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind. All things are mortal but the Jew. All other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?"

And to Mark Twain - I would answer - our conviction and belief in our cause.

This Purim, let's keep that conviction strong, eat, drink, share our happiness with others and be merry in celebration of our special relationship with G-d.

■ Shabbat Shalom and Purim Sameach!

RABBI ALEX CHAPPER - COMMUNITY RABBI AT BOREHAMWOOD & ELSTREE SYNAGOGUE

DVAR
TORAH



A PROMISE IS A PROMISE

It was the gravest sin that the people could have committed.

Standing at the foot of Har Sinai, waiting for Moshe to return with the *luchos*, they gathered around Aharon and demanded **עֲשֵׂה לָנוּ אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵינוּ** - Make us gods that will go before us.

And, despite Aharon's attempts to stall them, they fashioned the *Egel Hazahav*.

Can you imagine anything worse? To do such a thing, at such a time and at such a place? It's like a rabbi going away for a month and coming back a day late to find people eating bacon sandwiches in his Shul!

And so we can understand why Hashem reacts angrily and tells Moshe **לֵךְ-יֵרֵד** - Go down, for your people that you've brought up from the land of Egypt have acted corruptly. **צִוִּיתָם אֲשֶׁר מִן-הָהָרָה מִתֵּר סָרּוּ** - They've quickly turned away from the path that I've commanded them; they've made themselves a molten calf! And they've bowed down before it, slaughtered sacrifices to it, and called it their god.

G-d is emphatic that He will wipe out the entire people and says to Moshe: **וְעַתָּה הִנֵּחָה לִּי וְחֵר-אָפִי** - Now leave Me alone, and My anger will

be kindled against them so that I will annihilate them, **וְאַעֲשֶׂה אוֹתָךְ לְגֹי גְדוֹל** - and I will make you into a great nation.

But Moshe pleads on behalf of the people - knowing that the very survival of our nation depends on it - and so he employs every possible argument.

His chief defence was to say to Hashem, 'Remember Abraham, Yitzchak, and Yisrael, **אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לָהֶם בָּךְ** - to whom You swore Yourself and said: 'I will multiply your seed like the stars of the heavens, and all this land which I said that I would give to your seed, they shall keep it as their possession forever.'

What sort of case was Moshe presenting?

Rashi quotes the Midrash to explain. Moshe emphasised to Hashem that He had sworn an oath to our ancestors. **אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לָהֶם בָּךְ** - You swore Yourself: You didn't swear to them by something finite - not by the heavens and not by the earth, not by the mountains and not by the hills, but by Your very Self You swore, for You exist and Your oath exists forever.

Moshe reminded Hashem, so to speak, of what He'd said to Abraham: 'By Myself I have sworn, says G-d' (Bereishit 22:16). To Yitzchak He'd said: 'and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham, your father' (ibid 26:3). To Yakov He'd said: 'The land which I gave to Abraham and Yitzchak, I will give to you and your descendants after you' (ibid 35:11).

The Brisker Rav explains this Midrash. Moshe's point was that G-d destroying the entire Jewish nation would be in violation of His oath to our forefathers to multiply their offspring and grant them the Land of Israel as an inheritance.

Although the terrible sin of the Golden Calf, it could be argued, meant that the people had forfeited

their rights - G-d's hands were tied - He'd made a promise which couldn't be broken.

How does Hashem respond?

G-d said, 'You've said well' **אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר לַעֲשׂוֹת לִעֲמֹ** **עַל-הָרָעָה וַיִּנָּחֵם ה'** - And G-d relented from the evil He had said He'd do to His people.

The decision goes in our favour. Moshe should've been a lawyer!

Despite how critical a condition the Jewish people were in at that moment, with their very survival in the balance, there's one simple point that emerges from this whole episode: A promise is a promise.

If you make a promise you can't break it, you have to keep it, even if you're G-d and your people have committed a terrible sin, you still have to keep it.

Let's consider the promises we make and whether we always keep them.

It's well-known that we begin Yom Kippur - the holiest day of the year - with Kol Nidrei - to annul the vows we made and to atone for the broken promises.

It's no shock that Moshe broke the *luchos* when he witnessed the people worshipping the Golden Calf and by so doing, breaking a promise to have no other gods but Hashem.

It's no coincidence that Moshe returns with the second set of *luchos* on Yom Kippur as it is a symbol of Divine forgiveness and our second chance to keep our promises in the future.

