

# THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT KI TISA



London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



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

## PURIM AND THE DEDICATED COMMUTER!

How long does it take you to get to work? Are you one of those suffering the increase in tube congestion?

How many passengers do you think the London Underground carried last year? Just over 1.2 billion journeys were made!

A decade ago, the number was much less at roughly 900 million and life seemed much more spacious commuting to work.

Some people take the bus; others have the luxury of the car.

Increasingly, it has become fashionable to circumvent the commute by having an office in the house.

A fascinating story emerged a few weeks ago. James Robertson, a 56 year old man from Detroit, found himself in the headlines.

For the past decade, he has been commuting by bus and foot and walks a whopping 20 miles a day to get to work.

Originally he had a car, but it broke down and was too costly to fix. He decided to make his way through the wintry rain and snow on foot.

What would you do if you heard this story? Our Sages state (source?): "Ezehu Chacham? Halomed Mikol Adam" Who is a wise man? One who learns from every person.

Looking at James, we get Chizuk (strength). If this is the conviction that someone shows in order to fulfil his mundane job, how much more so should we put in the effort through tough times in order to fulfil our job of serving G-d.

But just learning lessons from this is not enough – we need to act.

And someone did!

Evan Leedy, a 19 year old university student, heard this story and acted with superb effect, launching an online fundraiser highlighting

James' walk. People saw and reacted kindly by donating, and raised a whopping \$330,000 for James within a week!!

I know what you're thinking. If only something like that would happen to me. After all, I also have it hard.

Maybe you do, but I would like to share my view as to why this person merited such special assistance.

Purim is one of the most fun packed festivals. Great food, drink, presents, charity for the poor and of course fancy dress!

Two thousand years ago in Persia arose an evil man – Haman with the power and decree to destroy and annihilate the Jewish people in ONE day.

The Jews were in trouble and didn't know how best to deal with the situation.

A few years earlier, they had attended the king's banquet, against the will of Mordechai (the righteous Jewish leader) and now they needed his advice more than ever. Could they approach him? Could they now tell him they were sorry? Surely that wouldn't go down well with their ego!

Nevertheless, they put their arrogance aside and accepted every word of advice Mordechai gave. They repented and fasted praying to G-d for three days and were eventually answered with the saviour of the Jewish nation.

You and I are around today due to their gallant decisions.

Over 300 years ago, King Louis XIV of France asked Blaise Pascal, the great Christian philosopher, to give him proof of G-d. His answer was astonishing: "The Jews, your honour, the Jews".

We Jews have faced a tough history, which unfortunately we seem to be feeling more frequently nowadays. Nevertheless we have survived with great accomplishment.

Persistency in the face of adversity is what leads to success.

We live in a generation blessed with choice.

We enter the supermarket and are engulfed with row after row of products from across

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**14TH ADAR 5785**

**SHABBAT BEGINS:**  
17:49pm

**SHABBAT ENDS:**  
18:52pm

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the globe.  
Send a guy that hasn't been to the supermarket for years in to buy a product and he will certainly get lost. Which row? Which product? Which brand?  
From toiletries to food, the rows are filled seemingly with the same product, in different coloured/branded wrappings. Knowledge is king, but deciphering that knowledge and knowing how to process and allocate it, is really the key.  
Two people enter a game and are given a task to buy a chocolate from the local supermarket. One dashes off, before the judge finishes speaking. The other waits. The judge continues: "There will be several chocolates to choose from. Make sure that the one you get contains no peanut content and comes with a special red label."  
The first goes in to the supermarket, tracks down the first chocolate he lays his eyes on and rushes back home easily beating his opponent. The second takes

his time, looks for the correct aisle, goes through all the rows until eventually he finds the one product that is without peanut content.  
He arrives twenty minutes later, but he is the real winner.  
When James Robertson went to work, he did so because he loved his work. Through thick and thin, he would march gallantly to work.  
He had a goal, chose a path and happily followed, successfully achieving his aim. The world saw and reacted.  
Now he has been blessed with the ability to fulfil his goal in better standards.  
Purim is a time that we celebrate our persistency. As a nation, our primary goal is to believe and serve G-d Almighty.  
Throughout our history, we have faced seemingly unsurmountable challenges, but through our belief we remained steady and firm, eventually triumphing in celebration.  
In 1899, Mark Twain wrote: "The

Egyptians and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendour, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away. The Greek and Roman followed, made a vast noise and they are gone. Other peoples have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out and they sit in twilight now or have vanished. The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind. All things are mortal but the Jew. All other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?"  
And to Mark Twain – I would answer – our conviction and belief in our cause.  
This Purim, let's keep that conviction strong, eat, drink, share our happiness with others and be merry in celebration of our special relationship with G-d.  
Shabbat Shalom and Purim Sameach!



## RABBI DAVID BAADANI

Director - TAL Chazanut Program

### ESTHER'S HIDDEN MESSAGE: WHY BRING HAMAN TO THE BANQUET?

One of the great mysteries of Megillat Esther is Esther's decision to invite Haman to the banquet with Ahashverosh—not once, but twice! Why would she choose to bring such a dangerous enemy into this intimate setting, rather than seizing a private moment with her husband to plead for her people? While many commentators offer political or strategic explanations, I'd like to suggest an approach that shifts the focus from politics to a deeper, more personal message about relationships and human nature.

