

# THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



**PARSHAT EKEV**

London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



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

## TO FEAR G-D

Bertrand Russell (a British philosopher and mathematician who was a foremost proponent of atheism in the early 20th century) once was asked what he will respond if after he dies he meets G-d and He will judge him for his lack of belief. Russell responded that he would ask G-d, why He didn't provide sufficient evidence of His existence.

Hashem might respond, why didn't you exercise your common sense and look beyond the secular surface of the world and see the overwhelming evidence of My existence and of My Holy Torah.

How could it be possible for such an orderly world to come into existence?

The oxygen levels in the air are exact, the beautifying scenery, the flowing sea, the lush fields, man's intellect. All these are gifts from our Creator.

Belief in Hashem is one step, but the next step is to ask, what is it that Hashem desires from us?

In this week's Parasha Moshe asks this exact question.

The problem is that Moshe presents the petition as if it were a simple feat. He says, "And now Israel, what does G-d want of you? Only that you fear G-d your Lord (Deuteronomy 10:12)."

Moshe makes it sound as though the fear of G-d is only a minor matter.

The Gemara Berachot asks: Is the fear of G-d such a small thing?

The Gemara relates how Rabbi Chanina said in the name of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai: The Holy One, blessed be He, has in His treasury nothing except a stockpile of

the fear of heaven, as it says, "The fear of G-d is His treasure" (Isaiah 33: 6). Obviously if fear of G-d is so cherished by the Almighty, it must be very difficult to attain.

The Gemara answers: True! For it was Moshe who said this verse and for Moshe fear of G-d was a small thing.

Rabbi Chanina said "This is comparable to a person who is asked for a large vessel which he has; it seems to him like a small vessel. A small vessel which he doesn't have; it seems to him like a large vessel." Yirat Shamayim is, indeed, a "large vessel," and not something simple. However, since Moshe had already acquired this trait, he viewed it merely as a "small vessel," and was able to say "only."

Ok, so we know that for Moshe it was simple, but just because it was easy for Moshe, who says it is easy for us? So why does Moshe imply to the people that fear of G-d is simple. Surely he is relating the Torah to us, and for him it might be a walk over, but for us it is not!?

Rabbi Yitzchak Zilber, founder of Toldot Yeshurun, an organization that re-educates estranged Russian Jews about the heritage that was snatched from them, is known as the Father of contemporary Russian Jewry. A native of Kazan, Russia, Rabbi Zilber was born just before the Russian Revolution in 1917, but was discreetly taught Torah by his revered father and not only completed Shas several times during his years in Russia, but also taught Torah to many others. During World War II, he was imprisoned in Stalin's gulag where, yet he managed to remain Shomer Shabbat despite the inhumane conditions. He later had to flee from the KGB, which wanted to arrest him for his Torah activities in Russia.

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**KIDS ZONE - QUIZ**

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THE ORIGINAL COMMUNAL PARASHA SHEET, SERVING THE COMMUNITY FOR OVER 12 YEARS!



In 1972, he immigrated to Israel. As he walked off the airplane on his arrival in Israel and embraced the custom agent.

"Chavivi! My dear one! Shouted Rabbi Zilber as he gave the man a bear-hug embrace. It is so wonderful to be here and talk to a Jew like a Jew!" The man offered a polite smile and a pleasant Shalom.

"Please tell me", pleaded Rabbi Zilber with an intensity that seemed to announce a question whose answer would solve all the problems facing Jews for the millennia. "For years I am struggling with this problem. Please tell me, how did you understand the K'tzot HaChoshen on the Sugya of Areiv?" (The K'tzot HaChoshen is a classical commentary on the Shulchan

Aruch Choshen Mishpat, Code of Jewish Law.)

"Ma zeh K'tzot haChoshen. (What is a K'tzot HaChoshen)?" Came the reply.

Rabbi Zilber was puzzled. He tried another query.

"Maybe you can explain how you understood the Mishne in (tractate) Uktzin in the last chapter?"

"Mishne? Uktzin? K'tzot? What are you talking about?"

Rabbi Zilber, recalling the difficulties he had trying to teach and study Torah in Russia was mortified. In honest shock, he asked the man.

"How is this possible? You mean to tell me that you live here in Israel and have the ability to learn Torah. And you don't know what the Ktzot is? You never heard of Mishne Uktzin?"

