

THE COMMUNITY Parasha Sheet



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TAL wishes the community a sweet and happy New Year 5778! TIZKU LESHANIM RABOT NE-IMOT VETOVOT.

CHIEF RABBI EPHRAIM MIRVIS

ROSH HASHANAH MESSAGE 5778

"FINDING UNITY IN COMMUNITY"

As we conclude a year which seems to have been dominated, in no small part, by disunity across the Jewish world, it is increasingly troubling to see some of the vitriol that is now routinely espoused by Jews against one another.

It takes no time at all to find comments on social media about "Chareidi extremist bullies with no grasp of the realities of the modern world" and "heretical leftists who wilfully dilute and undermine the sanctity of Torah at every opportunity." Is this what it has come to?

ויעשו כלם אגודה אחת לעשות רצונך בלבב שלם.

"And may the people form a single united bond – to perform Your will with a full heart".

These words, from our Mussaf prayer on Rosh Hashanah, encapsulate our deep and enduring desire for Jewish unity which stretches back, through the annals of history, to the point at which we left Egypt and became a nation for the first time. But, what is the virtue of unity? Don't we have a responsibility to protect what we believe to be right, even if that means division? ►

RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

DIRECTOR TAL



WRITE YOUR BOOK!

A recent survey by the National Centre for Social Research found that for the first time, more than half of people in the UK (53%) described themselves as having "no religion".

Among those aged between 18 and 25, the proportion was higher at 71%.

This greatly contrasted with 75% of people aged 75 and over who said they were religious.

Wow, the trend is harsh...the youth seem to be offloading religion whilst the elders are hanging on.

Is that really the case?

Rosh Hashanah (the new Jewish Year) is upon us. A time for change, awakening, inspiration and rebuilding our relationship with G-d.

What's interesting to note is the way we relate to this day. Rosh Hashanah is literally translated as the head of the year. Why do we not call this exceptional day Shana Chadasha (New Year)? What's special about the head?

The Shulchan Aruch (583:2) writes that on Rosh Hashanah we eat the head of a lamb to symbolise that "we should be as a head and not as a tail, and to remember the ram at the Akedat (binding of) Yitzchak."

The Chayei Adam mentions the custom to use fish in its stead and to say that "we should multiply like fish and that no evil eye be upon us".

What is interesting is the double language used. Wouldn't it have been enough to say we wish to be at the head? Why do we need to add the words and not the tail? ►

> TIMES

WEDS 20th – 18:49 / THURSDAY – 19:48
SHABBAT – 18:45 / SHABBAT ENDS – 19:46

> UPCOMING EVENTS

23rd SEPTEMBER
TAL SEPHARDI UNITED SELICHOT

9th OCTOBER
SUKKOT LUNCH @ CANARY WHARF
(see more info online)



THE WEEKLY QUOTE

"Don't be afraid to start over.
It's a new chance to rebuild what you want."



DVAR TORAH

Write your book!

RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

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DVAR TORAH

The Lesson of The Shirah

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

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There is no question that we do, but what is also certain is that throughout history, disunity has been nothing short of an existential threat to the Jewish people.

The Talmud describes the tense state of conflict in Jerusalem during the years 67-70 CE, throughout which, the Romans laid siege around the walls of our capital city. In Jerusalem, there were storehouses which had provisions to last for 21 years. Yet tragically, when civil war broke out within the city, the storehouses were burned and destroyed. The Romans, who would otherwise have likely lost patience and moved on to fight more pressing battles, were now able to breach the walls and conquer a weakened people.

Chief Rabbi Lord Jakobovits pointed out that 'Sim Shalom', our prayer for peace in the Amidah, includes the words 'Bless us our Father, all of us as one, in the light of Your countenance'. Why, in the context of prayers for peace with our enemies, must we aspire to peace amongst ourselves? Lord Jakobovits explained that if we cannot overcome our differences within, we will never prevail over our enemies without.

The first Chief Rabbi of the Holy Land, Rabbi Kook, would point out that in an orchestra, there are many different instruments which make their own unique sound. Together, under the baton of the conductor, they create beautiful harmony.