Perhaps Esther's actions were meant to send a profound message to Ahashverosh about the state of their relationship. She is not just saying, "I want Haman to be here," but, rather: "I do not wish to bring a man into our private feast. But there is already a man present between us, always lingering. He is not my guest; he follows us everywhere."

What does this mean? In the Megillah, Haman is repeatedly referred to as zeh – as in ha'ish hara hazeh—"this wicked man." His name and presence symbolize a certain mindset: a transactional, self-serving

approach to life. Haman views the world through the lens of personal gain, driven by the question: What's in it for me? Every action, from his rise to power to his eventual downfall, is dictated by this self-interested mentality. His entire identity is shaped around zeh—as we see when Ahashverosh, in his fury, exclaims, "מי הוא זה ואיזה הוא אשר" ("Who is this man, and what is his nature, that he would dare to do such a thing?"). Ahashverosh cannot comprehend anyone who would act without personal gain, a mindset that Haman embodies completely.

Further evidence of Haman's self-centeredness is seen when he declares to his wife and friends, "וכל זה איננו שווה לי בכל" ("All this is not worth anything to me as long as I see Mordechai the Jew sitting at the king's gate"). Haman's frustration reveals his inability to appreciate any blessing or achievement if it doesn't serve his ego. His entire worldview reduces relationships and successes to mere opportunities for self-advancement.

Esther subtly communicates to Ahashverosh that their relationship is plagued by this very mentality. A relationship cannot thrive when both partners are constantly evaluating what they are receiving, rather than being fully present for each other. True love and

connection are not about accumulating benefits but about existing together, valuing one another for who they truly are – not what they can provide.

By inviting Haman to the Mishteh, Esther is holding up a mirror to Ahashverosh. She forces him to see that there is an intruder in their relationship—a mindset that has always been there, even if they have not acknowledged it. If Ahashverosh desires a true, meaningful connection with her, he must rid their bond of the Haman-like perspective that reduces their interactions to calculations of what can be gained.

This message is not only for Ahashverosh; it resonates deeply with all of us. Relationships—whether romantic, familial, or friendships—suffer when we adopt a mindset of taking rather than being. We must reflect on how often we let a "Haman" intrude into our connections. Are we too focused on personal gain, or are we nurturing relationships rooted in generosity and presence?

Esther's actions remind us that meaningful relationships are not about what we can extract, but about the willingness to simply be with and for each other. As we read the Megillah this Purim, let us reflect on our own relationships. Can we learn from Esther's wisdom and strive to build deeper connections grounded in selflessness, care, and true presence?



## HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

### When is Birkat Ha'mazon a Torah Obligation?

In some situations, Birkat Ha'mazon is required by Torah law, and in other situations, it is required Mi'de'rabbanan – by force of Rabbinic enactment. The practical difference between a Torah obligation and one required Mi'de'rabbanan is in cases of Safeik – uncertainty. If one ate and cannot remember whether or not he recited Birkat Ha'mazon, then if the situation is such that Birkat Ha'mazon was required on the level of Torah law, then he must recite the first three blessings of Birkat Ha'mazon. In cases of uncertainty involving Torah law, we must be stringent, and so when there is uncertainty in a case where Birkat Ha'mazon was required by the Torah, one must recite the first three blessings (as the Torah obligation includes only the first three blessings). If Birkat Ha'mazon was required "Mi'de'rabbanan," then one can be lenient in situations of uncertainty, and so he does not recite Birkat Ha'mazon.

The basic rule is that the Torah obligation applies if a person ate at least a Ke'zayit of bread and he experiences "Sebi'a" – satiation. The Torah introduces the command of Birkat Ha'mazon by stating, "You shall eat and you shall be satiated, and you shall bless Hashem your G-d," and so the obligation depends on the experience of satiation. Therefore, even if one ate a large quantity of food, if he does not feel satiated, Birkat Ha'mazon is required only "Mi'de'rab-

banan." Conversely, if one ate only a "Ke'zayit" of bread and feels satiated, then he is obligated to recite Birkat Ha'mazon on the level of Torah law.

It must be noted that one does not have to receive satiation only from bread for the Torah obligation to apply. Even if the satiation came from the combination of bread and other foods, the Torah obligation applies.

According to some Rishonim, the Torah obligation applies only if a person is "satiated" in regard to both hunger and thirst. This means that even if a person ate to the point of satiation, the Torah obligation of Birkat Ha'mazon does not apply if he feels thirsty. According to this opinion, the obligation applies in such a case only "Mi'de'rabbanan" unless the individual drinks and quenches his thirst.

