

Mesilah



כולל רבנים
רבינו צבי אשכנזי

AN INITIATIVE OF KOLLEL RABBONIM RABBEINU TZVI ASHKENAZI, AMSTERDAM

info@amskollel.nl | www.amskollel.nl

SHVAT 5783 • FEBRUARY 2023 • VOL II, ISSUE 2

PARSHAS BESHALACH

The Power of Emunat Chachamim

Rabbi David Szejnhauer



What was Am Israel's first test when they left Egypt?

The Torah tells us that when the people left Egypt, "G-d walked in front of them by day in a pillar of cloud, and by night as a wall of fire, to show them the way". Suddenly G-d tells Moshe to turn back and stop at Pi Hachiroth, and Moshe was commanded to instruct the people to return towards Egypt.

The people listened to Moshe and replied: whether we like it or not, we must listen and do only what Moshe tells us, even if that means going back with our children in the opposite direction to where we were going.

Asks the *Imrei Emes*, what is the doubt that Am Israel had? They had no choice! The cloud that protected them turned in a different direction to the one they were taking, so what option did they have to continue and remain unprotected in the middle of the desert? What then was the greatness in saying "we listen and do only what Moshe tells us we have to do"?

Says the *Imrei Emes* that the clouds did not return towards Pi Hachiroth but continued to move forward and Moshe was the one who told them to return! At that moment the people were in a great dilemma: listen to Moshe and go back without the clouds and without protection, or continue on their way protected by the clouds? At this point, they said: We only listen to what Moshe tells us to do, even if it is not logical. Listening to our Rabbis only when it suits our logic is not *emunat chachamim* (belief in our Sages); the greatness is listening even when there is no logic to be perceived.

The Rambam writes in Hilchot Yesodei Hatora that the entire revelation at Sinai happened to reinforce in Am Israel their *emuna* in Moshe Rabeinu, as the *pasuk* says "vegam becha ya'aminu le'olam" – and also in you (Moshe) they will believe forever.

Says the *sefer Yesod Ha'avoda*: A person does not need to believe that their Rabbi has prophecy or *ruach haKodesh*; he just has to believe in one thing: That the Rabbi is one step higher than he is!

When we say to our children, "there are people older than you and you have to listen to them", the child knows that the parents know more than him and that is why he listens to them, and he also sees that the parents may not know everything and they themselves consult with people older than themselves. In this way we remind ourselves that we don't know or understand everything. For this reason, we receive advice from people who are older than us. But the moment the child sees that parents listen only when it suits them, they will in turn also only listen to their parents when it is logical in their eyes or when it suits them, a very undesired outcome!



PARSHAS YISRO

Issues of Tissues

Rabbi Yossi Krausz



It's just 80 days since the Jewish people stood at Sinai and Moshe has descended from heaven to return to leading his people.

Moshe is of course the leading halachic authority. The people, committed to the Torah way, are storming forward in pursuit of the Torah's solution to their monetary disputes. This burden is entirely on Moshe and from morning until night he receives the public.



In what was probably the first recorded instance of a father-in-law giving constructive criticism, Yisro steps in. He's concerned and suggests delegation. Through a hierarchy of Rabbinic authority, the lighter issues can be dealt by the lower ranks and the more severe problems can be sent to higher ranks. Only the most severe of all problems, described as *davar hagadol* – "a big matter", shall be addressed to Moshe alone.

The Torah goes on to describe how Moshe accepted this proposal and implemented exactly so. Yet there is a change in the wording. The most severe question is described by the Torah, not as Yisro articulated as "a big matter" but rather as *davar hakoshe* – "a difficult matter."

What does this mean and why the change?

The Alshich explains that Yisro's idea of a severe question was one pertaining to a great monetary value. In such a case the stakes are of large proportions and a mistake in judgement would mean a big loss to someone innocent; one that is difficult to compensate.

But the Torah teaches otherwise. A severe question is one that is difficult to *resolve*. The value makes no difference. Only what truly is for us may we possess, no matter the size or importance.

