

THE COMMUNITY Parasha Sheet



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Shetizku Legadlo Latorah Lechupa Ulemasim Tovim!

RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

DIRECTOR
TAL



OOH OR AAH?

The great Chassidic sage Rabbi Aryeh Leib known as the Shpolle Zeide, tells how as a child, he would go to a shvitz (steam bath) with his father, who would pour freezing water on him just as he began to perspire. "Ooh," he would scream as the cold water contacted his hot flesh, but - after cooling down - would exclaim happily, "Aah."

"Remember, my child, the lesson of the Ooh and Aah," the Shpolle would hear from his father. Before (and often even during) the commission of a transgression, you have physical enjoyment - Aah.

But afterwards, when you ponder your sin and its consequences - Ooh! In the case of a Mitzvah, however, you might cry Ooh when you have to get up early for prayers or for a lesson of daf yomi, but in considering your religious accomplishment, you will always sigh Aah afterwards.

Make sure you conclude your life with an Aah!

One might think the commandments Hashem has placed upon us represent a yoke. They are tough and restrictive, yet the Torah teaches that the opposite is true.

The other day whilst walking, I came across an interesting sign.

"G-d said don't look around you, you will be impressed, don't look down you will be depressed, just look to Meand you will be **blessed**."

These words initiated an interesting thought in my mind. We are all in search of blessings, yet never really know how to approach receiving them.

This week's Parasha lends a fascinating insight.

Moshe Rabbenu begins the Parasha by telling the people, "Behold, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse. The blessing, if you listen to the commandments of Hashem your G-d, which I am commanding you today; and the curse, if you do not listen to the commandments of the Hashem your G-d, but turn aside from the way which I am commanding you today, by following other gods which you have not known."

Moshe tells the people that keeping the Mitsvot will reap blessings and reward, yet if we choose not to then punishment is sure to come.

This poses a difficulty, as we are taught "There is no reward for Mitsvot in this world" (Kiddushin 39b).

In fact this is not the only time the Torah seems to contradict the Gemara in Kiddushin. The Torah on many occasions has promised us reward for performing Mitsvot.

In Vayikra (26:3-6) we learn "If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, I shall give you rains in their season, so that the land will yield its produce and the trees of the field will bear their fruit....I shall also grant peace in the land, so that you may lie down with no one making you tremble. I shall also eliminate harmful beasts from the land, and no sword will pass through your land".

How can Gemara in Kiddushin seemingly contradict the Pesukim which clearly state there is reward?

The famous Rabbi Yehudah Halevi (1075-1141) in his magnum opus the Kuzari discusses the difference between Judaism and other religions. He asks - "why doesn't the Torah stress the reward awaiting the righteous in the world to come." Instead, the Torah goes out of its way to mention at length the reward one receives in this physical world.

Rabbi Yehudah Halevi goes on to explain that a person who lives a true spiritual life connected to Hashem can achieve closeness to the world to come **whilst living in this world**. This is exactly what prophecy is all about. Through the true prophets of Israel the people of Israel were in constant connection with the upper world while living a physical life in this world. Angels were walking amongst them. This is what the Temple is all about, a centre of Divine prophecy and worship where this world and the upper worlds combine. ►

> MAZAL TOV TO

Michael & Hadassa Cohen
for their son Elijah's Bar Mitzvah

” THE WEEKLY QUOTE
"A smile is one of the only things you can give away without you losing out."

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DVAR TORAH

Ooh or Aah?
RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

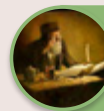
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Hence when Yaakov Avinu had his dream over the future Temple site, he saw angels ascending and descending a ladder that had its base on the ground reaching far into the heavens (Bereishit 28:12).

Rabbi Kook (1865-1935) explains that this is the reason why during the first Temple period there was no stress on the world to come since miracles and prophecy would take place every day. It was so natural for the nation to feel a spiritual connection with Hashem in this world. Therefore, there was no need to focus on life after death. However, during the second Temple period and throughout the 2000 year exile when prophecy stopped and miracles were not common anymore, the nation felt the need to focus on the world to come. There was a spiritual vacuum that needed to be filled. When the sun is shining strong there is no need for a candle to give light. Only when darkness is prevalent is the need for a candle felt.

