

# THE COMMUNITY Parasha Sheet



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This week's Parasha Sheet is sponsored lirfuat Adi Bat Michal Betch Shaar Cholei Yisrael

## RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

DIRECTOR  
TAL



### MANY THOUGHTS!

You're late for a very important business meeting. The Chazan finishes the Amida – and you wait for the potential good news – no Tachanun. But it doesn't come! You check your watch and decide time out. Off go the Tefilin and before you know it you're in the car on the way to the meeting.

Fait has it of course that every traffic light you seem to approach – turns red!

In an undertone you can hear yourself claiming – it wouldn't have made any difference if I would have stayed in Shul 5 extra minutes. (Of course it would have made all the difference as each extra minute with Tefilin and each Amen gains eternal reward!)

Shlomo Hamelech stated – Rabot Machshavot – "Many thoughts are in a man's heart, but Hashem's advice will prevail (Mishlei 19:21).

We think we are gaining by leaving early, but Hashem sometimes has a different plan.

In this week's Parasha, Moshe, was commanded to avenge the attack on the Children of Israel by the Midianites before his death. Rashi comments that even though Moshe knew that his death would follow, he did this with joy and did not procrastinate.

We can ask, how did Rashi know that Moshe acted joyfully? Perhaps he felt sadness and only did this because of G-d's command.

The "Kli Yakar" (Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim of Lunshitz) explains that the answer can be found in the changes Moshe made when repeating G-d's words. Whereas G-d

said: "Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites; afterward you shall be gathered unto your people," Moshe changed his words and said: "...execute Hashem's vengeance on Midian". Moshe said to himself: If I repeat the words as they were spoken, that they should go to war with Midian for their own honour and afterwards I will be gathered up unto my people, the Children of Israel will say: We forego the vengeance and let Moshe not die! Therefore Moshe changed the wording and said: "...Hashem's vengeance on Midian." The vengeance is for the honour of the Almighty, and this you cannot forego.

This type of message can only result form joy, not sadness.

Our sages, who expressed Moshe's greatness, mention in that same Midrash that not everyone merits rising to such a high level. Even a spiritual giant like Yehoshua did not achieve that degree of selflessness demonstrated by Moshe.

Our sages taught: It is written in Yehoshua (1:5) "As I was with Moshe, so will I be with you."

Yehoshua should have lived 120 years like Moshe! Why was his life shorter by 10 years? When G-d told Moshe: "Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites; afterward you shall be gathered unto your people," and even if this heralded Moshe's death, he acted quickly "and Moshe sent them". But when Yehoshua was about to fight against the 31 kings, he said "If I kill them immediately, I will die right away, just like Moshe or teacher. What did he do? He delayed the war with them, as it is written (Yehoshua 11):

"Yehoshua made war a long time with all those kings."

G-d said to him: "Have you done everything? Behold, I will shorten your life by 10 years." (Bamidbar Rabba 22)

Yehoshua thought that he would prolong the war and live longer. Hashem wasn't happy with this conduct and the opposite occurred. So said Shlomo "Many thoughts are in a man's heart, but G-d's counsel will prevail." (Mishlei 19:21):

In fact on a deeper level, throughout Jewish history these famous words have rung out, symbolising G-d's Guiding Hand in our eventful history. ►

## > MAZAL TOV

Sion & Deanna Cohen  
on the birth of their baby boy.



## THE WEEKLY QUOTE

"Happiness lies in the joy of achievement and the thrill of creative effort."

## > UPCOMING EVENTS

• 16TH SEPTEMBER FUN DAY

For our upcoming events check our website  
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### DVAR TORAH

Many Thoughts!  
RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

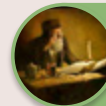
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This newsletter contains Divrei Torah and may contain Sheimot - Please dispose of accordingly

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The entire exile to Egypt was as a result of Yosef going out to look for his brothers.

There were no GPS's in those days. He was not looking for a specific address. He was out in the field in the middle of nowhere.

Yosef should have gone back to Yaakov and told him "I tried to find them but I was not successful. They were nowhere to be found."

But the Almighty wanted Yosef to find his brothers and A man found him and behold he was blundering in the field..."(Bereishit 37:15) Yosef was 'found' by a man who helped guide him to his brothers.

He went off to see them, they sold him to Egypt and the rest is history.

The Ramban on this Pasuk " says four very important words.

HaGezeira Emet V'haCharitzut Sheker.

When G-d wants something to happen, He makes it happen!

HaGezeira Emet - what G-d has decreed is true (it will happen), V'haCharitzut Sheker and the diligence of man is false.

