

THE COMMUNITY Parasha Sheet



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From all of us at TAL, CHAG SAMEACH!!

This special edition is dedicated Lehatlachat Moshe Ben Rav Yitschak Hakohen Vechol Mishpachto

RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

DIRECTOR
TAL



UNITY IN NUMBERS!

What does a number mean to you? Technically a number is a mathematical object used to count and measure. Yet we use numbers to represent important times in our lives, to role dice in a game or even play a lucky lottery. This week we enter the fourth book of the Torah Bamidbar. Our Sages know this book as Sefer Hapikudim – the book of Numbers.

On first thought we understand the book is so called after the beginning of our Parsha which deals with a population census that is taken of the Jewish people at the time.

Yet when we think of it, why is a whole book named after such a one off event? Wouldn't it have been better for our sages to keep the name as the book of Bamidbar, especially seeing as most of the book deals with occurrences in the wilderness?

Furthermore on inspection the Torah states: "Take a census..... according to their fathers' house, BY NUMBER OF THE NAMES, every male according to their head count." (Bamidbar 1:2).

The expression "Bmispar Sheimot" [by number of the names] seems contradictory. What does it really mean? The term "number" and "names" are almost mutually exclusive. When we talk about numbers we imply anonymity. The word "names" has the exact opposite connotation. A name gives a person singularity and a quality of being special - more than just a number!

Which is it - was the census concerned with the overall numbers (the "Klal") or was the census interested in the individual names (the "P'rat")?

Have you ever been in a synagogue searching for a Minyan? When people arrive in the synagogue the Shliach Tsibur has to wait till there are ten men. The Halacha is that he may not count these people directly.

Rav Mordechai Gifter zt'l, explains that numbers by their very definition are finite. ►

> TIMES

SHABBAT IN : 21:00

YOM TOV 1st NIGHT (MOZEI SHABBAT) : 22:20

YOM TOV 2nd NIGHT LIGHTING (SUNDAY NIGHT) : 22:21

YOM TOV ENDS : 22:22

> MAZAL TOV

Aharon & Shani Gabbay

on the birth of their daughter Sara Miriam



THE WEEKLY QUOTE

"The single greatest thing you can do to change your life right now would be to start being grateful for what you have today."



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Stating a number, one quantifies an item such that the quantity is no more and no less than the number stated. A human being, by his very definition, is not finite in this sense. He has a soul and strengths, and characteristics. He has unlimited potential to grow and expand his capabilities. Trying to put a number on an individual limits him and restricts his ability to reach untold heights. Therefore, when we speak of a “Minyan” we are not speaking of a “mispar” [a number]. We cannot just “count” Jews. When we enumerate people and treat them as numbers we in effect say they are defined and limited. This is certainly not the way Hashem wants us to view the Jewish people.

Thus when there is a census of the people, the aim is to work out the number, but they are not counted by numbers, rather they are counted through names. Each name represents an individuality, an unlocked potential – each person has a separate task in life. The end number is the sum of all the physical bodies, but it in no way measures the awesome infinite power of all their souls.

Getting the Jewish people to unite nowadays isn't easy.

But let's think about it 3323 years ago, when the Jews left Egypt. How easy was it for them to unite?

The Midrash states that when the time was right to leave Egypt Hashem gathered the Jews from all over Egypt. They all set out and followed Moshe into the wilderness. Imagine, a people that had been scattered across a vast land, there were no technological communications, and yet they all went following one leader into the wilderness.

Forty nine days later they stood at Har Sinai – and they encamped united - Kelsh Echad Belev Echad. Millions of people, a whole nation, and within 49 days they had achieved unity!

What is the secret to this unity?

Chazal explain that Moshe had already told them that the whole purpose of Yetsiat Mitsrayim was Taavdun... Al Hahar Hazeh – receiving the Torah. The people had a goal, they were excited and had a goal to work towards. They united behind this goal, and worked on

themselves for 49 days each day improving their characters and unity, until they were able to completely unite to receive the Torah.

The Torah could only be received by a united people!

Similarly we find in this week's Parsha. Moshe was worried. Each tribe had a different flag, each tribe had a different Avoda (work) set out for them. How would they all be able to integrate? Perhaps some of the tribes would complain about their flag and tasks?

