

# THE COMMUNITY Parasha Sheet



LONDON'S LEADING PLATFORM FOR STUDENTS AND YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

This weeks Parasha sheet is sponsored by Dan & Hannah Benhamou on the joyous occasion of the birth of their baby girl.

## RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

DIRECTOR  
TAL



### TWO IS BETTER THAN ONE!

An ignorant patient once approached a doctor asking for his analysis on his brain. The doctor examined the patient and told him, "I'm sorry to tell you that your brain has two halves.

The left half has nothing right in it, and the right half has nothing left in it."

Many times through life we don't seem to be reaching out to our full potential – we seem to be filling the glass only half, at others we are completely empty, only occasionally do we reach our target. How can we go for and realise that potential?

Let us take some insight from this weeks Parasha.

The Torah relates about the upkeep of the temple in the wilderness (Mishkan) via a collection of Machatsit Hashekel (half shekel).

Every man, whether rich or poor had to give half a shekel contribution to the Mishkan.

Our sages ask many questions on this episode; let us concentrate on a few.

Why they were commanded to give half a coin? What was the symbol of this half?

Furthermore when it came to this half a shekel, it seems that even Moshe was confused.

Rashi cites a Midrash that Moshe had difficulty envisioning this. Hashem showed Moshe the appearance of a coin made from fire weighing a half shekel and told him "This is what they shall give."

After this Moshe understood, but why did Hashem show the coin specifically to Moshe as a coin made of fire?

The Alshich Hakadosh explains that Hashem wanted to portray an important message to the entire congregation. Everyone had to give a half a shekel as opposed to a whole shekel, to imply that Am Yisrael is only whole, when we get together. Two halves that join together make one.

In our single status we are not complete.

When Hashem first created Adam, it was a combination of man and women. Hashem then split Adam and Chava, and the duty of every man since then is to find his soul mate, to settle down and get married. For this reason the Talmud calls an unmarried man a Palga Ish – half a man. When two halves combine a whole is created. Similarly when we all join in unity then we are a united force, otherwise we are divided and only worth half.

The Admor Mibohush Shlita gives an awesome insight as to why Moshe was shown a coin of fire.

Every Motsei Shabbat at Havdala we light a candle and bless Hashem – Borei Morei Haeish – for creating fire.

Why do we bless Hashem on Motsei Shabbat for creating fire?

Our Sages explain that when Adam sinned he lost the merit to stay in Gan Eden, yet Hashem in His mercy allowed Adam to stay there for Shabbat. ▶

17<sup>th</sup> ADAR I 5779

SHABBAT BEGINS: 5:10 PM

SHABBAT ENDS: 6:20 PM

### > MAZAL TOV

Antoine & Jessica Arama  
on the birth of a baby girl Naomi Hadassa

Dan & Hannah Benhamou  
on the birth of a baby girl



### THE WEEKLY QUOTE

"Live for the moments you  
cant put into words"

### > UPCOMING EVENTS

For our upcoming events  
check our website  
www.torahactionlife.com

- 1<sup>st</sup> MARCH  
Shabbat UK Young Professionals Friday night dinner
- 3<sup>rd</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> MARCH  
Young Professionals Ski Trip



### DVAR TORAH

Two is better than one!  
RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

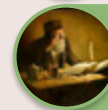
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### DVAR TORAH

The "boomerang effect" of giving!  
RABBI ALAN GARBET

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### OUR CHACHAMIM

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### HALACHOT

Wearing Tefillin at One's Son's Berit  
RABBI ELI MANSOUR

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### Q&A & CARTOON

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

As soon as Shabbat was over, he was banished and entered a dark world. He was alone and didn't know how to bring light to this darkness. He prayed to Hashem and He informed him that by taking two stones a spark could be created.

Hence fire was 'created' by man on Motsei Shabbat, and as we enter the new week, we thank G-d for this creation.

Take a look at a stone, what do you see?

Not much!

Perhaps you can use it as a door stopper, yet on the inside it has the ability to create fire.

Can it do this alone?

No. In order to create fire, there has to be two stones rubbing away at each other.

This says the Admor is why Moshe was shown the coin in fire.

Its value would be half, in order to emphasise that in order to reach your full potential you

must join with others. Team work and unity amongst Am Yisrael are essential.

But there is a further dimension – that of the individual;

In relating to the artisans that would build the Mishkan, Moshe was told “See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri...”. Betsalel was a man ‘filled with the spirit of G-d, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge’.

Yet this is the first time we are introduced to him. We have no recollection of who he is beforehand.

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein Zts'l asks why Hashem told Moshe to ‘see’. How was he supposed to see, if he didn't know this person before.

