

THE COMMUNITY Parasha Sheet



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This weeks Parasha is sponsored LeHatslachat Shaul Yonatan Ben Moshe Vechol Mishpachto

RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

DIRECTOR
TAL



WHAT ARE YOU CHASING?

A banker was vacationing in a small coastal village. While walking near a pier, he observed a small boat with just one fisherman. Inside the boat with the fisherman were several yellow-fin tuna. The businessman complimented the fisherman on the quality of his catch and asked how long it took to catch them. "Only two hours," he replied.

The businessman then asked why he didn't stay out longer and catch more fish. The fisherman said he had enough to support his family's immediate needs. "But what do you do with the rest of your time?" the banker asked. The fisherman responded, "I sleep late, fish a little, play with my children, take a nap in the afternoon, and stroll into the village each evening with my wife where we relax and sing and I play guitar with our friends. I have a full and busy life."

The businessman scoffed, "You should spend more time fishing and with the proceeds, buy a bigger boat and with the proceeds buy a fleet of boats. Instead of selling your fish to a middleman, you could sell directly to a processor. You could eventually open your own cannery. You would control the product, processing and distribution. You could leave this small village and move to a big city where you could run your expanding enterprise."

The fisherman asked, "But how long will this take?" The businessman replied, "15 to 20 years!" "But then what?" asked the puzzled fisherman? The banker laughed and said, "That's the best part. You can sell your business and retire and move to a small coastal fishing village where you could sleep late, fish a little, play with your kids, take afternoon naps, stroll to the village in the evenings with your wife where

you could relax, sing and play guitar with your friends. You would have a full and busy life."

The fisherman smiled at the businessman, quietly gathered his catch and walked away.

What are you chasing after in life?

Some people are chasing money, others work, leisure, friends or spouses! Yet the Torah interestingly informs us to chase something else.

The Sfat Emet explains that the only time the Torah commands us to chase, is in this week's Parsha.

Tsedek Tsedek Tirdof - Chase after justice!

The Targum Unkelos translates this Pasuk to mean pursue "truth" (kushta). We are taught to always pursue truth.

Why not simply tell us to speak the truth? What's the idea behind pursuing truth?

We live in a world termed by our Sages as a false world - 'Alma DeShikra.'

Rav Dessler ZT"L quotes the Zohar which explains that the original sin of Adam and Chava was due to a lie.

The snake approached Chava and said "Do you know why you can't eat from this tree?"

She had no response.

The snake continued: "It's because G-d ate from this tree and through this was able to create worlds. He does not want you to be in the same situation." Of course this was a blatant lie aimed at enticing Chava to sin.

But it was through this lie that Adam and Chava sinned and punishment was wrought on the world. It is for this reason that this world which is influenced by the Yester Hara is called Alma Deshikra - a world of lies. For us to get to the truth it's a constant battle. It does not come easy and it's very difficult to achieve, hence we have to pursue it.

Whenever the Torah wishes to forbid something it merely tells us that it is forbidden. There is one instance in which the Torah goes out of its way to tell us that not only is it forbidden but one must also set a distance from it - "Bidvar Sheker Tirchak - distance yourself from a lie." Thus we must chase truth and run far from lies. An old Midrash brings the story of Rabbi Shimon Ben Shetach (one of the earliest Tannaim) who was approached by a man in need. ▶

Elul 6th 5779

SHABBAT BEGINS: 7:12 PM

SHABBAT ENDS: 8:22 PM

” THE WEEKLY QUOTE
"In this world it is not what we take up, but what we give up, that makes us rich."

> UPCOMING EVENTS

- ▶ 9TH SEPTEMBER
KNOWLEDGE & WISDOM SERIES
- ▶ 11TH SEPTEMBER
YOUNG MARRIED COUPLES
- ▶ 17TH SEPTEMBER
LADIES MORNING PROGRAM
- ▶ 20TH SEPTEMBER
FRIDAY NIGHT DINNER

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DVAR TORAH

What are you chasing?
RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

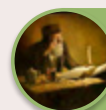
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He had grown up in a good home, but been badly influenced and had ended up joining a band of robbers. He led a life of sin, until one day whilst robbing, he came across a child whose fierce words penetrated his heart.