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky explained that Hashem reassured Moshe, and told him so long as they are encamped around the Mishkan all will work well. So long as we are unified in our ideology, we understand the important things in life and set these as the centre of our attention – the Holy Presence of Hashem – then we will be successful.

The Netsiv explains that book of Numbers, is so called, because it begins with a census and ends with a census. The census at the beginning refers to a census shortly after leaving Egypt. A nation that had received the Torah, built the Mishkan and was ready to start their voyage. It was a show of how we value each Jew individually, yet at the same time, how we value the whole nation as a united entity. It is only through unity that we can have the Mishkan and Hashem's presence within us. The census at the end refers, a generation later, to a newborn nation, about to enter Israel. The message being sent to them is clear. To inherit the land of Israel, there must be unity. A count of the people is taken, each exists on their individual level, yet each must know the centre piece must be Holiness.

Am Yisrael are a successful nation when we are united.

Let us focus on our heritage, focus on our individual goals and unite in His service to merit the coming of Mashiach Bimhera Byamenu Amen.

Chag Sameach! ■

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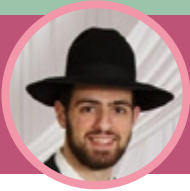
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AHARON GABBAY - KOLLEL ZICHRON CHANA VERACHEL - JERUSALEM

ALL FOR ONE

Chag Shavuot is a grand time for the Jewish people. It is the reliving of the Jews receiving their beloved Torah from Hashem. It is arguably the most eventful occurrence in Jewish history. However, with some thought, it doesn't seem to be as grand as it appears. If one looks into the story of the Jewish people, it seems that there was some form of teachings well before the Bnei Yisrael stood at Har Sinai. Rashi in Sefer Bereshit refers numerous times that mitzvot, such as matsot and korban pesach, were being fulfilled. The Gemara in Shabbat (87b) also says that the Bnei Yisrael received Shabbat before they even got to Har Sinai. If there was already teachings around, what happened at Har Sinai that was so remarkable? Furthermore, in the Haggadah we say "If we came to Har Sinai and we didn't receive the Torah, it would be enough". How could it be enough just to stand at the bottom of the mountain, if the whole purpose of standing there is to receive the Torah?

Avraham was the first man to create a connection with Hashem. He reached very high levels in relating to G-d not to mention going against the ideologies of the entire society that was around him. Hashem made a Brit (covenant) with Avraham and the rest of Bnei Yisrael who would follow. This began with the Brit Milah. This was the birth of Bnei Yisrael. Avraham began to spread his teachings about a one powerful G-d who ruled over all nature. He installed it into his children and they passed it on through to their descendants. The teachings continued through the descendants of the forefathers and even under the intense slavery in Egypt, they managed to keep everything they had learned until they broke out of the chains of slavery and into freedom into the desert. However, for the Jewish people, this was not enough.

When the Bnei Yisrael stood at Har Sinai they accepted upon themselves another Brit. The pasuk says that the Bnei Yisrael stood facing the mountain.

Rashi says "אחד בלב אחד כאיש" - like one man, with one heart. Every single soul that left Egypt was standing at Har Sinai ready to receive the Torah from Hashem. Everything they had learnt was about to materialise in front of their eyes, but it requires one thing that was not there before. Rashi says that until now there had been lack of connection between each other they did not see eye to eye and there was dispute between one and other. What enabled the Jews to receive the Torah was that they stood together with love and care which combined them as one body of people which can never be torn apart. Only through this connection were they able to receive the Torah from Hashem. That is what is so remarkable about Har Sinai and that is what we are referring to in the Haggadah - the unification of the Jewish people would be enough.

The Jewish people are not just a race who come from a country, they are an interconnected group of people who inevitably affect each other. Rav Yisrael Salanter used to say that when a Jew gossips in Kovno, a Jew in Paris desecrates Shabbat. Furthermore, the same way every single cell is vital for a human body to fully function, every Jew is vital for the Jewish people to fully function.