May 5778 herald a year in which each one of us can look to parts of our community within which we might ordinarily find very little common ground; those whose instruments possibly make an entirely different sound to ours, but with whom we can offer beautiful harmony to the world.

Valerie and I extend to you all our very best wishes for a happy, fulfilling and peaceful New Year.



Furthermore in Parshat Ki Tavo (28:13) the Torah relates that G-d will place us at the head, and not at the tail.

Rabbi Yonatan Eibeshitz Ztz"l explains with the famous words in Pirkei Avot 4:15 which state that we should strive to be the tail of a lion and not the head of a fox.

R Eibeshitz explains that here too we are asking G-d that He make us the head. But not the head of foxes or even lions, the head of heads!

What do I mean by the head of heads?

Let me explain with a fascinating story.

As a young man Rabbi Yaakov Galinsky Ztz"l found himself in an ever changing world through the rise in power of communism and the Nazis, leading to the Second World War. Times were tough and many of the Yeshivot escaped Poland and headed for Vilna, Lithuania. They thought they could seek refuge there, but were soon traumatised as the Russian tanks rolled through the towns. They were chased and eventually "caught" (for no reason) and sent off to Siberia to a harsh labour camp.

As they arrived they were greeted by one of the commanders who stood them up in the freezing cold and informed them that they were there to stay. In fact he told them they would be there for 25 years!

Amongst the group of Jews, Poles and Lithuanians was the previous Minister of Education of Lithuania- an elderly eighty year old man who had been through much to get to where he was; now broke down crying.

Understanding their situation Rabbi Galinsky made a quick calculation as to how old he would be when they left twenty five years later. But alas his calculation soon broke down as he was shouted at by the commander. "You see those gates, no one leaves there alive!" said the commander.

I once heard Rabbi Galinsky personally relate his predicament.

"What could I do? How should I pray to G-d to save me?"

Almighty G-d, I implore you to let me have the strength to survive and if that's too much, please at least let me have a Jewish burial.

If someone would have approached me and told me at that time not to worry, calming my fears by saying

"One day you will leave this place and go to Israel where you will set up a Torah Academy, including a Yeshiva and range of Kolelim.

You will be blessed with a large family and merit to see your children, grandchildren and great grandchildren in health, living a rich Jewish life.

And that when you will be invited to travel outside of Israel it would be hard for you to arrange as you will be attending so many family engagements, weddings, Bar Mitzvah's" I would have said Rachok Miyeshuati Divrei

Shaagati - literally meaning man asks for a lot and receives a little.

I learned with my own flesh that the explanation is the exact opposite.

All I asked for was the simple strength to survive and if that was too much then at least a Jewish burial. And G-d in turn blessed me with the abundance that I have experienced!"

Therefore my friends when it comes to Rosh Hashanah we ask G-d please let us be the head.

But the head of what?

Not the peak of what our understanding is. What we think is the head, is really just the tail. Therefore we beseech the Almighty to bless us to be the head in His understanding, rather than what we perceive to be the head, yet is really the tail.

A message to generation Z.

It's not all as it seems. There is much more depth to what you think is the peak.

This is the easy come easy go generation where what are thought of as Super Computers - the heads of the computer world - are a few years later already considered obsolete. Where fun and action are quick to arrive, yet don't seem to leave a lasting impression.

What are your desires for the next year? Rosh Hashanah is the first page in a blank book of hundreds of pages. Write a good one!

What shall we ask for? Better gaming powers, technological advances that will enable us to text, video call, drive unmanned vehicles, get to the moon and back?

What we think is the head - the top of our list of asks, could actually be the tail.

So we ask G-d - You realise what is at the top - please put us there!

Judaism has so much to offer, boasting a rich legacy of dialogue and thought provoking debate to cultivate both wisdom and compassion. There is a reason why so many people in the previous generations died for their belief!

Religion is dying? Not with us. We have been crushed in the past, yet we have now risen and cultivated barren land, returning to the promised land of our forefathers - Israel. We have rebuilt the Torah learning centres that were destroyed by the evil Nazis. And we will continue to learn from the book of a Living G-d that Was, Is and always Will Be.

