

# THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



**PARSHAT BO**

London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



**RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL**  
TAL Founder & Director

## TEENAGERS!

The teenage years are some of the toughest years around. There is so much opportunity, yet there are so many tests as well, and one has to tread carefully in order to come out strong.

Our Sages teach us that when a baby is born, they are born with a Yetser Harah – a bad inclination. The Yetser Harah stays with them throughout their life. At the age of bar Mitzvah for a boy, (and Bat Mitzvah for a girl,) the child is blessed with a Yetser Hatov. It says in Kohelet (4:13) "a poor child who is wise is better than an old, foolish king." Rashi quotes the Midrash that this child refers to the Yetser Hatov, your inner desire to do good, and the old king is the Yetser Harah, your inclination to do bad. Why is the Yetser Harah called an old man and your Yetser Hatov a young child? Because, says the Midrash, you are born with a Yetser Harah and it stays with you for your whole life. The Yetser Hatov only joins at the age of 13 and since it isn't with you for your full life it is called a child.

What does it mean that you are born with a Yetser Harah but only acquire a Yetser Hatov when you reach your bar mitzvah? Certainly young children perform Mitzvot and do good-natured acts of kindness. The Chovot Ha-Levavot explains that the Yetser Harah is your physical desires. A baby is born wanting to eat and sleep, and as you grow older your desires grow with you and expand well beyond their original parameters. In contrast to these physical desires is the Yetser Hatov, your intellect. It is your job to recognize the negative consequences of

your actions and rein in your desires, to understand what is good and what is bad and to choose properly.

This complex recognition of right and wrong, this abstract understanding, is something that also grows with you but at a different pace. A major stage of intellectual growth happens at approximately the age of thirteen. This is when you must and do reach a level of understanding of the consequences of your actions. But a person's appreciation of the abstract reasoning of religion, a comprehension of what is above you and what the future holds for you, is something that grows through the years. Thirteen is when your intellect reaches not just a level of maturity but an inflection point, the beginning of the great growth years of teenage hood, high school, yeshiva. These are years of exploration, growth and personal evolution. These are the years when you learn about the world and where you stand in it. Twenty is when you reach maturity. You've reached a plateau, you're an adult with a stable understanding of right and wrong, of what and why.

As it turns out, a bar mitzvah isn't the time when you become an adult. It's the beginning of a wonderful period in which you grow into an adult. It's a time when you are ready to take on the responsibility of a Jew, to act and to learn like a Jew, and to grow in understanding and ability on your way to adulthood.

The Torah relates regarding the Korban Pesach that it was to be taken from either sheep or goats - "Min Hakvasim u'min Ha'izim Tikachu" (12:5) "From the sheep or goats shall you take it."

The Gemara Shabbat (77b) notes an interesting phenomena. Goats normally walk ahead of sheep. Why is that? The Gemara

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explains that this reflects the creation of the world where the creation of darkness preceded the creation of light. Goats are normally dark-skinned and sheep light.

The Gaon Chida, z"l, explains (in Kisay David) that this hints at the Yetser Hara being created in a person before the Yetser Hatov; Goats, being dark and tough, represent one's evil impulses - the Yetser Hara; The sheep which are light and soft represent one's good impulses -the Yetser Hatov. Hence this hints that Yetser Hara comes to a person before the Yetser Hatov.

What Hashem was telling Moshe was that when it comes to Avodat Hashem – the servitude of Hashem – one should take both his Yetser Hara and Yetser Hatov to serve Hashem.

How is that possible, surely the Yetser Hara is all evil?

The Ben Ish Chai brings an awesome Mashal to explain how we can use both in the service of Hashem.

One day the Yetser Hara came in front of the Yetser Hatov and told him that we are fighting to much, we should make peace. The Yetser Hara pleaded and eventually the Yetser Hatov agreed for one night to allow the person to go to a

bar frequented by wicked people. The Yetser Hatov encouraged the person to go on this occasion, but warned him to remain G-d fearing and not to sin. So the man went and observed, staying until very late at night.

At the end of the evening, the Yetser Hara followed the pious man home to discover what wickedness had been planted his heart and what bad would emerge as a result of attending the celebration. The pious man entered his home, went straight to bed and sobbed uncontrollably. His wife, upon hearing him cry, rushed to him and asked what was wrong. He told her that he had a golden vessel which he always believed was very pure and fine. But tonight he tested it and discovered that it was actually two-thirds gold and one third impure.

The wife didn't understand what he was talking about. He explained further; The golden vessel which I possess is my heart. I serve Hashem through my heart's desire to learn His Torah and do His commandments. I used to think that my heart was very pure and that I was completely joyous in learning Torah and keeping its commandments. I was wrong.

However, tonight I witnessed men who

played their games with such extreme intensity and excitement; I realized that I do not display nor even possess one tenth of their fervour. I observed adults who were so overjoyed and ecstatic at sheer foolishness; I have not one tenth of this sheer joy for my Torah. Tonight I saw people dancing together with such energy that sweat poured from them. They delighted by their exertion whereas I don't toil a tenth as much as they do, nor delight a tenth as much as they do in my learning and observance. Therefore, I cry. My service to Hashem which I thought was pure is on a low level.