'The wrath of the Almighty is turned to the doers of evil to erase their memory from the earth,' shouted the child. The man was shaken and eventually took leave of the band of robbers, resolving to find honest work and redeem himself.

However, as time passed he was tempted to return to his evil ways. He was now approaching Rabbi Shimon to beseech him for guidance and help.

Rabbi Shimon commended him on his wish to do good and told him that his future success lay in promising never to lie again. 'Keep from falsehood. That is the key!' said Rabbi Shimon.

The robber was shocked: "Is this all you are going to tell me? Is there not more powerful advice and help to give?"

"You will see," replied Rabbi Shimon. "If you but listen and keep from falsehood, you will not steal again."

The man was still unconvinced, but he had no choice but to go to the room he rented and hope that Rabbi Shimon was correct.

That night, he grew very hungry and went to the apartment of the lady from whom he was renting his room. He knocked, hoping to get some food. Since there was no answer, he opened the door and walked in.

The apartment was empty as the family had left, but in the corner was a great wooden chest. Walking over to it and opening it, the man gasped as he saw a whole treasure of jewellery and other valuable items. Hastily pocketing a handful of valuables, he tip-toed back to his room and lay down on his bed. He thought to himself; "If the woman comes to me and asks if I was home during the theft, I will simply say that I was out and know nothing about it."

Suddenly, however, the man remembered the promise that he had made to Rabbi Shimon that he would always speak the truth. How then could he lie to the woman and say that he was out during the theft? On the other hand, if he did not lie, he would become the primary suspect.

Then it dawned upon him. This was what Rabbi Shimon meant! It would be impossible for him to steal if he never lied. Jumping up from his bed, he ran back to the woman's apartment and returned the property he had stolen.

"Bless Rabbi Shimon," he said. "He is indeed a wise man. Now I know that if I but adhere always to tell the truth and never tell a lie, I will be saved from the sin of robbery."

Such is the power of truth – and falsehood. It can change our lives for good or evil depending upon whether we are true or false to ourselves and to others.

When someone wants to sign an important document, their signature represents their presence.

The Gemara (Shabbat 55) tells us that the seal of the Almighty is Truth. Hashem desires that we turn away from lies and pursue the truth.

The day that Adam and Chava sinned was none other than Rosh Hashanah. That is the day that we are all judged. We will stand in front of the Almighty and there will be nowhere to hide from our falsehood.

The original sin that caused so much sorrow to the world emanated from a lie. It is up to us to correct it via pursuing truth. We must garner the strength and stamina to talk truth to all those around us.

We have less than a month to chase after something real - let's get going!

■ **Shabbat Shalom**

RABBI YEHONATAN SALEM - SHALOM LAAM DIASPORA



COMPLETE RELIANCE

One of our main "legacies of life" is the positive commandment in this week's parashah. "Tamim tiheyeh im Hashem Elokecha" – "You shall have complete reliance on Hashem your G-d" (Shofetim 18:13). We are commanded to serve Hashem with open faith and sincerity. Even though powers of witchcraft and magic exist, as well as ways of looking into the future, we Jews are commanded to avoid all these activities. We are forbidden to probe into the future or try to change it. Rather, we must empower ourselves through our faith and trust in G-d, and firmly believe that all that He brings upon us is divinely- destined and for our good. Moreover, we must believe that we have the means and capability to handle everything that He sends our way. [It goes without saying that we should and must pray to Him to help us in all our endeavours and save us from all evil.]

The reason why these activities are forbidden is because witch craft and the like draw their powers from sources of evil, or even from powers of nature. Even though these resources are G-d made, they do not have control over us as Jews. We have been instructed, from the time of our forefather Avraham, to know that we are not subservient to nature, the signs of the zodiac or any similar powers. Although "naturally" Avraham Avinu was not able to bear a child, G-d told him to look "beyond nature" and to have faith and trust in Him that he would have offspring. As a result of his faith, Avraham merited having children. We too, must raise ourselves above this "naturalistic outlook," and understand that with the power of pure faith and trust in G-d, we will be able to cope and succeed beyond all expectations, even when things look bleak. This is because when we have complete reliance and trust totally in G-d, He becomes our "portion" and will accompany us through our life's travails.