We have a tremendous faculty that is unique in many ways. The Jewish people feel such connection to each other throughout their entire livelihood. The kindness, generosity and hospitality we share, just because we are Jewish, is indescribable. The reason we do that is because we are a people who established an unbreakable connection. That connection was established at Har Sinai and that connection is what we relive today. ■

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RABBI MASCHIACH KELATY - ROSH KOLLEL NER AVROHOM

I KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SHAVUOT

I once heard a shiur given by Rav Moshe Aaron Stern zt"l. In his inimitable way, he posed the following question. Hillel the Elder had 80 talmidim. The top of the list was Rav Yonatan ben Uziel, otherwise known as the Targum Yonatan. He used to have a fire above his head, which used to burn birds who were flying overhead. The sort of person you want to sit next to at a barbeque. 'Floundering' at the bottom of the list was Rav Yochanan ben Zakkai, whose timely three point plan was accepted by the Roman Emperor Vespasian, thereby saving Rav Tzadok, the Royal line of King David, and all of the chachamim in Yavneh in one fell swoop.

Knowing only two names at positions 1 and 80, that leaves 78 talmidim, at least greater than Rav Yochanan ben Zakkai, who remain unnamed. Who are they?

Before I attempt to give you the answer, please indulge me by reading on.

In the beginning of Megillat Ruth we are told that a man from Bethlehem in Yehudah went to live in the fields of Moav, because of the famine in Eretz Yisrael. Chazal criticise this person for abandoning his people in their time of need and fleeing with his family to Moav.

When the Megillah first tells us of this person's departure, he is mentioned anonymously ('a man'). However, we do not remain guessing about his identity for very long. In the very next verse we are told that "The name of the man is Elimelech".

Why the 'cloak and dagger'? Why not write this story more 'economically' and tell us the name of the man and what he did in one pasuk?

To further exacerbate the point, I will quote you another verse:

"And a man went from the House of Levi and he married the daughter of Levi" (Shemot 2:1). The Torah later

identifies these mysterious individuals as Amram and Yocheved, the parents of Moshe. But why the anonymity? Why not simply say: "And Amram went and married Yocheved"?

The Baal HaTurim in Shemot points out that these two places are the only times in Tanach where the Torah uses the expression "And a man went" (vayelech ish). The Baal HaTurim comments that the pasuk "A man went from the Tribe of Levi" brought about the first redeemer (Moshe Rabbenu) and the pasuk

"A man went from Bethlehem Yehudah" led to the final redeemer (Mashiach -who will descend from King David, a descendent of Ruth).

[Incidentally, the Mincha Belulah says that the word 'im' as in 'Im Bechukotai teleichu' is a hint to redemption, past and present. It stands for Aaron and Moshe, and also for Esther and Mordechai, and ultimately for Eliyahu and Mashiach. If we keep shteiging, we will get to merit the last set of saviours - very soon, Amen]

The Shemen HaTov elaborates on this Baal HaTurim. The person who produces the Redeemer can be an anonymous person. One does not need to be the great leader of his generation -- an Amram or an Elimelech -- to produce the Redeemer. Any Jew is capable of producing a child who will be the greatest personage in his generation and in fact a Redeemer.

The Chafetz Chaim once told the following story. During the reign of the Czar of Russia, a father and son worked together in Siberia to lay the tracks for the railroad. This was backbreaking labor. Night and day, under the most brutal conditions, from freezing cold to stifling heat, they worked putting their blood, sweat and tears into the Czar's railroad. One day, the son turned to his father and asked, "Father, will the people that ride the train have any idea concerning

the backbreaking labor that went into preparing this railroad?"

The father looked at his son and said, "It is not important what people will or will not think, what they will or will not know. We work for one reason and for one purpose: to fulfill the command of the Czar. He is our leader, our father, who provides for our country. He has asked us to build the railroad. That is all that counts."

"The same idea applies to Torah study," continued the Chafetz Chaim. "It is unimportant for us to know if those who later delve through Torah chidushim will appreciate the time and effort expended in their production. Likewise, it should not matter to us the amount of toil that we put into learning a difficult sugya. Everything that man does in this world should be executed with one focus in mind: he is carrying out Hashem's will."

One does not necessarily need to be great himself or have superior lineage or wealth or power. Any anonymous Jew can potentially produce the future leader of the Jewish people.