Needless to say, from that day on the Pious man served Hashem with extra energy and resolve. He had transformed an evil desire in to a tool of serving Hashem.

At the outset of the Geula, Am Yisrael were like a newborn baby. They had been the most gallant servants Egypt had ever witnessed. They had served pharaoh with all their strength. Now, Hashem said, I want you to use that same effort in the service of G-d. Of course this time the excitement and happiness will differ, but just as you had strength to serve pharaoh, so to should you serve Hashem.



## RABBI DAVID BAADANI

Director - TAL Chazanut Program

### WE ARE THE STORY WE TELL

Three times in our parsha, the Torah repeats the same instruction: When your children ask you what this is all about, tell them. Tell them that we were slaves in Egypt. Tell them that it was painful. Tell them that Hashem Himself took us out. And don't just give them the headline, give them the details.

Why the repetition? Why now, in the very moment of redemption, while the Jewish people are still walking out of Egypt, does the Torah pause and say: Don't forget to explain this to your children?

Memory is not information. Memory is identity. What you remember defines who you are.

Egypt was not just a place we escaped from, it is the place where we were born as a people. Before Egypt, we were a family. After Egypt, we were a nation. And nations do not survive on miracles alone. They survive on stories that are told accurately, repeatedly, and personally.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks shared a fascinating story that brings this into sharp focus. In the 1950s, the Dalai Lama fled Tibet with his followers and settled in exile in India. Decades later, they realized something alarming: exile doesn't only threaten lives, it erases cultures. They asked a critical question: Who in history has survived exile without losing their identity? The answer was obvious, the Jews.

So they reached out. And the Jews show them A mock Pesach Seder. They watched as Jewish parents told their children a story, our story. Not as distant history, but as lived experience: "We were slaves. We were redeemed.

We are here because of that." This, Rabbi Sacks explained, is the secret of Jewish survival.

We don't tell the story so the children will know what happened. We tell the story so they will know who they are. And while we're telling it to them, we hear it again ourselves.

That is why the Torah insists on the details. Details make it real. Details make it personal. Details turn history into destiny.

Every generation is another chapter. The story didn't end in Egypt. It didn't end at Sinai. It didn't end anywhere, because it is still unfolding. And when a child hears the story clearly, they don't just inherit the past. They inherit responsibility for the future.

That is why, as we walk forward toward our destiny, the Torah stops us and says: Tell your children. Because people that remember who they are will always know where they are going.



## RABBI DANNY FISHER

### Director - TAL Boys After School Programs

#### "LEIL SHIMURIM" THE POWER OF EMUNAH AND BELIEF IN HASHEM

"Leil Shimurim" is described as a time when Hashem is mindful of His promise to redeem the Jewish people from Mitrayim. Rashi's interpretation emphasizes that Hashem's promise was not just a declaration but a signal for the people to maintain unwavering Emunah and Bitachon, knowing that through their belief, Hashem's promise

would come to fruition.

The Posuk references the faith of the Avos especially Avraham, whose Bitachon in Hashem was counted as righteousness, even when the fulfillment of divine promises was not immediate. The teaching underscores the relationship between Emunah and the eventual realization of Hashem's promises. This Emunah and Belief are seen as necessary for the fulfillment of the divine plan.

Moreover, the Posuk reflects on the balance of Yom Tov observance, where Pesach's first night is framed as a time

when Hashem is hopeful for the Geulah, and the rest of the Yom Tov is for the people to connect with their own spiritual growth, divine service as well as enjoying the Yom Tov meals.

It's a beautiful reminder of the power of Emunah and Belief in Hashem, especially during Pesach when we commemorate the Geulah from Mitrayim and Daven for a complete Geulah in the future. The Posuk invites us to renew our Emunah and Bitachon in Hashem's promises, and to approach the Yom Tov with a mindset of gratitude and spiritual awareness.



## HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

### If the Minyan is Lost In the Middle of the Tefilla (PART 2)

*Continued from last week...*

This applies also in a case where the Minyan was lost during Selihot. The Selihot service may be completed without a Minyan, but, according to Sephardic practice, the Kaddish Titkabal following Selihot may not be recited. Ashkenazim, however, allow reciting the Kaddish Titkabal after Selihot in this case, because – as with regard to the Kaddish following the Amida – they view the Kaddish as integral to the Selihot service.

If the Minyan was lost during the Torah reading – even if this happened during the first Aliya – the entire Torah reading may be completed. Likewise, the Haftara may be completed if the Minyan was lost during the Haftara reading. However, the Kaddish following the Torah reading is not recited if the Minyan was lost during the Torah reading.

If ten men were present during the silent Amida, and somebody left before the Hazzan began the repetition of the Amida, the Hazzan may not repeat the Amida, as the repetition is viewed as

separate and apart from the silent Amida.