Man can plan and do this and that but in the final analysis, if G-d wants something to happen, it will happen and if He does not want it to happen, it will not happen.

This is Jewish history. This is the whole story of the exile to Egypt. It was all hanging on Yosef finding his brothers.

Once in the depth of servitude in Egypt, we see that Pharaoh wanted to get rid of the Jewish boys. He decreed that all male children be thrown into the Nile.

Pharaoh stated - Hava Nitchakma Lo Pen Yirbeh - Let's come up with a plan lest they increase in population... R Shlomo Zalman Auerbach Zts'l explained that the numeric value (Gematria) of this phrase is 918.

Pharaoh wanted to bring down our population;

G-d has a different plan: Vayomer Lahem Elokim Pru Urvu... - and G-d said to them: Be fruitful and multiply. This also has a numerical value of 918.

And so it was that G-d's plan overrode Pharaoh's plan.

Similarly when it came to Moshe's birth - pharaoh was told by his astrologers that the saviour of the Jewish people would be born. He decreed that every male baby be thrown into the river. And it was - even Moshe Rabenu himself was thrown into the Nile as an infant.

Pharaoh decreed - Kol Haben Hayilod Hayora Tashlichu - numerical value of 1154.

And Hashem had other plans - but G-d's counsel will prevail - Atsat Hashem Hi Takum - 1154.

Pharaoh's own daughter came down just then to bathe, saved Moshe, and he was raised in Pharaoh's own palace. It was as a result of his own plan that the future Jewish leader was raised not as a slave, but as a prince who learned the protocols of leadership.

It is only when we tap into and connect ourselves to Hashem, that we are able to attach to the infinite.

Hashem has been with us and will always be with us throughout history. If we make our will like the will of the creator - we cannot fault.

Many are the thoughts in the hearts of man, and G-d's plan is what emerges. ■ **Shabbat Shalom**

## RABBI DANNY KADA - WEMBLEY SEPHARDI SYNAGOGUE



### ENVIRONMENTAL FRIENDLY

We may not like to think of ourselves as conformists but there is ample scientific evidence that to some extent, whether we like it or not, we are conditioned by the environment and society we find ourselves in.

In the 1950's Solomon Asch conducted a series of experiments in which eight people were gathered in a room and were shown a line, then asked which of three others was the same length. Unknown to the eighth, the seven others were associates of the experimenter and were following his instructions. On a number of occasions the seven gave an answer that was clearly false, yet in 75 per cent of cases the eighth was willing to give an answer, in conformity with the group, he knew to be false.

Other experiments have shown that customers are less inclined to return a supermarket trolley to the trolley line if when entering the shop's premises the trolleys are not organised in an orderly fashion.

Towards the end of the double parasha this week we read about the six cities of refuge to which an inadvertent killer was instructed to flee to protect him from the vengeful relatives of a victim<sup>1</sup>. Earlier in the Parasha we learn of Moshe's approval to the proposal of the members of two and half (Reuven, Gad and half of Menasheh) of the twelve tribes

to occupy permanently the land east of the River Jordan<sup>2</sup>. As a significant minority of the Jewish people were to remain Transjordan, it was of course necessary for protection for inadvertent killers to be offered there too. Surprisingly though, we find that the six cities of refuge were to be divided equally between the two pieces of land the Jewish people were to occupy: three were to be situated on the west of the Jordan and three on the east, meaning that 50 percent of the cities was to accommodate a mere 21 percent of the Jewish population.

The Gemara<sup>3</sup>, bothered by this statistical imbalance, explains that on the east bank of the Jordan murderers were more common; consequently an equal amount of cities was necessary.

The difficulty with this explanation is apparent: the cities of refuge were provided only for those who had killed inadvertently. Even if there were more murderers on the east bank, why would that have any effect on the number of cities designated for inadvertent killers?

Maharal<sup>4</sup> offers the following profound interpretation: the fact that premeditated murder on the east bank was relatively common had the effect of devaluing life even for the innocent, law-abiding citizen. Because life was valued less, the standard of care adopted by innocent citizens on the east side was far lower than those on the west. Consequently, there were more inadvertent killings since people were - subconsciously - more negligent with human life.

We should never underestimate the power of our surroundings and how we are affected, even subconsciously, by the society we choose to live in. Even some of the most important values we precious cherish, such as respect and dignity for

another human's life, can be unwittingly eroded when we witness and live amongst others that do not share the same values we do.