In today's world, where there is much turmoil, confusion and havoc, people often feel that they are lost or forsaken. Seeking direction, meaning or security in such situations, people sometimes find themselves compelled to resort to false or evil intermediaries or fortune-tellers, which are

forbidden by the Torah, in an attempt to resolve or at least reveal their future. Apart from these methods being strictly forbidden, they can in certain circumstances even be fatal. Moreover, it is not emotionally healthy for a person to know what is going to be. It may cause people to become depressed or even worse. And even if a person receives an exciting prediction, since it is dependent upon nature, factors may change and the result may be that one will suffer from shattered expectations.

Our national trademark is our ability to put our complete trust and faith in Hashem and accept everything that He is going to bring upon us. Even when we have foreseen a problem in our private lives, how often have we seen for ourselves how Hashem has tended and taken care of us. When we put our reliance on Him and trust in His kindness, all worrying becomes superfluous.

Let us make a point the next time we see G-d's divine hand helping us, to internalise the message, then, even when things may be difficult, we will be able to trust in G-d's ability to help us out.

■ **Shabbat shalom**

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OUR CHACHAMIM

RABBI CHAIM FALADJI

Rabbi Chaim Faladji, the Rav of Izmir, Turkey, was one of the great sages of his generation. Born in 1788 (5548), he took upon himself the responsibility, in every sense of the word, of the community with grace and an attitude that was unequalled in thoughtfulness and attentiveness. At the same time, he was known for his extreme diligence in Torah study, a diligence that found expression in the enormous number of books that he authored, the total of which numbers 95. Among these are Guinzei Chaim and Hukei Chaim.

A heavy yolk rested upon Rabbi Chaim Faladji's shoulders, one that stole much of his time. One marvels at discovering just how exhaustively he succeeded in studying Torah, how he managed to give his own explanations, and how he arrived at writing such a large number of books, ones which opened the eyes of the Jewish world. His story is in fact one of time optimization. His books testify to the fact that one can arrive at finding the time to accomplish many more things than we, ordinary people, can even imagine. The works of Rabbi Chaim deal with many tractates of the Gemara and offer explanations on Halachah and Aggadah. They deal with the work of the Rambam, with the four sections of the Shulchan Aruch, and give thousands of responses to Halachic questions. His works offer explanations on the weekly Torah sections and comprise, moreover, over 100 discourses and 14 volumes on the entire Tanach. One of his books deals with questions pertinent to dayanim, another on the laws of sacrifice, another on laws pertaining to the community, etc., etc. It is simply impossible in this article to detail the 95 books that he wrote. How did he find the time to write all of these books?

The most definite answer to this question is found in his own personal account: "I take Heaven and Earth as my witnesses that from the day that I began to reason for myself, until the day of my twentieth year, I was deeply immersed in Torah study day and night, without the loss of the least moment, for I occupied myself with nothing having to do with the world in general. And from the age of 20 until the age 40, since I had a family to feed, I occupied myself with the affairs of the world in order to survive. Yet when I had no issues to deal with, I didn't take advantage

of it in order to lose my time, but instead returned to my studies. In the same way, from the age of 40 - the age at which I became a Dayan (judge and decision-maker), and when I took charge of the needs of the community - until today, year after year I took upon myself an extremely heavy yolk, for there was no instant in which I wasn't called upon during disputes and communal affairs, both in the city itself and its surroundings. Yet even though the authorities added even more difficult tasks to me, and in several domains, and even though my heart grieved within me because I could not study Torah as I wished, I forced myself to find time where I was free from my tasks - the little spare time that I had - in order to consecrate my eyes and heart to the study of Torah. May my actions be observed and imitated when one is faced with numerous communal and individual worries and pressed for time, that one's eyes and heart not wander in following vain pursuits when given a few moments of freedom from responsibilities, and may blessing be found in one's Torah!"

