

THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT NITZAVIM AND VAYELECH

London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
TAL Founder & Director

NEVER GIVE UP ON THE THINGS THAT MAKE YOU SMILE.

We are blessed to have youth.

Rashi spells out the details of Hakhel, based on the Gemara [Chagiga 3a]: The men come to learn; the women (who in those days did not have the educational background to really learn the Torah) come to listen; and the children come to bring a reward to those who bring them. The simple reading of the Gemara is that there is in fact no inherent purpose for the children to come. The men can learn. The women can at least listen. But what are the kids coming for? They will not even listen properly.

In light of this, it is hard to understand the meaning of the Gemara when it says, "to give reward to those who bring them". What does this mean? If, in fact, there is no purpose to bring the children, then what reward should be granted to those who bring them? There is no mitzvah to bring a sack of potatoes!

The Nesivos answers this question very practically. All the Jews from throughout the Land of Israel came to Jerusalem for Hakhel. So who was left home to watch the kids? Where would they find baby sitters? Obviously, the adults had no choice but to bring the children. Since the children had to be brought anyway, the Torah commanded that they be brought, so that there would also be a Mitzvah and the associated reward involved in bringing the children.

Reb Yerucham. When the Gemara states that the children are brought "to grant reward to those who bring them", the intent is not that there is no inherent value in bringing children to Hakhel. In fact, there is

something to be gained from bringing them even if they do not have the intellect to learn or the patience to listen. Merely being present at an event like Hakhel – in an atmosphere permeated with holiness has an effect on the children, not necessarily immediately, but in years to come.

For example, the Gemara [Jerusalem Talmud: Yevamos] says that the mother of Rav Yoshua ben Chananya used to take his cradle and place it in the Beis Medrash, just so the baby should absorb the sound of Torah.

Parents who make the effort to expose their children to positive experiences in life, despite the fact that the child ostensibly does not gain anything concrete from the experience at the time, will be rewarded. Merely making the effort to expose them to a positive environment will allow the parents to reap reward in the future.

I recently bought a book for my wife called, "A Day in the Life of Israel". Sixty of the best photographers in the world were assigned a city or an area in Israel and told to take photos on a given day, the best of which would appear in this book. I saw one photo of a newborn nursery in Bnei Brak. There is a picture of rows of little infants in plastic cribs lined up in the nursery. In one of the cribs, there is a picture book opened to pictures of Rav Shach, the Steipler Gaon, and the Chazon Ish. There in the cradle, in the hospital, pictures of Gedolim [great Torah luminaries] surround the baby. This book is not a religious book. It is a secular book. Nonetheless, the caption on this photo is "Education starts early in Israel".

On a subconscious if not a conscious level, his environment has an effect on him. Parents who make the effort to put their children into a good environment – even though at the time the efforts seem in vain –

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DVAR TORAH
Never give up the on the things that make you smile,
by Rabbi Jonathan Tawil

DVAR TORAH
Parshat Nitzavim-Vayelech
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Tehillim for our Times
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KIDS ZONE - QUIZ

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will eventually receive reward, in the form of the development of spiritually developed children. This is what our Sages mean when they say, "to grant reward to those who bring them".

Now, Write For Yourselves This Song

We are taught that before Yehoshua captured the city of Jericho he met an angel: "It happened when Yehoshua was in Jericho, that he raised his eyes and saw, and behold! — A man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand. Yehoshua went toward him and said, 'Are you with us or with our enemies?' He said, 'No, for I am the commander of Hashem's legion; now I have come.'" [Yehoshua 5:13-14]. This is an inexplicable dialogue. We do not understand Yehoshua's question and we do not understand the angel's answer.

The Gemara [Megillah 3a] explains the dialogue. The angel told Yehoshua that because of the siege of Jericho, they failed to do two things. The previous night they neglected to offer the daily sacrifice of the evening and now they were neglecting the study of Torah. Yehoshua asked the angel for which of

the two sins he was coming to chastise them. The angel responded "for the sin that you have done now" (neglect of Torah study).

The meaning of the angel's response is hinted at by the allusion of the word "now" (ata) in the response, which is reminiscent of the command "Now (Ata), write for yourselves this Song" [Devorim 31:19]. The song refers to Torah. However, Tosfos in Megillah asks how we see from the words of the pasuk that the above explanation reflects what Yehoshua was asking the angel? Tosfos answers because the angel said "Ha-lanu ata..." [Are you on our side?] The word "lanu" [us] connotes the pasuk "the Torah was commanded to us (lanu) by Moshe" [Devorim 33:4].

They were talking in code. Yehoshua used the word "Lanu" as a code for Torah tzeeva lanu Moshe [The Torah was commanded to us by Moshe.] and the angel used the word "Ata" as a code for "Ata Kisvu lachem es haShira haZos" [Now you write for yourselves this Song]. The Ponevizer Rav asked, if they are already speaking in code, then why didn't the angel use the same code word (lanu) back to Yehoshua that Yehoshua had

used in the first place?