Conversely, living in an environment in which the values we subscribe to are indeed advanced and promoted, can only encourage us to remain committed to those ideals. Indeed, R. Yehoshua Leib Diskin<sup>5</sup> understands the directive to judge one's acquaintance favorably in this light. Seeing another Jew committing a sin inevitably causes that particular sin to become weakened from the perspective of the spectator. When the Torah commands us to judge a fellow Jew favourably it is partly to avoid the wrongdoing in question from becoming an accepted form of behaviour to us. Viewing others in a positive light and finding their good has the effect of the mitsvot of Hashem remaining precious to us.

In the beautiful words of Rambam<sup>6</sup>: "It is natural for a man's character and actions to be influenced by his friends and associates and for him to follow the local norms of behaviour. Therefore, he should associate with the righteous and be constantly in the company of the wise, so as to learn from their deeds."

<sup>1</sup> Bemidbar 35:9-15.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid 32:20-24.

<sup>3</sup> Makkot 9b, cited by Rashi.

<sup>4</sup> Gur Aryeh, Rabbi Yehuda Loewe, 1526-1609. See Ramban for a more technical answer.

<sup>5</sup> Maharil Diskin, Vayikra 19:15.

<sup>6</sup> Deot, 6:1.

■ **Shabbat shalom**



## OUR CHACHAMIM

### RABBI AVRAHAM SHAG • "THE RAV OF KOBELSDORF"

Three shepherds of Israel have placed Jerusalem at the head of their concerns. They always dreamed of returning to Zion, and they impatiently awaited the day when they could settle down in Eretz Israel and cherish its soil. These were the Vilna Gaon, the Baal Shem Tov, and the Chatam Sofer, men who also encouraged their disciples to ascend to Zion and to raise it from its ruins.

The disciples of the Vilna Gaon went to Eretz Israel in 5568 (1808) and established outposts for the Ashkenaz community in Jerusalem, while those of the Baal Shem Tov settled in Sefat and Tiberias. The disciples of the Chatam Sofer did a great deal of work for renewing settlements in Jerusalem and establishing agricultural villages throughout the country.

Rabbi Avraham Shaag (Zwebner) was born on Iyar 4, 5561 (1801) in the city of Freistadt, Hungary to Rabbi Yehuda Leib, who was among the greatest disciples of Rabbi Yechezkel Landau, the author of Noda Bihuda. The family name of Rabbi Yehuda Leib was actually Zwebner, but once when he asked his Rav, the Noda Bihuda, a difficult question, the latter replied: "A lion shaag [has roared]; who will not fear?" [Amos 3:8]. From that time on, people began calling him "Shaag".

He lost his father near the age of four, and his mother sent him to Rabbi Yitzchak Fraenkel, the Rav of Roggendorf, so that he teach him Torah and mitzvot. The young boy was very gifted, and about the age of 10 he already knew a great part of the Talmud. When he reached the age of Bar Mitzvah, he went to study at the Chatam Sofer's yeshiva in Pressburg, and there he rapidly became known as one of Rabbi Moshe Sofer's best students. His Rav would often boast of him to the Torah greats who came to visit him.

One day, accompanied by his son Rabbi Avraham Shemuel Binyamin, the Chatam Sofer organized an inspection after midnight in the student's dormitory. When they approached the room of the young Avraham Shaag, they could hear from afar the sounds of Torah that arose from the room. Both of them, the Rav and his son, remained listening joyfully to his voice for a long time. The Chatam Sofer then turned to his son and said, "Observe and listen. This is how one must study!"

Before the age of 25, Rabbi Avraham became the Rav and Av Beit Din of the city of Schottelsdorf. He thereupon opened a yeshiva, which young men flocked to from near and far to hear his Torah. The city, which before his arrival was devoid of Torah and mitzvot, became a center of Torah and the fear of Heaven during the 25 years that Rabbi Avraham was its Rav.

From Schottelsdorf, he went to the community of Kobelsdorf (the name by which he is known), where he remained as Rav until his departure for Eretz Israel.

As was his habit, Rabbi Avraham Shaag was not content with enclosing himself in the tent of Torah study. Rather, he was in the first line of defense against the assimilationists and reformers, calling upon people with impassioned words to be vigilant and defend the holiness of Israel. He

proved to be a leader who knew how to safely and loyally guide the ship of Judaism and thus prevent it from sinking in the ocean of unbelief. Little by little, he became the spokesperson and leader of Hungarian and Austrian Jewry.

His yeshiva was also filled to capacity. Each day for six hours in a row, he would remain standing to give courses to youngsters. Even in the twilight of his life, when he was sick and weak, he stood as he gave his courses. Despite his numerous occupations, he found the time to write responsa to those who asked him questions, and he was in contact with the greatest men of his generation on matters of Halachah.