The *luchos* and the Torah are our manifesto that contain G-d's promises to us and our promises to Him.

We must never underestimate the importance of keeping those promises. ■

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OUR CHACHAMIM

RABBI YAAKOV ABIHSSIRA

Our saintly and venerated teacher Rabbi Yaakov Abihssira, may his memory be blessed, was born in Tafilalet, Morocco in the year 5567 (1807). At the time he was born, a great brightness illuminated his room, and his father Rabbi Messod and the entire community were joyous. They knew that a child prodigy had just been born.

In growing up, Rabbi Yaakov showed a particular interest, and a seldom-seen aptitude, for Torah study. His father initiated him in the different disciplines and the young man showed a great ability for understanding. Rabbi Yaakov soon grew to adulthood and his love for Torah increased ever more. He quickly became a Kabbalist and saintly man renowned for his great piety. He slept very little and would spend the entire week, night and day, in the Beth Hamidrash devoting himself to the study of our Holy Torah. He would leave only on the eve of Shabbat to go home. When necessary, he would journey from city to city to collect funds for the destitute and sick. Even when bothered in the middle of the night, he would never complain. He was a generous man and his home was open to all who visited. People came from everywhere to consult with him, and he was ever careful to ensure that peace reigned between the members of his community. He had a sharp sense of justice, even if his decisions appeared at times surprising. Thus a rabbi who was staying with him for an entire year had the impression that Rabbi Yaakov was judging cases in ways that hardly conformed to the Din (Jewish Law), and this greatly surprised him. Yet in every case, the truth suddenly dawned upon him and it turned out that Rabbi Yaakov had correctly judged from the outset. It is said that the truth was shown to him from Heaven, and that G-d had steered him clear of the least trouble.

Rabbi Yaakov Abihssira was infused with Ruach Hakodesh (the Holy Spirit) and had the power to perform miracles. Examples of such are numerous and are illustrated by authentic recounts that have been transmitted across time. His body, people say, was connected to the earth, but his spirit sailed about in the upper worlds.

Rabbi Yaakov Abihssira authored twelve books. Some find an allusion to these works in the verse that states, "The sons of Jacob [Yaakov] were twelve" (Gen 35:22). Among his books are commentaries on the Torah: Pituhe Hotam, Mahsof Halavan, and Levona Zacca; Responsum: Yoru Michpatcha Layaakov; a collection of Drashot: Doresh Tov; and works on Kabbalah: Bigde Haaserad and Guinze Hamalech. All of these were printed after the death of the Tzaddik.

One day his son, Rabbi Messod, asked his father for permission to publish his works. Rabbi Yaakov replied, "My son, you will not print them until after I join the next world. There I will see if they

have G-d's consent, and I will let you know in a dream." In fact, after the death of the Tzaddik, Rabbi Messod saw his father in a dream, at which point his father asked him to publish his works, for he then knew that they had been approved by G-d.

His love for the Holy Land ran deep. On several occasions he expressed the desire to leave everything and go there, but the community never wanted to separate from the Tzaddik. When he had reached an advanced age, he informed his entourage that the time had come for him to move. He felt compelled as by an overwhelming force, yet wasn't sure that he could realize his dream. He managed to travel all the way to Egypt, to the city of Damanhour (near Alexandria). This place would be the last step of his long journey. Once, at the outset of Shabbat, while he was preparing to recite Kiddush, a candle suddenly went out without apparent reason. He then said, "Fine! May the soul return from where it came and may the body go to where it should." Those who heard these remarks were perplexed.

The next morning Rabbi Yaakov fell ill. His condition became worse during the entire week that followed, to the point that he found himself on death's door by Thursday. His host, Mr. Saroussi, had a doctor come by, a pious man, who announced that, unfortunately, there was nothing that could be done for the Rabbi and he would certainly pass away that night. When the doctor left, Rabbi Yaakov got up and asked his host what he had said. Mr. Saroussi, however, didn't want to reveal the doctor's remarks to him, but on the Rabbi's insistence he eventually did.

"I must still live until just after Shabbat," Rabbi Yaakov said in correcting the doctor's prognosis, "and I have certain things to do." Friday morning, when the doctor returned to confirm the death (for he was convinced that the Rabbi was already dead), he was stunned to see the Rabbi (clearly better) with a Torah book in his hand.

