

# THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



**PARSHAT  
CHUKAT-BALAK**

London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



**RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL**  
*TAL Founder & Director*

## DISCONNECT TO RECONNECT!

Enter a synagogue during the week and take a look around. What are people's facial expressions? Tired, overworked, stressed? When it comes to Shabbat morning however, it would seem that you are entering a different place with completely different people. Everyone seems to be happy, excited and well rested. Why is that?

Perhaps it's the long Friday night 'shluf' or the fact that a delicious Kiddush is around the corner, but I would like to share with you an amazing thought.

First a fascinating story from June 2014.

Hundreds of Cinema goers in Hong Kong gathered for a short film.

During the interval, they were shown an advert from Volkswagen.

The advert shows a point-of-view account of a person getting into their car and setting off on a drive. The scenery is lush and there is classical music in the background. The idea seems to be that this car is smooth and great to drive - very relaxing!

What the people didn't know was that the Cinema was equipped with a location-based broadcaster that could send a mass text to everyone in the room at once. Shortly into this advert operators sent a simultaneous text to everyone in the Cinema. Imagine, everyone's phones pinged and beeped to receive the message.

There were hidden cameras catching people's reactions. The room was full of people looking into their phones, intrigued as to who was sending them a message.

Just at that split second, the advert turned sour – and a large crash is heard as the ad comes to an end. The audience is taken completely by surprise and shocked faces appear around the room.

The message was piercingly clear, do not text whilst driving – the effects could be deadly. We live in a society that is run on technology. It's difficult if not impossible to get by nowadays without mobile phones, emails,

internet shopping, sat nav etc. We have become very reliable on this, perhaps too reliable. Yet there is a repercussion from such a connection; the more we connect, the more we really disconnect. The more we engage in our phones, the less time we have to speak directly to other people.

When we are at dinner with loved ones and our phones ping as a message is delivered, how many of us really concentrate on what our dinner partner is saying or are we too busy thinking "who is contacting me now, perhaps it's more important".

There are times at work where we receive a phone call, and trying to multi task so as not to waste time, we type away at the desk losing real concentration on the person to whom we are speaking.

Shabbat is different!

It's a time of blessing, a time when we rid ourselves of our technological connection in order to increase our communal and G-dly connection. It is a time we disconnect in order to reconnect!

Perhaps that is why people seem so happy on Shabbat. We are actually getting to sit down and understand others without interruptions. We can concentrate on our prayer and Torah learning much more without momentary distractions.

In this week's Parsha we are told: "This is the law (Torah), when a person dies in a tent..." [Bamidbar 19:14]. There is a famous teaching of our Sages regarding this verse: "Torah does not become established within a person, unless he is prepared to die for the Torah" [Berachot 63b].

I'm confused?! Suicide is forbidden! How can a dead man study Torah?

The simple answer is that here our Rabbis are teaching us that in order to become accomplished in Torah learning, a person must make sacrifices for Torah. You must be willing to give up of your time and exert extra effort in Torah study.

There is a further explanation. Often when people sit down to study, they permit various factors to interrupt them such as a telephone call or the arrival of visitors. There is no way however, of disturbing a dead person with a

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Disconnect to Reconnect!  
By Rabbi Jonathan Tawil



**DVAR TORAH**  
Parshat Chukat-Balak  
By Rabbi David Baadani



**OUR CHAHAMIM**  
Rabbi Moshe Rivkes



**DVAR TORAH**  
Tzur or Selah?  
By Rabbi Benjamin Stone



**HALACHOT**  
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telephone call or the like. The Gemara is teaching us that a person who wants to succeed in his learning must consider himself "dead". He cannot permit anything whatsoever to interrupt him. Imagine that Google, Wikipedia, Facebook and Waze are all in the room together having a discussion of who's the best. Wikipedia says "I **know** everything". Google answers back "I **have** everything". Waze says "I know the way to **anywhere!**" Facebook says "I know **everybody**".

Just then there is an interruption and the internet comes in saying, "without me your all nothing!" Think it's all over?? Then there is a blackout. This time Electricity opens its mouth and says "Now who is talking!" During the week we think we are our own bosses, we get carried away into the imaginary internet and mobile world. On Shabbat we are able to lose that and reconnect to our real selves. We are reminded that it is Hashem that is in charge! He created the world in six days

and rested on the Seventh. We have been blessed with this special day accordingly and are able to reconnect to Him. Wouldn't it be amazing if we tried that during the week? It's difficult but perhaps for one Shiur or lesson a week, we can really turn off the phone and concentrate. Let us uphold the words of the Gemara; for it is only if a person is prepared to die and act dead to the outside world that he will be able to succeed in real Torah advancement.