The famous Rabbi Meir Leibush Weiser (1809-1879) known as the Malbim brings down the words of Rav Yehudah Halevi

and explains that this is exactly the meaning of the opening words of this week's portion.

In mentioning the blessings and curses the Torah stresses the word "today" three times!

The Torah could have easily mentioned it once. The reason, explains the Malbim, is that by following the Torah one will merit in seeing the blessing of Hashem in *this* world **today** and will not have to wait until he leaves it to experience the Divine.

The Gemara in Kiddushin however refers to the real spiritual reward felt on a higher level of spirituality only due in the next world; but that does not desist from the fact that via performing Mitsvot in this world with a correct heart and good intentions, we will ourselves be feeling the blessings of our actions.

The Ktav Sofer makes this message clear by asking on another Pasuk in our Parasha.

The Torah relates (Re'eh 15:10) וְלֹא-יִרְעַ לְבָבְךָ בְּתַתֵּן לוֹ, כִּי בְגִלְלֵי הַדָּבָר הוּא, יִבְרָכְךָ ה' בְּכָל-מַעֲשֶׂיךָ. If we give Tzedakah Hashem will give a Brachah to all our work. Again, how can that be possible if there is no reward in this world?

The Ktav Sofer answers that for the Mitzvah itself there is no reward in this world. However for the Simcha, the joy with which one performs the Mitzvah, there is a reward in this world. If we look carefully at the Pasuk we see that the Pasuk clearly states this. לֹא-יִרְעַ לְבָבְךָ בְּתַתֵּן לוֹ, there should be **no ill will** in your **heart** when you give it - only **joy** in doing Hashem's Mitzvah. כִּי בְגִלְלֵי הַדָּבָר הוּא, יִבְרָכְךָ ה' בְּכָל-מַעֲשֶׂיךָ, because of this aspect of the Mitzvah, the Simcha you had, you will be rewarded in this world.

The litmus test to every Mitzvah is the way we approach it. If we are happy in our performance and don't look around, but rather look towards Hashem, we are sure to feel blessed.

Only then can we be on the path to conclude with an Aah! ■

RABBI PEARLMAN - MEVASERET ZION -YERUSHALAYIM

DVAR
TORAH



OCCURRENCE OF THE YAMIM TOVIM IN THE TORAH

Towards the end of the sidra we have the well-known parshiot of Aser Te'aser and Kol Habechor which are read for Kriat Hatorah "Chutz La'Aretz" on Shmini Atzeret and Yom Tov Sheni. There are five places in Chumash where the range of Yamim Tovim are described and there are numerous differences between them.

1. In Mishpatim the harvest festival aspect is emphasised and the Yamim Tovim are given agricultural names. Pesach is in chodesh HaAviv, Shavuot is Chag Hakatzir and Succot Chag HaAsif.

2. In Ki Tisa we are told about the Nationalistic aspect and that we will become an independent nation fully protected by Hashem even when we leave our homes to go up to Yerushalayim notwithstanding our enlarged territory.

3. Then in Emor the Yamim Tovim are described in detail including also Rosh Hashanah and

Yom Kippur and all the Yom Tov mitzvot are mentioned there. This could be described as the Ritualistic Parasha. Indeed it is referred to as the Parashat HaMoadim.

4. The next occasion is in Pinchas where all the musafim and korbanot to be sacrificed on Yom Tov are recorded. The maftir following Kriat HaTorah on Yom Tov is always taken from here. So this could be called the Sacrificial Parasha.

We have thus far noted four important aspects of Yom Tov namely 1) Agricultural 2) Nationalistic 3) Ritualistic 4) Sacrificial. And now 5) In Re'eh we come to what in certain ways is the most important aspect of all which we can describe as the Social Welfare aspect.