Sunday morning, numerous merchants in the city came to see him for a blessing. He told them, "Today you will not go to work, for the time has come for me to leave this world." Then he looked at them one by one and called out two Rabbis among them, asking them if they were prepared to take care of his body after his death. He warned them, however, that it wouldn't be long before he died. The two learned men agreed. And so Rabbi Yaakov began to recite the Song of Songs, Vidui, and other prayers to ask forgiveness for his sins. He was then asked if he wished to be buried in Damanhour, and he agreed on condition that it be in a Jewish cemetery. Finally, he recited the Shema and entrusted his soul to G-d. ■

He passed away on Sunday, Tevet 20, 5640 (January 4, 1880).



HALACHOT

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

BORER: SELECTING CUTLERY TO SET A TABLE FOR THE NEXT DAY

One of the critical conditions for permitting selecting on Shabbat is "L'altar"-for immediate use. That is, even if one fulfilled the other necessary conditions of selecting the Ochel (food) from the P'solet (waste), it must be done for immediate use. One application of this is setting a table on Friday night, after the meal, for the next day's lunch. Is it permitted to select the forks or spoons from the mixture of silverware? Even if he selects the Ochel, i.e. the type of utensil he desires, it still is for the next day.

Rabbi Shlomo Miller has a novel approach to this question. He refines the definition of what is considered "L'altar"-for immediate use. Even though the primary use of the silverware is for eating, and that will only happen the next day, there is another, secondary, function of the silverware on the table, and that is "Yipui HaShulhan"-beautifying the table. When a table is set with the cutlery in the right position, the table, and the whole room, look nicer. Therefore, selecting the cutlery in order to immediately set the table is considered "L'altar" and is permitted the night before the meal.

However, this principle would not allow one to select a knife from a mixture of silverware in order to cut the roast on Friday night for tomorrow's meal. He argues that cutting the roast is not a final function in and of itself; it is a mere preparation for the eating, which will only be tomorrow. Therefore, selecting the knife does not meet the condition of "L'altar" and is prohibited.

Similarly, Rabbi Miller analyzes putting together a puzzle on Shabbat from the perspective of Hilchot Borer (without getting involved in other potential Halachic issues). Sometimes, a person will select the pieces he needs, e.g. the corner pieces, from the pile. On one hand, this is Ochel from P'solet, but there is a potential problem of "L'altar." The main purpose of selecting pieces is to complete the puzzle. Since he does not always finish the puzzle on Shabbat, the selecting was done for a later date and is prohibited.

Rabbi Miller also rules that one should not play with a Rubik's Cube on Shabbat. He argues that when one is trying to achieve a single color on one side, he moves the other colors to a different side. This constitutes selecting P'solet from the Ochel and is prohibited. Nevertheless, other Poskim may have a different, more lenient approach.

SUMMARY

It is permitted to select silverware from a mixture and set the table on Friday night for the next day's meal. ■

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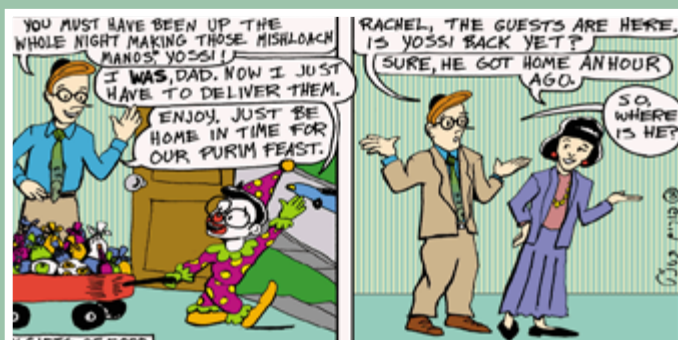


TEST YOURSELF - Q&A

- ❶ What was the minimum age of military service in the Jewish army?
- ❷ How many books are there in Tanach?
- ❸ Why did Aharon build the altar for the golden calf by himself?
- ❹ How can two brothers belong to two different tribes?
- ❺ How did Moshe become wealthy?

Answer

Moshe to keep the leftover fragments.
 ❶ 34:1 - Moshe carved the Tablets out of precious stone. Hashem commanded longer and in the interim Moshe would return. ❷ 32:27 - Half-brothers, sharing the same mother.
 ❸ 30:14 - Twenty. ❹ 31:18 - 24. ❺ 32:5 - He hoped that by building it by himself it would take



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