

# THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT VAYESHEV

London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



**RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL**  
TAL Founder & Director

## JUST SAY NO!

Imagine one of those typical days in London. The clouds are heavy, the wind is strong and the rain doesn't stop falling. You come into work after having fought with the wind, your umbrella broken and your coat drenched. Just then the door opens and a colleague of yours walks in. "What an awesome day it is today, the weather is great don't you think?"

What is your response? Two quick replies strike my mind.

The calm approach; "Interesting, I kind of thought it was raining and quite murky out there".

Alternatively you offer a more definitive response – "No!" you exclaim. "Its not great weather!" Then you begin to explain yourself. "Have you seen the weather? It's raining and cloudy and I was drenched this morning! How can you call this good weather?"

Which would you chose?

Let us take a look into the Parasha for some clues as to what you might be correct in answering. Yosef was sold as a slave to Potiphar – a great and mighty minister in Pharaohs regime. Potiphar was married to a beautiful wife, but as soon as she set eyes on Yosef, she desired him. She approached Yosef constantly and tried to coerce him. Each time Yosef would resist. One day Potiphar and all the people in the house were out; the only two people left were Yosef and

Potiphars wife. She took the opportunity to make her move.

Yosef, a single young lad sold into slavery, was being severely tested. He passed with flying colours. He first refused, and then went on to explain how he could never do such a thing to his trusted master. Finally after she moved in on him, he ran away.

When reading this episode from the Torah one comes across an unusual cantillation over the word Vayema'en – he refused (Bereishit 39:8). This cantillation is called a Shalshelet and appears only three times in the book of Bereishit. Why is this cantillation used here? Furthermore there is a line representing a stop after the word Vayema'en, implying a pause. Why is this necessary?

Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz zts'l explains that Yosef was in no doubt that succumbing to her desires would be immoral. He was being severely tested, it was difficult, but his response to such a test was an emphatic NO!

The statement, "Vayema'en" (with a Shalshelet and a Psik) implies that Yosef needed no process of logical deduction or calculation in reaching his decision.

The separation indicates that for himself, Yosef needed no explanation. Only in his response to Potiphars wife did he feel the need to explain. For Yosef, the very fact that a given action is forbidden was sufficient reason to abstain.

The way of the Yetser Harah is to try and convince us to sway to his side of thought. He uses manipulation, convic-

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**19TH KISLEV 5785**

**SHABBAT BEGINS:**  
15:38pm

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16:48pm

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tion and coercion to try and make us sin. Our answer, explains Rabbi Yerucham must be an emphatic NO! If possible, in our war against our Yetser we should not try to get into a debate, we should be quick and certain to refuse at first. For once we open the door to doubt and debate with the Yeter, and then we are playing on his ground and will find it harder to make a stand.

We find a similar idea when it came to burying Yaakov. The body of Yaakov was brought up from Egypt by all his sons. They came to the cave of Machpela to bury him and they were met by Eisav. He contested the fact that Yaakov should be buried there. The Tribes opened conversation trying to convince him that it was rightfully theirs. In the end they decided to send Naphtali (who was fast) to Egypt to bring the document that showed it belonged to Yaakov. Chushim the son of Dan was also present at the time. He was deaf and couldn't follow the conversation. He asked what all the fuss was about;

why were they not burying Yaakov? They explained to him the situation. He was very zealous for his grandfather Yaakov and couldn't bear to see his body lie without burial for so long. He took action into his own hands and simply went and killed Eisav.

Rabbi Chaim Shmulevits zts'l asks didn't the others feel for Yaakov. Why was it only Chushim that acted? He explains that once they entered into a debate with Eisav, then they were opening themselves up to manipulation. Eisav was able to buy time and try and conceive another way to cheat Yaakov out of being buried. Chushim on the other hand was deaf. He didn't hear the whole conversation. He still had that initial conviction and acted on it straight away. It was due to his conviction that Yaakov merited a quick and honourable burial.

