

THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT MISHPATIM

London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
TAL Founder & Director

WHERE DO I FIND A RABBI?

Without a teacher, we don't learn. If we don't learn, we don't grow. Teachers inspire us. They help us become our best selves. They mirror to us our potential. In fact, they show us what we can – or do – know.

We go through school and have our fair amount of likeable teachers. Yet as we grow older we realise how important it is to attach ourselves to real mentors, and people that not only inspire us, but will guide us along the path of life.

In Pirkei Avot (Ch 1:6) we read, the advice of Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Perachya; "Make for yourself a teacher/Rabbi and acquire for yourself a friend, and judge each person favourably."

Wise words of assistance that will help us throughout our life.

A Rabbi does not necessarily know everything. This is why Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Perachya tells us to "make" a Rabbi, and not to merely "have" one. Finding a Rabbi doesn't necessarily come naturally. You may have to go out of your way to find (make) one. Or you may have found one who is good but limited in some way. Nevertheless, "make" him your Rabbi because you need someone who can guide you and give you perspective. Although he may be lacking in some way, he still has something you don't: perspective on your problem. He is objective where you are subjective. And he has a combination of Torah knowledge and experience enough to lead you across the "very narrow bridge" of life.

At the end of Parshat Mishpatim, we read how Moshe set out towards Har

Sinai to receive the Torah. "Moshe and his aid Yehoshua set out. Moshe went up on G-d's Mountain..." (24:12-14)

Rashi comments "I don't know why Yehoshua is here, but maybe he is serving the role of "student who accompanies the teacher."

Let's take a deeper look at who Yehoshua was and why he merited being Moshe's student.

Explaining Yehoshua's sudden presence, the Ramban says he was one of the elders.

In Parshat Shlach Lecha the Torah lists out the names of the spies (Meraglim) who went to spy out the land of Israel. The Ramban there notes that the Torah does not list them in order of their tribes nor in order of their ages, but rather in order of their greatness. Yehoshua is listed as number five, meaning that there were four other Meraglim greater than him.

If so why was Yehoshua the one chosen to lead Klal Yisrael after Moshe, why not one of the other Meraglim who were listed as being greater than Yehoshua?

To understand this, we come back to our Parasha.

Yehoshua was known as the "aid" or student of Moshe. He followed Moshe, his teacher and Rabbi all the way to Har Sinai until they arrived at the bottom of the mountain where Yehoshua was no longer allowed to accompany Moshe any further. At this point Moshe ascended the mountain to Hashem for forty days where he would learn the entire Torah and prepare himself to give it over to Klal Yisrael.

Yehoshua knew that Moshe would be forty days, nevertheless, rather than

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return to the camp, he pitched his tent at the bottom of the mountain and waited there for forty days.

As far as Yehoshua was concerned, the Torah was his number one priority, it was so important to him and he wanted it so much, he was afraid that if he would return to the camp and his day to day routine and then go back to greet Moshe at the end of the 40 days, perhaps he would get held up or delayed. He could possibly miss the first minute of his Kabbalat Hatorah, and it wasn't worth taking the risk. For this reason Yehoshua decided not to return to his family but rather pitch his tent at the bottom of the mountain, this way being guaranteed to be present to be the first to receive the Torah from his mentor Moshe.

In fact when Moshe eventually emerged (Ch 32) the first person he met was Yehoshua!

That is a real student, someone thirsty to learn from his teacher, someone who appreciates what is being taught.

But what about us, are we expected to be on that level? How can we achieve the ability of "Making ourselves a Rabbi".

Rabbi Aharon Leib Shteinman, zt"l, points out that the total period of time during which Yehoshua served

and learned from Moshe was actually quite short.

The Mishnah in Eduyot (2:10) teaches that the entire punishment and judgment of the Egyptians spanned a period of 12 months, prior to which Moshe was living in Midian, and the Torah was given only seven weeks after the Exodus. At this point, Yehoshua had known Moshe for at most a little more than one year, yet he was already considered Moshe's primary disciple. Rabbi Shteinman suggests that this teaches us that the depth of the connection between a Rabbi and his student is not a function of the amount of time that they spend together, but rather of the student's dedication and commitment to learn from his Rabbi and emulate his ways.

Similarly, Rabbi Chaim Vital is considered the primary disciple of the Arizal, and most of the reliable teachings of the Arizal that we have today are found in the writings of Rabbi Chaim Vital. However, they spent only 20 months together before the Arizal tragically passed away at the age of 38. Nevertheless, Rabbi Chaim Vital was so devoted to his Rabbi that this short period of time was sufficient for him to imbibe the Arizal's wisdom and preserve it for future generations, as the depth of the relationship is far more impor-

tant than its length.