Judaism is alive and well, thriving, offering life, teaching love, kindness, free will and true happiness. Judaism has an enormous wealth of wisdom and experience to offer this troubled world, and we as Jews ought to be proud to speak about it with enthusiasm and dignity.

As the New Year arrives remember the book is called opportunity and Rosh Hashanah is the first chapter in the book. Grab it, embrace it and create your Jewish future. ■

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RABBI BENJAMIN STONE - MAGGID SHIUR - MI K'AMCHO

THE LESSON OF THE SHIRAH

Sometimes a question is so strong, it is almost unanswerable.

“And it shall be when (the Jewish people) encounter many evils and tribulations and this *shirah* (song) will testify before them as a witness - because it will not be forgotten from their offspring”. (*Devarim*; 31:21)

This verse teaches us that when troubles befall *klal yisrael* (G-d forbid), our first point of reference should be the *shirah* in this week's parasha which serves to remind us of why those troubles have occurred and that, at some point, redemption will kick in.

Now the question is as follows; in three thousand years of our troubled existence, has any communal leader or saintly individual ever quoted the *shirah* in times of suffering?

Even if our leaders might have, on occasion, referred to the *shirah*, it is clear that the *shirah* is not considered the “go to” document in difficult times, as prescribed in this verse.

How could that be?

If we look a little at the content of the *shirah* the answer to this question begins to reveal itself. At the outset the *shirah* tells us the exact point at which everything starts to go wrong. After being meticulously cared for in the desert and then lavishly provided for in *Eretz Yisroel*: “Yeshurun became fat and kicked,” (32:15) meaning that the Jewish people over indulged in material pleasures and rebelled.

According to the *Sforno* it was not simply the uninitiated, simple Jew who was enticed by material success. The term “*Yeshurun*” refers to those who were the shield bearers of the Torah, those capable

of learning to a high standard. Their immersion in luxury and their hedonistic leanings served to dull their intellectual sensitivities, weakening their ability to grasp the subtleties of fine *halachic* argument.

To return to our question; although the Torah, at face value, does instruct us to refer to the *shirah* when we meet troubled times, that is not its precise intention.

A few verses earlier, Moshe is instructed to “Write for yourself the *shirah* and teach it to the children of Israel; make them fluent in it...so that it can be a witness”.

The *shirah* is to be the mini-blueprint of the future which every Jew needs to carry with them into exile. The *shirah* is the letter of advice a mother places in a locket and gives to the child she might not see again and is to be the mantra of our survival in *galut*. It is a song which every man, women and child is supposed to know so well that when difficult times set in, it will not be necessary to positively consult the *shirah*; at that point the *shirah* will in fact “testify itself”. (*Devarim* 31:21)

It is too late to look to the *shirah* once we begin to experience trials and distress. We need to be proactive. When times are good we need to check that the lesson of the *shirah* is absorbed into our bones; that whilst we may enjoy the pleasures of this world, we must not allow those pleasures to divert our focus away from our avodat Hashem. ■

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CROWNING THE KING

Many people approach Rosh Hashanah with the mind-set of judgement and fear, after all, this is Yom Hadin¹. However, what we must remember is that there are two sides to the coin and Rosh Hashanah has a joyful element to it as well.

Rosh Hashanah is not only “judgement day”, but Hashem’s – The King of all kings, coronation as well. Each year, since the beginning of time, we crown Hashem anew on Rosh Hashanah. We see this from the wording of our prayers. During the “Aseres Yemei Teshuva” for example, we say “HaMelech Hakodosh” and “HaMelech HaMispahat”. When the Shliach Tzibbur ascends to the Bimah after Pesukay DeZimra, he says in a melodious and loud voice, “HaMelech”. Finally, the Mussaf service is divided into three blessings: Shofros, Zichronos and Malchiyois.

The Shofar itself contains both of these aspects within it. On the one hand it is blown in order to arouse within us a feeling and sense of teshuva². On the other hand, it is also used as a “trumpet” signifying our crowning of Hashem as king³.