Next came a promise: "As long as you have a great desire for Torah, and as long as you do not give yourself over to trivial pursuits, and that your mind becomes completely liberated during the hours and minutes that you are free in order not to lose anything, we will help to find time to accomplish what you desire, to study the Torah a little and to practice it a lot. Most of the time, when a man or woman presented themselves before me and I had to speak to them at length in order to comfort them, G-d knows just how much I suffered when they caused me to lose hours of Torah study. However if I pushed them aside, I feared humiliating them and not having shared in their pain. Now we know that 'honorable conduct [derech erez] precedes Torah.' As for that which our Sages told us in Perkei Avoth, that reducing social contacts (derech erez) to a minimum is one of the 48 things by which Torah is acquired, this means that one should avoid extending social contacts in one's private life in order to occupy oneself with Torah, but this does not at all deal with the honor of others, for in that respect one risks causing them pain and humiliation." ■



HALACHOT

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

THE SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF ALENU

The period of the Three Weeks (from Shiba Assar BeTammuz through Tisha B'Av) is a period of special holiness. The Maharsham (Rav Shalom Mordechai Schwadron of Berezhany, 1835-1911) writes that the sanctity of these weeks resembles the sanctity of three-week period from Rosh Hashanah through Simhat Torah. He adds that the prayers recited during this period are more powerful and more readily accepted by Hashem than our prayers throughout the rest of the year. This is particularly so, the Maharsham teaches, of the prayers recited on Shabbat Hazon, the Shabbat before Tisha B'Av. The Maharsham brings this in the name of Rav Uri of Strelisk ("the Saraf"). Especially during this period, therefore, it is imperative to pay greater attention to our prayers and ensure that they are recited properly.

Some sections of the prayer service such as the Amidah generally receive proper attention, and are approached with seriousness and focus. Others, however, seem to have fallen into neglect particularly the Alenu prayer, which is recited at the very end of the service. This prayer for many has become a "Tefilat Haderech" a prayer recited on the move, as they leave the synagogue. And some people don't even stay for Alenu at all. It is jokingly said that the morning Shaharit service begins with the arrival of Pharaoh "Ki Ba Sus Pharaoh" (a verse recited at the very end of the Pesukei Dezimra section), and concludes with the arrival of our redemption "Uba Lesiyon Goel" (a prayer recited towards the end of the service, but before the concluding prayers). Although we give Alenu a great deal of attention and prominence on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, when it is recited during Musaf, we tend to recite it quickly and mindlessly the rest of the year, when it is recited at the very end of the prayer service.

This neglect of Alenu is most unfortunate, because Alenu is an especially powerful and significant prayer. Rav Hai Gaon (d. 1038), in a responsum cited by the Hid"ah (Rav Haim Yosef David Azulai, 1724-1806) in Birkat Yosef, wrote that Alenu is "greater than all praises in the world." And the Rokeach (Rav Elazar of Worms, Germany, d. 1238) described Alenu as "the Shir Hashirim of all the praises," comparing it to Shir Hashirim, which the Sages say is "Kodesh Kodashim" "the holiest of the holies." Likewise, the Mishna Berura (Rav Yisrael Meir Kagan of Radin, 1839-1933) writes (citing from the Mateh Moshe) that the Alenu prayer "opens all the gates of prayers," and when we recite this prayer, Hashem exclaims, "See My children who give Me praise!"

The unique importance of Alenu can be seen in the explanation given by the Shaar Hakavanot (a collection of teachings of the Arizal, Rav Yishak Luria of Tzefat, 1534-1572) for the structure of the prayer service. The Shaar Hakavanot writes that the prayer service consists of four sections, corresponding to the four realms of existence ("Asiya," "Yesira," "Beria," "Asilut"). These four

sections are: the introductory prayers before Baruch Sheamar; Pesukei Dezimra; Shema and its blessings; and the Amidah. The Amidah prayer represents the realm of "Asilut," the highest domain. Through the recitation of these prayers, we "build" the four realms. The Kaddish recitations in between the sections of the prayer service signify the transition from one realm to the next. Our prayers also help build the "Or Penimi" the "inner light," as well as the "Or Hamakif" the "surrounding light." However, this entire process is threatened by the "Mekatreigim," the "prosecutors," the harmful angels and spirits which seek to sabotage our prayers. This is why we recite the Pesukei Dezimra section before we pray the Amidah. The word "Zimra" is derived from the root "Z.M.R.," which means "prune," removing unwanted branches. Our recitation of Pesukei Dezimra has the effect of "pruning," eliminating the harmful spirits so they cannot tamper with our prayers. However, while this suffices to ensure the successful creation of our "Or Penimi," it does not suffice to ensure the creation of the "Or Hamakif." For this we require the recitation of Alenu. We build the "Or Hamakif" when we recite in Alenu, "Shehem Mishtahavim Lahebel Varik Vaanahnu Korim Umishtahavim" ("For they bow to nonsense and nothingness whereas we kneel and bow"). It is then that we produce the "Or Hamakif," thereby building all four worlds. This is why it is so vitally important to recite Alenu properly because it is the secret to the success of all our prayers.