Every day we say in our prayers En Kelokenu En Kadonenu – there is no one like our G-d, no one like our Master. We continue and say Mi Kelokenu Mi Kadonenu – Who is like

our G-d, who is like our Master? Our sages ask why the prayer is in this order. Surely we should first state who is like G-d and then state there is none like G-d. Why do we say it the other way round?

Our Sages explain that a Jew has to build him/herself up so strong that their first reaction in life is En Kelokenu – there is none like Hashem. He is our Father, He is our Leader and He is the Creator of the Universe. There is none like Him. It is only once we have this understanding that we can then go on and ask who is like Him.

So when your friend walks in the room and says what a nice day it is outside, and it clearly isn't, then by choosing to answer with a clear no, might not be such a bad response. It shows your sincere belief in what you are stating. Our first point in life is to build up our belief in Hashem. Our response when faced with tough tests must be swift and clear. We must state emphatically – "Everything is Min Hashamayim". It is the strength and clarity in our belief that will lead us through all of life's tests.



## RABBI DAVID BAADANI

Director - TAL Chazanut Program

### YOSEF'S RESILIENCE AND THE LIGHT OF HANUKKAH

The Torah describes Yosef as exceptionally successful in Potiphar's house, emphasizing his meticulous grooming (מסלסל בשער). Far from vanity, this act reflected Yosef's understanding of his future as a leader, as revealed in his prophetic dreams. However, Hashem criticized Yosef, asking, "Your father is in mourning, and you are grooming yourself?" and decreed, "I will send the bear (Potiphar's wife) against you" (Rashi). This rebuke set the stage for Yosef's ultimate test in Mitzrayim with Potiphar's wife.

Hashem tested Yosef to teach him the importance of remaining rooted in his

spiritual heritage, particularly the teachings of his father, Yaakov Avinu. Yosef's mission required him to build a life of holiness and integrity in a spiritually foreign land, distant from his family's guidance. Yet, Hashem wanted Yosef to understand that his success would hinge on maintaining a strong connection to the values and Torah he received from Yaakov.

This lesson crystallized during Yosef's trial with Potiphar's wife. Chazal teach that Yosef resisted temptation by envisioning the image of Yaakov Avinu (Rashi). This vision reminded him of his moral responsibilities and his role as a representative of his father's legacy, empowering him to overcome great challenges.

From Yosef, we learn that true strength and resilience in any environment

depend on staying connected to our spiritual roots. Even when facing trials or distant from familiar support, we must anchor ourselves in the teachings and values of our heritage. These roots provide clarity and strength, enabling us to rise above challenges and fulfil our unique mission in life.

This idea ties beautifully to Hanukkah. Just as Yosef stayed connected to his spiritual legacy in Mitzrayim, the Maccabees clung to their faith during the Greek oppression. Surrounded by forces that sought to assimilate them, they upheld Torah values and rededicated the Beit Hamikdash, demonstrating that true light comes from spiritual resilience. Hanukkah reminds us to remain steadfast in our traditions, no matter the challenges, and to let our inner light shine brightly.



## RABBI BENJI STONE, TAL Chavruta Program

*Tehillim for Our Times; Chapter 6 - ::לְמַנְחָה בְּנִינּוֹת עַל־הַשְּׂמִינִית מְזִמּוֹר לְדָוִד*

### THE POWER OF PRAYER - PART I

Have you seen the T-Shirt which a (very) small minority can be seen wearing in the month of Nissan? It reads "It was worth being a slave in Egypt just for this!"?

This message refers to the well known halacha which dictates that we omit the Tachanun prayer for the whole month of Nissan, in which Pesach (Passover) falls.

We tend to look at the Tachanun prayer, recited twice a day, as an unwelcome addition to our day.

Why do we say Tachanun? Is it anything more than the product of a devious plot just to keep us in shul for an extra few minutes? Is it possible to actually be inspired by the content of this (sometimes) short prayer?

