

# THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT KI TAVO

London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



**RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL**  
TAL Founder & Director

## FIRST AND FOREMOST

You shall take of every fruit of the ground produced by the land that Hashem your G-d is giving you. You must place it in a basket, and go to the site that G-d will choose (Devarim 26:2)

The Torah commands us to take the first fruits and bring them to the Kohen as a thanksgiving offering to Hashem. Elsewhere we are enjoined to dedicate all our firsts to Hashem – the first shearings of the wool, the first of the dough, the firstborn of man and animal, etc. Why did the Torah not command us to offer the best of our produce and not the first?

The importance of the first lies in the fact that it is the root and foundation of all that follows. The foundation of a building must be totally free of imperfections. A hairline crack in the foundation endangers the entire building, whereas that same crack in the fourth floor would not be significant. Similarly, with respect to everything having to do with kedushah, the beginning must be holy and pure if holiness and purity is to emanate from it. Any imperfection in the root will manifest itself a hundredfold in what grows out of it. Therefore, we dedicate all firsts to Hashem to firmly establish the foundation and root of all that follows.

The Yerushalmi in Chagigah blames Elisha ben Avuya's tragic departure from the path of Torah on an incident that occurred on the day of his brit. The great Sages of Jerusalem were discussing Torah at his brit with such intensity that a fire descend-

ed from the heavens and surrounded them. When Elisha's father saw this, he announced that he would devote his son to Torah so that he would also be able to work such wonders. His father's distorted motivation left its mark on his brilliant son, when later in life Elisha came to distorted conclusions on the basis of various incidents he witnessed. He saw a child fall to his death while fulfilling his father's command to send away the mother bird before taking her eggs. Since the Torah specifically promises length of days for honouring one's parents and sending away the mother bird, he conclude there is neither justice nor a judge. R' Yaakov, however, saw that reward for mitzvot is not in this world but rather in the next.

And so, too, from a good beginning comes good. The Gemara (Bava Metzia 85b) relates that when R' Chiya reintroduced Torah in a generation in which it had been forgotten, he began by planting flax. From the flax he made nets to capture deer. Upon the skins of those deer he wrote the Five Books of the Torah. He would then travel from town to town teaching Torah to five boys in each town. With each one learned one book of Chumash. To six older boys he taught one order of Mishnah each. Each then taught the others what he had learned, and in this way, Torah was once again established.

Why was it necessary for R' Chiya to plant the flax and make the nets. Couldn't he have bought these? The answer is that very new beginning is the construction of a foundation. Only if every step is taken with holy and pure intentions will the result be holy and pure.

The same principle answers a question

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asked with respect to Chanukah: Why was a miracle necessary to insure that the menorah not be lit with impure oil? The halacha is that impure oil may be used for a mitzvah incumbent on the tzibbur (community). Chanukah was a rededication of the Beit Hamikdash and the Menorah. As such it was a new beginning, and only pure oil was fitting. Only when the kedushah has been firmly established can impure oil be used for its maintenance. The special significance that Chazal

attach to the education of young children lies in the fact that we are setting the foundations of their Torah. Similarly, the blessings and curses uttered upon our entrance into Eretz Yisrael at Mount Eival and Mount Grizim, emphasize the fact that our first encounter with Eretz Yisrael must set the foundation for our future settlement of the land. That required an intense awareness of our duties and responsibilities.

The message is clear: strong founda-

tions determine the future. The blessings and responsibilities given to us at the entry to Eretz Yisrael remind us that a nation's destiny is built upon its earliest commitments. So too, in the education of our children and in the choices we make in our own Avodat Hashem, we are constantly laying the groundwork for generations to come. May we be zocheh to establish foundations so firm in Torah and mitzvos that they will carry us and our descendants forward with strength, blessing, and eternal connection to HaKadosh Baruch Hu!



## RABBI DANNY FISHER

Director - TAL Boys After School Programs

### PARSHAT KI TAVO

In this week's Sedra we find the tochochos once again given to the Yidden, the first being in Bechukosai.

When one looks closely at the two Parshiyos, we see that in fact the tochochos given are very different to each other and not merely a repeat of the same calamities that will befall the Yidden.

Why is this so? There must be a deeper significance to this.

The Ramban explains that the tochochos in Parshas Bechukosai are corresponding to the calamities that will befall the Yidden after the destruction of the first Beis Hamikdash. In addition, the tochochos of this week's Sedra Ki Sovo are related to the punishments that come to the Yidden after the destruction of the second Beis Hamikdash.