The Sages teach that Moshe recited 515 prayers begging Hashem to allow him to enter the Land of Israel. This is why the Torah describes him praying with the word "Vaethanan," which has the Gematria (numerical value) of 515. G-d responded by telling Moshe to stop praying and the Rabbis explain that had Moshe recited one more prayer, G-d would have had to relent. The holy books teach that this refers to the first part of Kaddish "Yitgadal Veyitkadesh Shemeh Rabba." In Kaddish, we do not make any requests for ourselves; we pray solely for G-d Himself, that His Name should be exalted and glorified. When we recite this kind of prayer, praying solely for Hashem, and not for ourselves, it makes all our prayers exceptionally powerful. And therefore, if Moshe had recited Kaddish, his prayers to enter Eretz Yisrael would have been accepted.

The same is true of Alenu. We do not make any requests in Alenu; we recite this prayer solely for Hashem, and not at all for ourselves.

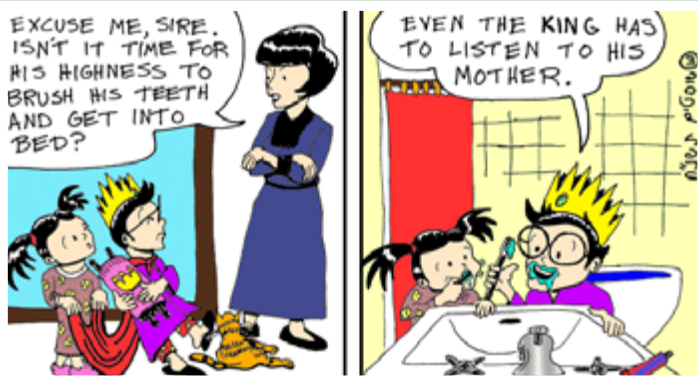
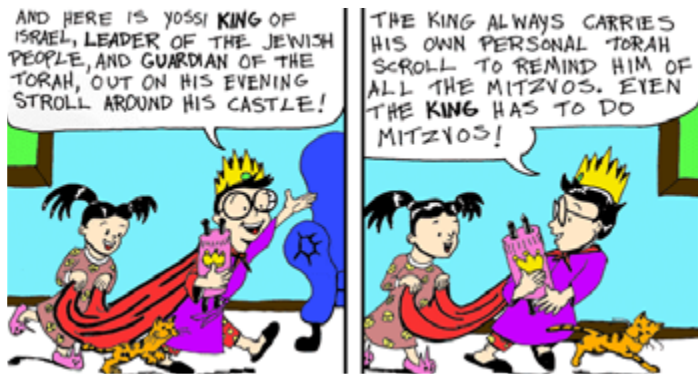
The first section of Alenu begins with the letter "Ayin" ("Alenu"); the second section begins with "Shin" ("Shelo Asanu"); the third begins with "Vav" ("Vaananu Korim"); and the fourth begins with the letter "Heh" ("Hu Elokenu"). These four letters spell "Hoshea" the original name of Yehoshua, who composed the Alenu prayer. Let us commit ourselves to pay greater attention to Alenu, reciting it with greater focus and concentration, so that all our prayers will be lovingly accepted. ■



- ❶ Certain kosher animals are not included in the law of "chazeh, shok, and keiva." Which ones?
- ❷ Families of kohanim served in the Beit Hamikdash on a rotational basis. When was this rotation system implemented?
- ❸ Which three categories of false prophets are executed?
- ❹ What does it mean to "prepare the way" to the cities of refuge?
- ❺ How many witnesses are meant when the Torah writes the word eid (witness)?

- Answer**
- ❶ 18:3 - Chayot (non-domestic-type animals).
 - ❷ 18:8 - During the time of David and Shmuel.
 - ❸ 18:20 - One who prophesies something he didn't hear, something told to another prophet, or prophecies in the name of an idol.
 - ❹ 19:3 - To post direction signs saying "refuge" at the crossroads.
 - ❺ 19:15 - Two, unless otherwise specified.

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