The best type of Rabbi is a mentor who can turn you into a mentor yourself, teaching you to think for yourself -- with perspective.

If we change the inflection of the Mishnah in Pirkei Avot slightly then Yehoshua ben Perachiyah's aphorism can read: Asei lach rav -- "Make yourself into a Rabbi," i.e. your Rabbi should be someone who helps you to grow into a person who can be a Rabbi/mentor/teacher to others. That's a real mentor. That was the relationship between our leader Moshe and his eventual successor Yehoshua.

We might think that becoming a student or acquiring a Rabbi is a lifetime endeavour. However from the Torah it is clear, what makes a person in to your Rabbi doesn't have to take years, it depends on your seriousness and commitment. If you are committed like Yehoshua, and show your desire, this can be achieved in a relatively short time. Of course you will need to keep up the connection, but "making" the Rabbi, the initial step, doesn't have to be so daunting. Having a Rabbi will lead to disseminating any doubt, guidance for life and will help you build a rich Jewish connection. So what are you waiting for, make yourself a Rabbi!



RABBI DAVID BAADANI
Director - TAL Chazanut Program

PARSHAT MISHPATIM

One of the commandments in our Parasha is: אַל-תִּשָּׂא יָדְךָ עִם-רֵשָׁע לְהִיטֵי: :חָמָס: you shall not join hands with the guilty to act as a malicious witness.

Halacha ruled that witnesses should be threatened before any testimony. They should also be reminded of the shame they will have in this world and the next if they are found false. If indeed the witnesses were found conspiring. The Dayanim are obliged

to publish their falsehood in each and every city. Which is not found in any other prohibition in the Torah. Even the prohibitions of whose punishment is death and flogging.

Why was the Torah so careful regarding giving false testimony?

The essence of עם ישראל, the purpose for which a Jew was created, as G-d said by the prophet Isaiah (43, 12), וְאַתֶּם עִדְיִי... וְאֲנִי-אֵל: you are witnesses... and I am G-d. This is the role of the Jew in the world. To serve as a testimony to the reality of G-d in this world. A testimony that he is merciful and gracious.

The way for others to see the reality of the Creator through them and more importantly, the way he or she sees divinity when they look at themselves.

Because this is the true essence of every Jew when a person takes the right to testify and uses it to distort and lie, the harm of this act is very serious and it is important to mention of the shame that will come upon them in this world and the next. This very act violates the essence of a Jew. To be עִדְיִי witnesses of the L-rd. Loyal witnesses, in whom I will be glorified.



OUR CHAHAMIM

Rabbi Shimon the Righteous

Rabbi Shimon HaTzaddik (the Righteous) was one of the last survivors of the Knesset Hagedolah (the Great Assembly), a group composed of 120 men of Israel. On the day after the destruction of the first Beth Hamikdash (Temple), it was the Knesset Hagedolah that did so much to assure the survival of the Jewish nation, a nation that was threatened as much by the disappearance of the Beth Hamikdash as by the Galut (exile) that ensued. It is to them that we owe, in particular, our ritual of prayer, say the Sages in citing the prophet Hosea: "Let our lips substitute for bulls." Counted among those in that Knesset Hagedolah were great members of the community, including even some of the prophets. Rabbi Shimon HaTzaddik himself was the Kohen Gadol (High Priest) in the Beth Hamikdash. He held this office for forty years, attired in his solemn blue garments, and by virtue of his immensely pious works, many were the miracles that the Jewish people benefited from. What follows is an account of one of these miracles, thanks to which the Beth Hamikdash was saved from destruction by the Samaritans, a group that also wanted to massacre the Jewish population of

the land. The Eternal, however, put an end to this sinister plan and punished the Samaritans as they deserved. This entire story is recounted in the Talmudic tractate Yoma.

Our Sages teach us: The 25th of Tevet is a Yom Tov (a holiday). On that day we are not allowed to give eulogies or recite Tachnun (bi-weekly supplications). On that day, in fact, the Samaritans had asked for and obtained from Emperor Alexander the Great the authorization to destroy the House of the Eternal in Jerusalem. The terrible news was told to Rabbi Shimon HaTzaddik. What did he do? He dressed himself in his High Priest garments and called for several notable figures in Jerusalem. Each took a lit torch and they all marched during the night to encounter the Emperor, who was on his way to Jerusalem with his retinue. In the morning they found themselves face to face with his procession.

His court attendants announced to the Emperor: "Here are the Jews that have arisen against you."