## RABBI DAVID BAADANI

### Director - TAL Chazanut Program

### PARSHAT BALAK

Eliyahu HaNavi said: 'Once I was on my way and one person met me, and he said to me: Rabbi, I have two things in my heart and I love them completely, and these are: the Torah and the people of Israel, however I do not know which one of them is more important. And I answered, people usually say: Torah precedes all, but I would say: the holy people of Israel are before all' (Tanna Debi Eliyahu).

Eliyahu HaNavi, the herald of redemption believes that although the world tends to think that the love for the Torah precedes the love for the people of Israel. The truth is that the love for the people of Israel is desirable and important to G-d more than the Torah.

The love of G-d for his people is a love that

does not depend on any reason, not even on the observance of the Torah and mitzvot. The love of G-d for the people of Israel, is an eternal and unconditional love, like the love of a father to his son. Eliyahu Hanavi holds that the halachah is not in accordance with Rabbi Yehuda who ruled; when you behave like children (practicing Torah and mitzvot), you are considered 'children'. And when you do not behave like children, you are not considered 'children' of G-D. But according to Rabbi Meir, who says in any case, you are G-d's children, that love is unconditional and eternal.

Billam came to "bless" ישראל עם with an understanding that the love of הקב"ה for his children is a love that depends on the observance of the Torah and mitzvot, so he mentioned the iniquities of עם ישראל to extinguish the love. But after seeing that טוב בעיני ה' לברך את ישראל, it was good in the eyes of G-d to bless Israel,

he understood that G-d loves every Jew more than the love for an only child born to their parents in their old age (as the holy Baal Shem Tov described).

Let us return love to our Father in heaven, not in quantity but in quality.

By concentrating on one ברכה, performing one mitzvah for heaven's sake, one good thought and expressions of love in the small and simple things.

Let us take it upon ourselves to love every Jew no matter what level they may be on.

וכן אמר להם הקב"ה לישראל - בני אהובי כלום חסרתי דבר שאבקש מכם? ומה אני מבקש מכם אלא שתהיו אהובים זה את זה ותהיו מכבדים זה את זה... (תנא דבי אליהו כח).

... And so, G-d said to them to Israel - My beloved sons, I lacked nothing that I would ask of you? And what I ask of you is that you will love each other and respect each other ... (Tanna Debi Eliyahu 28).

Shabbat Shalom.



## OUR CHAHAMIM

### Rabbi Moshe Rivkes – The Author of Be'er HaGolah

Rabbi Moshe Rivkes was the son of Rabbi Naphtali Hirsch Sofer of Vilna, a great Torah scholar, and was known as a gaon and a tzaddik. In 5415, when Cossack hordes descended upon Vilna and committed widespread massacres, Rabbi Moshe fled the city along with Rabbi Shabtai Hacohen (the author of the Shach), Rabbi Ephraim Hacohen (the author of Sha'ar Ephraim), and Rabbi Aaron Shemuel Kaidanover (the author of Birkat HaZevach). They eventually found

refuge in Amsterdam, where Rabbi Moshe was shown great respect. In Amsterdam he published his great work on the Shulchan Aruch, entitled Be'er HaGolah. It indicated the various sources for Halachic decisions, along with brief explanations to resolve contradictions among Poskim with differing viewpoints. At the beginning of Be'er HaGolah, Rabbi Moshe describes how he was hounded during all those months, though he still forced himself to maintain his regular hours of Torah study.

Rabbi Moshe yearned to return to Vilna,

his hometown, and he was finally able to do so. Though he became very wealthy at one point, he devoted all his money to tzedakah, leaving absolutely nothing for himself. He wrote a great number of books during his lifetime, which we can see from his will. In it he states how his books were to be shared among his sons, in order that they should continue to spread the light of Torah.

Rabbi Moshe Rivkes passed away in Vilna on Sivan 9, 5432, and his soul ascended to the celestial academy. May the memory of the tzaddik be blessed.