And that's why we are not privy to the names of the students of Hillel. Regardless of the fact that they remain anonymous, their effect upon the history of Klal Yisrael was felt most acutely. Who knows how many times we have been saved from untold tragedies in the merit of these holy tzaddikim?

From red eye to Sinai, as you take part in the all night 'stake-out', make your stake in Torah. Even if you never get your name on a plaque, or will never have a synagogue named after you, you can sleep well after tikun leyl - knowing that there is One who knows all, and Who will never forget what you did last Shavout. ■

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THE POWER OF SILENCE

I once found myself in discussion with a young woman who objected to the perceived inequality of a Jewish wedding. She observed that under the Chuppah, although the groom has a small speaking part, the bride says nothing - which to her smacked of sexism.

I explained that in truth the bride's silence coupled with her public acceptance of a ring was the most powerful statement of intent even more significant than anything she could have said or that the groom did say. In fact, what the groom has to say is virtually immaterial, unless he offers the bride the ring and until she is witnessed to have accepted it, he could recite the most beautifully eloquent and moving poem to his beloved and it would mean nothing, no act of marriage will have taken place.

As the 19th century French politician Pierre-Joseph Proudhon said, 'When deeds speak, words are nothing.'

Perhaps this can help us understand why the fourth book of the Torah is called Bamidbar - 'in the desert' and, as it is read prior to Shavuot, why the Revelation at Sinai took place in such an environment.

It may be somewhat paradoxical that the Hebrew word 'midbar - desert' has the same root as the word 'davar' meaning 'word' and has the same letters as 'medaber - speaking'. For it is in the desert that the Jewish people, not only see, but hear revelation - the word of G-d and yet such an uninhabited place is synonymous with silence, the quiet associated with the absence of speaking.

However, the power of silence is highlighted by the episode of the death of Aharon's two sons Nadav and Avihu. Moshe explains to his brother why they died and the Torah records Aharon's reaction - he is silent and says nothing - a response which is highly commended and speaks volumes about his character.

And so we discover that not only is silence a sign of greatness but we also witness that where there is silence great things can happen. The Torah was given in a background of no noise, even the Jewish people, not known for being taciturn or tongue-tied, limited themselves to just two words at this juncture saying only, 'na'ase v'nishma - we will do and we will understand.'

As King Solomon phrased it so profoundly in Kohelet, 'There is a time (and place) for everything...a time to be silent and a time to speak.' Rashi explains that sometimes a person is silent and receives a reward, as it is said 'and Aharon was silent,' and he merited that the Divine speech be especially addressed to him, as it is said: 'And Hashem spoke to Aharon'.

So as the Jewish people and G-d, bride and groom stood under the Chuppah in the desert at Sinai there had to be silence to allow that most powerful and everlasting bond of national matrimony to be effected. ■





TAKE THE JUMP

Many of us are familiar with the story of Rabbi Akiva who saw water dripping on the rock face of a well and came to the conclusion that

“if water can make an impression on a rock then certainly Torah can make an impression on me”.

He then resolved to learn Torah and spent the next forty years in uninterrupted study.

This story is a little baffling however: Had R' Akiva never seen a rock formation before? Why only now at the age of forty did R' Akiva become inspired in this way?

The great mussar giant R' Yisroel Salanter zts"l (Ohr Yisroel; letter 10) explains that R' Akiva had actually learned Torah in his youth. He put in considerable effort at the outset but found that his learning made no impression on him whether in terms of improving his character or in terms of becoming a talmid chacham. He therefore decided to give up learning and turned his attention to sheparding. When he reached the age of understanding however he saw something profound in the effect that the dripping water had had on the rock - something he had never seen before. It occurred to him that when the water began dripping on the rock, it made no discernable impression at all. Even when it continued to drip, over many years the water made no apparent indent in the rock. Only after an extended period of time - possibly hundreds of years - did marks begin to form on the rock until out of nowhere a hole suddenly formed. R' Akiva realized that the same might be true of Torah learning. We might make a conscious decision to take our learning seriously - be it through going to yeshiva (or seminary), attending a new shiur or starting out with a new chavruta. However after some time we may ask ourselves “Why am I doing this?”; “Has my learning had an effect on me?” (“I still screamed at my wife when she threw out my favourite jacket”) or “Am I even

close to becoming a talmid chacham?” R' Akiva realized that when it comes to learning Torah a person needs to just keep going. He may not see the fruits of his labour for some years, maybe even a decade - but he will at some point taste success and his middot will also improve noticeably.