Rabbi Feinstein Zts'l gives an awesome answer.

Everyone is created with fantastic qualities. We each differ in our blessings. But we have to know and understand those blessings and if Hashem has blessed us, we should ‘see’ that

this blessing is for a reason. If we have great potential it is because Hashem created us that way in order for us to do great things.

Look at that potential and go for it.

Moshe was told – look – see, I have blessed Betsalel for a reason. He has great intelligence and understanding and he is the one that will be able to build the temple.

Thus the Parasha emphasises the individual together with the whole.

Each of us has incredible potential; we should introspect and understand that potential in order to bring it to light. But at the same time we should comprehend that the potential also requires joining others in unity. For as King Solomon wisely stated – two are better than one.

■ **Shabbat Shalom**

## RABBI ALAN GARBER - INTERIM PASTORAL RABBI BOREHAMWOOD AND ELSTREE UNITED SYNAGOGUE



### THE “BOOMERANG EFFECT” OF GIVING!

Giving to charity (tzedakah) is not a zero-sum game. Certainly giving to charity costs the giver something and benefits the recipient. However, there are benefits to the giver as well as to the receiver. In the Midrash on the Book of Ruth, Rabbi Yehoshua says:

More than what a rich person does for the poor man, the poor man does for the rich person, as Ruth says to Naomi, “The man's name whom I helped today is Boaz” (Ruth 2:19). It doesn't say, “Who helped me,” but rather “Whom I helped.”

The Midrash points out that Ruth, a poor woman, helped the wealthy landowner Boaz, implying that Boaz benefitted from the opportunity to give tzedakah. Indeed, Jewish tradition suggests several ways in which giving benefits the giver. Tzedakah is described as a way of getting closer to God, for it is through

tzedeck that God's presence is seen. The Torah further promises that God will reward those who practice justice and righteousness with long life and inheritance of the Land.

Maimonides, in his commentary to Ethics of our Fathers, takes this idea one step further, suggesting that the effect on the giver might even trump the impact on the recipient. He explains that if a person has a certain amount of money it would be preferable to give to more people smaller amounts than to give a large sum to one person as it cultivates a generous character in the giver.

At the beginning of this week's sedra, the Torah teaches us the way to take a census of the people; each person would give half a shekel which would go to community funds. The half shekels were then counted in order to find the total number of people.

It is interesting to note that the Hebrew word used to describe that each person should give is a palindrome;

וְנָתַנוּ - “Venatanu” (and they should give).

It reads the same forwards as it does backwards (the Hebrew letters are vav, nun, taf, nun and vav). This reflects this concept we have described that giving is a two way process. We could describe it as the “boomerang effect” of giving which benefits the recipient and elevates the person giving.

Indeed the two cantillation notes on top of the word וְנָתַנוּ are two “boomerang” shaped notes called kadma v'azlah which mean to go and come. When it comes to giving; what goes out, comes back.

Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler in the book “Strive for Truth” teaches us that a person is either a giver or a taker with their time, talents, money and energy. We are charged to constantly assess our actions and ask ourselves; are we being givers or takers? We should choose to be givers and by helping others we elevate ourselves.

■ **Shabbat shalom**

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## OUR CHACHAMIM

### RABBI SHLOMO ELIEZER ALFANDRI

Rabbi Shlomo Eliezer was one of the great sages of Sephardic Judaism. All the greats of the land came to see him – Ashkenaz Rabbis and Rebbe, as well as Sephardic Chachamim – in search of Torah.

He lived a long time, more than 100 years, and from his youth he corresponded with the greatest Gaonim of Israel, Rabbi Akiva Eiger and his son-in-law Rabbi Moshe Sofer.

Rabbi Shlomo was born in Constantinople (Istanbul), the capital of Turkey, into a renowned family. According to tradition, his family descended from Betzalel of the tribe of Judah, from which Sages and Rabbis of Jerusalem, Constantinople, and Izmir emerged. His father Rabbi Yaakov was known as a great G-d fearing scholar, yet he did not live a long time. At his death, Rabbi Shlomo was but a small boy.

The exact year of his birth is unknown, with some saying that he was born in 5586 (1826) and others saying in 5575 (1815).

He was first brought up by his mother, Hannah, a wise woman who was well-versed in the Torah. She had probably inherited this trait from her mother (Rabbi Shlomo's grandmother). She was very learned and filled with the knowledge of the Talmud and Poskim.

In his youth, Rabbi Shlomo Eliezer loved to isolate himself and study Torah without being disturbed. He would study all day long, late into the night, and he had no social life.

