

THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



SHABBAT ROSH CHODESH
& TAZRIA-METZORA

London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
TAL Founder & Director

THE BEST DIET

In this week's Parasha we are taught how to bring upon us the Kevod Hashem – the Glory of Hashem.

Moshe tells the people - Zeh Hadavar Asher Tsiva Hashem Taasu, Veyera Alechem Kevod Hashem (9:6). This is what Hashem has commanded to do, and the Glory of Hashem will appear on you. How can we bless our house with Hashem's presence? How are we to consider improving our lives? What should be our approach?

Are you a member of a gym? Research clearly shows how exercise can really help our quality of life so why is it that so many of us are 'laid back'?

Someone once said that the trouble with jogging is that by the time you realize you are not in shape for it, it is too far to walk back!

The famous story is told at the finish line of the London marathon. A first time runner is hobbling away, having just finished. A grizzled old marathoner looks at him and says, "You'll feel a lot worse tomorrow."

He pauses and then says, "But the REALLY bad news is that in about 3 days, you're going to think you had fun today!"

Being blessed with legs to run isn't enough. We need to put those legs to work. We need to exercise them in order to maximise potential. What's the hardest hurdle to overcome? It's the first step. Once we make that first step forward, we go to the gym for the first time, we make that first jog and then we seem to find that the motion is set in play. Yet it still requires constant work. Is it the same with spirituality?

The Alshich Hakadosh (1508–1593, Tsfat) brings a famous story in the days of King

David.

The wicked Pelishtim waged a tough war against Am Yisrael. They gathered their army in Emek Refaim. King David asked Hashem what was the best response. He asked using the Urim ve Tumim. (These were the stones in the Kohen Gadol's breastplate that were engraved with the names of the tribes, and they conveyed messages by lighting up letters.)

King David asked whether he should go up and fight with the Pelishtim. Hashem answered that he should not fight them straight on; rather he should attack them from behind.

Hashem stressed that the attack from behind should not occur until they heard the voice of marching in the tops of the trees. When they would hear this sound it is a sign that Hashem has sent his angels (see Rashi) to help and that would be the time to attack the Pelishtim from behind. King David listened to the word of Hashem and took his army around the side without the Pelishtim supposedly noticing. Just then the Pelishtim seemed to understand what was happening. They started to turn their army around to face the back. King David's army were eager to start whilst they still had a small element of surprise. Yet King David told them not to attack yet.

He waited for the sign. The enemy started to advance. Again King David's men wanted to attack, yet the King didn't let them. The enemy took out their swords, (according to the Psikta Rabati 8) they were 200 metres away - again King David told his men to hold back and stand firm. Just then they heard the sound from on top of the trees and at that moment the order was given to attack. Vayach Et Hapelishtim Migiva Ad Boacha Gezer – and they smote the Pelishtim – and Am Yisrael were victorious.

The Alshich asks why is it that Hashem wanted King David to wait. Why did Am

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21:00pm



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DVAR TORAH
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OUR CHAHAMIM
Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld



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Yisrael have to be put through such pressurising times? He explains that at times of difficulty, when merits are needed, Hashem has to test our allegiance to Him. Would the Bnei Yisrael listen, or would they revolt against Hashem's word in the face of what looked like certain defeat?

The Bnei Yisrael stood their ground and showed their belief in Hashem, and in that merit they defeated their enemies. Similarly, when the Bnei Yisrael were at the Yam Suf and the Egyptian army (intent on destroying every last soul and capturing back their wealth) was drawing nearer, Am Yisrael looked up to Hashem for salvation. Hashem's response was, "go.

Travel into the sea." Nachshon Ben Aminadav went until the water came up to his nostril and only then did the sea split. The show of belief in Hashem enabled the miracle to occur.

This, says the Alshich is the meaning of the Pasuk - Zeh Hadavar Asher Tsiva Hashem Taasu, Veyera Alechem Kevod Hashem (9:6) Do you want to know what Hashem commands you - Taasu - he commands that you do. Make the first step - then - Veyera Alechem - Hashem's Glory will be upon you.

Life is full of challenges. Sometimes we attack those challenges. At other times, we lift our hands up as to say

we give up. When it comes to the gym, there is no guarantee that if you buy a year pass in the gym

that you will end the year fitter. You must make the first stride, attend the gym, and work hard. Even then there is no guarantee that you will continue.