There are two aspects to Torah. First, there is a command to learn Torah. But sometimes it is tough to learn; sometimes there are legitimate excuses why not to learn. However, there is more to Torah than merely the obligation to learn Torah. Torah is also a song. A song is part of a person's existence. Song comes from the soul. It is part of the innermost feelings of a person. It is part of his essence.

The angel was, in effect, telling Yehoshua that he was not merely chastising them for not learning. For that, they would have had a legitimate excuse — they were busy; they were placing the city under siege. But if Torah is what it is supposed to be for a Jew — part of his essence — like a song, then a person literally cannot go a day without it, regardless of the excuse. Because this was not the case, the angel came to complain. Torah must be more than merely a series of commandments. Torah must be "the Song of our soul and the essence of our existence".

It may be 'tough' to learn, but if we are truly attached to Torah, we will not ever contemplate failing to learn. We cannot do without it.



RABBI DAVID BAADANI
Director - TAL Chazanut Program

**PARSHAT NITZAVIM
VAYELECH**

A baby camel turned to her mother and said.

Mummy, I want to ask you 3 questions. The mummy said 'ok, go ahead'. Then the baby asked. Mummy, Why do we have these ugly three toed feet?

And mummy explained. The reason that we have this ugly three toed feet is because we are not like other spoilt animals, we march thousands of miles through the Sahara desert, we need three toed feet to hold us strong.

Mummy, the baby continued asking, what about these ugly eye lashes?

Oh. In the Sahara desert, there are those sandstorms, these eye lashes protect our eyes from becoming blind.

Mummy... What about this hump? Why don't we have just handsome, flat, cute backs?

And mummy said. We go thousands of

thousands of miles through the desert, we are the only animals that can go weeks without drinking, without eating. How?! Our humps store all that fat that then dissolves and gives us all the nutrition we need for weeks marching in the desert without water.

The baby camel said. Mummy, one more fourth question.

Three toed ugly feet, to hold us strong as we march thousands of miles through the Sahara.

Ugly eye lashes, to protect our eyes from the sandstorms as we march thousands of miles in our trekking.

And repulsive humps, to store the fat and the water as we march from one end of the planet to the other end of the planet. I got it mummy!

Now, one last question, if this is true, what in the world are we doing in a cage in a brand zoo???

That is a question of מלכות. When you realise who you are, when you understand what type of soul and body you have, when you understand who you're representing and what your power is, the question that arises is why I allow myself

to live in a cage, confined, inhibited, afraid to flex my spiritual and physical muscles. We look at ourselves, so many of us are not only dumbing down our lives because of a fear that we are so small, some of us also have a fear to be great. We look at the mirror and we say who am I to be Powerful, successful, happy? Who am I to make an impact, to have an awesome marriage and a great relationship with my children?

As a preparation for ראש השנה the day in which we ask ה' הקב"ה, 'Reign over the entire world with your glory', the time in which his kingship is manifested in the world, this is the time we should realise the true power of our people, our roots, the physical and spiritual essence that we have got. Time to beat out our fear, time to flex our muscles, time to understand that your incredible, infinite potential to bring light, hope and redemption. We can transcend our mindset of exile and we certainly should allow ourselves to experience the true sense of מלכות, to believe that we are invincible, that we have the power to become greater than ever as a true servant of the king of all kings ה' הקב"ה.



RABBI BENJI STONE, TAL Chavruta Program

Tehillim for Our Times; Chapter 1 - אֲשֶׁרֵי הָאִישׁ - Part 2

The Torah Jew gets constant pleasure and enjoyment from learning and keeping the Torah's laws. His body will always function optimally, and he will never lose his vigour – even in old age, as we find elsewhere in Tehillim; "He (the tzaddik) will still be fruitful in old age" (92;15).

Everything the Torah Jew does will be blessed with success given that he is

connected to the infinite.

However, we need to be aware that certain factors in our lives may operate to sever this connection.

One needs to be very careful when choosing his or her circle of friends because it is all too easy to be drawn away from one's holy and sincere aspirations by those who do not share them.

As the Rambam writes:

The nature of man is for his opinions

and actions to be influenced by friends and associates...Therefore a person needs to draw close to tzaddikim and sit with chachamim on a regular basis in order to learn from their ways. (Hilchot Deot; 6,1)

Do not mix with those who may be a negative influence on you. If you do mix with them, your Torah learning and service of G-d may diminish, pulling you away from the source of all beracha (Rashi).



HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

The proper time to say selichot

It is customary among Sepharadim to recite Selihot each morning during the month of Elul, ideally around the time of dawn. One should recite the morning Berachot before reciting Selihot; in particular, one must ensure to wash his hands with the Beracha of "Al Netilat Yadayim," and recite Birkat Ha'Torah, before Selihot.