Still a young man, people predicted that he would one day become a Gaon. He possessed an extraordinary memory, a "cistern that does not lose a drop" of everything that he saw and heard. He witnessed many things in his life, for his diligence knew no limit. From time to time he would go to the Chachamim of Constantinople to hear their words of Torah, but the majority of his wisdom was due to his dedication to study. His name quickly became famous, and everyone knew that a new light shined in Constantinople.

At the age of 17 he married, and he had one son that died after a short time. For the rest of his life, he and his wife had no more children.

At the same time a wealthy resident of Constantinople built a special yeshiva for him, and great Talmidei Chachamim studied there, men who would become known, over the course of time, as great Torah scholars in Israel. Rabbi Haim Hizkiyahu Medini, the author of Sdei Hemed, was among them.

At about the age of 30, Rabbi Shlomo enjoyed great renown, and many people addressed him with questions of Halachah. His replies were short, concise, and categorical.

Even though he held firm opinions and possessed great courage and fervor for Torah and Judaism, he conducted himself with extreme humility. He wore neither a silk hat (as did the Chachamim), nor the customary apparel of the Rabbanim, but rather took care that his garments were clean and simple, like those of ordinary individuals.

He fought for education that was in conformity with the demands of the Torah. When some wanted to establish new schools in which secular subjects were to be taught instead of the Talmud, Chacham Alfandri (as he was known) went out to war against this idea. He published an open proclamation in which he stated: "If the Jewish people exist, it is precisely because of the Oral Law.

Without it, there would remain no trace of Israel, whereas thanks to the devoted study of the Oral Law, no people will be able to subjugate us." These words had a profound effect on all.

When the position of Rabbi in Damascus became vacant in 5659 (1899), the leaders of the community called upon Chacham Alfandri and asked him to become their Chief Rabbi. Despite his age, he accepted.

In 5664 (1904), Rabbi Shlomo Eliezer left for Eretz Israel and settled in Haifa. From there, the Chachamim and Rabbanim of Sefat invited him to become their Rav and Av Beit Din. He accepted this appointment and went to settle in Sefat.

A new period in his life began there. The aged lion surprised everyone who saw him by his vigor and sharp mind. All the great men of Torah came to him in order to hear his Torah and wisdom, and all who came into contact with him sensed that they were dealing with a holy man.

Legends of miracles and wonders began to circulate about him. The elders of Sefat recounted that during Nissan 1914, after having recited Birkat HaLevanah and his eyes were still turned upwards, Chacham Alfandri struck his hands together and he let out a deep sigh as tears flowed from his eyes. When he was asked the reason for this, he replied, "I see that a terrible world war will soon break out." At the end of that summer, the First World War began.

Chacham Alfandri spent his last years in Jerusalem, surrounded by a multitude of admirers and disciples. He was already more than 100 years old at that time, yet his mind was lucid and his vision clear. He didn't even need glasses.

In 5690 (1930) Rabbi Chaim Elazar Shapira (the Rebbe of Munkacz) came to meet him face to face. He even spoke with him using Sephardic Hebrew in order to better communicate with him. The Rebbe told him that he had learned from great Tzaddikim that the closeness of the Final Redemption depended primarily on the Tzaddik of the generation – if he would decree by the power of his Torah that Mashiach should arrive. This is why the Rebbe implored him to make such a decree. However Rabbi Shlomo Eliezer, in his humility, immediately replied: "I am not a Tzaddik." Upon hearing this, the Rebbe burst into tears.

This conversation took place about eight days before his death. On Tuesday morning, the 22nd of Iyar 5690 (1930), he asked his disciples to envelope him with his Tallit and to put his two pairs of Tefillin upon him, on his arm and head (according to the custom of the Sephardic Chachamim). He immediately recited Shema, and when he came to the word emet [truth], he signaled his disciples to remove his Tefillin. He then said, "Enough, enough. The main thing is emet. I can no longer continue..." and his soul departed in holiness and purity. By one estimate, he was 115 years old at the time.

Multitudes attended his funeral, and shops closed down as the rabbinical courts of Jerusalem decreed a stop to the workday. There were no eulogies given at his funeral, but multitudes from the Sephardic and Ashkenazi communities followed his coffin in tears.

His disciples carried his coffin on their shoulders all the way from his home in the Ruhama district to the summit of the Mount of

Olives. ■



## HALACHOT

### RABBI ELI MANSOUR

#### WEARING TEFILLIN AT ONE'S SON'S BERIT

In some communities, it is customary for the father to wear Tefillin during his son's Berit. Is this a proper practice?

While all agree that it is proper to wear a Tallit during the Berit, out of respect for the Mivva, there is some discussion regarding the propriety of wearing Tefillin during a Berit.

