

THE KTM DAF PARASHA

BRINGING A TASTE OF ISRAEL TO MONTREAL



SIRENS, SPIES AND WATERMELON

BY RAV ARI FAUST (ROSH KOLLEL)

Exactly a year ago, I had the honor of accompanying a group of over sixty Cegep and College students on the Journey of Hope trip to Poland and Israel. On our second night in Israel we were awakened by a siren informing Israelis that the IDF had engaged in a war with the regime in Iran. I, admittedly, didn't initially wake up from the siren, and sluggishly joined the group after the initial shock had subsided. Having the Rabbi join the group in his pyjamas lightened the spirits somewhat (it was funny for some to learn that Rabbis wear sweatpants to sleep, instead of a Rabbinic frock and hat)!

However, it was not all laughs. That Friday evening our Kabbalat Shabbat service was interrupted by a red-alert siren – we heard the Iron Dome interception before entering the shelter. The ensuing days were filled with fear and anxiety, followed by frustration and uncertainty over the security restrictions and closure of air space – which both affected our time in Israel in significant ways. With few exceptions, the only time we left the hotel was to a nearby park or *makolet* (depanneur) where we enjoyed free watermelon “on the house”!

Yet despite the traumatic experiences at the onset of the war and its implications to our experience – there are two takeaways I think about when I reflect back on the meaningful time we had:

First is the group's incredibly positive attitude. Once the initial fears had abated, the group managed to make the most of their experience – limited as it was. They had internalized that we were in Israel living through historic times, and demonstrated incredible hope and resilience. For many, it was the first time in Israel, and we couldn't so much as visit the Kotel due to security restrictions. But the monotonous routines of sleep-eat-shelter-repeat did not bring the group down. They focused on what they were experiencing instead of what they were not, and developed appreciation for the subtle elements of being in Israel, and for one-another.

And the second point, and perhaps a direct result of the first, was the group's attitude upon returning to Montreal. In the days and weeks immediately following our return, the vast majority of participants and staff I had spoken to were ready to plan a return to Israel! And that feeling has, by-

and-large, only *grown* with time. Instead of the experiences deterring the group from Israel, it engendered a new sense of connection. Perhaps we didn't get to enjoy *visiting* Israel, but we got to enjoy Israel. We had experienced Israel not through touring, but through deep solidarity – we were part of it during those historical days, and thus it became part of us.

This brings us to an important and profound insight in our parasha, Shelach, where we read about the spies who delivered a negative report about the Land of Israel. What prompted the spies' negativity? And perhaps more striking, if indeed Israel was so bad – “*A land that devours its inhabitants*” (Bamidbar 13:32) – how did the two spies, Calev & Yehoshua, return with a positive attitude about settling there?

When I learn the episode of the Meraglim, I often contemplate a particular detail. At first glance it seems minor, but I think there is something very telling and significant about it. When they return to the nation, the spies carry back what are described as colossal sized fruits (Bamidbar 13:23):

וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד-נֶחַל אֲשַׁכּוֹל וַיִּכְרְתוּ מִשָּׁם זֶמְרָה וְאֶשְׁכּוֹל
עֲנָבִים אֶחָד וַיִּשָּׂאֶהוּ בְּמוֹט בְּשָׁנִים וּמִן-הָרְמָנִים וּמִן-
הַתְּאֵנִים

They reached the wadi Eshcol, and there they cut down a branch with a single cluster of grapes—it had to be borne on a carrying pole by two of them—and some pomegranates and figs.

Rashi suggests that the Torah actually implies that the fruits were so huge that they required eight people to carry a cluster of grapes (the symbol of Israel's Ministry of Tourism) and each pomegranate and fig was so massive that one spy could only carry one fruit each.

While the imagery is amusing, why is it important for the Torah to hint to this seemingly irrelevant detail? I believe there is a profound message here: Before sending them off, Moshe instructed the spies to bring back the fruit of the land (13:20). Why is Moshe so concerned with such minute detail as bringing back fruit?