Rabbi Zilber began to cry. They say that the customs agent was so moved by Rabbi Zilber's simple sincerity that he began to study Torah.

Perhaps the Gemara is telling us the simple truth. It was important for an entire nation to see the man to whom fear of heaven was considered the simplest and most rudimentary aspect of life. To Moshe, fear of Heaven was natural. As a leader, he had the imperative to impress the nation, with his sincerity. To us simple Jews, it is important to see someone whose Jewish observance is as simple and graceful as if it is second nature. To us it may be a struggle, but it is imperative that the benchmark of our goals is someone to whom fear comes natural.



## RABBI DAVID BAADANI

Director - TAL Chazanut Program

### PARSHAT EKEV

והיה עקב תשמעון.

If you'll listen to what I say. If you listen and understand what Hashem says. What does He really want from you? The lifestyle He wants you to live and appreciate everything that you're doing.

Rashi says that the word עקב can also be understood as עקב which means Heel. The Torah chose to use this word in order to teach us to be careful with the Mitzvot that people usually walk over.

There are so many Mitzvot around us, easy Mitzvot. You help someone else out, smile at someone, put on Tzitzit, being more modest, things that we can do so easily that bring us a tremendous Zechut. Mitzvot that we might overlook and walk over. Those Mitzvot too, Hashem wants us to fulfil in order to give us His blessings.

But there's another message that Chazal are teaching us here. There are so many people who are doing all these Mitzvot, they're wearing Tzitzit, they're keeping Shabbat, they're helping people in need, they're doing so many Hassadim, and they say to

themselves. "I'm not doing as much as I could. look at that guy, look at that person, they're praiseworthy people. Not me! I'm not as good as they are". Say Chazal. No. Don't walk over those Mitzvot that you do. Appreciate them. Right, you could do more, but don't walk over any Mitzvah. We must appreciate all the Mitzvot we do. Appreciate that moment that you learned, the Torah that you know, the Tefilah that you did go to. Don't overlook even the smallest, good deed, don't walk over any Mitzvah, never underestimate your positive thoughts. Appreciate what you already do and strive for more.



## RABBI YEHONATAN SALEM

### WHAT DOES G-D WANT OF ME?

The verse writes (Ekev 10:12) "And now, Israel, what does Hashem your G-d ask of you, other than to fear Him, to follow all His ways, to love Him and

to serve Him with all your heart and soul." The Torah seems to start with an apparently small request, just to fear Him – be in awe of Him. However, the verse then continues with a list of the duties which are the basis of the entire Torah, namely, to follow in G-d's ways, to love Him and to serve Him with all our faculties. This is something that

requires our total dedication and commitment to the service of Hashem. How can we reconcile this seeming contradiction?

Before a person is born, almost everything about him is predetermined, whether he will be tall or short, fat or thin, born into this generation or into the next. The only thing that is left up



to him is whether he will be good or not. The definition of "good", as described by the Torah, is that he will observe the mitzvot of Hashem, which bring him to his perfection.

The single factor that determines whether we will follow the correct path or steer away from it is our fear of heaven. Are we so in awe of G-d that we could not possibly rebel or disobey His word, advertently or inadvertently, overriding a positive or a negative commandment? Are we so overcome with a feeling of privilege that we are His chosen nation, and of responsibility towards Him, that it would ensure our constant obedience to His word? When a person is awe-inspired, the effect is upward-spiralling, helping him to reach all the other aspirations that are mentioned in the verse.

Hence, G-d's singular request to us is to be in awe of Him. This in turn will bring us to achieve other goals through our labour of dedication. Moreover, requesting us to be in awe of Him is in

itself a small request. Although the requirements for self-improvement are quite immense, nevertheless, the actual choosing of the correct way just takes a small move in the right direction.

Why is it that the "awe of G-d" is our main focus and what is most valued in His eyes? Surely a good "value and ethics system" is equally as important? The answer is that if one relied solely on man-made guidelines to keep him on "the straight and narrow," then, if society decided to change its definition of what is considered to be moral or ethical, there would be a breakdown in the moral standards of people. The only factor that can make a person remain truly moral is the awe of G-d that he acquires, as this will motivate him to behave appropriately. During the riots in England in 2011, we witnessed the moral breakdown of normally law-abiding citizens – upper-class people were seen looting shops that had been broken into by the rioters.

