

THE COMMUNITY Parasha Sheet



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Lirfuat Eliyahu Chaim Ben Rivka Betoch Shaar Cholei Yisrael

RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

DIRECTOR
TAL

DECISIONS

The Mishna in Pirkei Avot (1:6) states that we should make ourselves (have) a Rabbi, and buy ourselves a friend.

Generally our perspective is highly subjective and biased with respect to all matters concerning our self. Our desires blind our eyes from anything other than the object of our desires and prevent us from weighing the pros and cons objectively. For this reason, writes Meiri in his commentary to Proverbs (20:18), one needs the perspective of someone who is removed from all the subjective biases that cloud one's vision, someone who can weigh the situation without having to contend with a welter of strong desires. With the help of good friends and advice from Sages we are destined to succeed along the right path.

Our Parsha commands us to adhere to the teachings of the Jewish Court: "According to the teaching that they will teach you and according to the judgment they will say to you, shall you do; you shall not deviate from the word they will tell you, right or left". Devarim (17:11).

Not only is there a positive command to listen to a Jewish Court, but moreover there is a negative prohibition of deviating from that which they tell you.

The Sefer haChinuch explains that the nature of human beings is that they are argumentative and have disagreements. People view things differently. The Almighty realized that if everyone had the ability to interpret Torah according to their own understanding of the Pesukim, anarchy would reign amongst the Jewish people. Such an approach would be a recipe for disaster and the Torah

would quickly disintegrate into a multiplicity of legal codes. Therefore, it is incumbent on the masses to follow the central authority of the Jewish High Court.

Lest we think that this only applies to the Sanhedrin that sat in the Hewn Chamber on the premises of the Holy Temple, the Chinuch continues: "And thus it is to be in each and every generation that the masses must listen to the Sages (of that generation) who received their tradition with much diligence and effort from the Sages of previous generations. And concerning this matter, the scripture enjoins us not to deviate from the words of our teachers 'to the right or to the left'. Our rabbis have interpreted this to mean that even if they tell us that what we think is our right hand is our left hand and what we think is our left hand is our right hand, we should accept their teaching." (Sifrei)

How can this be so? If we empirically know that the Sages are wrong, then why listen to them? The Chinuch addresses this question:

"Even if they are in error about a certain matter, it is inappropriate for us to dispute them and we should go along with their error. It is better to suffer with their single mistake (rather than undermine their authority), so that in general their good advice will remain sovereign and the masses will always be bound by their wise authority." In other words, they may be wrong on occasion but it is better for the "system" that they not be questioned, even about their obvious errors. Once people start arguing with the Sages, the entire infrastructure of Rabbinic authority will collapse. Once the system collapses, it's all over! It is better live with the mistake, rather than destroy the whole system.

The Alter of Novordok, Rav Yosef Yoisel Horowitz states that when the rabbis give a Mashal (parable) to explain the words of the Torah, it's not accidental. They could have said if the Rabbi tells you white is black, or black is white then believe him. Why did they chose to express the belief in our Sages through the example of - if the Sages tell you that your right hand is your left and vice versa you should follow their words? ►

> MAZAL TOV

Moussy and Shereen Salem
on the birth of a baby boy

Chana Rivka and Neil Mansoor
on birth of a baby boy



THE WEEKLY QUOTE

"Keeping busy and making
optimism a way of life can restore
your faith in yourself"

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- 16TH SEPTEMBER
FAMILY FUN DAY
- 12TH OCTOBER
FRIDAY NIGHT BANQUET AT THE AVENUE

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DVAR TORAH

Decisions
RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

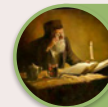
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Rav Horowitz gives an awesome explanation, when someone tells you that your right hand is your left, they are telling you that you are going in the completely wrong direction. You must turn around, and when you do, your right hand will be in the same place as your left and vice versa.

When the Mishna taught; “Make a rabbi for yourself” – the real meaning is to make yourself have a rabbi that you are prepared to listen to. A Rabbi that you trust and have confidence in, so much so, that were he to tell you to change directions in life you would observe his advice.