I believe this cuts to the root of the spies' failure, and the ultimate fault line between the ten who brought a negative report versus Calev



TORAH תורה
מִצִּיּוֹן MITZION

KTM MONTREAL

PARASHAT SHELACH

28 SIVAN 5786

13 JUNE 2026

CANDLE LIGHTING: 8:25 P.M.

HAVDALAH: 9:43 P.M.

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FOR THE SAFETY OF EVERYONE IN ISRAEL &
THE IDF, AND FOR SHALOM IN THE REGION.

and Yehoshua: More than Moshe wanted an assessment of the land, he wanted to engender a connection between it and the people. He didn't send the spies as investigative reporters, rather he wanted them to develop a relationship to the land and to bring *that* back to the people. The spies weren't meant to just deliver an impersonal report about the land, they were meant to express their enthusiasm about it.

But the spies only knew how to carry the fruit. They never tasted it. The spies did the equivalent of taking selfies with the gorgeous fruit for their social media stories, instead of using that platform for broadcasting the fruit's delicious flavor.

Our relationship with Israel – especially when living abroad – must be animated not only by the headlines or quick-fix experiences (both of which are important), but by a deeper connection to our modern-ancient homeland. It can be fun to visit Israel as tourists, but a true love for Israel is developed when we realize that we are part of Israel and it is part of us.

It seems fresh, free watermelon “on the house” can go a long way!



ENCOUNTERING THE GIANTS: RABBI CHAIM VOLOZHIN

BY CHAGAI SHREM

Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin (1749-1821) was one of the foremost Torah scholars, leaders, and thinkers of Lithuanian

Jewry. He was born in the town of Volozhin, where he later served as rabbi and spiritual leader, while also maintaining a successful business career.

In his youth, he became the foremost and closest disciple of the Vilna Gaon (the Gra). As he matured, he recognized a profound spiritual crisis in the Jewish world: on the one hand, the decline of traditional Torah institutions; on the other, the rapid growth of the Hasidic movement. In response, he initiated a historic revolution by founding the Etz Chaim Yeshiva in Volozhin in 1802 (widely known as the "Mother of the Yeshivot"). This independent, national institution became the prototype for the modern yeshiva world.

Among his major works are Nefesh HaChaim, Ruach Chaim (a commentary on Pirkei Avot), and the halachic responsa collection HaChut HaMeshulash.

Question: What is the place of man within creation, and how much influence does he have upon it?

Answer: Human beings exert immense influence over creation through their actions. When a person performs mitzvot, he literally sustains and animates reality, much as the Creator Himself sustains it. This is one meaning of the verse (Bereishit 1:27):

In the image of God He created him

Rabbi Chaim writes (Nefesh HaChaim, 1:3):

Thus He, may His will be blessed, granted man authority, that he be the one who opens and closes [the channels of influence]... as though he too were, so to speak, their master and possessor of power.

Moreover, not only a person's actions affect reality; his speech and thoughts also infuse vitality into the world.

Question: What is the place of emotion and prayer? Are they unnecessary once one immerses himself in intellectual Torah study?

Answer: Emotion and prayer are not without value, but their role is carefully defined in relation to the supreme value of Torah study.

Many spiritual movements viewed emotional intensity, tears, and enthusiasm in prayer as the center of religious life. In Nefesh HaChaim, however, a warning sign is erected: human

emotion is unstable and fluctuating. Often it stems not from pure attachment to God, but from the ego's desire to experience spiritual excitement.

Intellectual Torah study, by contrast, is objective, stable, and independent of a person's emotional state.

The key distinction is between "temporary life" (chayei sha'ah) and "eternal life" (chayei olam). Prayer is man's appeal from below upward, seeking his changing needs—health, livelihood, salvation. Torah, however, is an eternal connection through which God addresses man from above downward.