The value may be insignificant but the application of the truth is vital.

It may even be, issues of tissues.

Tu B'Shevat

The Beginning of Growth

Rabbi Shmuel Zev Lev



Some people have the *minhag* on Tu B'Shevat to daven for a beautiful Esrog with which to perform the Mitzva of Arba Minim on Sukkos. The reason given is because this day is the beginning of the new year for all fruit trees, and so what better time is there to daven that we should merit that our own Esrog will grow perfectly.

The Mishna in Masseches Rosh Hashono tells us all the various days in the year that symbolise the beginning of a new year. The main purpose this serves is for the separating of *trumos uma'asros* (tithes). This means that a certain amount of produce must be separated from all that grows in Eretz Yisroel and given to the Kohen and the Levi and only then may the remainder be consumed. But that which is separated must be taken as a part of the same yield that it will now permit for consumption, i.e. it must have been a part of that same produce. This is where the 'Rosh Hashono' plays a role. Anything that began its first stages of growth before the 'Rosh Hashono' is considered 'old produce' and may not be used as *trumoh* for the next year's crop; rather fresh produce will have to be used.

The Mishnah teaches that the 15th of Shevat is the new year in regard to the tithes of the fruits of the tree - *Rosh Hashono lo'ilonois*. Why is this? Rashi tells us that this is because on this day the sap rises in the tree to begin growing the next years fruit, so from then onwards anything that begins growing is from the next year.

This is somewhat puzzling, because the 15th Shevat is a date in the lunar calendar which will not fall out on the same day of the solar season every year. Surely the stage of growth of a tree should be bound by the season and not the months of the lunar year? Notwithstanding this, we still celebrate this day on the 15th because indeed, that is the day on which the tree receives its renewed energies and begins regrowing. This is a phenomenon we find in other places too; that the world is secondary to the direct influence and effect of the months that we, Klal Yisroel, establish, and the *zmanim* that are intrinsic to us Yidden.

The 15th of Shevat is the day of year on which growth is intrinsically initiated, so we must tap into this strength and allow our inner fruits to blossom and ripen into the finest we can produce!



Great Potential

Rabbi Alex Wolf



We're now approaching the 'Yom Tov' of Tu B'Shevat, which is one of the lesser discussed Yomim Toivim. Still, there are always multiple layers of messages to be learnt from everything spiritual, and so I'd like to share a thought that will hopefully give another dimension to the previous article.

There are two points that come to mind when thinking of Tu B'Shevat. Firstly, how odd is it that we celebrate the new year of the fruit when there is not a fruit in sight? The trees outside are bare and the only thing likely to be found on them is snow! We still have to wait until the month of Nissan before the trees even begin to visibly sprout! So how is it that we are celebrating the birthday of the fruits now, with the unseen rising of the sap, when it would have been better to wait until the blossoming is complete and the fruits emerge?

Secondly all other events of the Jewish calendar are days of commemoration of some kind of event. Pesach is a commemoration of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, and on Shavuot we celebrate receiving the Torah, but Tu B'Shevat has no historical significance.

The explanation to both these points is that indeed, we celebrate potential over achievement. The rising of the sap in the tree lays the groundwork for the fruit to grow, and this is more significant than the finished product. (Perhaps that is why we call it *Rosh Hashono Lo'ilonois*, the new year for the trees, and not the new year for the fruit.)

Albert Einstein couldn't speak until he was 4, and he couldn't read until he was 7. His parents viewed him as "sub normal"; his teachers labelled him as "mentally slow" and adrift forever in foolish dreams, which led him to being expelled from school. But this was the same person who later dazzled the world with his brilliance and genius.

Louis Pasteur was 15th out of 22 in his undergraduate studies of chemistry and many scoffed his theories in germs as ridiculous fiction. Yet it was the same Louis Pasteur who changed the world and saved millions of lives with his discovery of the principles of vaccination. These people were surely talented as children but it was all under the surface.

