

THE COMMUNITY Parasha Sheet



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Lirfuat Eliyahu Chaim Ben Rivka Betch Shaar Cholei Yisrael

RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

**DIRECTOR
TAL**



PARASHA INSIGHTS

There is a famous story of a king that built vast wondrous cities. At his disposal was an awesome architect and builder named Joseph.

Joseph was known throughout the Kingdom, and had been instrumental in producing the most magnificent edifices for the King. He worked gallantly all his life.

As he got older, he decided that the time had come to 'retire'.

Not an easy task being the best man in the kingdom. The King was very fond of Joseph and allowed him to retire, but first made one final request.

"I would like you to build for me one last building.

Make it as good as you can!

The land I am giving you for this project is vast, with potential for beautiful gardens and pools, as well as a large living area."

Joseph was tired. He had built his whole life and really needed the rest. But the King's request was paramount. He had to perform, and it would be his last.

He thought for a while about the planning and then realised that he had many tools and objects left over from previous jobs. It would be a shame and waist of his money to go out and buy new material.

Although he wouldn't be able to build such a magnificent place as before, he was happy to proceed using all the leftover tools and material to create the

king's final request. He had after all built up the entire country; surely the last place wouldn't matter so much.

With lacklustre he began to build his final building, putting together a mix of new and old. He had worked hard all his life, and just didn't have the energy or will power to work hard on this one. After months of mediocre workmanship, he approached the king with the final product.

The king made a grand party thanking Joseph for all his kind work and past effort.

After an hour, the trumpets sounded and the king came to Joseph with a box.

In it lay what looked like a special present.

Joseph was pleasantly surprised as the king related that he wanted to show his appreciation to Joseph for all his years' hard work.

His imagination went wild, he started to fantasise over what lay in the box; perhaps it was a massive diamond, worth millions.

As he opened the box, he was shocked.

The King looked towards him and said "these are the keys to your new residence!"

The building that Joseph had built in such a mediocre and lack lustre fashion was now his new residence a present from the king!

We are all created special. Each one of us is given many tools to produce who we are.

At times we make the most of it, but at others we complain, not realising that the edifice that we are building is our own!

We are and become what we ourselves create.

Lefum Tsara Agra - the wonderful result depends according to the hard work we put in. ►

” **THE WEEKLY QUOTE**
"Difficult roads often lead to beautiful destinations"

> UPCOMING EVENTS

• 3RD SEPTEMBER
ROSH HASHANAH SPECIAL TALK AND DINNER (Free)

• 16TH SEPTEMBER
FAMILY FUN DAY

• 12TH OCTOBER
FRIDAY NIGHT BANQUET AT THE AVENUE

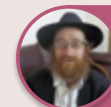
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Parasha Insights
RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

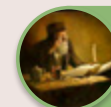
P1



DVAR TORAH

Kosher- Super Healthy- Supra Rational
RABBI AVRAHAM CITRON

P2



OUR CHACHAMIM

RABBI SHLOMO HACHOHEN OF VILNA

P3



HALACHOT

Faded Ink on a Sefer Torah, Tefillin, and Mezuzot / RABBI ELI MANSOUR

P3



Q&A & STORY

P4

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



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Jasmine your Bat Mitsva Parsha, (and by the way it's also my Bar Mitsva Parsha) starts with the interesting word Reeh - "See".

The Torah relates the reward and punishment for keeping the Mitzvot.

Interestingly it starts with the word Reeh - See in the singular form - relating to an individual. Yet the Pasuk continues a few words later in the plural tense with the word "Lifneichem." - In front of you (plural).

Why does the Torah change tense, surely it should have finished the sentence in the singular - Lefanecha?

Every action we partake of has an effect on our eventual personality. But at the same time our actions create ripple effects that ring throughout the world.