Rabbi Akiva Eger (1761-1837) addresses the interesting case of a Minyan which was lost and then restored. If during the Hazara, for example, five of the ten men left, leaving behind only five – which, as mentioned, do not suffice to allow continuing the Hazara – may the Hazara be resumed if one of the five men returns? Instinctively, we might say that since the Hazara began with a Minyan, and six men are now present, the Hazara may be continued. On the other hand, one could argue that once the Minyan was lost, as fewer than six men were present, the Hazara cannot continue on the basis of the original ten men who were present when it began. Rabbi Akiva Eger leaves this question unanswered.

A different question arises in the case of a "revolving Minyan" – where there were never fewer than six men present at any point, but six or more of the original ten men left. Let us consider, for example, the case of a Minyan consisting of exactly ten men, four of whom left during the Hazara, after which four other people entered the synagogue. At this point, there are ten

men in the synagogue – six members of the original Minyan, and four newcomers, who arrived in the middle of the Hazara. If one or more of the six who remained from the original Minyan would now leave, may the Hazara continue? One might argue that since fewer than six of the original ten members of the Minyan are present, the Hazara cannot continue, as there aren't six people in the synagogue who were present when the Hazara began. In truth, however, Halacha allows the Hazara to continue in this case, since there was never a point when fewer than six men were present.

This entire discussion applies only after the fact, if the Minyan was lost. If the people know ahead of time that the Minyan will be lost at a certain point in the service – such as if the tenth man informed the others that he must leave by a certain time – then they may not begin a part of the service that requires a Minyan. Meaning, if, for example, they know that the tenth man will leave during the Hazara, then the Hazzan may not begin the Hazara; if they know that the tenth man will leave during the Torah reading, then they may not begin the Torah reading.



# WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

## Parshat Bo

G-d tells Moshe that He is hardening Pharaoh's heart so that through miraculous plagues the world will know for all time that He is the one true G-d. Pharaoh is warned about the plague of locusts and is told how severe it will be. Pharaoh agrees to release only the men, but Moshe insists that everyone must go. During the plague, Pharaoh calls for Moshe and Aharon to remove the locusts, and he admits he has sinned. G-d ends the plague but hardens Pharaoh's heart, and again Pharaoh fails to free the Jews. The country, except for the Jewish People, is then engulfed in a palpable darkness. Pharaoh

calls for Moshe and tells him to take all the Jews out of Egypt, but to leave their flocks behind. Moshe tells him that not only will they take their own flocks, but Pharaoh must add his own too. Moshe tells Pharaoh that G-d is going to bring one more plague, the death of the firstborn, and then the Jews will leave Egypt. G-d again hardens Pharaoh's heart, and Pharaoh warns Moshe that if he sees him again, Moshe will be put to death. G-d tells Moshe that the month of Nissan will be the chief month. The Jewish people are commanded to take a sheep on the 10th of the month and guard it until the 14th. The sheep is then to be slaughtered as a Pesach offering, its blood put on their

door-posts, and its roasted meat eaten. The blood on the door-post will be a sign that their homes will be passed-over when G-d strikes the firstborn of Egypt. The Jewish People are told to memorialize this day as the Exodus from Egypt by never eating chametz on Pesach. Moshe relays G-d's commands, and the Jewish People fulfill them flawlessly. G-d sends the final plague, killing the first born, and Pharaoh sends the Jews out of Egypt. G-d tells Moshe and Aharon the laws concerning the Pesach sacrifice, pidyon haben (redemption of the first born son) and tefillin.

**Rabbi Sinclair,**  
Seasonsofthemoon.com

### Q

1. What was Pharaoh's excuse for not releasing the Jewish children?
2. How did the locusts in the time of Moshe differ from those in the days of Yoel?
3. How did the first three days of darkness differ from the last three?
4. When the Jews asked the Egyptians for gold and silver vessels, the Egyptians were unable to deny ownership of such vessels. Why?
5. Makat bechorot took place at exactly midnight. Why did Moshe say it would take place at approximately midnight?

### A

1. 10:11 - Since children don't bring sacrifices there was no need for them to go.
2. 10:14 - The plague brought by Moshe was composed of one species of locust, whereas the plague in the days of Yoel was composed of many species.
3. 10:22 - During the first three days the Egyptians couldn't see. During the last three days they couldn't move.
4. 10:22 - During the plague of darkness the Jews could see and they searched and found the Egyptians' vessels.
5. 11:4 - If Moshe said the plague would begin exactly at midnight, the Egyptians might miscalculate and accuse Moshe of being a fake.



## TAL TEENAGE LEARNING PROGRAM

The TAL Teenage Learning Program, led by Rabbi Danny Fisher, brings boys together each week after school for meaningful learning in a relaxed and welcoming environment. Through engaging discussions, real-life lessons, & the simple addition of pizza, the program creates a space where students feel comfortable connecting, asking questions, and growing. This weekly gathering has a powerful impact, strengthening friendships, deepening Jewish knowledge, and inspiring personal development that extends far beyond the classroom.

TAL programs for teenagers run daily.

Contact [info@torahactionlife.com](mailto:info@torahactionlife.com) for more information.