One objection to this practice was raised by a Rabbi cited by the Hida (Rav Haim Yosef David Azulai, 1724-1806), in his work Mar'it Ha'ayin. This Rabbi contended that it should be forbidden to wear Tefillin during a Berit, for the same reason Halacha forbids wearing Tefillin on Shabbat. Our Sages teach that Tefillin is described as an "Ot" ("sign") of our connection with G-d, just as Shabbat is. If we wear Tefillin on Shabbat, we give the impression that Shabbat itself is insufficient as an "Ot," thus necessitating Tefillin, and for this reason, the Sages forbade wearing Tefillin on Shabbat, in order to preserve the honor of Shabbat. Berit Mila, too, is described as an "Ot" of our covenant with Hashem, and thus, seemingly, just as it is forbidden to wear Tefillin on Shabbat, it should be forbidden to wear Tefillin at a Berit, as this would imply that the Berit itself is not a clear enough sign of our special bond with the Almighty.

The Hida strongly rejects this line of reasoning. He notes that if one wears Tefillin on Shabbat, he himself is showing two signs of the Berit – he is observing Shabbat, and he is wearing Tefillin. At a Berit, however, the circumcision is being performed on the infant, not on the father, and thus the father's wearing Tefillin does not imply anything about the "sign" of circumcision. Moreover, the Hida argues, according to this Rabbi's logic, we should never wear Tefillin, because we have the sign of the Berit on our bodies at all times. Just as we observe Shabbat as a "sign" of the Berit despite our already having such a sign in the form of the Berit Mila, there is no problem at all wearing Tefillin during the circumcision of one's child.

Nevertheless, the general practice among Sepharadim is not to wear Tefillin during a Berit. Additionally, Hacham Baruch Ben-Haim (1921-2005) discouraged fathers from keeping their Tefillin on after Shaharit until the Berit, because usually, when Beritot are performed after Shaharit, there is a delay between the conclusion of Shaharit and the Berit, during which time people mingle and socialize. It would be disrespectful to the Tefillin to socialize while wearing them, and so Hacham Baruch felt it would be best to remove one's Tefillin after Shaharit, rather than keep them on for the Berit.

It should be noted that if a Berit is being performed on Rosh Hodesh, one should not put his Tefillin on for the Berit. After we remove our Tefillin before Musaf on Rosh Hodesh, they should not be put on again, and so on Rosh Hodesh, it is improper to put on Tefillin for a Berit.

On all other occasions, however, it would be permissible to put one's Tefillin on for a Berit, or to keep them on after Shaharit if the Berit is being performed immediately after the conclusion of the prayer service, such that the Tefillin will not be disrespected in the interim. As mentioned, however, the prevalent practice in our community is not to wear Tefillin at a Berit.

It should be noted that generally speaking, Mohalim do not wear Tefillin while performing the Berit, for the simple reason that the straps might interfere with their work. It goes without saying that a Mohel's very highest priority when performing a Berit is to ensure that it is done properly, and thus Mohalim generally do not wear Tefillin at a Berit, as the Tefillin might get in the way. Many Mohalim do not wear a Tallit while performing a Berit, either, for the same reason, as the Sisit strings might interfere with their work.

Summary: In some communities, it is customary for a father to wear Tefillin at his son's Berit, though this is not the common practice among Sephardic communities. Regardless, one should not wear Tefillin for a Berit on Rosh Hodesh, as it is improper to put Tefillin back on after removing them before Musaf on Rosh Hodesh. Additionally, one should not keep on his Tefillin after Shaharit if there is a delay before the Berit during which time he will be mingling, as this would be disrespectful to the Tefillin. ■



**MONDAY NIGHT SERIES**

I recently discovered the TAL Monday night series and for me this is a great way to start the week. Everyone is very welcoming and with the evenings being held at Rabbi Tawil's house I quickly felt at home.

I enjoy the format of social and learning and take pleasure from meeting new people each week while building friendships with likeminded young professionals.

By Bradley Bendell

# Kids Time



## TEST YOURSELF - Q&A

- ❶ How many books are there in Tanach?
- ❷ From where did the men take the earrings that they donated to make the calf?
- ❸ Why did Aharon build the altar for the golden calf by himself?
- ❹ Why did Moshe break the Tablets?
- ❺ How can two brothers belong to two different tribes?

❶ 31:18 - 24. ❷ 32:2,3 - From their ears. ❸ 32:5 - He hoped that by building it by himself it would take longer and in the interim Moshe would return. ❹ 32:19 - Moshe reasoned: If those who have estranged themselves from the Torah are forbidden to partake in even a single commandment (Pesach sacrifice), surely the entire Torah cannot be given to a whole nation which has estranged itself from Hashem! ❺ 32:27 - Half-brothers, sharing the same mother.

**Answer**

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