With spiritual matters Hashem guarantees us that if we open for Him a door the size of a pin-hole, He will open for us the supernal gates. He will come towards us to help us through. We will still need make the effort, but we will have Hashem's helping hand walking us through.

Let us make that first stride towards Hashem, show our faith in Him, and see the wonders that follow.



RABBI YEHONATAN SALEM

PARSHAT TAZRIA - HOW TO "DO FOR OTHERS"

At the beginning of the perashah the Torah teaches us the laws concerning a lady who gives birth. After waiting the prescribed time for purification, she must bring an offering of a sheep, and a dove or a pigeon.

The Baal Haturim makes the following observation. Everywhere else in the Torah, when it says that doves or pigeons may be used for a required offering, pigeons are mentioned before doves. Here however, the Torah specifies the dove first. What is the reason for this? He answers that everywhere else offerings require bringing two birds of the same kind. Here, however, the mother who gave birth is only required to bring one bird. It is a known fact that if a dove loses its mate, it will find another one. A pigeon, however, will mourn its first mate forever and will not seek another partner. Hence, the Torah states that since only one bird is offered, it is preferable to take a species that will mate again, as opposed to one that will not.

This teaches us an important concept. When deciding whether a certain action should be taken, firstly, check if it is correct and appropriate. Then, ascertain the correct way of doing it, bearing in mind one's motives and the sensitivities of the parties involved. Even if ulterior motives play a part in one's decision, nevertheless, this does not disqualify the act. For example, if a person wishes to give charity in order

to receive honour, although this may not be the highest level of giving, it is nonetheless a commendable act. If however, the intended action will cause one to act inappropriately or harm someone else, e.g. standing on someone else's toes in order to achieve one's aim, although essentially the action is a positive one, it is nevertheless not justified. I remember once hearing about a host who told a guest: "You should come more often. My wife prepares such delicious food when we have guests!"

The Gemara states that if by giving charity the recipient will become embarrassed, it is better not to give. Similarly, although it is a mitzvah to rebuke a wrongdoer, nevertheless, reprimanding him in public for a transgression that he committed, thereby causing him humiliation is no mitzvah. The objective of reprimanding one's fellow man is to help him better his ways. If one acts incorrectly by embarrassing him, even if he happens to better himself, the method used is unacceptable. We must remember that according to the Torah "ends do not justify the means". The way to achieve something positive is only through means that do not harm anyone.

Before we embark on a positive action, let us consider the best way to do it. Let us evaluate the ramifications of our actions and consider how other people will be affected by it. If we say something to our friend in a friendly and thought-out way, he will be encouraged and come away with a smile, as opposed to if we say it in a way or in a tone of voice that will break him.

PARSHAT METZORA - SAYING "THANK YOU"

Last week's perashah describes the miraculous illness called tzara'at (comparable to leprosy today) which was inflicted upon a person as a punishment for having spoken slanderously about his friend, albeit true. Anyone who contracted this divinely-inflicted condition had to go and live in solitude outside the camp to atone for his sin, and as a period of introspection. Our perashah describes the purification process of the metzora - the diseased person, once he was healed. The kohen would go outside the camp and command the metzora to bring, amongst other things, two birds as the beginning of the purification process.

What is the symbolism of birds being used for this, and why specifically was a kohen involved in the purification process?

The Ramban (Metzora 14:4) explains that birds eat man's food and drink his water. Therefore, now that man needs atonement, it is only correct for the bird to be available to help him attain this. Similarly, kohanim, who are constantly involved in the service of the Bet Hamikdash, and are not able to earn a living, are given tithes to sustain them. Since they receive their sustenance from others, it is only right for them to be the ones to help lepers become pure. Hence, birds are specifically chosen as an offering, and a kohen, to enact the purification process, as an expression of their gratitude!

We too, are constantly receiving, whether a child from a parent, one

spouse from the other, or just from people upon whom we generally rely. If a bird must show gratitude to whom it is reliant, all the more so, we as human beings must do so as well.

If we must show gratitude to other people, then surely to G-d, who is consistently giving us a breath of life and sustaining us, we must show recognition and at least say "thank you." A Jew is called a Yehudi – a derivative of the name Yehudah, one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Yehudah was named by his mother Leah, thanking G-d for His benevolence towards her. He was also known for his ability

to admit to the truth, which is what saying "thank you" is all about. A person can only show gratitude when he understands that he has received something. This requires him to be truthful and not to attribute everything to himself, which is the essence of being a Jew!