This is the view accepted by the Ben Ish Hai (Rav Yosef Haim of Baghdad, 1833-1909), in Parashat Hukat (Shana Rishona). He writes that if a person is "Ta'eb Li'shtot" – meaning, he feels a need to drink – he is not considered "satiated" and thus the Torah obligation of Birkat Ha'mazon does not apply. This does not mean that one must always drink during a meal for the Torah obligation to apply; it means that the Torah obligation does not apply if a person feels thirsty. If a person did not drink and does not feel thirsty, then the Torah obligation applies even according to this opinion.

Most other Rishonim, however, disagree, and maintain that thirst is not a factor with regard to the Torah obligation of Birkat Ha'mazon, and one who ate to the point of satiation is required to recite Birkat Ha'mazon on the level of Torah law even if he is thirsty.

In light of this difference of opinion, if one feels thirsty after eating, it is preferable to drink and quench his thirst so that he will have the opportunity to fulfill the Torah obligation of Birkat Ha'mazon according to all opinions.

#### Summary:

The Torah obligation of Birkat Ha'mazon applies if one ate at least a Ke'zayit of bread, and he ate to the point of satiation (even if his satiation resulted from the combination of bread and other foods). If one ate a Ke'zayit or more and does not feel satiated, he is required to recite Birkat Ha'mazon only on the level of Rabbinic enactment. This difference is practically relevant in a case where one does not remember if he recited Birkat Ha'mazon – in such a case, if Birkat Ha'mazon is required as a Torah obligation, the person must recite the first three blessings of Birkat Ha'mazon, but if it is required by the Rabbis, he does not.

According to some opinions, the Torah obligation does not apply if a person is thirsty, and so it is preferable for a person who feels thirsty after eating a meal to drink and quench his thirst so he can fulfill a Biblical Misva according to all opinions.



## HALACHOT (LAWS) OF GIVING GIFTS ON PURIM

- 1) Mishloach Manot is fulfilled by sending two types of ready-to-eat food to at least one friend. This mitzvah should be performed on Purim day itself.
- 2) There is a custom to send Mishloach Manot through a third person messenger, since the word Mishloach is related to the word for messenger, Shaliach.
- 3) Matanot La'evyonim is fulfilled by giving money to at least two poor people on the day of Purim. The gift should at least equal the value of a fast-food meal.
- 4) This is not a "family" obligation, but rather each person should perform the mitzvah themselves.

5) The money needn't be given directly to a poor person, but can be given to a community representative – as long as the money is actually distributed to the poor on Purim day.

6) Matanot La'evyonim is a special mitzvah, not to be included in the amount of money a person sets aside for charity during the rest of the year.

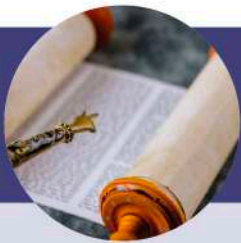
7) Maimonides writes that it is inappropriate to buy expensive Mishloach Manot, if this will come at the expense of larger gifts to the poor.

The Chasam Sofer adds that prayers on Purim are so powerful that G-d answers any

heartfelt prayer on this special day – even if we don't deserve it. He bases this idea on the words of the Ritv"a.

The Ritv"a in his commentary to Megillah 7a quotes the Talmud Yerushalmi which explains regarding the fulfillment of the obligation to give matanot La'evyonim, gifts to the poor, on Purim, that "Kol Ha'posheit Yado Leetol Yitnu Lo - we give to anyone who extends his hand to receive".

This is to say that on this festive day we give money to everyone who asks, without first checking to see if they truly are poor and worthy of receiving tzedakah funds.



# WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

## Parshat Ki Tisa

Moshe conducts a census by counting each silver half-shekel donated by all men age twenty and over. Moshe is commanded to make a copper laver for the Mishkan. The women donate the necessary metal. The formula of the anointing oil is specified, and G-d instructs Moshe to use this oil only for dedicating the Mishkan, its vessels and Aharon and his sons. G-d selects Betzalel and Oholiav as master craftsmen for the Mishkan and its vessels. The Jewish People are commanded to keep the Shabbat, an eternal sign that G-d made the world. Moshe receives the two Tablets of Testimony on which are written the Ten Commandments.

The mixed multitude who left Egypt with the Jewish People panic when Moshe's descent seems to be delayed, and so they force Aharon to make a golden calf for them to worship. Aharon stalls, trying to delay them. Hashem tells Moshe to return to the people immediately, threatening to destroy everyone and build a new nation from Moshe. When Moshe sees the camp of idol-worship, he smashes the Tablets and destroys the golden calf. The sons of Levi volunteer to punish the transgressors, executing 3,000 men.

Moshe ascends the mountain again to pray for forgiveness for the people, and G-d accepts his prayer. Moshe sets up

the Mishkan and G-d's clouds of glory return. Moshe asks G-d to show him the rules by which he conducts the world, but he is granted only a small portion of this request. G-d tells Moshe to hew new Tablets, and reveals to him the text of the prayer that will invoke Divine mercy.

Idol worship, intermarriage and the combination of milk and meat are prohibited. The laws of Pesach, the first-born, the first-fruits, Shabbat, Shavuot and Succot are taught. When Moshe descends with the second set of Tablets, his face is luminous as a result of contact with the Divine.

**Rabbi Sinclair,**  
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