Read on to find out.

The Tur writes that our shacharit and mincha prayers are divided into three

sections and we approach each one completely differently.

We sit for the first section of our prayers – the Pesukei Dezimrah. We then stand for the Shemona Esrah. Finally, we put our head down for the Tachanun prayer (at least according to the Ashkenazic custom). This prayer structure is designed to mirror the method employed by Moshe Rabbeinu (Moses) as he pleaded for forgiveness on behalf of the Jewish people after they had sinned in worshipping the golden calf. In Parshat Eikev, Moshe describes how he "sat on the mountain" (9;9) to pray and then "stood on the mountain" (10;10). Finally, Moshe describes how "I fell on my face before Hashem" (9;25).

Remarkably, the connection between Tachanun and the first two sections of our prayers is so strong that some held that that one may not allow any interruption between them (Talmidei Harashba; Bava Metzia, 59b). Clearly then, Tachanun takes its place as the final and most dramatic stage in our prayers. You might have concentrated intently on your

Shemona Esrah - but now is your chance to literally throw yourself in front of Hashem and plead for your prayers to be answered.

This chapter of Tehillim takes centre stage in the Ashkenazi version of the Tachanun prayer. Whilst the prayer in general is concerned with the suffering of the Jewish people as a nation, this chapter actually describes King David's personal challenges.

As an aside, it is important to note that although King David may have written many chapters of Tehillim with reference to his own suffering, his comments were also directed at any Jew facing personal challenges in any given place or time (Radak).

In this chapter we find King David to be seriously ill and also facing an external threat from his enemies. He describes how his illness has weakened him and reached into his bones. Even his soul has been affected. His bedsheets are saturated with his tears as he utters the eternal cry "Until when??" (6;4) - Until when will Hashem allow me to suffer??



## HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

*The Beracha on Coffee*

The accepted custom is to recite the Beracha of "She'ha'kol" over coffee, and this is, of course, the Halacha. Interestingly, however, there is considerable discussion among the Poskim as to why this should be the case. The Rosh (Rabbeinu Asher Ben Yehiel, 1250-1327) was of the opinion that if a fruit is boiled, the Beracha over the liquid is "Ha'etz," like the fruit itself. Seemingly, this should apply to coffee, which is produced by boiling coffee beans that grow on trees. And even the Rashba (Rav Shlomo Ben Aderet of Barcelona, 1235-1310), who disputes the Rosh's ruling, concedes that if this is the primary use of the fruit – to boil it and drink the liquid – then the Beracha over the liquid is "Ha'etz." Clearly, the primary method of consuming coffee beans is by producing coffee, and so even according to the Rashba, there is reason to believe that the Beracha over coffee should be "Ha'etz."

As mentioned, common practice is to recite "She'ha'kol" over coffee, but the Poskim establish that the possibility of the proper Beracha being "Ha'etz" has certain implications. Namely, if a person mistaken-

ly recited "Boreh Peri Ha'etz" over a cup of coffee, he has fulfilled his obligation, and does not then recite "She'ha'kol."

Hacham Ovadia Yosef added that this is true also if one mistakenly recited "Ha'adama" over coffee. He brought a view that a tree which produces fruit already within its first year does not have the Halachic status of a "tree" with respect to Berachot, and thus the Beracha over its fruit is "Ha'adama," and not "Ha'etz." The coffee bean tree produces the beans within its first year, and so there is room to argue that the Beracha over coffee is "Ha'adama." Therefore, if one recited "Ha'adama" over a cup of coffee, he has fulfilled his obligation and does not then recite "She'ha'kol."