Finally, Rosh Hashanah is the day Hashem created man⁴ and as the adage goes, “There is no king without a nation”⁵ - this being the first day of Hashem’s kingship. Granted, Hashem had other creations before Man, but none of which had free will - the choice to appoint and accept Hashem as a king. (After all, one of the

main functions of a king is to create edicts, all of which would only apply to beings of free will.)⁶

So what does it mean to crown Hashem as king? In simple terms, it means to subjugate yourself as His loyal servant and accept the “Oil Malchus Shemayim” – “The yoke of Heaven”. On a deeper plane, it means to give yourself totally over to Hashem, to nullify yourself to His will - that in everything you do, you are serving Hashem, you eat as Hashem’s servant and you sleep as Hashem’s servant. Every act is permeated with a sense of ‘there is nothing but Hashem and my whole being is here to serve Him’.⁷

So on this day of Rosh Hashanah, let us renew our service to Hashem and let us rejoice that He is our King and we, His people. ■

¹ Four names are given to this day: Rosh Hashanah, Yom Hadin, Yom Hazikoron and Yom Teru'ah

² Rambam, Hilchos Teshuvah 3:4

³ Sefer Abudraham, Seder Tefilas Rosh Hashanah Ve'Peirusheha lists 10 reasons in the name of Rav Saadiah Gaon of why we blow the shofar. See also Ritva on Tractate Rosh Hashanah 16A

⁴ Vayikra Rabbah 29:1

⁵ See Rabbeinu Bachaye Parashas Vayeishiv 38:30 and Sefer Ma'amorim 5743 “Yom Beis De'Rosh Hashanah” etc.

⁶ Rambam, Hilchos Teshuvah 5:1

⁷ Parashas Veschanan 4:35

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THE TWO WORDS THAT MAKE US STOP AND THINK.

Another year has gone.

What have we achieved in that time?

Where are we at this stage?

What have we done over the last year?

Have we used our time appropriately?

The Gemoro in Brochos 55b teaches us that if someone hasn't seen his friend for twelve months, he should recite the Brocho of "Boruch mechayei hameisim".

The Maharsh there explains that during the twelve month period, we have passed a Rosh Hashono, and during that time we were judged whether we would live or die.

Therefore, after the Yom HaDin, we acknowledge the fact that a friend of ours has been judged and found worthy of life ... so we recite a Brocho to praise Hashem that his life was spared.

The Meforshim ask that surely it would be more appropriate to make the blessing of HaGomel, which implies that a life was spared, unlike the blessing of Mechayei meisim, which denotes a more drastic message, as if the man had been granted a new life.

A revival from death.

Really?

It must be that after Rosh Hashono we don't merely continue to live.

No. Our existence ceases at the end of the year and we actually need to plead for another year of life.

Thus the Sifrei Chaim are also open on the day of judgement, as even those that are alive need to be reinserted in the Book of Life.

Reb Yonoson Eibshitz further underscores this point by going one stage further.

In Zichronos we daven "zeh hayom techilas ma'asecho". This day is the first day of creation. Wouldn't it be more correct to say 'this is the same day as Brias Ho'olom?

Similarly, after blowing the Shofar, we cry out 'Hayom haras olom' today is the first day of creation. Surely we should say this in the past tense, today is the day when the world was created?

Clearly, Rosh Hashono every year is the day when everything is renewed and starts again.

The world and even our lives begin anew.

Allow me to use a simple analogy to illustrate why we need to plead sincerely for a new year.

If we have a car that has served us loyally; its dents and knocks show its years of service, but we bear with. They are badges of familiarity that we can live with.

However, when purchasing a new car, we will inspect it with a fine toothcomb, not wanting any scratches or impediments.

Because when we buy a new product, we want the best.

Similarly, on Rosh Hashono, HKBH is giving us a new life and we need to make sure we are completely fresh and clean.