Are there any practical suggestions as to how we could attain this level, of living an "awe-inspired life?" Our Sages teach us that a person should recite one hundred blessings to G-d every day. These blessings may be from our prayers, where we praise G-d, thanking Him for all that He has given us, or where we request our needs from Him. They may be blessings for all the different benefits we receive from Him, such as the food we eat, natural scents we enjoy, or natural wonders that we observe. By stopping to contemplate when we bless G-d and mention His name one hundred times a day, we can begin to absorb an awe of Him. It can bring us to an awareness of Him at every juncture of our day, thereby aiding us to conduct our lives according to His will, as described above.

Let us try to stop and think before we make our next Berachah, about the meaning of its words, and enjoy making a step towards acquiring an awe of G-d.



## HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

Is it permissible to wear a Bite Plate, Dentures, or Invisalign in the public domain on Shabbat

In Siman 303, Maran discusses various items which may not be worn in the public domain on Shabbat, out of concern that one may remove it and carry it. This could happen because either he wants to show it off to someone else, or he is embarrassed and wants to hide it from someone else.

One example of an item that a person may be embarrassed by is a gold tooth. Therefore, the Shulhan Aruch prohibits

walking in the public domain with such a tooth. On the other hand, a silver tooth does not present a problem because it does not stand out in the same way. Hacham Bension (Or Lesion 23:1) rules that nowadays even a gold tooth is not a problem. Today, such teeth do not embarrass people. Moreover, even if one would want to remove it, they are implanted in a permanent fashion.

He also rules that a bite plate is not a problem for the same reason. He reasons that it is no different from a Kami'ah (amulet) worn for health.

Braces would certainly be permissible, because they are attached. Yalkut Yosef rules that dentures are not a problem to wear in the public domain. It is not likely that someone would remove them in public, and there is nothing embarrassing about them. Similarly, there is no problem to wear Invisalign.

### SUMMARY

It is permitted to wear gold teeth, dentures, bite plates, braces and Invisalign in the public domain on Shabbat.



## WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

Parshat Ekev

If Bnei Yisrael carefully observe even those "minor" mitzvahs that are usually "trampled" underfoot, Moshe promises

them that they will be the most blessed of the nations on earth. Moshe tells Bnei Yisrael that they will conquer Eretz Canaan little by little – so that the land will not be overrun by wild

animals in the hiatus before Bnei Yisrael are able to organize and settle the whole land. After again warning Bnei Yisrael to burn all carved idols of Canaanite gods, Moshe stresses that



the Torah is indivisible and not open to partial observance.

Moshe describes the Land of Israel as a land of wheat, barley, grapes, figs, and pomegranates, a land of oil-yielding olives and date-honey. Moshe cautions Bnei Yisrael not to become haughty and think that their success in Eretz Yisrael is a result of their own powers or vigor. Rather, it was Hashem who gave them wealth and success. Nor did Hashem drive out the

Canaanites because of Bnei Yisrael's righteousness, but rather because of the sins of the Canaanites, for the road from Mount Sinai had been a catalogue of large and small sins and rebellions against Hashem and Moshe. Moshe details the events after Hashem spoke the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai, culminating in his bringing down the second set of Tablets on Yom Kippur. Aharon's passing from this world is recorded, as is the elevation of the Levi'im to be

Hashem's ministers. Moshe points out that the 70 souls who went down to Egypt have now become like the stars of heaven in abundance. After specifying the great virtues of the Land of Israel, Moshe says the second paragraph of the Shema, conceptualizing the blessings that accompany keeping mitzvahs, and the curses that result from non-observance.

**Rabbi Sinclair,**  
Seasonsofthemoon.com



1. What must the Jewish People do to ensure that Hashem will fulfil His promise to do good for us?
2. What were the: a) wonders b) strong hand c) outstretched arm that the Jewish People saw in Egypt?
3. When a group performs a mitzvah, whose name is attached to the mitzvah?
4. How did the Jewish People do their laundry in the Midbar?
5. How did the Jewish People obtain clothing for their growing children in the Midbar?

- A**
1. 7:12 - Guard even the "light" commandments.
  2. 7:19 - a) Plagues; b) Pestilence; c) Slaying of the firstborn.
  3. 8:1 - The person who finishes it.
  4. 8:4 - The ananei kavod (clouds of glory) cleaned and bleached their clothes.
  5. 8:4 - As their children grew, their clothing grew with them.

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