Recently, I was asked to speak to a group of unaffiliated children about Judaism. When thinking what I could say to youngsters, who did not even know the elementary concepts of Judaism, I realised that I should speak about the concept of saying "thank you". I would suggest to them to "grab

the opportunity" three times a day to thank their parents or anyone else who did something for them. Ultimately, this would help them to recognise their Creator. Saying "thank you" is an admission that "I did not do it myself", but rather, someone else did it, and furthermore, I am acknowledging their good. Eventually, a person will come to admit that his health, wealth and standing are all G-d-given and thank Him for it. This is a Jew!

Let us understand that we are reliant on Hashem, recognise the good that G-d and others have done for us, and say "thank you".



HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

SEFIRAT HA'OMER – MAY WOMEN COUNT THE OMER?

The obligation of Sefirat Ha'omer falls under the category of "Misvot Ase She'ha'zman Gerama" – Misvot that apply only in a certain time-frame. Halacha generally exempts women from the Misvot in this category, and, as such, women are exempt from the obligation of Sefirat Ha'omer. The question thus arises as to whether women may nevertheless count the Omer if they so desire, and, if so, whether they may recite the Beracha

over the counting. Regarding the second question, it is clear that Sephardic women should not recite a Beracha over the counting of the Omer. Sephardic practice follows the ruling of the Shulhan Aruch that a woman who chooses to perform a Misva from which she is exempt cannot recite the Beracha. Since she is not included under the obligation, she cannot recite the text, "Asher Kideshanu Be'misvotav Ve'sivanu" ("...Who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us..."). Thus, for example, a woman who wishes to shake the Lulav on Sukkot may certainly do so, though she may not recite the Beracha of "Al Netilat Lulav," since she is not

bound by this Misva. In the case of Sefirat Ha'omer, however, a number of authorities ruled that a woman should not even count the Omer without a Beracha, because according to Kabbalistic teaching this Misva has no relevance to women. This is the ruling of the Ben Ish Hai, in his work Rav Pe'alim, and of the Kaf Ha'haim. Ben Sion Abba Shaul likewise follows this position in his work Or Le'sion.

Summary: Women are exempt from the obligation of Sefirat Ha'omer, and it is preferable for them not to count the Omer.



OUR CHAHAMIM

Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld – The Rosh Av Beit Din of Jerusalem

The gaon Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld Zatzal was born to the tzaddik Rabbi Avraham Shlomo in the Slovakian town of Worboy in 5609. At the age of four he lost his father, and starting from the age of eight he began to demonstrate exceptional abilities in the holy Torah. He went to study in the yeshiva of the gaon Rabbi Tzvi Manheim Zatzal, and at the age of 13 he was given Smicha and received the title of Moreinu ("our teacher"). He also learned Torah from the gaon Rabbi Avraham Shemuel Sofer Zatzal, the author of Ketav Sofer, and the gaon

Rabbi Avraham Shag Zatzal, the Rav and Av Beit Din of Kobelsdorf. Rabbi Yosef Chaim's reputation quickly began to spread, and when his teacher Rabbi Avraham Shag left for Eretz Israel, he accompanied him there and was treasured by all the Torah greats of Israel. Rabbi Yosef Chaim aided his teacher in strengthening Jewish observance in Israel, and with his help the districts of Mea Shearim, Beit Israel, and Beit Ungarin were built in Jerusalem. Rabbi Yosef Chaim was also among the founders of the great Diskin orphanage, and later he was unanimously appointed as the Rosh Av Beit Din of Jerusalem. He was effective in

vigorously and boldly working for the holiness of Jerusalem, and he was also active in Jewish institutions connected to the government. His humility was legendary, and in his will he stated that his casket was not to be brought into his Beit Midrash. Rather, people should only say of him: "We mourn an old Jew of Eretz Israel who has passed away." Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld's soul ascended to Heaven on Adar 19, 5692, and his body was laid to rest on the Mount of Olives as all the inhabitants of Jerusalem mourned his passing. May the memory of the tzaddik be blessed.



WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

Parshat Tazria-Metzora

PARSHAT TAZRIA

The Torah commands a woman to bring korbanot after the birth of a child. A son is to be circumcised on the eighth day of his life. The Torah introduces the phenomenon of tzara'at (often mistranslated as leprosy) — a miraculous affliction that attacks people, clothing and buildings to awaken a person to spiritual failures. A kohen must be consulted to determine whether a particular mark is tzara'at or not. The kohen isolates the sufferer for a week. If the malady remains unchanged, confinement continues for a second week, after which the kohen decides the person's

status. The Torah describes the different forms of tzara'at. One whose tzara'at is confirmed wears torn clothing, does not cut his hair, and must alert others that he is ritually impure. He may not have normal contact with people. The phenomenon of tzara'at on clothing is described in detail.

PARSHAT METZORA

The Torah describes the procedure for a metzora (a person afflicted with tzara'at) upon conclusion of his isolation. This process extends for a week and involves korbanot and immersions in the mikveh. Then, a

kohen must pronounce the metzora pure. A metzora of limited financial means may substitute lesser offerings for the more expensive animals. Before a kohen diagnoses that a house has tzara'at, household possessions are removed to prevent them from also being declared ritually impure. The tzara'at is removed by smashing and rebuilding that section of the house. If it reappears, the entire building must be razed. The Torah details those bodily secretions that render a person spiritually impure, thereby preventing his contact with holy items, and the Torah defines how one regains a state of ritual purity.

Rabbi Sinclair, Seasonsofthemoon.com



LIVING WITH THE PARSHA: HIDDEN JEWELS

Sara awoke with a scream. "No don't do it! Don't destroy my bedroom walls—I just got them painted... NOO!!"

Sara's mother rushed to her daughter's bedroom, but not before glancing at the clock on the wall: 4:12 am. Why on earth was her daughter screaming in the middle of the night?!

As soon as she opened the bedroom door, she realized her daughter was having a nightmare. "Shhh...Sara...it's just a dream. Don't worry, you're home, lying in your bed, shhh..."

"Oh Mummy!" Sara sobbed. "It was so real! Just like we learned in the weekly Torah reading class today! One of the walls of the house inside was covered in spots. It was terrible. Mr. Cohen from next door came and looked at it, and said the wall has to be knocked down!"

Her mother sat down next to her on the bed and began to stroke her hair. "Shhh darling...it's okay...that only happened thousands of years ago, that sort of thing does not happen nowadays..."

"Mummy! You don't understand," Sara cried. "We learned in class yesterday about a thing called tzara'at, spots and patches. It can come on someone's skin, or on their clothes, or on the walls of their house. One reason why it came was because of speaking badly about people, lashon hara. If the person didn't stop, it would get worse and worse. Even the walls of his house would become covered in spots. Then, he would have to destroy his home to get rid of them. Imagine, his very own home!"

Sara's mother looked at her daughter with a tired smile. "Sara, it seems that you only heard half of the story. Life sometimes does that—what appears to be so strange and even scary really ends up to a person's benefit."

Sara rubbed her eyes in confusion. "I don't get what you are trying to say..."

"Before the Jews came to settle in the Land of Israel, the Canaanites lived there. The Canaanites knew that the Jews would conquer the land, so they hid their jewels in the walls of their homes. Knocking down the walls was actually a way that the buried treasure would be discovered."

Despite the late hour Sara gave a huge grin. "My dream does not seem so scary anymore! I can just imagine—this poor man, feeling so bad about his sin, having to destroy his own home....Lo and behold, he finds treasures hidden inside the wall! What a great ending!"

Exhaustion was rapidly affecting Sara's mother, but not before she got her last word in. "You know Sara, the jewels hidden in the walls tell us something about people. Some people seem very negative, like a wall covered with spots. But in fact, there is always something positive and beautiful hidden inside them. The Torah is always hidden inside their soul—like the precious jewels."

Sara laughed. She looked up at the clock: 4:30 am. She had forgotten her bad dream. "I can imagine helping everyone uncovering their treasure inside—but just not at this early time in the morning!"

1

When may a metzora not be pronounced tahor?

14:2 - At night

2

In the midbar, where did a metzora dwell while he was tamei?

14:3 - Outside the three camps.

3

Why does the metzora require birds in the purification process?

14:4 - Tzara'at comes as a punishment for lashon hara. Therefore, the Torah requires the metzora to offer birds, who chatter constantly, to atone for his sin of chattering.

4

In the purification process of a metzora, what does the cedar wood symbolize?

14:4 - The cedar is a lofty tree. It alludes to the fact that tzara'at comes as a punishment for haughtiness.

5

During the purification process, the metzora is required to shave his hair. Which hair must he shave?

14:9 - Any visible collection of hair on the body.