

# THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT VA'ERA

London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



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

## PERFECT PRESENT!

It's always so exciting to open gifts, they come in all shapes and sizes. There are two ways in which a person can pass on a valuable article to someone he loves. The first is through a present the second is through inheritance – Yerusha. Receiving a present is great and seeing as it is normally given out of appreciation could potentially have greater value than an inheritance. The advantage of an inheritance over a present is that no matter whether one really deserves it or not, everyone directly connected to the deceased automatically receives a portion.

Interestingly when Hashem tells Moshe in this week's Parsha that He is going to give the land of Israel to Am Yisrael, He seems to use both languages; -Venatati Otah Lachem Morasha Ani Hashem – I will GIVE to you as an INHERITANCE I am Hashem. Why does the Pasuk use the form of both giving, and inheritance, surely, they have opposing meanings?

Let's look at the word for inheritance that is used here. The Hebrew word for inheritance is YERUSHAH. The word used here is MORASHAH. The former means something you get. The latter implies something you give. The word Morasha appears in the Torah in reference to only two things. The first is Eretz Yisrael (as quoted in the Pasuk in our Parsha) and the second is regarding the Torah itself.

The first words Jewish children are taught to say are "Torah Tziva Lanu Moshe,

Morasha Kehilat Yaakov" -The Torah that Moshe commanded to us is an inheritance of the congregation of Yaakov. The usual word for heritage, "Yerusha ", is an heir one receives from his parents; "Morasha" a causative form, means that which a person causes to be inherited by his children. The Torah inherited from the past must be passed on to the future. The children should regard it not only as received by tradition, and look backwards, but as something which they should use to build the future.

Chazal teach a tradition based on the Pasuk, "This Torah will not depart from your mouth or the mouths of you children or the mouths of your grandchildren forever" Yehoshua (1:8): If three generations are committed to learning Torah, then the Torah will never leave that person's family. The Gemara Bava Metzia (85a) summarizes this idea with the expression "The Torah returns to its host" (Torah Chozeret Al Achanania Shelah).

Someone once asked the Chofetz Chaim if we know people who descend from many generations of Torah scholars who are themselves ignorant of Torah.

Unfortunately, we see millions of Jews that fit into this category. There are families that bear the name of prestigious Gedolim [Torah greats], who today may not even know what an Aleph looks like. What then does it mean "Torah Chozeret Al Achanania Shelah"? The Chofetz Chaim explained that the Gemara's analogy is very precise. The Torah is like a guest seeking its host's home. Sometimes a guest knocks on one's door. If no one answers the door, the guest will not come in. "Torah Chozeret Al Achanania Shelah" means that if Torah has

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been in a family for three generations, the Torah will come "knocking on that family's door" in future generations. But still, the younger generation must open the door for the guest. The guest must still be invited in by each new generation.

We can now understand why the Pasuk states that Eretz Yisrael and the Torah are both a present (Regarding the Torah the Pasuk states: "Vayiten El Moshe Kechaloto Ledaber.....Shnei Luchot Habrit" (31:18)) and an inheritance. The inheritance the Pasuk refers to is an inheritance that faces both the past and the future; it is a Morasha and not a Yerusha. Hashem gave us these precious presents to enjoy. Their enjoyment will depend on

our appreciation, and our merit. They are also an inheritance, since the beginning of time they have been designated to us. Yet we are told that they are not just any inheritance, they are a Morasha. Whilst they can be enjoyed by us, we have a duty to pass them down to our children. We must teach them the importance of Torah, the importance and holiness of Eretz Yisrael.

A Chasid once approached the Rizhiner Rebbe on return from a pilgrimage to Eretz Yisrael. He came to the Rebbe and told him that although he had been to the Holy land, he had not really sensed anything especially holy about it. The Rebbe responded with the following Mashal. He said that

a blanket is meant to provide warmth and comfort. The degree of warmth that it can provide, however, is dependant completely on the heat of the person being covered. Thus, if a dead person is covered with a blanket, it will not warm him. The same thing is true about Eretz Yisrael. If one comes to Eretz Yisrael and does not sense the Kedusha, it suggests the fact that there is a spiritual coldness that pervades his life. One who comes here and feels the warmth can be assured that the fire burns within him and is rekindled in the right surroundings. Let us work to make our Torah and our Land, a Morasha, let us lead by example, and pass this Kedusha to generations to come.



## RABBI DAVID BAADANI

### Director - TAL Chazanut Program

#### PARSHAT VA'ERA

The ten plagues that G-d brought upon the Egyptians in Egypt were not only punishments or ways to show the control of the Creator of all worlds in His world, but also lessons and messages given by G-d to teach both Pharaoh and his people and the people of Israel on their way to redemption on how the world is run.