Therefore, emotion and prayer must never come at the expense of Torah study (Nefesh HaChaim, 4:14):

Regarding Torah study, whose greatness and lofty stature are immeasurable... no mitzvah can compare to it, not even prayer... for prayer concerns temporary life, whereas Torah concerns eternal life. One who abandons eternal life and occupies himself with temporary life—about him it is said: 'He who turns his ear away from hearing Torah, even his prayer is an abomination.'

Rabbi Chaim further distinguishes between prayer and Torah study. In prayer, without heartfelt intention and emotion, the act is nearly devoid of value. In Torah study, however, the situation is reversed: the very act of verbalizing and intellectually understanding Torah creates a connection to God, even if the learner experiences no emotional excitement (Nefesh HaChaim, 4:10):

For in truth, the study of the holy Torah is unlike other mitzvot, which require intention and attachment... In Torah study, the very engagement and articulation through speech and thought constitutes complete attachment... and no additional intention is required.

Question: How can dry, intellectual study—without Hasidic emotion or moral fervor—connect a person to God?

Answer: Deep intellectual study is not an indirect path to God; it is itself the richest and most complete form of attachment to Him.

Many spiritual movements sought connection with God through emotional ecstasy, passionate prayer, or intense moral introspection. Yet these approaches are inherently limited because human emotion is unstable and often circles back to the self and one's personal experience.

By contrast, total immersion in Torah study lishmah—for its own sake, motivated simply by the desire to understand the truth of Torah—connects a person directly to the Infinite. Since Torah and God are one, whenever the human mind grasps a Torah concept, the Divine intellect itself is clothed within that person's mind.

No dramatic displays, tears, or self-mortification are necessary. The careful unraveling of a difficult passage of Gemara through honest intellectual effort is itself a direct encounter with the Creator.

As Rabbi Chaim writes (Nefesh HaChaim, 4:6):

For through Torah study, when a person analyzes and understands with his intellect... he grasps and encompasses within his will and intellect a portion of the will of the Holy One, blessed be He... He is truly attached to His blessed will, and the Holy One, blessed be He, and His will are one.

Rabbi Chaim explains that a person need not pause constantly during study to seek an artificial feeling of spiritual attachment, because the very act of study accomplishes its spiritual work automatically. Even the simple learner—one without mystical attainments who merely seeks to understand Torah through straightforward human reasoning—merits this elevated connection (Nefesh HaChaim, 5:10):

Even one who comprehends only according to ordinary human understanding... nevertheless, when he studies and understands according to his capacity, he is truly connected and bound at that very moment to the supernal light that is the source of Torah... and at that moment he is genuinely attached to the Holy One, blessed be He.

From this emerges a revolutionary idea: in prayer, man speaks to God and therefore requires emotion and intention. In Torah study, however, it is God who speaks into the mind of man. Intellectual Torah study draws down inner holiness and softens the heart by its very nature, without the need for external aids.





HALACHIC Q&A

BY RABBI YOSEF ZVI RIMON - NASI, WORLD MIZRACHI

Question: We want to grow certain plants (such as basil) in pots that are not connected to the ground. Can I grow multiple types of plants in one pot? Additionally, is there an issue of kilayim with growing flowers and plants together?

Answer: You can plant them in the same pot at a distance of 12 cm from each other. Flowers are not included in the prohibition of kilayim because they are not fit to be eaten by human beings or animals (Rambam, Hilchot Kilayim 1:4).

Question: If all of the adults accepted Shabbat but there is still time until shkiah, can we ask a child to do melacha?

Answer: The Shulchan Aruch (OC 263:17) paskins like the Rashba that you can ask another Jew who has not yet accepted Shabbat to do melacha for you. However, during bein hashmashot (between shkiah and tzeit hakochavim), you cannot even ask a child to do melacha, although you can ask a non-Jew (OC 261:1).

Question: I made couscous and mixed it with other foods. After the fact, I realized that I forgot to check it for worms. Can I eat the couscous?