Yet in seeing Shimon HaTzaddik, Alexander the Great hastened to descend from his chariot and prostrate himself before him. Stunned, his court attendants asked him, "A great king

such as you bows down before Jews?" He replied, "I saw the face of this man when I was in the midst of battle. It was thanks to that vision that I triumphed over my enemies."

Then, turning towards Rabbi Shimon HaTzaddik and his companions, he asked them why they had come to meet him. Rabbi Shimon replied, "Is it conceivable that idolaters could manage to persuade you to destroy a building in which we never stop praying for you and the longevity of your Empire?"

"Of what are you speaking?"

"The Samaritans."

Cognizant of his error, Alexander the Great told them, "They are in your hands. Do with them as you wish."

Immediately, the heads of the community seized the conspirators, attached them to the tails of their horses, and dragged them among prickly shrubs and thistles all the way to their villages on Mount Gerizim. There, they destroyed everything in their path, exactly as the Samaritans had planned to do to Jerusalem.

Since that time, the 25th of Tevet has been decreed as a festival among the Jewish people.



HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

May One Wash Dishes on Shabbat?

The Shulhan Arukh 323:6 teaches that one is not permitted to exert oneself on Shabbat for something which will only be used after Shabbat. Therefore, one may not wash dishes which will not be used until after Shabbat. However, since drinking glasses may be used throughout the day, they may be washed on Shabbat.

There are, however, a few cases worthy of discussion.

First, R. Ovadia Yosef (Hazon Ovadia Helek 6 pages 100-104) writes that after making Kiddush on Shabbat morning, since the cup will not be used again on Shabbat, it should not

be washed until after Shabbat. He adds, however, that one may simply rinse the cup with water, as that is not a tirha. He adds that one may also fill up a dirty pot with water in order that it will be easier to clean after Shabbat, as that is not considered to be a tirha.

Second, R. Ovadia Yosef (ibid.) also discusses whether one may clean his dishes on Friday night in order to use them the next day, if he has other clean dishes. He cites the Mishne Halachot who rules that one may wash those same dishes, and does not need to use the clean dishes in his closet.

Third, what if a person wishes to wash dishes for other reasons? For

example, what if a person wishes to wash dishes because dirty dishes may attract bugs, or for hygienic reasons, or because guests may come and it is not proper to have dirty dishes in the sink? In this case R. Ovadia Yosef (ibid.) rules one may wash the dishes. Similarly, one may make a bed in the morning, even if he will not sleep until after Shabbat, as it makes the room look nicer.

Summary: It is prohibited to exert effort, i.e., a tirha, on Shabbat for something which will be used after Shabbat. However, the action does not involve a tirha, or if there is another reason to exert the effort, then it is permitted.



WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

Parshat Mishpatim-Shekalim

The Jewish People receive a series of laws concerning social justice. Topics include: Proper treatment of Jewish servants; a husband's obligations to his wife; penalties for hitting people and for cursing parents, judges, and leaders; financial responsibilities for damaging people or their property, either by oneself or by one's animate or inanimate property, or by pitfalls that one created; payments for theft; not returning an

object that one accepted responsibility to guard; the right to self-defense of a person being robbed.

Other topics include: Prohibitions against seduction; witchcraft, bestiality and sacrifices to idols. The Torah warns us to treat the convert, widow and orphan with dignity, and to avoid lying. Usury is forbidden and the rights over collateral are limited. Payment of obligations to the Temple should not be delayed, and

the Jewish People must be Holy, even concerning food. The Torah teaches the proper conduct for judges in court proceedings. The commandments of Shabbat and the Sabbatical year are outlined. Three times a year – for Pesach, Shavuot and Succot – we are to come to the Temple. The Torah concludes this listing of laws with a law of kashrut to not cook or mix meat and milk.

Rabbi Sinclair
Seasonsofthemoon.com

KIDS ZONE

1 In what context is a mezuzah mentioned in this week's Parsha?

21:6 - If a Hebrew slave desires to remain enslaved his owner brings him "to the door post mezuzah" to pierce his ear.

2 What special mitzvah does the Torah give to the master of a Hebrew maidservant?

21:8-9 - To marry her.

3 What is the penalty for wounding one's father or mother?

21:15 - Death by strangulation.

4 "A" intentionally hits "B." As a result, B is close to death. Besides any monetary payments, what happens to A?

21:19 - He is put in jail until "B" recovers or dies.

5 What is the penalty for someone who tries to murder a particular person, but accidentally kills another person instead? Give two opinions.

21:23 - A) The murderer deserves the death penalty. B) The murderer is exempt from death but must compensate the heirs of his victim.



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