Aser Te'aser has been talking about giving tithes, looking after the Levi, the Ger, the orphan and the widow. Open your hand and give to the needy. Dealing fairly and generously with your Jewish servant, whom you should treat as your brother. Then follows the chapter of Kol HaBechor emphasising how you must enjoy the Yom Tov in the presence of Hashem "You, and your son and your daughter and your servant and your maidservant and the Levi in your gates and the Ger and the orphan and the widow amongst you etc"

Rashi comments "Four of mine (Levi, Ger, orphan and widow) to correspond to four of yours (your son, daughter, servant and

maidservant). If you will make mine happy I will then make yours happy correspondingly".

It is most instructive in this context to quote from the Rambam. In hilchot Shvitat heAsor ch 6 halachot 17-18 he describes a person's duties of simcha and good spirits on Yom Tov to include one's children and wife and then he continues "When eating and drinking one is obligated to feed the ger, the orphan and the widow together with other unfortunate poor people, but anyone who closes the doors of his yard, eats with his children and his wife but does not feed and give drink to the poor and those of low spirit has not performed the mitzvah of simcha. He has done simcha in his belly" and he goes on to use unusually strong language to deplore such behaviour. Indeed the language chosen, borders on the vulgar which is completely out of character for the great Rambam whose choice of words is most refined, and he is obviously accentuating here his disgust of utterly inappropriate performance and indeed perversion of an important mitzvah.

Thus the Yomtov chesed aspect in Re'eh rounds off the previous four we have mentioned, by emphasising the social welfare and bein adam lechaveiro that we have to accentuate in our performance of mitzvot and in the service of Hakadosh Baruch Hoo. ■

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OUR CHACHAMIM

RABBI ISRAEL ZEITOUN

During his youth, Rabbi Israel was a delicate boy who sought the companionship of Torah scholars because he thirsted for knowledge. The vanities of this world did not interest him at all, and he desired nothing other than to grow in Torah.

Rabbi Israel was a sage who literally absorbed Torah, and he quickly distinguished himself as a great Torah scholar. Every Shabbat evening, he hastened to the house of study where Rabbi Yeshua Bessis and Rabbi Avraham Cohen Itshaki taught Kabbalah and its mysteries. Rabbi Israel put his head in his hands and very attentively drank in the words of his teachers.

He studied the Torah that his teacher Avraham Hadjaj instructed him. A deep affection developed between them, and Rabbi Israel loved him as a father, without reservation. He even took it upon himself to publish his Rav's book, entitled Saro Shel Avraham.

During the day, Rabbi Israel earned his living as a wax merchant. During that time, he understood the workings of the business world very well, and learned how to avoid the scams of the business world. Years later, when he was presiding over the Rabbinic court of Tunis, that experience helped him in arriving at judicial decisions and to properly carry out his inquiries.

Rabbi Israel was a fair judge. He was upright and honest, with nothing to hide. The Rabbis of Tunis relied on him and named him as head of the Rabbanim. When controversy arose among the Rabbanim, he fled from all disputes as if from a fire. When he himself had opponents, he forgave them, and through the love that he showed them he managed to bring them close to him.

Rabbi Israel maintained a correspondence with Rabbi Shmuel Salant of Jerusalem, with whom he exchanged messages dealing with all aspects of Halachah. He also maintained a correspondence with the Rabbanim of Morocco and Livorno in Italy.

Famous for his merit, his modesty, and his uprightness, he continued to be loved and appreciated even after his death in 5861 (1921) at the age of 80.

His Hilloula is celebrated on Av 18. ■



HALACHOT

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

IS IT PERMISSIBLE TO EAT A MEAL JUST PRIOR TO SHABBAT

The Gemara in Masechet Pesachim (100) discusses the requirement that one come to the Shabbat meal on Friday night with an appetite, so that he eats the Shabbat meal heartily.

