



# TorahActionLife

## COMMUNITY PARASHA SHEET

This week's edition is Dedicated  
Lirfuat Sarah Bat Rachel Betch  
Shaar Cholei Yisrael

### YITRO

21<sup>st</sup> SHEVAT 5777

Shabbat begins: 17:04

Shabbat ends: 18:08



**RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL**  
**DIRECTOR, TAL**

Ah, Baruch Hashem!

There is a famous story of a man called Mo that went to borrow a horse from his neighbour, Shmuli. "Sure, you can borrow my horse," replied Shmuli, "But there is one thing you have to know about this horse. He is trained to start moving when you say 'Baruch Hashem' (thank G-d) and stop when you say 'Shema Yisrael'" Mo thanked Shmuli for his kindness and set out starting to practice on the horse. Sure enough every time he said Baruch Hashem the horse started to trot, and whenever he said Shema Yisrael it stopped.

After a short practice he felt confident enough to start his journey.

Three hours into his journey he notices that at the end of the road is a steep cliff. Mo tries to veer the horse into a different path, but the horse seems adamant forge ahead. Mo tries to remember the word needed to stop the horse. "Ashrei yoshvei vetecha," he squeaks desperately. The horse keeps going. "Um - Adon Olam" he intones. The horse keeps going. "Eh - Aleinu L'shabeiach." But the horse keeps galloping. Now fearful that he is about to die, Mo does what any good Jew would do when confronted with certain death. He screams out, "Shema Yisrael!" As trained, the horse stops suddenly -- barely two feet from the edge of the cliff. Shaking like a leaf, Mo pulls out his handkerchief and wipes the sweat from

his forehead. "Phew!!" he exclaims, "Baruch Hashem!!"

The famous words of Baruch Hashem can be heard in almost every Jews conversation.

By stating Baruch Hashem we constantly bring Hashem into our lives, and recognise His Kindness towards us.

So who was the first to say Baruch Hashem after the Jews left Egypt? Was it Moshe, Aharon or perhaps Miriam?

The Torah states that after Moshe told Yitro all that had happened to them and the Egyptians, Yitro said, 'Baruch Hashem! Who has saved you from Egypt and from Pharaoh.' (18:8- 10)

The Gemara in Sanhedrin (94a) states that it was taught in the name of R' Papayus: It was a disgrace for Moshe and the 600,000 Jews that left Egypt that they did not say Baruch Hashem until Yitro came and said it.



The Gemara continues;

"Va-yichad Yitro" (18:9).

What is the meaning of the unusual word "Va-Yichad"?

Rav says: It means he circumcised himself. Shmuel says: It means that his flesh became full of goose bumps (he got the shivers after hearing what Hashem had done to Egypt). As people say: For ten generations after his conversion, one should never disdain a gentile in front of a convert.

This Gemara leaves us with a few questions.

First, surely Moshe and the Bnei Yisrael said Baruch Hashem; they had just sung the most elevated song in history – Az Yashir – which was full of praise and exultation of Hashem? Why then does the Gemara criticise them?

Second, what is the connection between Yitro saying Baruch Hashem and the next part of the Gemara which states that according to Shmuel he was shivering when hearing what happened to the Egyptians?

The Mishna in Berachot (9:5) states that one is obligated to bless Hashem regarding the bad just as one does regarding the good.

It is significant that Chazal do not obligate us to thank Hashem for bad just as one thanks for good but rather to bless. To thank in Hebrew is Le-Hodot. To bless is Le-Vareich. To thank Hashem for something one is not really thankful for would be dishonest.

So what is the difference between to thank and to bless? What exactly do we mean by blessing Hashem?

When we say, "Baruch Hashem" as we do at the beginning of every Beracha we make, we are not thanking Hashem, but rather recognizing and acknowledging that Hashem is the origin of all sustenance: Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the Universe... - You are The Source from which all sustenance flows.