The Chatham Sofer brings a Gemara in Kiddushin that states one should live his or her life as if their life is

in complete balance between good and evil. If they were to perform even one more Mitzvah, their personal scales would be tipped and they would be guaranteed life. However, the opposite effect holds true as well. By using this mind set, an individual will learn the power of even one of his or her actions on their life.

R' Akiva later in the Gemara takes this idea a bit farther. He says that not only should one have the mindset that their life is a scale; one should view the entire world as being in complete balance. R' Akiva is trying to explain that every person should view themselves as being able to individually affect the entire world.

Jasmine you are now Bat Mitsva - but what does that mean? The daughter of a mitzvah? Sounds funny?!

You are of an age where your decisions are key to your outcome, your eventual personality.

The word Mitzvah comes from the word Tsevet - a team or connection. Every Mitsva that we perform connects us to G-d, but also connects us to the entire nation.

This is the phase in life that you are now entering.

We can now understand why the Torah starts by referring to the individual Re'eh and moves on to the plural Lifneichem. We should see (Re'eh) as individuals the power that we have on the world around us. When we do Mitzvot we need to know that Hashem promises to place before us (Lifneichem) Brachot. Those blessings will affect the entire world and will affect history.

Did you know that Jasmine is a genus of shrubs and vines in the olive family? Well thanks to Wikipedia I found out that it contains around 200 species native to tropical and warm temperate regions of Europe, Asia, and Africa. ■ **Shabbat Shalom**

RABBI AVRAHAM CITRON - WALFORD ROAD SYNAGOGUE, SHAARE MAZAL TOV



KOSHER- SUPER HEALTHY- SUPRA RATIONAL

When Rabbi Tawil asked that I write an article about Parshat Re'eh, kosher animals immediately came to my mind. But as it was Chukat when he spoke to me, so I thought I would write about the chukim (statutes which seem to have no logical reason) and their connection to Kashrut.

Why does the Torah command us not to eat certain animals? There are those who explain that it is for our own good health-wise. Certainly many health practitioners advise against eating pork and shellfish. Even this most rationalist approach (Vol 3 Chapter 48 of Moreh Nevuchim of Maimonides) has an element of chok (unknowable). Can you show the same evidence for the hundreds of other non-kosher animals? Probably not. You take it on faith that just as pork is bad for your health so are the others.

Or possibly, as the Ramban [Nachmanides] says, you are what you eat. The negative character traits of non-kosher animals can ill-affect your own character. Note that not one predatory mammal is kosher. Apparently preying on others is not a trait valued by G-d. Seems to make sense, yet there are non-kosher animals that the Torah itself uses as metaphors for good qualities, for instance when the Torah refers to the tribe of Yissachar as a donkey bearing the yoke of Torah.

When Rashi explains what 'chok' means, he writes, "The nations and the Satan pester us, saying why don't you wear shatnez (clothing with a linen-wool mix), why don't you eat non-kosher etc?"

So why indeed kosher?

All the above is true. Keeping Torah really is beneficial for us in tangible and visible ways. It is healthy to live a Torah-bound lifestyle. "For it is your life and the length of your days" (Devarim 30, 20). Torah and its observance is most certainly spiritually uplifting as well, and we become morally improved people by striving to keep the mitzvot and allowing ourselves to be changed by it.

But, most importantly, the Torah (in its entirety) is an unknowable chok because G-d is unknowable and the Torah is the wisdom of G-d. Hashem is not physical. He is also not spiritual. He is beyond all definition. He is infinite while we are finite, and even if we sat on a mountain top our entire life and meditated, we would still not be truly connected to Him. We connect to G-d through a mitzvah, through fulfilling what He instructed us to do. How we finite beings connect to the infinite G-d is truly a mystery.

It is wonderful to explore and attempt to at least have a glimpse of the beauty of Torah and its depth, but let us first and foremost commit ourselves whole heartedly to the Mitzvot whatever level we stand at and however deep our understanding reaches.

