

THE KTM DAF PARASHA

BRINGING A TASTE OF ISRAEL TO MONTREAL



THE JEWISH QUESTION REVISITED

BY RAV ARI FAUST (ROSH KOLLEL)

My father-in-law once bought a poster that read:

"Family: Where you can say whatever you want because no one is listening anyway."

My mother-in-law took offense to the messaging, but my father-in-law proceeded to hang-up the poster in the kitchen nonetheless, despite her protests (perhaps proof of the truth of the poster!).

The modern era introduced a tension into Jewish identity. Is "Judaism" a religion? Is it a race? A culture? In December 1789, the year of the French Revolution, at a debate of the French National Assembly on the question of Jewish emancipation, Stanislas de Clermont-Tonnerre argued that *"Everything must be denied to the Jews as a nation; everything must be granted to them as individuals."*

This effectively ignited the "Jewish Question": for non-Jewish society, what to do with the Jews; and for Jews, what does it *mean* to be a Jew? This is not an age-old question, nor is it one that was traditionally asked by all facets of Judaism. According to Professor of Jewish Studies at Princeton University Leora Batnitzky, before the modern era "it simply was not possible . . . to conceive Jewish religion, nationality, and what we call culture as distinct from one another."

Various sectors defined Judaism differently: Some - like Moses Mendelssohn or Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch - opined that Judaism is primarily a religion, and is thus fully compatible with non-Jewish society. Others - such as Ahad Ha'Am or Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook - saw Judaism as a national-collective. Mordechai Kaplan defined Judaism as a civilization, and Rabbi Jonathan Sacks advanced the idea that Judaism is a covenantal people.

To argue that Judaism is a "religion" is difficult - the basis of religion is faith and there are plenty of Jews who don't subscribe to the central tenets of Jewish faith; moreover, an apostate Jew is still Jewish! It is equally hard to define Judaism as a "nation" since there are many Jews across the globe with many different nationalities. Jews have different cultures and customs, speak different languages, and have every possible skin colour.

Despite being a modern question, it is one that has a deep-rooted impact on Jewish society today. In so many ways the faultlines of Jewish disunity today revolve around this question. Orthodox Jews consider other movements as heretical. The progressive movements see Orthodoxy as archaic. In Israel the Haredi community considers

the Secular one illegitimate, and the Secular community considers the Haredi one as parasitical.

Perhaps the difficulty lies not in choosing the correct modern category, but in recognizing that Judaism predates the categories themselves. I would suggest that a more inclusive definition of Judaism is a "family". A family is composed of people with diverse opinions who live in a variety of locations. A family is something you are born in, but also enter into voluntarily. Also, once you are born into a family, you can never leave - as the expression goes "you can choose your friends but you can't choose your family". Family is not based on creed or deed, language or race. Family is the crucible of cooperation and sharing.

French sociologist Émile Durkheim has said that "Social life is not possible without family, which is the first and fundamental group in society." Durkheim reminds us that family is not merely emotional, but social; it is the training ground for coexistence. Family sets us up to successfully build a society.

This is why Sefer Shemot - the book when we are forged into a nation - has such a strong emphasis on the centrality of family. Our parasha opens (Shemot 1:1):

וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הַבָּאִים מִצְרָיִם אֶת יַעֲקֹב אִישׁ וּבֵיתוֹ בָּאוּ

These are the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob - each man and his household came:

As individuals, our fate in the Egyptian exile would be questionable. Our strength and the secret to our continuity against all odds throughout generations of slavery is "man and his household came" - we were families.

This is why, when it comes time for our Exodus, we celebrate as a family (Shemot 12:3):

דַּבְּרוּ אֶל כָּל עַדְתִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר בְּעֶשֶׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה יִקְחָה לָהֶם אִישׁ שֶׂה לְבֵית אִבְתּוֹ שֶׂה לְבֵיתוֹ

Speak to the entire community of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth of this month, let each one take a lamb for each parental home, a lamb for each household.'

We don't celebrate our birth as a nation in the public sphere, we don't go to synagogue - we consume the Korban Pesach at home, with family.