Baruch Hashem this generation has been blessed with Talmidei Chachamim, Great Sages that are happy to grant advice and help us lead the correct path.

I recently heard a story of a Holocaust survivor who was permitted to remarry on the basis of evidence that her husband had perished in the concentration camps. Then, after more than 20 years, when she had grown children of marriageable age, she met her first husband. The

distraught woman came to seek Rabbi Moshe Feinstein’s guidance.

R Moshe asked the woman to tell her story. She told of how she had brought her case before a well-known Rav in one of the Displaced Persons Camps after the war. Based on available testimony and evidence, this Rav had ruled it correct to assume her husband dead, and had given her a document containing this decision. It was on the basis of this ruling that she had remarried. The Rav had passed away not long after the war, and, due to the chaotic post-war conditions, she had lost the document. Now she and her family were suffering indescribably from a mistake that was not theirs.

Rabbi Moshe asked to repeat her story, and she did so. He asked her to tell it a third time. Why was R Moshe tormenting the poor woman so? R Moshe then rose, leaned across the table and said agitatedly to the woman, “It cannot be! I knew the rav of whom you speak. He was a Gaon and a Tzadik, and I do not even approach his ankles in Torah. I have permitted over two thousand Agunot to remarry and never did the first husband reappear. Now

you are telling me that such a thing could have happened to that Tzadik? It is impossible! It cannot be!” The people in the room were shocked that R Moshe, who was famous for his mild manner and compassion, could have spoken in such a way to a woman in distress. But their shock gave way to incredulity when the woman broke down in tears and admitted that her story was indeed false. She had been sure that her husband was dead - how could he have survived, she had asked herself. When she heard that a highly respected rabbi had passed away, she made up the story concerning the document, using that rabbi’s name.

The Torah is the blue print of the world, and our Sages are constantly connected to it. They live their every second by it, and are true servants of Hashem.

They too are human and there is of course always the possibility that they can err, nevertheless the Torah commands us to follow them every step of the way. That is the right thing, even if we think it might not be.

■ Shabbat Shalom

RABBI MOSHE BORGER - LECTURER IN OHR SOMAYACH, JERUSALEM AND JLE UK LIAISON IN ISRAEL



PARASHA INSIGHTS

We are told “Judges and officers you shall place for yourself (singular) in all of your gates” (Devarim 16:18). If the Torah is commanding us to appoint representatives as part of a Judicial System then it seems strange we are commanded to do so as individuals using the term ‘yourself’ as opposed to as a Community in the plural as ‘yourselves’? What is the Torah teaching us?

Rabbi Chaim Vital and the Shela Hakodosh both explain this verse as referring to our individual physical ‘Gates’; meaning our senses; the Gates of Sight, Sound, Smell, Touch and Taste. We are being told to Guard ourselves and use our senses in permitted and positive ways. The Rebbe of Slonim brings in the name of the Holy Books on a similar note, that there are seven Gates to the head, two eyes, two ears, two nostrils and a mouth. There are permitted and forbidden foods so we can use our mouth and our sense of taste in right

or wrong ways. We can use our sight to look at permitted things and it is a Mitzvah. Looking at the new moon and giving testimony over its newness, looking at the Havdalla Candle and making the blessing over its beauty are examples. On the other hand we can also use our eyes inappropriately. There are things we are and are not allowed to listen to. So our ears also need to be protected from forbidden and vulgar language. Regarding smell we are told (Yoma 9b) that the young girls in Jerusalem would click their heels to emit a perfume from inside their shoes as they would walk past the young men to attract their attention. On the other hand we can smell the fragrance of the spices by Havdalla and do a Mitzvah. We have to judge with each sense whether or not it is being used in the right way.