In 5631 (1871), at the age of 70, he decided to fulfill the ambition of his life and leave for Eretz Israel, the land that his soul ardently yearned for. When his plans became known, the greatest Rabbis of Hungary came to see him and implored him to take the situation of Judaism at that critical time into account. Thus his voyage was postponed.

However in 5633 (1873), he made the definitive decision to go and settle in Eretz Israel. To those who once again asked him not to leave, he replied that from the time he heard his Rav the Chatam Sofer speaking of Eretz Israel and its holiness, he had decided to ascend the mount of G-d and settle down near the Holy of holies, considering his life in exile as being temporary. He added that he had never spent a day, nor an hour, without yearning for Zion.

At the end of a 20-day journey, the boat carrying Rabbi Avraham Shaag arrived on a Friday at dusk at the port of Alexandria. He remained there on Shabbat, and during the entire day he stayed in his cabin in the bowels of the ship, without leaving, because of the prohibition "You shall no longer return on this road [to Egypt] again" (Deuteronomy 17:16).

On Sunday, Iyar 21 the lion of Hungary walked upon the soil of the Holy Land. He prostrated himself to the ground and kissed it as he said, "For Your servants have cherished her stones and favored her dust" (Psalms 102:15).

Not long after his arrival in Jerusalem, Rabbi Avraham Shaag greatly desired to purchase some land in Eretz Israel, and he wanted even more that it be near Jerusalem. He purchased a parcel of land near the city walls at the Jaffa Gate on the west. On this site a series of shops were built that remained as the commercial center of both parts of Jerusalem until 5708 (1948). After the Six Day War, all the structures that had been built on the site were removed, and the walls of the old city once again appeared.

Rabbi Avraham Shaag remained in Jerusalem for about three years. On Shabbat, the eve of Rosh Chodesh Nissan 5636 (1876), he rendered his soul to Heaven and was buried on the slopes of the Mount of Olives.

His main disciple, Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, the Rav of Jerusalem, recounted the following: "This last Friday, when his classes were finished, my teacher concluded by stating, 'We are staying here.' This is something that he had never said at the end of a lecture, which in general finished by him kissing the margins of the Gemara." ■



## HALACHOT

### RABBI ELI MANSOUR

#### DO PEOPLE WHO TRAVEL BY FERRY EVERY DAY RECITE BIRKAT HA'GOMEL?

The Minhat Yishak (Rav Yishak Weiss, 1901-1989) addresses the situation of people who live on an island and thus frequently travel by ferry through waterways. He writes that since the ordinary mode of travel for such people is by ferry, and this is how they get to the places they need to go on a day-to-day basis, they do not recite Birkat Ha'gamel after a ferry ride, even if the ride entails a trip of 72 minutes or longer. Since this is their normal, everyday practice, and Birkat Ha'gamel is required only after an unusual situation of danger, people in this situation do not recite the Beracha.

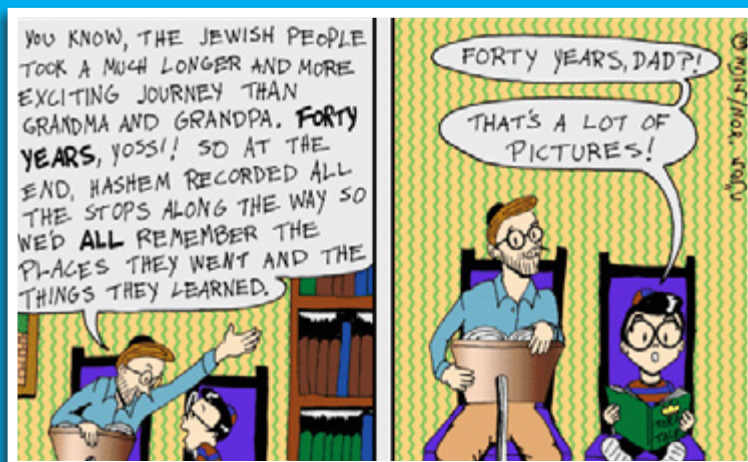
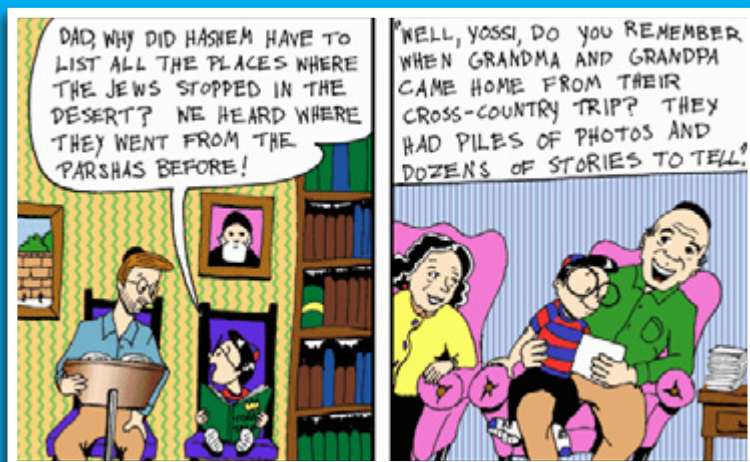
Rav Shemuel Pinhasi (contemporary) adopts this ruling in his work Ve'chol Ha'haim (p. 47; listen to audio recording for precise citation). He gives the example of the city of Venice, where the only way to travel from one place to the next is by ferryboat. Since ferry travel is the ordinary, day-to-day means of travel, people who live in such places would not recite Birkat Ha'gamel after a trip in a ferry.