Another practical application of this discussion is a case of one who eats a fruit together with coffee, as often happens at dessert. If one recites "Ha'etz" over the fruit before drinking the coffee, then the coffee might be covered by this Beracha, and, as such, one would not then recite "She'ha'kol" over the coffee, given the uncertainty as to whether it still requires a Beracha. Therefore, Hacham Ovadia Yosef advised that if one

eats a fruit with coffee, he should have specific intention while reciting the Beracha over the fruit that the Beracha should not cover the coffee. If he does not have this intention, then he does not then recite a Beracha over the coffee, as the coffee might have been covered by the Beracha recited over the fruit.

This discussion demonstrates that when it comes to Berachot, we must be aware not only of which Beracha should be recited over a given food item, but also which Berachot would cover the food after the fact if they are recited, as this, too, is a significant factor in regard to the Halachot of Berachot.

**Summary:** Although it is accepted to recite "She'ha'kol" over coffee, it could be argued that the proper Beracha is "Ha'etz." Therefore, if one mistakenly recited "Ha'etz" over coffee, he does not then recite "She'ha'kol." And, if one is eating a fruit with his coffee, he should have specific intention that the Beracha recited over the fruit does not cover the coffee, and if he does not have this intention, he does not then recite a Beracha over the coffee.



# WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

Parshat Vayeshev

Yaakov settles in the land of Canaan. His favourite son, Yosef, brings him critical reports about his brothers. Yaakov makes Yosef a fine tunic of multi-coloured woollen strips. Yosef exacerbates his brothers' hatred by recounting prophetic dreams of sheaves of wheat bowing to his sheaf, and of the sun, moon and stars bowing to him, signifying that all his family will appoint him king. The brothers indict Yosef and resolve to execute him. When Yosef comes to Shechem, the brothers relent and decide, at Reuven's instigation, to throw him into a pit instead. Reuven's intent was to save Yosef. Yehuda persuades the brothers to take Yosef out of the pit and sell him to a caravan

of passing Ishmaelites. Reuven returns to find the pit empty and rends his clothes. The brothers soak Yosef's tunic in goat's blood and show it to Yaakov, who assumes that Yosef has been devoured by a wild beast. Yaakov is inconsolable. Meanwhile, in Egypt, Yosef has been sold to Potiphar, Pharaoh's Chamberlain of the Butchers.

In the Torah portion's sub-plot, Yehuda's son Er dies as punishment for preventing his wife Tamar from becoming pregnant. Onan, Yehuda's second son, then weds Tamar by levirate marriage. He too is punished in similar circumstances. When Yehuda's wife dies, Tamar resolves to have children through Yehuda, as this

union will find the Davidic line culminating in the Mashiach.

Meanwhile, Yosef rises to power in the house of his Egyptian master. His extreme beauty attracts the unwanted advances of his master's wife. Enraged by his rejection, she accuses Yosef of attempting to seduce her, and he is imprisoned. In prison, Yosef successfully predicts the outcome of the dream of Pharaoh's wine steward, who is reinstated, and the dream of Pharaoh's baker, who is hanged. In spite of his promise, the wine steward forgets to help Yosef, and Yosef languishes in prison.

**Rabbi Sinclair,**  
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**Q**

1. These are the offspring of Yaakov: Yosef...." Give three reasons why Yosef is considered Yaakov's main offspring.
2. What was praiseworthy about the fact that Yosef's brothers did not speak to him in a friendly manner?
3. How do we see from Yosef's dream about the sun, moon and stars that all dreams contain some untrue element?
4. Who brought Yosef down to Egypt?
5. Where was Reuven when Yosef was sold?

**A**

1. 37:2 - (a) Yosef was the son of Rachel, Yaakov's primary wife. (b) Yosef looked like Yaakov. (c) All that befell Yaakov befell Yosef.
2. 37:4 - They did not act hypocritically.
3. 37:10 - The moon represented Rachel. Since she had already died, it was impossible for that element of the dream to come true.
4. 37:28 - A caravan of Midianites.
5. 37:29 - He was attending to Yaakov.



"Yehudah recognized; and he said, 'She is right; It is from me ...'" (Bereishis 38:26)

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