May we all be zoicheh to be inscribed in the Sefer Hachaim. ■



OUR CHACHAMIM

RABBI SHNEUR ZALMAN OF LIADI

THE AUTHOR OF THE TANYA

Forty-seven years after the birth of that great light, our teacher the holy Baal Shem Tov on Elul 18, 5458, Rabbi Shneur Zalman Schneerson Zatzal was born in 5505. The author of the Tanya and the founder of Chabad Chassidut, Rabbi Shneur Zalman was born in the small town of Liozna, in the province of Mohilov.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman learned most of his Torah with Rabbi Issachar Ber in Lubavitch, and as early as the age of 11 his teacher discovered extraordinary talents in him. He therefore exiled himself to a place of Torah, and at the age of 18 he was fully versed in every Torah subject. Indeed, everyone who met him was amazed.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman settled in Vitebsk after his marriage, and from there he went to study Chassidut with Rabbi Dov Ber, the great Maggid of Mezritch. The Maggid predicted that he would lead a community of myriads. Rabbi Shneur Zalman began to direct the community after the passing of his teacher, and thousands of Jews gathered around him in the small town of Liadi, which became a shining beacon of Torah. It was from there that Torah and Chassidut went out to the entire Diaspora.

The Baal HaTanya (as Rabbi Shneur Zalman became known) was arrested several times due to false allegations. When he emerged from prison a second time, on Kislev 19, everyone realized that he was a holy man. From then on, Kislev 19 became known as the "Rosh Hashanah" of Chassidut, the day that the Rebbe was freed.

During the Napoleonic wars, Rabbi Shneur Zalman fled into the heart of Russia due to his opposition to Napoleon. However due to his many travels, he fell ill and ascended to the celestial academy on Tevet 24, 5573. He is famous for having written the Tanya, as well as for his own Shulchan Aruch, known as Shulchan Aruch HaRav. Rabbi Shneur Zalman is buried in the town of Hadiacz. May his merit protect us all. ■



HALACHOT

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

KEEPING BREAD ON THE TABLE DURING BIRKAT HAMAZON

The Shulhan Aruch, in Siman 180, rules that bread must be left on the table during Birkat Hamazon. One explanation is that Birkat Hamazon draws down the Beracha from Heaven, and there is a general principle that blessings do not descend upon empty vessels. This is derived from the story of Elisha and the wife of Ovadia, in which he told her to use her last remaining oil to perform the miracle. Leaving bread on the table serves as the basis for the continued flow of Beracha from Hashem. The Ben Ish Hai (Rav Yosef Haim of Baghdad, 1833-1909) went one step further that one should leave all the remaining bones, shells and peels from the meal. Apparently, the Beracha of Birkat Hamazon can extract from them sparks of holiness. Of course, one should collect them in an orderly fashion.

One should be very careful not to step on remaining pieces of bread or show disdain for them. Doing so leads to poverty. If the pieces are less than a Kezayit, they may be discarded respectfully. If there are bigger pieces, which will not be eaten, the Poskim allow sealing them in a bag and then placing the bag in the garbage. The precedent for this is discarding Teruma nowadays and fruits with Kedushat Shevi'it. This Halacha would also apply to cake and other Mezonot, as well.

SUMMARY: One should leave bread on the table during Birkat Hamazon.

Stepping on bread leads to poverty. Pieces larger than a Kezayit may be sealed in a bag and placed in the garbage. ■



TEST YOURSELF - Q&A

- ❶ How many major floods did Hashem bring upon the world?
- ❷ Why did Hashem separate the world's nations into exactly 70?
- ❸ When Hashem overturns a nation that persecutes the Jewish People, His attribute of Mercy is "replaced" by which attribute?
- ❹ If Moshe had spoken to the rock rather than striking it, what would the Jewish People have learned?
- ❺ How is the Torah like rain?

Answer

❶ 32:7 - Two. One in the time of Adam's grandson Enosh and one in the time of Noach. ❷ 32:8 - To correspond to the 70 Bnei Yisrael who entered Egypt. ❸ 32:41 - His attribute of Justice. ❹ 32:51 - The Jewish People would have reasoned as follows: If a rock, which receives neither reward nor punishment, obeys Hashem's commands, all the more so should they. ❺ 32:2 - The Torah gives life and promotes growth like rain.

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