It should be noted that according to some authorities, the time for the morning hand washing begins only at dawn. We do not follow this opinion, as we allow a person to wash his hands with the Beracha as soon as he wakes up with the intent of remaining awake for the day, even if this occurs in the middle of the night. However, in

deference to the view that the time for washing begins only after dawn, one who washed his hands before dawn should preferably wash his hands again – though without a Beracha – after dawn. During the period of Selihot, then, one should arise early, wash his hands with a Beracha, recite the other morning Berachot, and then recite Selihot. After Selihot, he should preferably wash his hands again without a Beracha.

As mentioned, the preferred time for reciting Selihot is the time of dawn, as this is the time when the Almighty is especially receptive to our prayers. Nevertheless, it is permissible to recite Selihot earlier, anytime after Hasot (midnight as defined by Halacha), or later, anytime throughout the day. Thus, for example, many communities hold

Selihot services late on Mosa'eh Shabbat, after Hasot, since many people are up late on Mosa'eh Shabbat and it would be difficult for them to wake up at dawn for Selihot. By the same token, people who, for whatever reason, cannot recite Selihot early in the morning may arrange a Minyan for Selihot at any point throughout the day.

Summary: Selihot should ideally be recited at dawn, though it may be recited at anytime from Hasot (midnight as defined by Halacha) until the end of the day. One should perform the morning hand washing with a Beracha and recite the other morning Berachot before reciting Selihot. If one washed his hands before dawn, he should preferably wash his hands again after dawn without a Beracha.



WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

Parshat Nitzavim-Vayelech

NITZAVIM

On the last day of his life, Moshe gathers all the people, young and old, lowly and exalted, men and women, in a final initiation. The covenant includes not only those who are present, but even those

generations yet unborn. Moshe admonishes the people again to be extremely vigilant against idol worship, because despite having witnessed the abominations of Egypt, there will always be the temptation to experiment with foreign philosophies as a pretext for immorality.

Moshe describes the desolation of the Land of Israel that will result from failure to heed Hashem's mitzvahs. Both their descendants and foreigners alike will remark on the singular desolation of the Land and its apparent inability to be sown or to produce crops. The conclusion will be apparent to all – that the Jewish

People have forsaken the One Who protects them, in favor of powerless idols. Moshe promises, however, that the people will eventually repent after both the blessings and the curses have been fulfilled. And, however assimilated they will have become among the nations, Hashem will eventually bring them back to the Land of Israel. Moshe tells the people to remember that the Torah is not a remote impossibility, but rather that its fulfillment is within the grasp of every Jew. This Torah portion concludes with a dramatic choice between life and death, with Moshe exhorting the people to choose life.

VAYELECH

On this, the last day of his life, Moshe goes from tent to tent throughout the

camp, bidding farewell to his beloved people, encouraging them to keep the faith. Moshe tells them that whether he is among them or not, Hashem is with them and will vanquish their enemies. Then he summons Yehoshua, and, in front of all the people, exhorts him to be strong and courageous as the leader of the Jewish People. In this manner, he strengthens Yehoshua's status as the new leader. Moshe teaches them the mitzvah of Hakhel: That every seven years on the first day of the intermediate days of Succot, the entire nation, including small children, will gather together at the Temple to hear the king read from the Book of Devarim. The sections that he reads deal with faithfulness to Hashem, the covenant, and reward and punishment.

Hashem tells Moshe that Moshe's end is

near, and that he should therefore summon Yehoshua to stand with him in the Mishkan, where Hashem will teach Yehoshua. Hashem then tells Moshe and Yehoshua that after entering the Land, the people will be unfaithful to Him, and begin to worship other gods. Hashem will then completely hide His face, so that it will seem that the Jewish People are at the mercy of fate, and that they will be hunted by all. Hashem instructs Moshe and Yehoshua to write down a song – Ha'azinu – which will serve as a witness against the Jewish People when they sin. Moshe records the song in writing and teaches it to the Jewish People.

Rabbi Sinclair,
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Q

1. Who were the wood-choppers and water-carriers?
2. Why can Hashem never "swap" the Jewish People for another nation?
3. Where is the Torah not to be found? Where is it to be found?
4. Why does the Torah command that babies be brought to the Torah reading?
5. Which verse promises that the Torah will never be totally forgotten?



A

1. 29:10 - Canaanites who joined the Jewish People under false pretences.
2. 29:12 - Because Hashem swore to their ancestors that He would never do so.
3. 30:12-15 - The Torah is not found in Heaven, nor is it across the ocean. Rather, it is "very close to you, in your mouth and in your heart."
4. 31:12 - To give reward to those who bring them.
5. 31:21 - "For (the Torah) will not be forgotten from the mouth of their offspring."