## RABBI BENJAMIN STONE

### Director - YP Chavruta Program

### TZUR OR SELAH? THE HIDDEN HAND OF HASHEM

That fateful day when Moshe Rabbeinu hit the rock instead of speaking to it takes prominent place in the list of low points our people have encountered. It has also been cited as the cause of Hashem's decision to forbid Moshe's entry into the holy land.

But what exactly did he do wrong? This is a question which our commentators have grappled with for centuries and one which we will return to.

Changing the focus a little, it is interesting to note that the rock which features in this episode is referred to in the verse as a "selah". Hashem said to Moshe "...take this stick and talk to the selah in front of their eyes".

Contrast this with the previous occasion involving the extraction of water from a rock when, Hashem said to Moshe "You should hit the tzur and water will flow from it".

There, the rock is described as a "tzur" and not as a "selah". What is the difference between a "tzur" and a "selah"?

We find the expression "tzur" throughout Tenach. The Navi Yeshaya (26:4) tells us "Trust in Hashem forever because he is the rock (tzur) of the worlds"

R' Avraham, son of Maimonides writes that the word "tzur" alludes to the fact that Hashem is "founder of all the worlds and therefore one can trust in him on all matters whether relating to wealth, possessions or health with the firm belief that everything ultimately has its source in Him because he is the creator of all matter. He can cause anything to cease to exist and he keeps everything going at will".

We also refer to Hashem in the "Modim" prayer as "the rock (tzur) of our lives" again pointing to the fact that he is the constant,

unmoveable source of all goodness in our lives.

Thus we see that the "Tzur" represents Hashem as the constant rock in our lives providing everything we need to survive and prosper.

If one truly appreciates Hashem's ever-presence in our lives one will come to the realization that Hashem is not just there to turn to when we are in trouble. To pray for help only when we are in a difficult situation gives the impression that Hashem is only in control of those "big moments". But what about all the small things we need? Every time we move our hands we are relying on our brain, nervous system, muscles and tendons to work in sync. If only one of these systems would fail we would not be able to move. Every time we put something in the fridge we are relying on the force of gravity to keep all foods in their containers to prevent some original dish being created as all creams, sauces and drinks merge into one unpalatable cocktail in the air.

All these routine benefits flow constantly from the "Tzur" and we need to regularly verbalize our appreciation of those benefits and also pray that they continue.

Very soon after leaving Egypt the Jews were educated in the basic idea that when you desperately need something specific you pray hard for hard for it with real fervour. You need to "hit the rock" with powerful and effusive prayer when you are in trouble. Then miracles can happen.

The second episode with the rock occurred much later, in the fortieth year of the Jews sojourn in the desert. The Jews had been educated at length with the idea that Hashem is their provider, as they received manna and meat daily, freshly laundered clothes and water from their miraculous mobile well. They had literally lived in the gentle hands of Hashem for forty years.

The lesson the Jews were expected to have learned during this time was that Hashem is

not just there to help out when things get tough, that he is not just protecting us in times of danger. They were to have internalized the idea that Hashem is the "Tzur", that he is there twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. He is not just there to turn to when you need to "hit the rock" with desperate prayer. He is there to converse with casually throughout the day, even when assistance is required in simple day-to-day matters.

This explains the description of the rock as a "tzur" in the first episode and a "sela" in the second.

At the outset Hashem presented the Jews with a rock described as a "tzur" - revealing openly Hashem's character as a G-d to be relied upon at all times, as the constant source of blessing. However at that time the Jews were being given the limited lesson that Hashem could be turned to in one's hour of need when they could "hit the rock" with emotional prayer. Forty years later the stone was presented to the Jews as a simple "sela" - a stone hidden amongst others. Hashem was to continue to be perceived as a constant source of beracha but this time as the hidden source of all goodness at all times - not just on occasions when urgent help was needed. The Jews were being shown that it was not appropriate to only ever "hit the rock" in an episode of ad-hoc panic but one also had to engage pleasantly with it on a daily basis as part of one's everyday activities. For example one might thank Hashem for a comfortable bed, a working car or perhaps a new pen.

This deeper recognition of the ever-present hand of Hashem was to be the final stage in the refining of the Jew's perception of Him as they would learn to engage calmly and frequently in personal prayer throughout the day. This intended message was chronically undone when Moshe ultimately made the choice to hit the rock.



## HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

### WHAT BERACHA DOES ONE RECITE OVER FRIED BREAD?

If one takes a piece of bread and fries it in oil, what Beracha is recited over that piece of bread? Does it retain its status of "Ha'mosi," or does it lose this status and require "Mezonot"? And is there any distinction in this regard between ordinary frying - where the bread is

placed in a pan on a bit of oil - and deep frying - where the bread is completely submerged in oil?