Eating kosher and eating it for the right reason(s) does not merely save us from negative animalistic traits but also internalizes in a very palpable way (and in a way that becomes one with us) the fact that we can, through mitzvot, unite with the Holy One, blessed by He, who is unknowable and beyond anything we can ever possibly imagine.

■ **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 Shirintz, 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.

When the "Lovers of Zion" movement first appeared, Rabbi Shlomo Hachohen became interested in it and gave it his approval. At that time he wrote a letter asking people to help farmers and wine-growers in our Holy Land: "Up to now, a dozen or so villages have been established in our Holy Land, and it is a great mitzvah to help, support, and give them what they need in order to survive, and to assure them of a solid foundation. The merit of this mitzvah is extremely great, and one mitzvah brings about another. We must also remember the Rabbi Meir Baal Haness fund and collect money for it as well, for it is also very precious and holy to us. From Zion G-d will bless you all, and you will merit to see His return to Zion in mercy, speedily in our days. Amen." His work for the "Lovers of Zion" movement in Russia demonstrated his great love for Eretz Israel, which had conquered his heart and soul.

In reality, where Rabbi Shlomo Hachohen's greatness lay, there we also find his modesty. Never did he seek out honor. He behaved like a simple and ordinary man, and in no way did he feel that he deserved respect because of his Torah. When he went to synagogue and people rose in his honor, he thought that they wanted to perform the mitzvah of rising before the elderly. It did not even enter his mind that people were honoring him because of his Torah and importance.

Rabbi Shlomo Hachohen lived to a good old age. On Kislev 29, 5666 (December 27, 1905), this Gaon and Tzaddik rendered his soul to G-d in purity from the town of Vilna, where he had lived and worked all his life. ■



HALACHOT

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

FADED INK ON A SEFER TORAH, TEFILLIN, AND MEZUZOT

It is very common that over the course of time the black ink on a Sefer Torah fades. Although the letters are still fully visible, at times, they are no longer black. Does this affect the validity of the Sefer Torah?

The Hatam Sofer (Teshuvot, Yoreh De'ah 256) rules that even if the ink fades, that is considered to be normal 'wear and tear' and the Sefer Torah is still valid. R. Ovadia Yosef agreed, especially in light of the position of the Rambam (Teshuvot 294), who maintains that an invalid Sefer Torah may be read publicly. He adds that it is proper to go over the letters and darken them. Regarding Shabbat Zachor, which many view as a Biblical obligation, one should be strict and not read from a Torah with faded letters.

However, this is only true for a Sefer Torah. Regarding Tefillin and Mezuzot, a person should not wear tefillin, or use the mezuzot, until a sofer goes over the letters and darkens them with black ink. He notes that darkening the letters does not violate the principle of "kesidran," i.e., that one must write the parshiot of tefillin in the order in which they appear in the Torah. ■

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TEST YOURSELF - Q&A

- 1 What were the sites designated for the "blessings and the curses" to be pronounced by the people?
- 2 On what condition will Bnei Yisrael receive the blessings from Hashem?
- 3 Why does the Torah use idolatry as an example when describing one who strays from the path that Hashem commanded?
- 4 What was to be the sign for the Jewish People that they would inherit the Land?
- 5 During the 14 years of the conquest and division of the Land, what types of offerings were permitted on private altars?

Answer

1 11:26 - Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal, respectively. 2 11:27 - On condition that they listen to Hashem's commandments. 3 11:28 - Because those who worship idols are considered as if they have strayed from the entire Torah. 4 11:31 - The miracles that would occur while crossing the Jordan River. 5 12:8 - Vow offerings or free-will offerings.



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CIRCUS

Family Fun Day

Sunday 16th September
At Hasmonean Girls NW7

Early bird online £3 per child
At door £5 per child

* This price includes entry, shows and torah island

- Fire performance
- Inflatables
- Food stalls
- Magician
- and loads more
- Fun fare rides
- Pre Yom-Tov market
- Circus workshop

1pm to 6pm

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