TORAH תורה
MITZION מציון

KTM MONTREAL

SHEMOT
21 TEVET 5786
JANUARY 10 2026
CANDLE LIGHTING: 4:12 P.M.
HAVDALAH: 5:21 P.M.

THIS WEEK'S DAF PARASHA IS DEDICATED
BY DAVID AND LISA HAMAQWI IN HONOUR
OF DAVID'S FATHER'S YAHRZEIT - L'ILUY
NISHMAT ABRAHAM BEN DAVID

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SPONSOR A DAF
PARASHA, PLEASE CONTACT
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Sefer Shemot introduces the transition of Bnei Yisrael into a People. To excel as such and to build a cohesive society we need to learn to unite the disparate elements of our people. This is why family is so important, family is the incubator that allows a healthy society to be born. Families, of course, are not always harmonious. They argue, disappoint, and wound. But they endure. And it is precisely through that endurance that responsibility and solidarity are learned. American political scientist James Q. Wilson writes:

We learn to cope with the people of this world because we learn to cope with the members of our family. Those who flee the family flee the world; bereft of the former's affection, tutelage, and challenges, they are unprepared for the latter's tests, judgements, and demands.

Judaism endures not because it fits neatly into modern categories, but because it binds people together across difference and time. Like a family, it asks more of us than belief alone and gives us more than agreement ever could. If we can remember that we are bound to one another before we are divided by ideology, then our differences need not weaken us. They may yet become the source of our resilience.



אין כמו שנה בארץ

BY AXEL BITTON, YESHIVAT NETIV ARYEH

This year I came to Israel for a gap year at Yeshivat Netiv Aryeh to truly understand myself, my Judaism, and my relationship with Hashem. I wanted to explore who I am, who I want to become, and what my purpose is in this world. I felt that yeshiva would give me the environment, structure, and inspiration to grow into the best version of myself and eventually build a בית נאמן. My choice was between CEGEP and yeshiva, and I'm incredibly grateful to both my parents and to Hashem for guiding me toward the right derech. Even though life back home was fun, it didn't always feel meaningful. I knew that coming to Israel would give me a deeper sense of purpose.

One of the things that makes Netiv Aryeh so special is its location. Every single morning, I have the privilege of praying while looking directly at the Kotel, we are literally inside the Old City. The environment, the friends, and the bochurim here help you grow tremendously, and the rabbis are

both inspiring and supportive. In my afternoon seder, I take a class called "Proving God's Existence Through Science," which is one of the most fascinating classes I've ever experienced. We explore major questions about faith and challenge the foundations of atheism. Our Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Bina, is a tremendous tzaddik and, if you know him, also very funny.

One of the highlights of my year so far was one of the last nights of selichot before Rosh Hashanah. Our yeshiva has a balcony overlooking the Kotel, and we prayed there while tens of thousands of people filled the plaza below. Hearing the voices, seeing the crowd, and feeling the energy of Am Yisrael gathered together was truly unforgettable.

There's a lesson I learned that has really stuck with me. When Yaakov prepares to meet Esav after twenty years, and the passuk says, "וירא יעקב, ויירא ויצר לו" (Gen. 32:21), Yaakov was very afraid, and it pained him. Chazal in Masechet Berachot (4a) explain that Yaakov feared he had lost some of Hashem's protection, saying שמא יגרום החטא - maybe a "sin"

caused it. But what sin? What wrong could Yaakov had done? The explanation is that he simply hadn't been able to perform kibbud av va'em - honoring his parents - while living at Lavan's house.

Rashi explains that the word חטא - can mean not only sin, but also lack or disadvantage. Yaakov felt that Esav had a spiritual advantage because Esav had performed kibbud av va'em consistently. The Ramban teaches that even one mitzvah done with full devotion can elevate a person tremendously. Yaakov understood the power of a single mitzvah, and that even a small gap in one's spiritual life matters.

The message for us is powerful: never underestimate the impact of one mitzvah. Growth isn't only about avoiding mistakes, it's also about noticing where we can add, strengthen, and elevate ourselves.