The Nile. One of the longest rivers in the world, the source of life of Egypt, above

the surface it looks like a place of peace and life. But beneath the surface the Nile was used to cover up horrific crimes and extremely heinous acts, the bottom of the Nile used as a cemetery for countless bodies of Jewish babies thrown into it by criminals knowing that no one would ever judge them for their actions.

This is the first plague, the first lesson delivered by the Creator of the world. After decades of loss, fear and trauma, injustice and cover up of a painful truth, the big lie has been exposed and the

waters of Nile have been revealed as they really are. Not a source of life but deaths, not heaven but hell, not cold water for a weary soul but blood of innocent helpless souls.

By turning the waters of the Nile into blood, by revealing the truth out of falsehood, as clearing the silver from the slag, and as extracting the wine from its yeasts, the way to redemption, to receive the Torah and to the unity and wholeness of the Jewish people has paved.

The truth will set the world free.



## RABBI YEHONATAN SALEM

#### DIVINE PROVIDENCE

As we proceed through the book of Shemot, we read about the slavery and persecution that the Jews suffered under Egyptian rule. G-d warned Pharaoh, through his emissaries Moshe and Aharon, that if he does not free the Jews, he and his people will suffer terrible plagues. Essentially, Pharaoh believed that G-d had created the world, but thereafter, had left its running in the hands of powers of idolatry. He reasoned that it is below

the dignity of G-d, the Creator of the world, to be involved in such mundane matters.

The lessons of the supernatural plagues and the miraculous redemption of the Jewish People taught Pharaoh that, on the contrary, G-d is directly involved in the running of the world on a daily basis.

This is why our redemption from Egypt plays such a major role in our religion: Every recital of the shemah, each time we wear tefillin, and every kiddush of Shabbat and festivals reminds us

about our exodus from Egypt. Through the miracles of our redemption, G-d made the following statements in a very clear manner: He created the entire world from nothing, He supervises the actions and destiny of every single individual, and He remains the supreme Ruler of the world, not championed by anyone.

It is part of our basic emunah – faith, to realize that G-d is constantly involved in the life of every single Jew. A person will not bang his finger unless it has been decreed from Above. All the more



so, events greater than this, change of circumstances, trials and tribulations are all tailor-made specifically for each person, to learn from them and grow spiritually. A person who thinks about what happens to him in his life and does not merely assume that "it is all a coincidence," will be able to develop a closer and more personal relationship with Hashem, since he appreciates that he is being guided by Him.

For example, a man may travel abroad on business, and unexpectedly, meet his intended wife. Thus, what he thought was to be a business trip, G-d had planned otherwise. The Zohar

teaches that if a needy person stretches out his hand to us for help; it is not because he needs our help, but rather, we are in need of an opportunity to give. G-d has many ways to take care of people, so if He sent this person to you, that is because you need the merit of giving. When we internalise this approach to life, believing and trusting that G-d runs the world, events will take on a totally different meaning.

People may ask: where are "the daily miracles" that we mention and pay tribute to G-d for them in our prayers? The answer is that if we pay attention to the events in our daily lives, we will see that our lives are literally one long

miraculous process. Thinking about the sequence of events, "why I just happened to be there at that time", and "just happened to meet him", or "didn't meet him", may help us unravel some of the mystery behind the guiding Hand of G-d, that is interwoven into every step of our lives.

Let us start keeping a diary, recording daily any occurrence or incident from which we see G-d's directly intervening Hand. With time, we will see that there is too much to write! The more we look for Hashem in our daily lives, the more we will become aware of His providence towards us and enjoy our personal relationship with Him.



## HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

### MAY ONE ALLOW A NON-JEWISH CONTRACTOR TO BUILD ON SHABBAT?

If a Jew hires a non-Jewish contractor to build him a house, may the Jew allow the contractor and his labourers to work on Shabbat, or must he instruct them not to perform any building on Shabbat?

The Shulhan Aruch addresses this question in Orah Haim (244), where he rules that one may allow a contractor to build on Shabbat only outside the town. Strictly speaking, when a Jew contracts a gentile to complete a certain project for a set price, it is permissible for the gentile to perform the work on Shabbat. Since the Jew did not hire him to work specifically on Shabbat, but rather the gentile chose independently to work on Shabbat, no prohibition is entailed. Nevertheless, the Shulhan Aruch forbids allowing the gentile to work on Shabbat in this case within the "Tehum" (the area around a city within which one may walk on Shabbat) of one's city, to avoid suspicion. Onlookers may be unaware that the gentile receives a fixed amount and might assume that he was hired on a daily wage. They might then wrongly suspect the Jewish client of violating the Shabbat laws by hiring a gentile dayworker to perform labour for him on Shabbat.