So when Tu B'Shevat comes round we are not commemorating something that happened, but rather we are celebrating the future potential; the growth beneath the surface. Although there is a long way to go and a lot of work and nurture required until we have the perfect fruit, we still recognise that the sap of the tree is rising and the birth has begun. Let us all recognise our *pintele neshomo* -our spark of Jewish soul and work with it and grow it until it sprouts and ripens and connects us to Hakadosh Baruch Hu.



The Order of Berachos

Rabbi Ephraim Arnstein



The *Shulchan Aruch* stipulates the correct order of *berachos* one needs to follow when eating a variety of foods that require different *berachos*. For instance, when being served an apple (*ha'ets*) and a cup of water (*shehakol*), *birchas ha'ets* should be recited prior to *shehakol*. [It should be understood that right after the recitation of *ha'ets* the apple needs to be eaten from, before making the next *beracha*.]

The reason why *birchas ha'ets* takes precedence, is because it is a more specified and precise praise to Hashem, i.e. 'Who creates the fruit of the tree'; whereas *shehakol* is rather a more general praise meaning 'everything comes to be through His word'.

The same applies when faced with a *borei pri ha'adama* and a *shehakol*. Being that *borei pri ha'adama* is more detailed it should be recited first.

If one has for example, a pear (*ha'ets*) and a tomato (*ha'adama*) in front of him, there is a difference of opinion regarding how to proceed. The *Mishna Berurah* concludes that, if both items are liked equally then the *ha'ets* gets priority, but if the tomato is preferred over the pear then its *beracha* (*ha'adama*) comes first.

Regarding fruits within the *Shivas Haminim* category there is another rule: The order in which they are mentioned in the *Pasuk* determines which of the fruit the Bracha should be made on.

ארץ חסה ושעורה וגפן ותאנה ורמון ארץ זית שמן ודבש

The nearer the fruit appears to any the words "*erets*", the more priority it receives. Therefore when being served grapes and dates, one should recite the *beracha* on the dates (*ha'ets*) and eat from them before eating from the grapes. This is because the word "*u'dvash*" which refers to dates, appears at the second 'place' after the second "*erets*", whereas the word "*gefen*" which refers to grapes, comes at the third place after the first "*erets*".

Some exceptions do apply:

1) Although grapes come after dates (and olives) as mentioned above, grape juice comes before all fruit that require a *birchas ha'ets*. The reason is because the special *beracha* that is recited, i.e. *borei pri hagafen* puts it before *birchas ha'ets*.

2) According to the order of the *Pasuk* wheat and barley come at first and second place, respectively. However, this is only true when a dish or pastry was made from it. If, however, it is eaten as wheat or barley kernels, then a *birchas ha'adama* must be recited and it comes after a *birchas ha'ets*.

**This article is not comprehensive. For more on this subject see Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 211*





Writing Our Song

Rabbi Yehuda Zev Klyne

There was a Sunday several weeks ago when the entire Buitenveldert *van oost naar west* was buzzing. Quite literally. All were looking down out their windows at the crowds dancing through the streets surrounding the newly written Sefer Torah. The holy guardians of the scroll; the members of Kehal Chasiddiem Shul continued the celebration into the early hours of Monday morning. I was there. It is hard to fully describe the joy that exuded from the faces of everyone present. The whole event portrayed the honour and glory of Torah very boldly. It was truly amazing.

A few days before the music started, on Thursday evening the community came together to our weekly Minchas Chinuch learning event, where we learn a different Mitzvah each week, joining together this time to delve into this special Mitzvah: writing a Sefer Torah. This gave us a feel for this commandment that we so enthusiastically celebrated over the weekend that followed.