To this end, Halacha imposes certain restrictions regarding one's eating on Erev Shabbat. According to the Shulchan Aruch, it is permissible to eat a normal-sized meal, the kind of meal one normally eats during the week, anytime on Erev Shabbat, provided that it will not satiate him to the point that he will have no appetite when Shabbat begins. One may not, however, eat a particularly large, festive meal on Erev Shabbat, unless it involves a Mitzva that applies specifically that day. For example, if a circumcision or Pidyon Ha'ben took place on Erev Shabbat, one may conduct a large, festive meal in honor of the event. Likewise, if one completes a Masechet (Tractate) of Talmud on Erev Shabbat, he may hold a large "Siyum" celebration. Large meals to celebrate an engagement, however, are forbidden, since modern-day "engagements" are not Halachically binding, and the meal is therefore not considered a formal Se'udat Mitzva (meal involving a Mitzva). The Mishna Berura (commentary to the Shulchan Aruch by Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan, Lithuania, 1835-1933) rules that one may host an engagement celebration consisting of light food on Erev Shabbat.

It should be noted that the Shulchan Aruch records a custom among some to refrain from eating even normal-sized meals within three Halachic hours before sundown on Friday afternoon.

Furthermore, the Mishna Berura mentions that one should avoid drinking alcoholic beverages close to Shabbat, as he may become inebriated and thus be unable to conduct the Shabbat meal properly.

In general, one must be aware of his eating patterns, and ensure that he eats on Friday in such a manner that he goes into Shabbat with an appetite.

Summary: Halacha requires that one sit down to the Shabbat meal on Friday night with an appetite. Therefore, it is forbidden to eat a large, festive meal – larger than a meal one normally eats – on Erev Shabbat, except as part of a Mitzva celebration that occurred on that day, such as a Berit Mila, Pidyon Ha'ben, or completion of a Masechet. Some have the practice to refrain from even normal-sized meals within three Halachic hours of sunset on Erev Shabbat. One must avoid drinking alcoholic beverages late on Friday afternoon. ■

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

Answer

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

Kids STORY

Did you figure out the answer to the teacher's question yet Chaim?

Which question are you referring to Avi?

The one about charity.

Hmmm. I don't remember the question so clearly Avi. Could you remind me what he said?

Sure. Imagine that you had one hundred dollars to give to charity. Is it better to give the entire sum to one poor person, or give one dollar each to one hundred poor people?

Now I remember the question. Let's think about this a minute. If you give to one hundred poor people, you are helping one hundred people. That's a lot better than helping just one person.

That's true, Chaim, but how much are you really helping each person? One dollar isn't very much. On the other hand, if you give the whole one hundred dollars to one poor person, you are really giving him a big helping hand.

You have a good point, Avi. So do I. Each answer has its advantage and disadvantage.

Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan, the premier Jewish scholar of his generation, who is known to us as the Chofetz Chaim, has a different angle on this question. He focuses on what is better for the giver of the charity, not the receiver. If you look in this week's Torah portion (Devarim 15:10) you will see that the verse repeats the word “give” twice when instructing us to give charity to the poor. Rashi comments that the Torah repeats the word to teach us that as long as the poor remain needy we must give to them. Even one hundred times.

I'm not following you, Avi. What difference does it make to the giver how many times he gives? It's the same amount of money in either case.

That's true, Chaim. However, imagine yourself as the giver. A man comes to you to ask for charity. You give to him. He returns the next day. You give again. This continues for a week. Then another week. And another week. After a while you begin to think, “Can't this man get a job? Why does he keep coming back to me?”

However, the Torah instructs you to give. Therefore, you keep giving. Each time that you give, it gets a little easier. You take one more step towards overcoming your inclination to ignore the poor person. After one hundred times, the giving becomes second nature to you. You have become a generous person. You would never accomplish this by writing one check for one hundred dollars. One hundred acts of giving make a much bigger impression upon a person than a single moment of generosity.

I see Avi. It's like exercise in a way. Daily training is much more beneficial to you than one massive workout.

Now you're getting the hang of it Chaim. The Torah wants you to develop your “giving” muscles. Therefore, you have to exercise them regularly.

You've changed my whole attitude towards charity, Avi. Each person that comes asking for charity is another opportunity for me to get some exercise.

Chaim, you're really getting into shape. Keep up the repetitions!

We were honoured to host Rabbi Baadani Shelita Rosh Ziknei Hachamim at the Adeni Synagogue in Finchley.

The Rabbi delivered words of Chizuk on the importance of Torah and capturing every moment in our lives.

We were all honoured with his presence and words which left us very inspired.