By blessing Hashem for the good and for the bad, we acknowledge that Hashem is the source of everything. Ultimately, we realize that even what we perceive as bad also comes from Hashem, and thus must, in the grander scheme of things, be for our good, even if it's sometimes difficult to see how. As the famous expression goes, "Gam zu le-tova/Even this is for the good." Still, because it feels bad for us, it is not possible to obligate one to thank



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Hashem for it. By blessing Hashem "even when it hurts," we affirm that our belief in Hashem is stronger than our feelings, emotions and perceptions.

When Moshe described the destruction of Egypt, Yitro according to Shmuel, found it painful and distressing to hear. This country had once been his home. Although he had by all means distanced himself from their evil and corrupt ways, in his heart he had hoped that they would succumb to Moshe's request for freedom, thereby recognizing Hashem and saving themselves from destruction.

Things hadn't worked out how he had hoped. Nevertheless he garnered up enough courage and conviction to state "Baruch Hashem". These words could both allow room for his pain; yet at the same time recognize that this too was from Hashem.

When the Bnei Yisrael saw the destruction of the Egyptians at the sea, they immediately sang out in praise of Hashem, but says Rav Papayus, they never said "Baruch Hashem." Their song focused

strictly on the salvation and miracles of Hashem. But, we never find them blessing Hashem for everything they went through - not only for the salvation, but for the slavery and subjugation as well. They failed to recognize, at least verbally, that Hashem is not only the one who saved them from their oppressors, but He is also the One who put them there in the first place.

It was specifically through Yitro, who according to Shmuel was shivering when hearing this news and nevertheless connected this to praise Hashem, that we learn the importance of saying Baruch Hashem.

We must thus remember that the Baruch part comes to recognise Hashem as the ultimate source of everything, the good as well as what looks to us as bad.

A true story is told about the first printer in Bnei Brak. After enjoying many years of a monopoly on all the printing needs of the town, a second competing shop opened up. The first printer went into the new shop and shared with the newcomer all the tips of the trade - which suppliers

were reliable and which clients could be trusted to pay on time, and so on. When his son asked him why he did that, he explained, "My livelihood is decreed in Heaven. It is in my best interest that he should be successful, because then I will get my income for only half the work, and will have more time for my learning."

When a person such as this says Baruch Hashem, they really mean it and recognise Hashem as the source of everything; both their success and their loss.

Our first Prayer of the new week - Arvit on Motsei Shabbat begins with the Chazan saying Barchu Et Hashem Hamevorach.

The Chidah z"l says in the name of Rav Hai Gaon that a great, tried and true Segulah for a successful week is to draw out one's response of "Baruch Hashem Hamevorach" on Motsei Shabbat in Arvit. We begin our week by internalising the truth that Hashem is the source of everything that happens to us.

Ahh Baruch Hashem!



**MORDECHAI OVADIA**  
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Gemara Through  
To Halacha

Is one obligated to read Shnayim Mikra with the Targum translation or Rashi? Is it acceptable to read the Torah twice and then an English translation such as Artscroll?

Rabbeinu Ephraim writes an allusion in Parashat Shemot: the words V'ele Sh'mot are an acronym of Vechayav Adam Likrot Haparasha Shenayim Mikra Ve'echad Targum, which means that one is obligated to read the weekly Parasha twice (Mikra) and the Targum (the translation of Onkelos) once.

The Gemara (Berachot 8a) quotes Rav Huna the son of Rav Yehuda who says in the name of Rav Ami that one should always complete the reading of his

Parasha with the congregation: twice to read the weekly Parasha and once the Targum Onkelos, even including words such as Atarot and Divon which do not have a translation since they are names of places. The Gemara states that everyone who fulfills this Mitzva will be rewarded with a long life.

Tosefot brings an opinion that reading any foreign language is equivalent to reading the Targum Onkelos: in the same way that the Targum explains the Parasha for those who spoke Aramit, similarly other foreign languages enable us to understand the Torah. However, Tosefot's own opinion is that the Targum Onkelos is more than just a literal translation of the Torah, because it actually explains the real meaning of the Hebrew. So Tosefot concludes that one must read the Targum Onkelos, and one does not fulfill his obligation in a foreign language.

The Rosh agrees with Tosefot but adds that if one uses a commentary on the Torah (such as Rashi) one would fulfill one's obligation of reading the Targum as it explains the Torah's verses.