But there is a deeper message to be taken from R' Akiva's personal story of re-awakening (as heard from R' Yosef Elefant of Yeshivat Mir).

The verse in Devarim (18;13) famously states: “Be tamim (“act with faithfulness”) with Hashem your G-d”.

In a fascinating passage Rashi writes that this verse is telling us

“Do not look too far into the future. Accept without question whatever happens to you and then you will be with Hashem and part of his people”.

Rashi informs us that there is a specific mitzvah not to be strategic when it comes to serving Hashem.

When any of us pick up a sefer a myriad of thoughts might cross our mind. Thoughts of hopelessness, (“How far I am I going to get through this gemarah any way”) or possibly thoughts of resignation (“I have a wife and young family to take care of. Hopefully during the summer holidays I will have the peace of mind to learn. Now it's just not possible”). The mitzvah to be “tamim with Hashem your G-d” tells us not too think or analyse too much. It is encouraging each individual to live the moment, to take the opportunity he has now before him.

Why is it that if you live the moment, you become “with” or connected to Hashem? The reason is that if you live the moment then essentially you are saying that you accept what Hashem has given you. You

are not saying “I want more” or a “different” or “better” life situation. This is what Hashem put on your plate. This is Hashem's personal plan for you and you have got to take it on! It may not be perfect but your job is to learn Torah and keep mitzvot in the situation you are in, at the standard you are at and without consideration of what benefit may or may not come from your learning.

We find in the gemarah (Shabbat 88a) that this idea underpinned the process of matan Torah itself.

Rava was sitting on his fingers as he was learning and his fingers were bleeding because he was so deep in thought. A heretic said to him “You are an irresponsible person and you come from a nation of irresponsible people who said “We will do” before saying “We will hear”. The heretic was criticizing the Jewish people for acting without forward planning. How could they accept the Torah without knowing if they would be able to keep all its laws?

Rava answered quoting a verse in Mishlei (11;3) “The faithfulness of the upright will guard them”

Rava's response was that the essence of the Torah life is to be able to “take the jump” without concern for what might be. This approach is based on the reasoned conviction that Hashem loves us and will protect those who seek to serve him with sincerity. This is why the B'nei Yisrael chose to “do” before they “heard”.

It took time for R' Akiva to appreciate this point. But when he finally did so...well the rest is history. ■



OUR CHACHAMIM

RABBI RAPHAEL BARUCH TOLEDANO

The illustrious Toledano family has its origins in the city of Toledo, Spain. In 5252 (1492), at the time of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, the ancestor of this family (the Gaon Rabbi Yossef) left Toledo accompanied by his son the Gaon Rabbi Daniel, the leader of the sages of Castile. The entire family swore that never again would they or their descendants see the land of Spain. To perpetuate the memory of this vow, they changed their family name to that of Toledano (meaning "Toledo-no" – No to Toledo). When the Jews were expelled from Spain, Rabbi Daniel decided to go to Morocco. He settled in Fez and established a great yeshiva there. The two sons of Rabbi Daniel, Rabbi Haim and Rabbi Yossef, were also great Torah scholars and held rabbinic positions in the city of Meknes.

Over the course of many years, brilliant and world-renowned rabbis and judges emerged from the Toledano family. The Gaon Rabbi Yaakov Toledano was known for his immense Torah knowledge and great fear of G-d. He was very young when named President of the Rabbinic Court of Marrakech. Following that, he occupied the post of rabbi in the city of Meknes. Rabbi Yaakov was respected and venerated as much by Jews as by Muslims. Thanks to his influence, the rabbis of the rabbinic court were officially recognized as civil servants of the government.

Rabbi Yaakov had a majestic face, brilliant like the sun; he resembled a Divine angel. His son, Rabbi Baruch, was known from his youth for his pure and delicate soul. From year to year, he elevated himself in the rungs of Torah study and the fear of G-d. He possessed a vast knowledge in all fields of Torah, hidden as well as revealed. His only ambition and passion was Torah, which he studied constantly.

