

# THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT MIKEITZ

London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



**RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL**  
TAL Founder & Director

## CHANUKAH – POTATOES, EGGS AND COFFEE!?

Yosef at a young age faced many challenges. Sold down to Egypt as a slave at the age of 17, he was able to work his way through the prisons to eventually become viceroy of Egypt. He is the first man to be known as wise, to be recognized as a fountain of wisdom and it is the Pharaoh of Egypt who calls him wise. What was his secret and what's the connection to this Shabbat Chanukah? Every day we live on this earth we make choices. Things happen, we make decisions, and that shapes our life. It's that simple, but do we put enough thought into how we react to things that happen to us? A story is told of a young girl who complained to her father that her life was miserable and that she didn't know how she was going to make it. She was tired of fighting and struggling all the time. It seemed that just as one problem was solved, another soon followed. Her father, a chef, took her to the kitchen. He filled three pots with water and placed each on a high fire. Once the three pots began to boil, he placed the potatoes in one pot, eggs in the second and ground coffee beans in the third. He then let them sit and boil without saying a word to his daughter. The daughter waited impatiently, wondering what he was doing. After twenty minutes he turned off the burners. He took the potatoes out of the pot and placed them in a bowl. He took the eggs out and placed them in a bowl. He then ladled the

coffee out and placed it in a cup. Turning to her, he asked. "What do you see?" "Potatoes, eggs and coffee," she hastily replied. "Look closer", he said, "and touch the potatoes." She did and noted that they were soft. He then asked her to take an egg and break it. After pulling off the shell, she observed the hard-boiled egg. Finally, he asked her to sip the coffee. Its rich aroma brought a smile to her face. "Father, what does this mean?" she asked. He explained that the potatoes, the eggs and coffee beans had each faced the same adversity – the boiling water. However, each one reacted differently. The potato went in strong, hard and unrelenting, but in boiling water, it became soft and weak. The egg was fragile, with the thin outer shell protecting its liquid interior until it was put in the boiling water. Then the inside of the egg became hard. However, the ground coffee beans were unique. After they were exposed to the boiling water, they changed the water and created something new. "Which one are you?" he asked his daughter. "When adversity knocks on your door, how do you respond? Are you a potato, an egg, or a coffee bean?"

In life, things happen around us, and things happen to us. The only thing that truly matters is our choice of how we react to and what we make of circumstances. We must learn, adapt and choose to make the best of each experience. Our reaction has the power of turning boiling hot water in to tasty coffee.

This week is Shabbat Chanukah, and the

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THE ORIGINAL COMMUNAL PARASHA SHEET, SERVING THE COMMUNITY FOR OVER 12 YEARS!

weekly portion is Miketz, which we supplement with verses from the book of Numbers that relate to the Chanukah, or inauguration, of the Tabernacle as well as a special Haftarah taken from Zechariah relating to the Menorah.

Zechariah was a man who saw many mysterious visions. He would typically ask an angel or the Almighty Himself, to explain the meaning of his visions. And so we find, near the end of the passage we read this week, the following vision:

"I see a lamp stand full of gold, with a bowl above it. The lamps are seven in number; each has seven pipes above it, and by it are two olive trees..."

Characteristically, Zechariah asks the angel, "What do these things mean, my lord?" The angel, like a good psychotherapist, asks him what he thinks the dream means. But the prophet confesses he has no clue.

The angel finally responds, "This is the word of the Lord: 'Not by might, and not by power, but by My spirit, says the Lord of Hosts.'"

Rashi explains that in his vision Zechariah saw seven tubes going to

each lamp. There were two olive trees next to the menorah, one on either side. The menorah ran on "automatic." The trees would beat themselves into the vats and the oil would flow into the lamps by itself. The message was that Zerubavel was destined to put the cornerstone of the Temple and that no nation would be able to stop it's rebuilding. The motion had begun and through the efforts of the righteous the second Temple would be built.

This is the lesson of Chanukah. When there is a G-dly spark, the mighty are subdued by the weak, and the many by the few.

In our own little homes, we wish to make the point, to ourselves if not for the rest of the world, that "a little light can drive away much darkness."

The lesson of the power of the single little candle is especially important in this day and age. We are bombarded by the images and sounds of cyberspace, and their message is often pernicious and malicious. The negative effects of most of what we hear and see on the internet and via other media outlets are typically devastating to our hearts and souls, if not our minds.

Yosef too found himself in a foreign land surrounded by negativity. He was far from his father's influence and the righteous surrounding he grew up in. What was he to do? How would he cope? Many of us would have given up in the face of adversity. Yet he persevered and was able to transform the boiling water into a place that would eventually host his father and family. He shone his light in the dark and changed Egypt for the better.

In our day and age, how do we counteract the immense influence of such overwhelming forces? We can only do so if each of us is committed to use the power of modern technology to assert tolerance, kindness, morality, and ethical behaviour. In essence we are to be wise like Yosef and use the challenges of this generation to turn the boiling water into delicious coffee. Through our little light, we are able to shine through a lot of darkness. When we use and light that spark of G-d, then no one can stop the rebuilding of our nation.