The Rambam (Hilchot Tefila 25:25) rules that even though one listens to the whole Torah being read every year with the congregation, one is still obligated to read it for himself every week: twice the

Torah itself and once the Targum. If the Passuk does not have a Targum Onkelos translation one should read those words in Hebrew instead a third time.

The Tur (285:2) writes that if one learns the Parasha with Rashi this is considered like Targum Onkelos because the intention of Targum Onkelos was that a person should understand the Torah, but if one reads it in another language this is not permitted. The Drisha suggests the reason for this is that there are many words that one can only understand with the Targum or Rashi's explanation, while in other languages there will not be an equivalent translation.

The Bet Yosef cites the opinion of the Rosh that one can fulfill the obligation by reading a commentator (i.e. Rashi) as he explains every word of the Torah. The Bet Yosef further brings the opinion of the Sma'g who says he and his Rabbis understood that reading a commentary is better than reading the Targum Onkelos. However the Sma'g admits that the Tosafot Ri, Rav Amram and and Rav Natrunai argue with him, as they hold that the Targum is more important since the original Onkelos translation was given at Sinai. (The Gemara relates that the original Targum was forgotten and Onkelos re-established it the same way it was given



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at Har Sinai). The Bet Yosef rules that someone who fears Heaven should read both Targum Onkelos and Rashi's commentary.

The Shulchan Aruch (285:1) writes that even though a person listens to the reading of the Torah every Shabbat with the congregation one is obligated to read for himself every week twice Mikra and once the Targum, and even the words Atarot Vedivon. The Shulchan Aruch (Se'if 2) goes on to say that if one learns the Parasha with Rashi's commentary it is considered like reading the Targum, but someone who fears Heaven should read both the Targum and Rashi's commentary.

The Mishna Berura suggests that Rashi and the Targum provide different benefits: the Targum was given at Sinai and it explains every single word, while Rashi explains the verses according to Midrashim more than the Targum.

The Mishna Berura (Seif Katan 4) goes on

to say that Rashi explains the verses better than the Targum, but if one read the translation in another language which only translates the words on a literal level one has not fulfilled the obligation of reading the Targum, as the Targum explains the verses and is not merely a literal translation. One can fulfill one's obligation by reading the verses twice and Rashi once, but one should read a third time those verses that do not have a Rashi commentary. If one does not understand the Rashi commentary then one can read a German translation like Tzena U'Reena which explains the Parasha according to Rashi and other Midrashim that are based on the Gemara.

The Maharshal in Yam Shel Shlomo writes that if one is not able to read both Rashi and Targum one should preferably read Rashi. However, the Bircay Yosef argues that according to the Kabbala there is a preference to read the Targum if one only has time to read one of them.

The question arose in the Kollel: if it is

difficult for one to read the Targum or to understand Rashi can he fulfill his obligation with an Artscroll translation? It seems that in this situation it would be permitted as the Artscroll translation is based on Rashi's explanations and the Midrashim, and the Mishna Brura above permitted using the Sefer Tzena U'Reena which is based on Midrashim. Moreinu Harav David Geinish Shlit'a agreed with this approach.

According to the Ari z'l it is ideal to read each passuk twice and the translation once, in that order.

In conclusion, one who fears Heaven should read the verses of the weekly Parasha twice and both Targum and Rashi. If one has time for only one of these, according to the Kabbala one should read the Targum, but one can also fulfill one's obligation with Rashi. If either of these are too difficult, then one should read the verses twice and the Artscroll translation once.



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### STORIES OF CHACHAMIM

Rabbi Chaim David Bernhard  
of Piotrkow  
Rebbe and Physician

In his youth, Rabbi Chaim David Bernhard was very far from Judaism, living his life much like a Polish nobleman. In fact he was the personal physician of King Wilhelm II of Prussia, and everyone knew him as Doctor Bernhard.