Axel Bitton is an alumnus of Herzlia High School.



SHABBAT'S GREATEST HITS: MENUCHA V'SIMCHA

BY EVYATAR KERNER

Imagine for a moment that you're standing in a courtroom. Not an ordinary courtroom, but the most important one there is. The judge asks: "Is there anyone who can testify that this world was created? That there is a Creator? That it didn't all just happen randomly?" And you stand up and say: "Yes. I am a witness."

This is exactly what we do every Shabbat - even if we don't realize it.

There are songs we sing out of habit. The words flow, the melody is pleasant, and it becomes part of the atmosphere. *Menucha V'Simcha* is one of those songs. But do we ever stop to ask: what did I just say?

Let's pause and read the words as if we're seeing them for the first time:

מנוחה ושמחה אור ליהודים, יום שבתון יום מהמדים

Rest and joy, light for the Jews, the Sabbath day, a day of delight.

So far, so good. Shabbat is light. It's precious. It's a day we desire. But then comes the next line — and suddenly everything changes:

שומרי וזכריי המה מעידים כי לשישה כל בראים ועומדים

Those who keep it and remember it, they testify that in six days all was created and established.

Testify? Witnesses? What's going on here?

Let's slow this down. "Those who keep it and remember it" - that's us. Those who observe Shabbat. And what do we do? We testify. And not just to anything, but to something very specific: that the world was created in six days. That there is a Creator. That existence is not random.

Think about that for a moment.

When you keep Shabbat - when you light candles, stop working, sit at the table and sing - you're not just doing a personal mitzvah. You're not just keeping tradition or enjoying a day of rest. You're testifying. You're standing before the world and declaring: there is a Creator. And the proof is not theoretical. The proof is lived. I stop on the seventh day because the Creator stopped on the seventh day. I'm not only believing this - I'm bearing witness to it.

Belief is internal. It's private. It lives in your heart. Testimony is different. Testimony is public. It's spoken aloud. It's a declaration before others.

Shabbat is exactly that. Your neighbors see your lights change. Your coworkers know you're unavailable. Everyone who knows you knows: there is one day when you stop. And the question is - why? Because you're testifying to something bigger than yourself.

Here is the extraordinary idea: the Jewish people are God's messengers in the world. Not as an honorific title, but as a mission. Messengers testify. And when you represent someone, the world watches you - because what you do reflects the One who sent you.

That's heavy. It's pressure.

And that's why the song begins with "rest and joy, light for the Jews." Shabbat is not meant to crush us under responsibility. It's not a burden. It's light. It's a joy. Because being a witness to meaning, to purpose, to creation - that's not exhausting. It's the greatest privilege there is.

Shabbat isn't a command we endure. It's a gift we desire. And when we understand that, Shabbat transforms - from obligation into delight, from duty into joy.

Shabbat Mission:

This Shabbat, when you sing "Menucha V'Simcha," stop after the first verse. Give everyone around the table a chance to share: "When did I feel like a messenger this week?" It can be a small moment, a kind word you said, an action you took.





HALACHIC Q&A

BY RABBI YOSEF ZVI RIMON - NASI, WORLD MIZRACHI

Question: Are tefillin boxes considered "tashmishei kedusha"? Can they be thrown in the trash?

Answer: They are tashmishei kedusha and require genizah (SA OC 154:3). They are defined this way because they directly interact with the bayit of the tefillin/straps which have kedusha on their own. Something which is a tashmish of a tashmishei d'kedusha does not require genizah. Additionally, a tashmish of a mitzvah, such as a tallit bag, can be thrown away, although it is better to put it in a bag in the trash.

Question: If somebody eats frozen strawberries throughout the year and then eats a fresh one in its season, does one make a shehecheyanu?

Answer: You should make a shehecheyanu, as it is apparent that these are from the new season. Eating frozen strawberries, even in the proper season, would not require a shehecheyanu as their renewal is not apparent, and they may not even be from the new season (MB 225:18).

Question: Is it a problem to return the wine to the bottle after making kiddush?