Our voices may be soft, but they will be heard. The positive images that we present may be dim, but they will be seen.



**RABBI DAVID BAADANI**  
*Director - TAL Chazanut Program*

## PARSHAT MIKEITZ

When Yosef stands before Pharaoh and interprets the dreams, Pharaoh reacts almost dramatically. He turns to his advisors and says, "Hanimtza kازه ish?" Have we ever encountered a person like this? And then he turns to Yosef himself: "Ein navon v'chacham kamocha." There is no one as wise and discerning as you. A moment later, Yosef is appointed second-in-command over all Egypt.

Why such astonishment? Yosef interpreted a dream, but people interpret dreams all the time. What was Pharaoh seeing?

The Torah V'Chaim explains a subtle but profound point. Pharaoh wasn't witnessing something new unfolding in Yosef. He was witnessing something eternal. Yosef's greatness

was not created in that throne room. Yosef did not become confident because Pharaoh elevated him. Yosef had dignity even in the pit, even in the dungeon. He "walked with Hashem", always. He carried the quiet certainty of someone who knew that his identity comes from Above, not from circumstance.

What changed was not Yosef. What changed was Pharaoh's ability to see what was always there.

Sometimes a soul shines so brightly that even those far from holiness cannot help but notice.

This is the secret of true confidence. It doesn't come from being lifted up by others. It comes from remembering who you are even when the world tries to make you forget. Yosef stood before Pharaoh already a prince, the son of Yaakov, the bearer of a Divine mission. Pharaoh merely recognized the royalty that Yosef had preserved through years of injustice.

This is also the story of Chanukah. The Maccabees didn't become heroes when they fought the army. They were always people of unwavering conviction. The battle simply revealed what had been burning inside them all along, a flame that no oppression could extinguish.

And today we see this truth again in the resilience of those who endured captivity and in the steadfastness of their families. Their strength was not newly acquired; it was uncovered. Beneath fear, beneath pain, beneath the cruelty they faced, there remained a spark that never agreed to surrender. A flame that knew: I belong to G-d. I am not defined by darkness.

Chanukah teaches us that one small flame can illuminate a palace. Yosef teaches us that one steadfast soul can transform a kingdom.

And we learn that human greatness is never granted by others. It is revealed when we remember the light we always carried within.



## RABBI BENJI STONE, TAL Chavruta Program

Tehillim for Our Times; Chapter 14: למנצח לדוד אמר נבל בלבו אין אלקים

### AN UNCOMFORTABLE QUESTION - PART 3

This chapter of Tehillim is remarkable in that it is repeated almost word for word in chapter 53. There is however at least one discernible difference in language. This chapter concludes with the prayer

מִי־יִתֵּן מִצִּיּוֹן יְשׁוּעַת יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשׁוּב ד' שְׁבוּת עַמּוֹ יִגַּל יַעֲקֹב יִשְׂמַח יִשְׂרָאֵל:

I wish I could see the redemption of Israel as Hashem returns the captivity of his people.. (14;7)

whereas in chapter 53 the verse reads; מִי־יִתֵּן מִצִּיּוֹן יְשׁוּעוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשׁוּב אֱלֹקִים שְׁבוּת עַמּוֹ יִגַּל יַעֲקֹב יִשְׂמַח יִשְׂרָאֵל:

I wish I could see the redemptions of Israel as Elokim returns the captivity of his people... (53;7)

Chapter 53 speaks of redemptions in the plural, whereas here we speak of redemption in the singular. Why the change?

The Chida, in his commentary Chomat Anach explains that whenever we experience salvation on a national scale - or in our personal lives - we only grasp the bare nature of the salvation as we see it and its immediate effects on us. However the redemptive event which we experience may have a positive rippling effect which works to improve our situation well beyond what we can see before us. What you thought was your redemption in its full glory was but a glimpse into a tsunami of goodness flowing into your life. This is the meaning of the verse in chumash:

נורא תהלות עושה פלא

"Hashem is too awesome for praises. He does wonder" (Shemot 15;11).

The plural tense is employed to describe Hashem's praises but then the verse speaks of "wonder" in the singular. The implication here is that Hashem's deeds are in fact deserving of multiple praises due to the scope and scale of their effect. However we only perceive the "wonder" itself as we see it,

in isolation.

That is also why we refer to "redemption" in the singular tense in our verse. We are overjoyed when something or someone intervenes to save us from trouble. However we cannot appreciate just how powerful and far-reaching that particular redemption is. In chapter 53 the verse talks of "redemptions" in the plural, hinting to us that the simple "redemption" we see before us might really be a trigger for many other "redemptions" which are not immediately obvious to us.

We are living in challenging times. Yishmael is seemingly on the rise in Europe and other areas and they do not have our best interests at heart. We need to wake up to the threat and pray with renewed fervour to our saviour. B'ezrat Hashem we will then be zoche (merit) to see redemption, which in actual fact will be "redemptions", a pre-cursor to an explosion of goodness and simcha for our people bimhero beyameinu.



## HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

Must a Boy Repeat Birkot Ha'Torah On the Night He Turns 13?