On account of a medical miracle that he witnessed, however, Doctor Bernhard did Teshuvah. One of his patients, who suffered from an incurable disease (which the physicians of the time deemed fatal), went to see the Tzaddik Rabbi David of Lelov for a blessing, after which he completely recovered. When he returned to Doctor Bernhard, he examined him and was amazed to discover that he was in perfect health. He therefore decided to go and see this rabbi from Lelov for himself. Rabbi David spoke in private with the doctor for several hours, and at the end of their conversation he said to the doctor, "When you return to Judaism, you will bring happiness to your Father in Heaven." In fact Doctor Bernhard became another man – Rabbi Chaim

David Bernhard – for he was determined on completely returning to Hashem

When he came back home, he broke all his dishes and purchased new ones, becoming a G-d-fearing Jew. In fact he became such a Chassid of Rabbi David of Lelov that he eventually became one of the Tzaddikim of the generation, having many disciples of his own. Near the end of his life, the Rebbe of Radomsk, the Tiferet Shlomo, visited him and said: "The former days be void" (Numbers 6:12). To this Rabbi Chaim David replied, "When we do Teshuvah out of love, deliberate sins are transformed into merits. Therefore even the 'former days' are Mitzvot." On Shevat 20, 5618, Rabbi Chaim David Bernhard departed from this world and was buried in the Piotrkow cemetery in Poland.



### HALACHA RABBI ELI MANSOOR

#### Reciting Hodu Before Shaharit

The Ben Ish Hai (Rav Yosef Haim of Baghdad, 1833-1909) discusses the importance of reciting "Hodu Le'Hashem Kir'u Bi'shmo" and the subsequent series of verses before the Shaharit service). He writes that it is proper to recite these verses immediately after concluding the "Tamid" and "Ezehu Mekoman" sections of the service, which discuss the sacrifices. During the morning Tamid offering in the Temple, the Leviyim in the Mikdash would sing the verses from "Hodu" through "U'bi'nbi'ai Al Tare'u," and during the afternoon Tamid offering, they would sing from "Shiru L'Hashem" through "Ve'hallel

L'Hashem." It is therefore appropriate to recite these verses immediately following the section of the prayer service that deals with the sacrifices offered in the Bet Ha'mikdash. The Ben Ish Hai notes that this was the practice of the Arizal (Rav Yishak Luria of Safed, 1534-1572), as recorded in the Sefer Ha'kavanot. This is in contrast to the custom of the Ashkenazim, who recite "Hodu" after Baruch She'amar.

Furthermore, the Ben Ish Hai adds, according to Sod (Kabbalistic thought), there is great significance to the recitation of the verses of "Hodu" before the main prayer service. This recitation helps to eliminate the "Kelipot" – the spiritual forces that could potentially interfere with our prayers and prevent them from reaching their destination in the heavens. It is therefore essential to recite the verses of "Hodu" before the main section of the prayer service, as printed in the Siddurim.

The Ben Ish Hai writes that if a person, for whatever reason, is unable to come to the synagogue for the beginning of the prayer service, and therefore recites at home the first part of the service, from the Akeda until "Hashem Melech," he should repeat "Hodu" when he arrives in the synagogue. "Hodu" should be recited shortly before the recitation of Ashreh and the subsequent

chapters of Tehillim that are recited as part of Pesukeh De'zimra. (This is why the Ashkenazim recite "Hodu" after Baruch She'amar.) Therefore, if a person recited the first section of the prayer service at home, he should repeat "Hodu" when he arrives in the synagogue before he proceeds with Baruch She'amar and the rest of the Pesukeh De'zimra.

Finally, the Ben Ish Hai writes that when we recite the verse of "Hodu L'Hashem Ki Tob Ki Le'olam Hasdo" in the "Hodu" section, we do not repeat this verse. Even though we repeat this verse when we recite it in Hallel, it is not repeated in the daily recitation of "Hodu."

Summary: It is important to recite the verses of "Hodu" each morning before the main part of the prayer service. Sephardic practice is to recite this series of verses after "Ezehu Mekoman." If one had recited at home the first part of the prayer service, from the Akeda through "Hashem Melech," and then comes to the synagogue for the rest of the service, he should repeat "Hodu" before proceeding with Baruch She'amar.

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