Answer: After drinking from a cup, the remaining wine is considered pagum (defective). You can add a bit of wine from the bottle into the cup to remove its status as pagum and then return all of it to the bottle (MB 128:27).

Question: If I pay for a snack at a vending machine and find two, what should I do? Should I assume it was somebody who paid

before me and therefore it is hefker now? Or should I assume it was a mistake by the machine and try to return it to the owner of the machine?

Answer: It's a complicated question. I think that its status is hefker, as this is a risk that the owner of the machine takes. I don't think that you need to struggle to find him. If he can be easily found, it is proper to tell him and give it back if he wants it.

Question: On Friday night before going to sleep, I realized that our cholent was cooking on "high" in the slow cooker. I forgot to turn it to low before Shabbat. At this point, the cholent was fully cooked and would burn if it was left in the slow cooker overnight. We had guests coming the next day. Was I allowed to take out the cholent and put it on the plata (electric hotplate)?

Answer: You are allowed to put it on the plata, as the Gemara in Shabbat says that you can move from a kira (burner) to a kira.

Question: I heard that during a pidyon haben, you first wash and eat hamotzi and only after do the pidyon. Is this true? And if so, why is this different from other seudot mitzvah?

Answer: Yes that is correct. You wash hands, eat hamotzi, and then at the beginning of the meal do the pidyon. The Terumat Hadeshen explains that the reason is to publicize the mitzvah.

Question: What should a Kohen do when the other Kohanim started Birkat Kohanim before being called? How essential is the calling? If it is essential and the Kohen has missed his chance to make the bracha, should he still say

the pesukim?

Answer: The Kohanim are generally supposed to start after being called (SA 128:10). This specific case is not brought up in the Shulchan Aruch or Nesei Keilim. It seems that while the kriyah is required l'chatchila, it is not me'akev, as we know that one Kohen does need kriyah to begin. Therefore, it would be correct to say the brachot with the Kohanim.

Question: The Beit Midrash announced that if certain sefarim were not claimed, they would be brought to genizah. Can I take seforim from this pile (after the allotted time) even if there is a name and number on the sefer?

Answer: It seems that you may take them. If there is a phone number, it is proper to call them. It would be best to put up a sign on the Beit Midrash door that says: anyone who brings seforim to the Beit Midrash does so with the recognition that they will be made hefker (ownerless) if they are not taken (and provide a specific amount of time).

Translated from Hebrew and abbreviated by Yaakov Panitch.

PARNESS HAYOM :: TEVET

- 5 TEVET | Edith Zukor, in honour of the Yahrzeit of her brothers, Laszlo Schwartz z"l and Ervin Schwartz z"l
- 11 TEVET | Sari and Shlomo Drazin, in honour of the Yahrzeit of her father, Joe Polansky z"l
- 21 TEVET | Stanley Yetnikoff, in honour of the Yahrzeit of his father-in-law, Isaac Babad z"l
- 21 TEVET | Susan Lieberman and family, in honour of the Yahrzeit of her father-in-law, Laizer Lieberman z"l
- 22 TEVET | Adrienne and Shlomo Drazin, in honour of the Yahrzeit of her grandmother, Bertha Segal z"l
- 22 TEVET | Philip Cola, in honour of the Yahrzeit of his father, Lemel Cola z"l
- 23 TEVET | Susan Lieberman and family, in honour of the Yahrzeit of her father, Moses Eisenstein z"l
- 23 TEVET | Susan Lieberman and family, in honour of the Yahrzeit of her mother-in-law, Raizel Lieberman z"l
- 23 TEVET | Alain and Susan Matarasso, in honour of the Yahrzeit of his father, Israel ben David Matarasso z"l
- 27 TEVET | The Drazin family, in honour of the Yahrzeit of Samuel Drazin z"l



The Little Things



In Parashat Shemot, the Jewish people are in danger, but the story moves forward because of small, brave choices. The midwives protect the babies, Yocheved hides Moshe, Miriam watches over him, and Batya reaches out to save a child she doesn't even know. None of them were trying to be heroes — they just did the right thing in that moment. This teaches us that even small acts of kindness and courage can make a big difference.