Summary: People who regularly travel by ferry do not recite Birkat Ha'gamel after a ferry trip. ■





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## STORY

### FINISH WHAT YOU START

Avi.

Yes, Mom.

Please finish your breakfast before you leave for school.

Yes, Mom.

Later that day . . .

Mom, can I go out to ride my bicycle now?

Did you finish your homework yet, Avi?

No, not yet.

First, finish your homework, then you can go out to ride.

The next day at the store . . .

Mom, can you please buy me that model car? It looks so neat and all I have to do is glue it together.

Avi, did you finish gluing together the last model that I bought you?

Uh, no Mom. Not yet.

Well, Avi, you have to finish that one first before we can buy you a new one.

Mom, it seems that you are always telling me to finish things. Finish your breakfast . . . finish your homework . . . finish your model. Why is it so important to finish everything?

Avi dear, may I answer your question with a question?

Why not, Mom?

What if G-d Himself told you to finish something that you started, would you listen to Him?

Of course, Mom.

That is exactly what happened in the desert, 3500 years ago.

Really?

Yes. Let me tell you the story. The nation of Midian tried to bring about the downfall of the Jewish people. They actually succeeded in convincing one of our leaders to join their way of thinking.

That's terrible.

It was actually worse than that. Some of the Jewish people were ready to follow this leader. He was gaining power and a following and nobody arose to challenge him. The situation was getting worse by the moment. Then Pinchas stepped in. He began the rebellion against the nation of Midian and against the people who were following them.

What does that have to do with finishing what you start, Mom?

I'm not finished the story yet, Avi. Pinchas began the rebellion but unfortunately, there was no way to avoid a war with the nation of Midian. When it came time to fight the war, G-d Himself told Pinchas to lead the nation in battle. Normally this would have been the job of the Kohen Godol, Elazar HaKohen, the father of Pinchas.

Why did Pinchas lead the battle and not his father Elazar?

Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, the great Bible and Talmudic commentator, known to us as "Rashi" explains the answer to your question, Avi dear. Pinchas began the rebellion against Midian; therefore, it was his job to finish what he started. We learn from this the importance of finishing what you start.

Wow, Mom.

If you want to get a little philosophical Avi, think about this. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts. A whole chair is more than the wood, fabric, and screws that went into making it. You cannot sit comfortably on pieces of wood. A car is much more than the parts that it is made of. They cannot drive you from place to place. Anything, when completed, becomes more than its individual parts. This is especially true of mitzvos (commandments). You may put a lot of effort into starting something and getting halfway through. It will take just as much effort to finish. However, you will have a whole thing. A whole complete nutritious meal, a complete homework assignment, a complete project. These are really worth something.

Thank you so much Mom, for finishing the story. You have really inspired me to always try to finish what I start.

That's a good start, Avi. Keep going and you will finish.

## TEST YOURSELF - Q&A

- 1 Who may annul a vow?
- 2 When may a father annul his widowed daughter's vows?
- 3 Why were the Jewish People not commanded to attack Moav, as they were to attack Midian?
- 4 Those selected to fight Midian went unwillingly. Why?
- 5 What holy vessels accompanied the Jewish People into battle?

### Answer

1 30:2 - Preferably, an expert in the laws of nedarim. Otherwise, three ordinary people.  
 2 30:10 - If she is under 12 and 1/2 years old and widowed before she was fully married.  
 3 31:2 - Because Moav only acted out of fear against the Jewish People. Also, Ruth was destined to come from Moav. 4 31:5 - They knew that Moshe's death would follow. 5 31:6 - The aron and the tzitz.