Deep frying, according to all Halachic authorities, indeed changes the status of bread to that of "Mezonot," on the condition that the piece of bread is less than the size of a "Ke'zayit." Thus, if French toast, for example, is prepared by completely submerging the bread in oil, and the piece of bread is smaller than a "Ke'zayit," then one recites over it the Beracha of "Mezonot." On the opposite

extreme, if one does not actually fry the bread, but simply adds a bit of oil to the pan so that the bread would not stick to it, then according to all opinions, the piece of bread retains its status as bread and requires "Ha'mosi." Even if the piece is smaller than a "Ke'zayit," it nevertheless retains its status as bread, since it was not actually fried.

If, however, the bread was fried normally in a pan, and it is smaller than a "Ke'zayit," its status is subject to a debate among the Halachic authorities. The Magen



Abraham (Rav Abraham Gombiner, Poland, 1637-1682) maintained that frying changes a piece of bread's status just like boiling does, and thus a small piece of bread that was fried requires "Mezonot," and not "Ha'mosi." Most other Aharonim, however, disagree, and maintain that frying does not affect bread's status. In light of this debate, the Mishna Berura (Rav Yisrael Meir Kagan of Radin, 1839-1933) ruled that one should not eat a fried piece of bread that is

smaller than a "Ke'zayit" unless he first recites "Ha'mosi" over an ordinary piece of bread, in order to avoid this Halachic question. Therefore, one who eats French toast must be aware of how it was prepared, whether it was deep fried or fried normally, and must also take note of the size of the piece, as these factors will determine whether it requires "Ha'mosi" or if it needs to be eaten together with ordinary bread.

**Summary:** A piece of bread that is a "Ke'zayit" or larger requires the Beracha of "Ha'mosi" even if it was fried. If it is smaller than a "Ke'zayit," and it was deep fried, then it requires "Mezonot." If it was fried normally, then its status vis-à-vis Berachot is uncertain, and therefore it should be eaten only after one recites "Ha'mosi" over an ordinary piece of bread.



## WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

### Parshat Chukat

The laws of the Parah Adumah, the Red Heifer, are detailed. These laws are for the ritual purification of one who comes into contact with death. After nearly 40 years in the desert, Miriam dies and is buried at Kadesh. The people complain about the loss of their water supply that until now has been provided miraculously in the merit of Miriam's righteousness. Aharon and Moshe pray for the people's welfare. Hashem commands them to gather the nation at Merivah and speak to a

designated rock so that water will flow forth. Distressed by the people's lack of faith, Moshe hits the rock instead of speaking to it. He thus fails to produce the intended public demonstration of Hashem's mastery over the world, which would have resulted had the rock produced water merely at Moshe's word. Therefore, Hashem tells Moshe and Aharon that they will not bring the people into the Land. The Jewish People resume their travels, but because the King of Edom, a descendant of Esav, denies them passage through his country, they

do not travel the most direct route to Eretz Yisrael. When they reach Mount Hor, Aharon dies and his son Elazar is invested with his priestly garments and responsibilities. Aharon was beloved by all, and the entire nation mourns him for 30 days. Sichon, the Amorite, attacks Bnei Yisrael when they ask to pass through his land. As a result, Bnei Yisrael conquer the lands that Sichon had previously seized from the Amonites on the east bank of the Jordan River.

Rabbi Sinclair,  
Seasonsofthemoon.com



1 "Take a perfect para aduma (red heifer)." What does the word "perfect" -- temima -- mean in this context?

19:2 - Perfectly red.

2 How many non-red hairs disqualify a cow as a para aduma?

19:2 - Two.

3 A man dies in a tent. What happens to the sealed metal and earthenware utensils in the tent?

19:14,15 - The metal utensils are impure for seven days, even if they are sealed. The sealed earthenware vessels are unaffected.

4 What happens to the one who: a) sprinkles the water mixed with the ashes of the para aduma; b) touches the water; c) carries the water?

19:21 - a) Remains tahor; b) He, but not his clothing, contracts tumah; c) He and his clothing contract tumah.

5 Why was the mitzvah of the para aduma entrusted to Elazar rather than to Aharon?

19:22 - Because Aharon was involved in the sin of the golden calf.





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