The most amazing thing about the Mitzvah of writing a Sefer Torah is the continuity of the Mitzvah long after the act is over. And guess why this is? The Sefer Hachinuch tells us that the main reason we have for this Mitzvah is to have the Torah scroll to hand ready to learn. So, let's learn a little bit about this Mitzvah together. Could there be a greater way of keeping all that we rejoiced over alive? We will see together some of the many details involved in writing a Sefer Torah based on what came out of that Thursday night learning Seder. I hope the Torah written here will bring out and show the eternal beauty of this great rare Mitzvah which, let's not forget, we too are all obligated to fulfil!

To Write Or to Own?

The word the Torah uses in Parshas Vayelech is 'כָּתַבְתִּי'-write. So much so, the Gemorah in Sanhedrin tells us that if one's father leaves over a Sefer Torah as part of the inheritance, the son must nonetheless go and write his own one. From here it would seem that by merely purchasing a Sefer Torah one has not fulfilled his Mitzvah; one needs to write.

The Minchas Chinuch deduces from the Rambam that indeed purchasing is not adequate, as the Rambam writes that if one does not have the expertise to write his own one, he should commission a Sofer to write for him (this is what most people do today to fulfil the Mitzvah). The Minchas Chinuch infers from here that the Rambam is of the opinion that purchasing is not enough, for if it was, then when one can't write, one could simply purchase one! Why would you have to appoint a messenger to perform the writing on your behalf?!

This fits well with the Gemorah that states that inheriting a Sefer Torah does not exempt the inheritor from writing. This is because the Mitzvah is to write; not to own.

Rashi however, on Gemorah Menochois 30a, says that if one purchases a Sefer Torah from the market, he is not required to write another one. (Rashi does however comment that it is preferable to write yourself; nonetheless acquiring is satisfactory). One could come away from this Rashi maintaining that the core of this Mitzvah is achieved by owning the Sefer Torah, and the logic of this would be similar to what we mentioned before in the name of the Sefer Hachinuch, that the idea of the Mitzvah is to have a Sefer Torah at hand to study Torah at your convenience and not have to borrow from others.

The problem with this way is, how will it fit with the Gemorah in Sanhedrin concerning inheritance, where we see that even if you have a perfectly Kosher Sefer Torah in your cupboard from your father you are required to write another?

The answer given, is that Rashi's opinion is that although the main purpose of the Mitzvah is to own the Sefer Torah, in order to fulfil the Mitzvah an act has to be done. Inheritance is purely passive so the performance of the Mitzvah still has not been carried out. Once however you do the act of writing or indeed purchasing the Sefer, the main achievement is the owning of the Sefer thereafter. If for example you lose it you will definitely have to have it replaced even though you have performed the 'act' of writing.

As I write this I wonder if according to Rashi, someone was to gift a Sefer Torah to someone else, would the recipient be obligated to still write another one? In certain cases, we consider receiving a gift to be less passive than inheritance. This is because the recipient also has some kind of involvement, by providing the giver with the pleasure of being the donor, as opposed to inheritance where the money simply moves down in the family. If anyone has any answer to this I'd be delighted to hear from you!

As mentioned, we come together every Thursday at 8pm to learn the amazing work of the Minchas Chinuch, followed by a shiur with (delicious) Cholent and refreshments. All men are welcome to join. I can be reached on 0647370213 if you want me to arrange a learning partner or for any questions.

Thanks to Rabbi David Szejnhauer for helping compile this article.



ת"ס

Amsterdam Kollel

invite the community to learn together A Mitzva from the Weekly Parsha in depth with the famous Sefer Hamitzvos.

Minchas Chinuch

Every Thursday | 20:00 | Beis Midrash Merkenburg 3

Cholent and refreshments served

.....

come witness the mitzvos coming alive

.....

For more details or if you need a shiur partner please contact Rabbi Yehuda Zev Klyne: yehuda.klyne@gmail.com 0647370213

This edition of Mesilah has been kindly sponsored by a few close friends of the Kollel, who, since the Kollel's inception, have been actively involved in promoting the Torah of the Kollel through our learning initiatives and Torah publications. We wish them and their families much bracha and hatzlacha!