At first glance, then, it would appear that one may not allow a gentile contractor and his workers to do construction work

on his home within the town.

The question, however, arises as to whether this Halacha applies nowadays, when virtually all construction is performed on the basis of a fixed price, rather than a daily wage. Moreover, contractors generally place visible signs at construction sites to inform onlookers of their name and contact information, such that everybody immediately realizes that a contractor has been hired for the project. Seemingly, then, under modern-day circumstances, we need not be concerned that onlookers might suspect the Jewish patron of hiring dayworkers to build his house on Shabbat.

Rav Moshe Feinstein (Russia-United States, 1895-1986), in his work Iggerot Moshe (Orah Haim 4:52), rules that technically speaking, it is indeed permissible to allow a contractor to build on Shabbat nowadays even within one's town, for the reason discussed above. Nevertheless, he adds, given the unfortunate laxity regarding Shabbat observance that is so prevalent in our generation, one should act stringently in this regard. As many Jews are in any event insufficiently committed to Shabbat observance, allowing people to have gentile contractors build on Shabbat might very well lead to graver infringements upon the laws of Shabbat. Most people will not recognize the Halachic distinction between contractors and dayworkers, and they might therefore wrongly conclude that it is permissible to hire gentile workers on Shabbat under all circumstances. (We

might also add that if other Jews live adjacent to the construction site, the noise of the machinery and trucks will likely interfere with their enjoyment of Shabbat.)

Rav Moshe therefore rules that one should not allow a gentile contractor to build on Shabbat, unless there is some pressing need to do so, in which case one should consult with a Rabbi for guidance. Rav Shemuel Pinhasi (contemporary scholar in Israel) reaches a similar conclusion in his work Ve'daber Davar. He adds that even if the Jew wrote in the contract that he does not require the contractor to work on Shabbat, he may not allow the building work to continue on Shabbat. Rav Pinhasi writes that outside the city there is room to allow the construction to be performed on Shabbat.

Some years ago, the Reichman family embarked on a multi-billion dollar building project in Battery Park in Manhattan, which received a good deal of attention and notoriety, and they instructed the contractors to refrain from building on Shabbat. This created a great Kiddush Hashem (sanctification of God's Name) as it impressed upon people the importance of Shabbat observance, and this serves as an inspiring example for us to follow.

**Summary:** One should not allow a gentile contractor and his workers to build on Shabbat; in situations of dire necessity, one should consult a Rabbi for guidance, as under some circumstances there may be room for leniency in this regard.





# WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

## Parshat Va'era

Hashem tells Moshe to inform the Jewish People that He is going to take them out of Egypt. However, the Jewish People do not listen. Hashem commands Moshe to go to Pharaoh and ask him to free the Jewish People. Although Aharon shows Pharaoh a sign by turning a staff into a snake, Pharaoh's

magicians copy the sign, emboldening Pharaoh to refuse the request. Hashem punishes the Egyptians, sending plagues of blood and frogs, but the magicians copy these miracles on a smaller scale, again encouraging Pharaoh to be obstinate. After the plague of lice, Pharaoh's magicians concede that only Hashem could be performing these miracles.

Only the Egyptians, and not the Jews in Goshen, suffer during the plagues. The onslaught continues with wild animals, pestilence, boils and fiery hail. However, despite Moshe's offers to end the plagues if Pharaoh will let the Jewish People leave, Pharaoh continues to harden his heart and refuses.  
**Rabbi Sinclair, Seasonsofthemoon.com**



**1** Did Hashem ever appear to Avraham and say "I am Hashem?"

6:9 - Yes.

**2** What cause did the forefathers have to question Hashem?

6:9 - Although Hashem swore to give them the land, they never actually had control over it.

**3** How long did Levi live?

6:16 - 137 years.

**4** Why are Yitro and Yosef both referred to as "Putiel?"

6:25 - Yitro fattened (pitern) cows for idol worship. Yosef scoffed (pitpet) at his evil inclination.

**5** After which plague did Hashem begin to "harden Pharaoh's heart?"

7:3 - After the sixth plague — shechin.

**6** Give two reasons why the blood was chosen as the first plague.

7:17 - a) Because the Nile was an Egyptian god. 8:17 - b) Because an invading army first attacks the enemy's water supply, and Hashem did the same.

**7** Why were the Egyptian sorcerers unable to bring about lice?

8:14 - The Egyptian sorcerers' magic had no power over anything smaller than a barley kernel.

**8** Why did Moshe pray only after leaving the city?

9:29 - Because the city was full of idols.



"There was one [giant] frog. The Egyptians hit it and it split into swarms and swarms [of smaller frogs]." (Rashi Sh'mos 8:2)

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