At the age of 10 he fell gravely ill, and to aid his recuperation the name Raphael was added to his first name. His teachers, Rabbi Haim Berdugo (the spiritual leader of the yeshiva of Meknes) and Rabbi Haim Massas (the Dayan of Meknes), opened the doors of profound Torah knowledge to him.

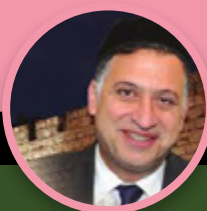
After a few years, Rabbi Raphael Baruch Toledano became a great scholar in Shas and the Poskim. He then began the study of Kabbalah with his teacher Rabbi Yossef Elkubi. Rabbi Raphael revealed himself to be a master in the subject by virtue of his sharp mind and intelligence.

His love for his neighbor and devotion to every Jew constituted his greatness. His home was open to all who sought entry. No effort was too difficult for him to make when it came to saving the life of the sick or to help the poor. Nevertheless, it sometimes happened that some in the community wanted to dodge the prohibitions of the Torah. Rabbi Raphael Baruch Toledano was beside himself and led a merciless fight against such people. He was a powerful rock that watched over the holiness of the Torah in all its respects.

His deep and pure faith demonstrated itself when, during prayer, he recited the verse: "The L-RD is King, the L-RD was King, the L-RD will be King forever and ever." He was always in the habit of saying "Why did King David, may his soul rest in peace, inverse the order of the passage and first write of the present, then of the past, and finally of the future? Logically, he should have first written of the past, then of the present, and finally of the future! This is to teach us that the basis of faith is in the present. We cannot feel the Kingdom of G-d in the past as long as we have not received His reign in the present. It is only after having deeply rooted the Kingdom of G-d in our hearts – at every present moment – that we can possibly, with a pure faith, reach an understanding of the Kingdom of G-d in the past and the future."

His majesty and nobleness, his modesty and humility, fused together in perfect harmony, thus forming the character that was Rabbi Raphael Baruch Toledano. This marvelous harmony created a Tzaddik whose feet touched the ground and whose head reached the sky.

Rabbi Raphael Baruch Toledano traveled to Israel and settled in the city of Bnei Brak, and in the year 5731 (1971), in the month of Heshvan, he rendered his pure soul to his Creator. ■



HALACHOT

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

LEAVING LEFTOVER BREAD ON THE TABLE FOR BIRKAT HA'MAZON

The Shulhan Aruch (Orach Haim 180:1) writes that it is not proper to recite Birkat Ha'mazon at an empty table, and one should therefore leave the leftover bread, and crumbs, on the table for the recitation of Birkat Ha'mazon. If all the bread was finished, one should not bring another full loaf to the table, as this was the practice of the pagans. If one has a partial loaf of bread, it may be brought to the table for Birkat Ha'mazon. A complete loaf that had been on the table during the meal may be left on the table for Birkat Ha'mazon.

The Ben Ish Hai (Rav Yosef Haim of Baghdad, 1833-1909) writes (in Parashat Shelah) that it is customary also to leave the bones, shells and peels on the table for Birkat Ha'mazon. These oftentimes have "Nisosot Kedusha" (sparks of holiness) within them, and reciting Birkat Ha'mazon with these on the table can have the effect of extracting the sparks. If one finds it uncomely to leave these things on the table, he may collect them onto a plate and move them to the side, but they should be left on the table.

Summary: It is proper to leave leftover bread on the table for Birkat Ha'mazon. If all the bread was eaten, one should not bring a new, complete loaf for Birkat Ha'mazon, but one may bring a new piece of bread. It is also proper to leave on the table bones, shells and peels for Birkat Ha'mazon. ■

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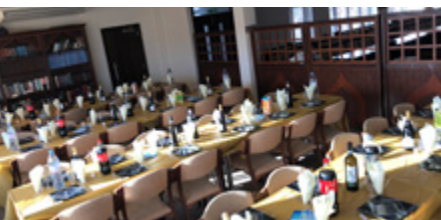
Hospitality



TAL Power Minute Video



Weekly Parasha Sheet



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