Answer: The Rashba paskins that there are two sfeikot (doubts) in cases such as this. The first doubt is whether or not there were any insects in the first place. The second doubt is that even if there were insects, they may have been destroyed through the cooking process and halachically batel (nullified) in the rest of the food. The Rashba says that based on this sfeik sfeika, we can be lenient in such a case.

Question: In a case where a man lights Shabbat candles, does he accept Shabbat with his lighting?

Answer: The Shulchan Aruch (OC 263:10) brings two opinions regarding what causes an acceptance of Shabbat. The Behag states that lighting candles is an objective statement of the weekday's final melacha and an acceptance of Shabbat thereafter, while the Ramban says that lighting is a sign that you have not accepted Shabbat because you are still doing melacha.

The Rama (OC 263:10) paskins that generally women accept Shabbat when they light candles, acting stringently in line with the Behag. However, we do not follow this stringency when it comes to men; therefore, a man does not automatically accept Shabbat when he lights. Still, it is better to stipulate beforehand that he is not accepting Shabbat.

Question: On Rosh Chodesh, between Shacharit and Mussaf, when is the best point to start taking off tefillin? If somebody has not finished wrapping them and the tzibur begins davening Mussaf, should he finish wrapping or start davening and finish wrapping afterward?

Answer: The best thing to do is to take them off after Kaddish and before the beginning of Mussaf. It would be best for chazanim to wait a bit longer than they do so that people can finish wrapping. Nevertheless, in most situations the chazan starts pretty quickly. It is best to start davening with them on, even if your tefillin are not completely wrapped, as long as the tefillin are still in the boxes.

Question: If I'm wearing sandals for tefila and I am a Kohen, am I allowed to go up for Birkat Kohanim barefoot?

Answer: The Rambam writes that kohanim ascend to the dukan barefoot, and the Beit Yosef adds that one is permitted to wear socks as well. The Mishnah Berurah writes that when the normal practice is not to walk in front of respected people barefoot, then the kohanim should ascend to the dukan wearing socks.

Nowadays, in many communities, people wear sandals without socks even in front of respected people. Therefore, in these communities it would be permissible to ascend to the dukan barefoot. Nevertheless, it seems preferable to wear socks, as it appears more respectful.

Question: A family is going out for Shabbat and splitting up into two apartments. The mother is sleeping in the apartment where they are eating, and the older daughter is sleeping in a different apartment. Where should each light candles?

Answer: The main factor in lighting candles is where you sleep. Therefore, because they are sleeping in different apartments, it would be best for them to light separately.

If this is difficult, they should both light in the apartment where they are eating, and the daughter should turn on the lights in her apartment with the intention that they serve as neiros Shabbat.

Translated from Hebrew and abbreviated by Yaakov Panitch.

PARNESS HAYOM :: SIVAN

- 1 Sivan | Manny Dalfen, in honour of the Yahrzeit of his father, Morris Dalfen z"l
- 2 Sivan | Gerald Bernstein, in honour of the Yahrzeit of his mother, Phylis Bernstein z"l (Chaya Faiyge bas Yosef Halevi)
- 3 Sivan | Baila Aspler, in honour of the Yahrzeit of her mother-in-law, Rita Aspler z"l
- 17 Sivan | Yael Miller, in honour of the Yahrzeit of her father, Rabbi Abraham Wahrhaftig z"l
- 22 Sivan | Moshe Reiss, in honour of the Yahrzeit of his father, David Reiss z"l
- 23 Sivan | Kamal Gabbay, in honour of the Yahrzeit of his mother, Muzli Gabbay z"l



The Source of Our Strength



In our parasha, Shelach, Calev ben Yefuneh (together with Yehoshua) stood up against the spies' negative report about Eretz Yisrael. Where did he find the courage to do that? Our Rabbis teach that Calev went to Me'arat HaMachpelah in Chevron, where the Avot and Imahot are buried. There, he drew strength and inspiration from those who came before him.

When we remember where we come from and the values that guide us, we gain the courage and confidence to keep moving toward where we are meant to go.