The rule is that we have to put judges and officers over all of our gates. The idea of a judge is referring to the intellect. We have to use our intellect to discern what things to bring close and what to distance. An officer has to take responsibility for keeping people within their boundaries. Torat Avot explains the verse regarding Balaam (the evil prophet hired to curse the Jewish people) that when he moved with his donkey to an alleyway it says “A fence on either side (of him) and the

leg of Balaam was crushed” as representing that if we want to crush the Evil Inclination symbolised by Balaam the way to do it is to make boundaries for ourselves. The more we monitor ourselves and keep ourselves within good limits the healthier it is, physically, spiritually and emotionally. It’s not possible to uproot bad just using our minds alone. We have to actively subjugate our inclinations. As the Saba from Slonim said “any day that a Jew did not do something against his will is not considered to be like a day in his life”. We have to keep on fighting to take control over our thoughts speech and actions.

So many times we are quick to judge others. The Torah teaches us “Judges and officers you should place for yourself.” First we have to judge ourselves before we start judging others. Let’s be more careful about our actions, keep our senses protected and being used in the right way and then Please G-d we will merit to have the great year we are praying for Amen!

■ Shabbat shalom

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OUR CHACHAMIM

RABBI ELIEZER ZUSHA PORTUGAL · THE SKULENER REBBE

On Wednesday the 29th of Av, 5742 (Aug 18, 1982), the Gaon and Tzaddik Rabbi Eliezer Zusha Portugal, the Skulener Rebbe, was called back to G-d at the age of 85. Multitudes attended his funeral, which took place in the Jewish neighbourhood of Williamsburg in Brooklyn. Near his Beit Midrash, famous Rebbes and Rabbis gave their eulogies, and all who spoke rendered homage to the Skulener Rebbe by declaring that he was a father to orphans, a pillar of kindness, and a remnant from a much older generation – a Tzaddik on whom the world is founded.

The Skulener Rebbe is the name by which Rabbi Eliezer Zusha Portugal was known around the world. People did not know him by his real name. People only knew that in Romania there was a Jew called the Skulener Rebbe, a man who looked for Jewish children orphaned by the war. He tried to save them from spiritual destruction, so he adopted them and raised them as his own, devoting himself to them so that they would remain Torah-observant Jews.

It did not take long for him to become known around the world as the “father of orphans” and a leader in rescuing Jews. Everyone respected him, both young and old, and he was loved by yeshiva students, Bnei Torah, and the masses of the Jewish people, in whose midst he became a living legend.

Rabbi Eliezer Zusha was born around the year 5657 (1897), the son of the Gaon and Tzaddik Rabbi Israel Avraham Portugal, the Rav of several Russian communities. At the end of his life, Rabbi Israel Avraham became the Rav of the Romanian city of Skulen. He was already quite old when his son Eliezer Zusha was born, yet he devoted himself to the boy and instilled him with his Torah and wisdom. Rabbi Eliezer was still young, about 18 years old, when his father passed away, yet despite his age the inhabitants of Skulen chose him to succeed his father, for everyone could see that the young man was destined for greatness.

With his appointment as the Rav of Skulen, Rabbi Eliezer Zusha devoted himself with all his heart and soul to the concerns of the community, earning fame throughout the region. He was not simply the Rav of the community; he was also its beloved shepherd. Jews cherished and respected their leader and Rebbe for his greatness in Torah, his goodness of heart, and his love for the Jewish people. He loved all Jews, be they rich or poor, religious scholars or the simplest of people.

The Rav of Skulen was endowed with many virtues that he put to use in his holy work, particularly his great sense of music. Like the “beloved singer of Israel” (see II Samuel 23:1), he composed numerous melodies that are sung with great fervour even until today, thus attaching himself to the hearts of hundreds of youngsters, who because of him remained upright, G-d fearing people who built homes that were beyond reproach.

While still a young man, people noticed his tendency for taking action. He was concerned with everything that dealt with the community, and he sought to take steps to strengthen the sacred values of the Jewish people. He especially devoted himself to education, establishing religious schools for Jewish children.