On the night of a boy's 13th birthday, when he becomes a Bar-Misva, he must - in principle - recite Birkot Ha'Torah before learning Torah. Generally, of course, a person's recitation of Birkot Ha'Torah in the morning covers all his Torah learning throughout the day and the following night. In the case of a Bar Misva boy, however, he recited Birkot Ha'Torah in the morning as a minor, who is not obligated in Misvot (except by virtue of his parents' obligation to train him in Misva observance). Therefore, his recitation that morning does not fulfill his obligation once he becomes a Halachic adult who now bears an obligation to recite Birkot Ha'Torah.

Therefore, before the boy learns and speaks words of Torah on the night of his 13th birthday, he is required to recite Birkot Ha'Torah.

However, as there is some uncertainty as to whether this is necessary, Hacham Ovadia Yosef suggested two ways to avoid this question. One possibility is to recite Arbit before learning Torah, having in mind that the recitation of Ahabat Olam - the blessing immediately preceding Shema - will satisfy the obligation of Birkot Ha'Torah. As we have seen, this blessing discusses similar themes as those of Birkot Ha'Torah, and thus a person can fulfill his requirement of Birkot Ha'Torah by reciting this blessing. Hacham Ovadia

adds, however, that if the boy chooses this option, he must ensure to recite Arbit after sundown, when he has already turned 13.

The other option is for the boy to have in mind when he recites Birkot Ha'Torah in the morning that his recitation should remain in effect only until sundown. He can then recite Birkot Ha'Torah after sundown according to all opinions, without any concern.

Incidentally, a similar Halacha applies to a convert. After undergoing conversion, a convert must recite Birkot Ha'Torah before he learns Torah, even if he had recited Birkot Ha'Torah that morning. His recitation of Birkot Ha-To-

rah as a gentile does not fulfill his obligation as a Jew, and so he must repeat Birkot Ha'Torah immediately after completing his conversion and assuming the formal status of a Jew.

**Summary:**

In principle, a boy must recite Birkot

Ha'Torah before he learns Torah on the night he turns 13, even though he had recited Birkot Ha'Torah that morning. Preferably, he should have in mind when he recites Birkot Ha'Torah in the morning that his recitation should remain in effect only until sundown, so he can then repeat Birkot Ha'Torah after

sundown according to all opinions. Alternatively, he can recite Arbat right after sundown and have in mind to fulfill his Birkot Ha'Torah obligation through the recitation of Ahabat Olam (the blessing preceding Shema), thus obviating the need to repeat Birkot Ha'Torah after sundown.



## WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

### Parshat Mikeitz

It is two years later. Pharaoh has a dream. He is unsatisfied with all attempts to interpret it. Pharaoh's wine chamberlain remembers that Yosef accurately interpreted his dream while in prison. Yosef is released from prison and brought before Pharaoh. He interprets that soon will begin seven years of abundance, followed by seven years of severe famine. He tells Pharaoh to appoint a wise person to store grain in preparation for the famine. Pharaoh appoints him as viceroy to oversee the project. Pharaoh gives Yosef an Egyptian name, Tsafnat Panayach, and selects Osnat, Yosef's ex-master's daughter,

as Yosef's wife. Egypt becomes the granary of the world. Yosef has two sons, Menashe and Ephraim. Yaakov sends his sons to Egypt to buy food. The brothers come before Yosef and bow to him. Yosef recognizes them but they do not recognize him. Mindful of his dreams, Yosef plays the part of an Egyptian overlord and acts harshly, accusing them of being spies. Yosef sells them food, but keeps Shimon hostage until they bring their brother Binyamin to him as proof of their honesty. Yosef commands his servants to replace the purchase-money in their sacks. On the return journey they discover the money, and their hearts sink. They return to Yaakov and retell

everything. Yaakov refuses to let Binyamin go to Egypt, but when the famine grows unbearable he accedes. Yehuda guarantees Binyamin's safety and the brothers go to Egypt. Yosef welcomes the brothers lavishly as honored guests. When he sees Binyamin, he rushes from the room and weeps. Yosef instructs his servants to replace the money in the sacks and to put his goblet inside Binyamin's sack. When the goblet is discovered, Yosef demands Binyamin to be his slave as punishment. Yehuda interposes and offers himself instead, but Yosef refuses.

**Rabbi Sinclair,**  
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### Q

1. What did the fat cows being eaten symbolize?
2. How did Pharaoh's recollection of his dream differ from Nevuchadnetzar's recollection of his dream?
3. What was significant about the fact that Pharaoh dreamed repeatedly?
4. What does "Tsafnat Panayach" mean?
5. What happened to the Egyptians' grain that was stored in anticipation of the famine?

### A

1. 41:4 - That all the joy of the plentiful years would be forgotten. (Not that the good years would provide food for the bad years.)
2. 41:8 - Pharaoh remembered the contents of his dream but didn't know its meaning. Nevuchadnetzar forgot even the contents of his dream.
3. 41:32 - It showed that the seven good years would start immediately.
4. 41:45 - He who explains things that are hidden and obscure.
5. 41:55 - It rotted.