One example the Ramban gives is in relation to the concept of Avodah Zorah. In Parshas Bechukosai ל פרק בר פסוק, the

Possuk states "and I will destroy your towers and your avodah zorahs", however the tochochos in Ki Sovo make no mention of avodah zorah. During the time of the first Beis Hamikdash idol worship was rampant amongst the Yidden, and a factor for the Beis Hamikdash being destroyed. However, there was no idol worship during the second Beis Hamikdash, hence the tochochah relating to the second Beis Hamikdash in Parshas Ki Sovo make no mention of it. Another example is concerning the actual nation who will destroy the Beis Hamikdash, the Possuk states in Parshas Ki Sovo "Hashem will carry against you a nation from afar, from the end of the world as an eagle will swoop". This reference is referring to the second Beis Hamikdash, and therefore is hinting to the Roman Empire who entered Eretz Yisroel and destroyed the Beis Hamikdash. The Romans were "A nation unknown to you and a nation whose language you will not understand." Compare this to Baval who destroyed the first Beis Hamikdash, there is no mention

in the first set of tochochos of a nation coming from afar, since Baval was close to Eretz Yisroel and known to them.

Yet we know that even within the tochochah and amidst the hardships, Hashem is still with us. The Possuk says, "I will make the land desolate and your enemies who dwell on it will be desolate". This seems like a terrible thing, that the beautiful land of Eretz Yisroel will be barren and desolate. Yet Rashi explains that this is ultimately a brocho for Klal Yisroel. The fact that Eretz Yisroel will be desolate and bare, empty fields and wasteland, will result in no other nations entering and taking over the incredible land. They will have no interest in doing so, as it will not benefit them. They will be unable to farm the land, unable to grow crops. This will leave Eretz Yisroel empty and ready waiting for Klal Yisroel to return and live in the land once again, farming the fields and reaping the produce. This is a true brocho from Hashem, that even though we were sent into Golus, the land of Eretz Yisroel was preserved and saved only for us.



## RABBI BENJI STONE, TAL Chavruta Program

Tehillim for Our Times; Chapter 11

### LOOKING UPWARDS...AND ALL AROUND - PART 2

In this chapter King David address both of these themes – the need to act properly in the arena of bein adam

lemakom (man to G-d) and also in the realm of bein adam lechavero (relationship between man to man).

In the first instance King David targets his criticism at a group of people who tell untruths (12:3) and he makes a passionate prayer to Hashem that He "Cut off all those with smooth lips, those who talk big". (12:4)

Based on this verse, the gemarah in Arakhin (15b) tells us that one who speaks lashon hara (slander) cannot be redeemed "because King David, in his divine wisdom has already cut him off" (actually, the gemarah there does offer two paths to repentance for one who transgresses this sin).

King David then tells us that those who speak lashon harah actually deny the existence of divine intervention in the world saying;

"our tongues will be victorious, our lips are with us. Who is our master?" (12:5) When lashon harah is uttered with purpose, there is a sense that the speaker places his faith in the ability of his words to have a real impact on the life of his fellow man, impinging on whatever plans G-d had up until that point and when he sees his words

apparently having an effect, he believes his theory is confirmed.

King David then describes how falsehood can also be apparent in the realm of bein adam lemakom, specifically the casual manner in the way some might interpret the Torah. Today, it is not too difficult to find an example of this. The internet provides an unpoliced forum for any author to promote their ideas and "novel" explanations of Torah passages. These explanations, aside from their having been written from a position of ignorance or rejection of our mesorah (tradition) are quite possibly agenda – driven, geared towards the more permissive lifestyle of the author.

These "foreign interpretations" may be "uplifting to man" (12:9) but those who offer them need to realize that our Torah is

"pure, like silver refined seventy times over" 12:7

Remarkably, the gemarah in Berachot (6b) points to both of these themes - bein adam lechavero and bein adam lemakom within one very prominent

verse in this chapter -  
"כרום זולת לבני אדם" (9:12)

The first explanation of this verse offered by the gemarah is that it refers to one's interaction with Hashem through tefillah (prayer) – a gift so special that it stands at the pinnacle of creation (עומד ברומו של עולם) but nevertheless is not properly appreciated (בני אדם מזלזלין בהם)

The gemarah then presents an alternative opinion which connects this verse to the arena of human relationships. According to this explanation, the verse refers to the case of one who has borrowed money and is being pursued for repayment in an insensitive manner. King David tells us

"The face of one who needs assistance from others (זולת) changes colour (ככרום)".

We see therefore that right through this chapter King David calls on us to improve our ways both in our relationship with Hashem and also in our relationship with our fellow man.



## HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

### The "Yehi Rason" Prayer After Birkot Ha'shahar

After reciting the lengthy Beracha of "Ha'ma'abir Hebleh Shena," which concludes with "Ha'gomel Hasadim Tobim Le'amo Yisrael," it is customary to then recite a "Yehi Rason" prayer. This is not a Beracha, but rather a beautiful prayer in which we beseech G-d to save us from many different kinds of misfortune and hardships.

We begin by asking Hashem to protect us today and every day from "Azeh Panim" – brazen people, who can inflict harm upon us. We then ask for protection from "Azut Panim" – brazenness, meaning, that we ourselves should not act arrogantly and harshly toward other people. We proceed to ask that Hashem save us from "Adam Ra" – evil people; "Yeser Ha'ra" – the evil inclination; "Haber Ra" – a bad friend; "Shachen Ra" – a bad neighbor; "Pega Ra" – harmful events;

"Ayin Ha'ra" – the evil eye; "Lashon Ha'ra" – either negative speech spoken about us, or that we should not speak negatively about others; "Din Kasheh" – harsh judgments against us; and "Ba'al Din Kasheh" – a difficult adversary who wages a legal battle against us.

In all, this prayer lists 11 harmful or otherwise undesirable phenomena from which we wish to be spared. Some texts also add "Isha Ra'a" – a "bad woman." However, the Ben Ish Hai (Rav Yosef Haim of Baghdad, 1833-1909) writes that the proper text one should recite is the one which lists precisely 11 forms of harm, as according to Kabbalah, there is great significance to the number 11. (Some claim that this list is associated with the 11 ingredients that comprised the Ketoret – the incense offered in the Bet Ha'mikdash.)

If one wishes to add more requests,

then he should introduce a new prayer by reciting "Ve'chen Yehi Rason Milefanecha..." ("And so may it be Your will..."). Indeed, many have the custom to add such a prayer, asking to be protected from "Malshinut" – people who report their fellow to the government; "Edut Sheker" – false testimony; "Sin'at Ha'beriyot" – people's hatred; "Alila" – libelous accusations; "Mita Meshuna" – unnatural death; "Hola'im Ra'im" – illnesses; "Mikrim Ra'im" – unpleasant experiences; "Satan Ha'mash'hit" – the Satan, which brings destruction; and "Dinah Shel Gehinam" – the punishments of Gehinam in the afterlife.

It is worthwhile to recite these prayers with concentration and feeling, as with these prayers we ask for protection from many different kinds of adversity that we all wish to avoid.



# WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

## Parshat Ki Tavo

When the Jewish people dwell in the Land of Israel, its first fruits are to be taken to the Temple and given to the kohen. This is done in a ceremony that expresses recognition that it is G-d who guides the history of the Jewish People throughout all ages. This passage forms one of the central parts of the Pesach Haggadah that we read at the Seder. On the last day of Pesach of the fourth and seventh years of the seven-year shemitta cycle, a person must recite a disclosure stating that he has indeed distributed the tithes to the appropriate

people in the prescribed manner. With this mitzvah Moshe concludes the commandments that Hashem has told him to give to the Jewish People. Moshe exhorts them to walk in Hashem's ways because they are set aside as a treasured people to Him. When the Jewish people cross the Jordan River they are to make a new commitment to the Torah. Huge stones are to be erected and the Torah is to be written on them in the world's seventy primary languages, after which they are to be covered over with a thin layer of plaster. Half the tribes are to stand on Mount Gerizim, and half on

Mount Eval, and the levi'im will stand in a valley between the two mountains. The levi'im will recite twelve commandments, and all the people will answer "amen" to the blessings and the curses. Moshe then details the blessings that will be bestowed upon the Jewish People, blessings that are both physical and spiritual. However, if the Jewish People do not keep the Torah, Moshe details a chilling picture of destruction, resulting in exile and wandering among the nations.

**Rabbi Sinclair,**  
Seasonsofthemoon.com

**Q**

1. When did the obligation to bring bikkurim begin?
2. Bikkurim are from which crops?
3. How does one designate bikkurim?
4. Who shakes the basket containing the bikkurim?
5. What does "v'anita v'amarta" mean?

**A**

1. 26:1 - After the Land was conquered and divided.
2. 26:2 - The seven species for which Eretz Yisrael is praised.
3. 26:2 - When he sees the first fruit ripen on a tree, he binds a piece of straw around it to mark it as bikkurim.
4. 26:4 - The kohen places his hands under the hands of the one bringing it, and they wave the basket together.
5. 26:5 - Speak loudly.

**PAUSE, REFLECT, RISE:**  
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