Rabbi Eliezer Zusha remained in Skulen for about 20 years, until a prominent individual from Chernovitz offered him the position as Rav of the city, which at the time was a large Jewish center. There, the rabbis placed him in charge of everything that concerned religious education. The Rav of Skulen devoted himself with all his heart and soul to this work as well, since his love for the Jewish people was boundless. His every thought concerned the education of the generation's young, and in this role he found spiritual satisfaction and achieved great success.

Rabbi Eliezer Zusha accomplished a great deal during his lifetime. However the jewel of his intense work was the devotion he demonstrated during the Second World War and the years that followed, for he was renowned as a

leader in rescue work. He feared nothing and was constantly ready to give his life for any Jew.

When the Russians left Chernovitz and the Germans took it over, they issued the directive that whoever sheltered a Russian soldier would pay for it with his life. When the Rav heard people speaking about three Jewish Russian soldiers that nobody wanted to shelter, he immediately had them brought to his home and hid them in his attic, personally bringing them food each day until the Russians finally retook the city. During that time he had 40 orphans living with him, sleeping across the width of a bed, while he and the Rebbetzin slept on the floor.

A woman recounted the following story concerning the Rav's devotion: In Romania her husband had been a leftist and a member of Hashomer Hatzair. When he was imprisoned on false charges of spying, the help and support that the Rav provided for this woman was impossible to describe. Not only that, but he also succeeded in freeing her husband from prison and enabling him to leave for Eretz Israel. The goodness that the Rav showed the man encouraged him to return to G-d, and today he is an observant Jew. From time to time he visited the Rav and asked him for his blessing and thanked him for his kindness.

Such was the Rav. He was self-effacing with everyone, and wisdom illuminated his face. He brought hearts back to G-d and the Torah by his gentle manner of speaking, and because of his finesse and natural nobility he was loved by all who met him.

At the end of the war, Rabbi Eliezer Zusha immediately began to establish institutions for orphans of the Holocaust, saving thousands of them. He personally sustained about 300 orphans, all of them calling him “Abba.” Almost all of them settled in Eretz Israel and have remained observant Jews.

He often had the occasion to meet men who always reminded him that he was their father-in-law, even though he never had any daughters! In fact, these men had married orphaned girls who were considered to be the Rav's daughters, and so by extension they considered themselves to be the Rav's sons-in-law.

Because of his activities, the Rav experienced tremendous persecution, both by the Germans and the Russians. More than once was he in danger of losing his life, and at one point he was even being led out for execution, when by a miracle the Germans saved him! The Russians also imprisoned him several times, yet despite everything he never stopped his sacred work.

In 5720 (1960), the Rav arrived in the United States and eventually settled in Williamsburg, New York. It was there that he established his Beit Midrash. He had barely opened it when hordes of people came to hear the Torah emanating from his lips. His home was soon attracting great crowds, with many coming to his door early in the day asking for advice and listening to his prayers. He prayed with extraordinary devotion and at great length. It is said that one who had never witnessed the prayer of the Rav of Skulen has never witnessed true prayer. Those who never heard the melody that escaped his lips and ascended during his prayers, said with the utmost concentration, never saw how a soul could connect itself to its Creator in love.

The Rav did not remain at rest in the United States either. Rather, he worked with all his might to save imprisoned Jews. He also established an educational network in Eretz Israel called Chesed LeAvraham, which today includes more than 50 institutions. The Skulener Rebbe often travelled to Eretz Israel and closely supervised the educational institutions that he founded. Even up to his final days, he was busy saving Jews, promoting Torah-based education, and performing acts of kindness. ■



HALACHOT

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

SOME LAWS AND CUSTOMS FOR THE MONTH OF ELUL

During the month of Elul we are to prepare ourselves for the period of the High Holidays, which begins with Rosh Hashana, continues with Yom Kippur, and reaches its culmination on Hoshana Rabba, when the final judgment is rendered. It was on Rosh Chodesh Elul when Moshe ascended Mount Sinai to beseech the Almighty to forgive Benei Yisrael for the grave sin of the golden calf. Forty days later, on Yom Kippur, God announced His forgiveness. Thus, this forty-day period has traditionally been a time of forgiveness, when God is – if we are allowed to say such a thing – in a “forgiving mood.” It behooves us to take advantage of this unique period and do what we can to earn atonement for the wrongs we committed during the year.

It is proper to read works of Musar during the month of Elul. One recommended book is “Sha'arei Teshuva,” the classic work by Rabbenu Yona (Spain, 1180-1263) describing the process of Teshuva. Other recommended works include Rabbenu Yona's famous letter about repentance known as “Iggeret Ha-Teshuva,” and the Rambam's Hilchot Teshuva, which presents the various requirements of Teshuva. Another work, “Orchot Chayim,” is divided into thirty sections, which many have the practice of studying on the thirty days of Elul. Some also have the practice to read “Tikunei Ha-Zohar,” a collection of inspirational passages from the Zohar (the basic text of Kabbala). The Kabbalists taught that the reading of this work has the capacity to cleanse and purify one's soul even if he does not understand the material he reads.

One must be particularly diligent during the month of Elul to recite each night “Keri'at Shema Al Ha'mita” before he goes to sleep. He should include the “Ana” prayer, petitioning God for forgiveness for whatever wrongs he may have committed over the course of that day.

One of the Berachot in the Amida service is that of “Hashivenu,” in which we ask God to help us perform Teshuva. During the month of Elul, it is proper to insert in this blessing the names of people who have strayed from the proper path of observance, before the concluding blessing “Baruch Ata Hashem Ha'rotzeh Be'tshuva.”

Many people have the custom to have their Tefillin and Mezuzot checked during the month of Elul. According to strict Halacha, a person is required to have his Mezuzot checked only twice in seven years, and Tefillin worn every day do not require checking at all. Nevertheless, there are those who make a point of having their Tefillin and Mezuzot checked during Elul.

Although one must ensure to recite Birkat Ha'levana (the blessing over the moon) every month, the Rabbis admonish us to be particularly diligent with regard to Birkat Ha'levana for the month of Elul.

In general, one must raise his level of observance during the month of Elul in preparation for the High Holidays, and in the merit of our efforts we should be deserving of a year of peace and happiness for ourselves, our families and our community, Amen. ■

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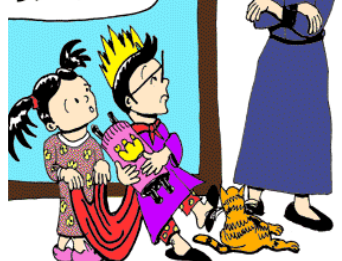
AND HERE IS YOSHI KING OF ISRAEL, LEADER OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE, AND GUARDIAN OF THE TORAH, OUT ON HIS EVENING STROLL AROUND HIS CASTLE!



THE KING ALWAYS CARRIES HIS OWN PERSONAL TORAH SCROLL TO REMIND HIM OF ALL THE MITZVOS. EVEN THE KING HAS TO DO MITZVOS!



EXCUSE ME, SIRE. ISN'T IT TIME FOR HIS HIGHNESS TO BRUSH HIS TEETH AND GET INTO BED?



EVEN THE KING HAS TO LISTEN TO HIS MOTHER.



TEST YOURSELF - Q&A

- ❶ What is the role of shoftim? What is the role of shotrim?
- ❷ What qualifications should one look for when appointing a judge?
- ❸ May a judge accept a bribe if only for the purpose of judging fairly?
- ❹ What is the source for the concept "seek out a good beit din"?
- ❺ Although the avot built matzevot, the Torah later forbade doing so. Why?

Answer

- ❶ 16:18 - Shoftim are judges who pronounce judgment. Shotrim are officers who enforce it.
- ❷ 16:18 - That he is expert in the law and that he is righteous.
- ❸ 16:19 - No, because it will sway his judgment.
- ❹ 16:20 - "Tzedek tzedek tirdof...."
- ❺ 16:22 - Because the Canaanites used them for idolatry.



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