



# CIRCLE TIME

AT YOUR  
Shabbos Table

... FOR A Meaningful and Entertaining SHABBOS WITH YOUR CHILDREN ...

# פרשת כי תשא - פרה

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DVAR TORAH IN A STORY >>

### THE REBBE'S REBBE

וְחִנֵּיתִי אֶת אֲשֶׁר אֶחֶן וְרַחֲמֵתִי אֶת אֲשֶׁר אֲרַחֵם

"And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have mercy to whom I will have mercy"

(Shemos 23:19)

**T**he Rebbe, Reb Zushe of Anipoli, was well known as a saintly but poor man. He lived in a broken-down cottage on the edge of the forest. Reb Zushe lived a private life and kept no airs about him, but there were people who came to him for *brachos* and advice.

One such person was a wealthy but simple-minded businessman. From time to time, he came to visit Reb Zushe. He asked for a *brachah*, gave the Rebbe some money—perhaps on which to live, perhaps to distribute to others—and went on his way. As long as he continued this habit, he had success in his business dealings, made a nice profit, and all was well. The businessman attributed his successes to his visits to Reb Zushe, and continued to come.

One day, the businessman arrived to see Reb Zushe as usual, but the Rebbe was not at home. "He will be back in a few days," Reb Zushe's *reb-betzin* told the man.

"Where has he gone?"

"Well, he went to visit his Rebbe, just like you come to see him."

"What?! The Rebbe has a...Rebbe?"



CONTINUED ON PAGE 4 >>



## PARSHAH RIDDLES

Answers to this week's riddles appear on page 3.

- 1 **The first two *aliyos* (92 *pesukim*) of *Parshas Ki Sisa* are nearly twice as long as the last five *aliyos* combined (47 *pesukim*)! Why?**
- 2 **Which word in the *parshah* is a well-known palindrome (read identically forward and backward) and what does it teach us?**
- 3 **Where does the Torah provide a hint to Mordechai Hatzaddik? Extra Credit: Why are specifically those words used to refer to him?**
- 4 **The midrash states that when Klal Yisrael did the *Chet Ha'egel*, they were attacked by five destructive *malachim*, one for each of the five *aveiros* included in the *Egel*. What were the five *aveiros*? Extra Credit: What five defenders did Klal Yisrael have?**
- 5 **Which two times in Chumash did someone misunderstand what they were hearing? When did someone understand something he was hearing but was not supposed to understand?**



SERIAL >> CHAPTER 11

# CHOLENT STORY

A story told in parts, designed to get children to come back to the table for the main dish!

Recap: The *kishufmacher* and the *poritz* plan to use Efraim's beloved harp to kidnap him from the under the watchful eye of the Maharal of Prague.



The *poritz* stepped out of his mansion in the gathering darkness. This was it! Tonight he and the *kishufmacher* were to meet and travel to Prague. He waited at the curb for a few moments, and the *kishufmacher* pulled up in a coal-black carriage, pulled by four coal-black horses with a fiery look in their eyes. The *poritz* suppressed a shudder as he passed them, and climbed into the carriage.

The *kishufmacher* motioned him to a seat across from his own. "Do you have it?" he intoned.

"Yes, yes, here it is!" The *poritz* peeled the cover off of Efraim's beautiful harp and showed it to the old man.

"Perfect!" The *kishufmacher* rubbed his hands together. "We will get back that boy, Johann or whatever his name is."

The black carriage set out for Prague, traveling through the night and next day. Toward late afternoon, it passed through the gates of the city of Prague.

At that moment, in his study at the *yeshivah gedolah* of Prague, the Maharal looked up from his writing. He was hard at work on his latest *sefer*, deep in thought, but something had come over him. A *tzaddik*, a spiritually sensitive person on his level, tuned into the spiritual world, could sense disturbances of *tumah* in the region. "Something has entered the city!"

The Maharal jumped up and began to pace his study, his brow furrowed. Some fearful force had arrived, and it was probably related to Efraim. It was his responsibility to look out for the boy. What to do? After some thought, he sent for three of the *yeshivah's* top-level *talmidim*.

Shortly, the three young men knocked on the door of the Maharal's study, and their great *rebbe* motioned for them to sit. "Some force of *tumah* has approached," he began. "I am certain it has something to do with our dear friend, Efraim. He has grown into a fine *bachur*, a wonderful *ben Torah*, but I fear the Satan is not willing to give up on him so easily. Something may happen tonight!"

"*Rebbi*, what shall we do?"

"The attack will likely come after dark. The power of Torah will protect us! The three of you will spend the night in the *beis midrash*, together with Efraim. I will personally lock you inside and seal the doors and windows. You should learn Torah all night, for it is the greatest *shemirah* from *koach hatumah*. But most importantly, you must not sleep! The three of you must remain awake all night. Do not doze for a second, and do not let anyone in or out of the *beis midrash*. Do not let Efraim leave, even for a minute!"

"Of course! *Rebbi*, you can count on us!"

That night, when the Maharal left the *yeshivah* to go home for the night, he locked the three boys and Efraim in the *beis midrash*. With *Tehillim* on his lips and *emunah* in his heart, he repeated his instructions to the four of them, and sealed the doors. Inside, the four boys sat down to learn.

At about midnight, a very black carriage drew up outside the *beis midrash*. It parked a block away, and the *kishufmacher* stepped out. With a swish of black cloaks, he walked to the *yeshivah* building, and began to circle it seven times, muttering *tumah* incantations and the like all the while.

Inside the *beis midrash*, the *bachurim* had taken a bit of a break, when suddenly Efraim suddenly stood bolt upright. "I must go out!" he cried. "I must leave!"

The three *talmidim* charged with protecting him looked at each other. It was beginning!

"No, no, you must stay here," they said. "Come, let's learn a little more. So, Rashi here is saying—"

But Efraim shook them off. "No, I must go, I must go! He began to walk toward the door.

Alarmed, the three *bachurim* raced to block the exit. "No, Efraim!" they said firmly. "We need to stay here and learn!" Efraim turned back to his seat.

Outside, the *kishufmacher* continued his circling of the building, and his muttering became louder and faster. Inside, Efraim leaped to his feet again. "Let me out, let me out!"

The boys exchanged worried glances. They had expected someone—or something—to try to break in. They had not expected Efraim to try to break out! "No, *Rebbi* said no one may leave! Come sit down." Efraim paused, torn, confused, and uncertain. Something was pulling him outside, and he couldn't fight it.

In the dark night outside, the *kishufmacher* passed under a streetlight. His muttering was almost shouting, at a feverish pitch, now, and he was completing his seventh circle. Inside, Efraim ran for the door again! But the boys were quicker. They got there first and, armed with Gemaras, they took Efraim's arms firmly and led him to his seat, talking in learning all the while.

The *kishufmacher* turned in frustration and headed back to the carriage. "It's not working!" He told the anxious *poritz*. "They are too strong. I must try something else!" He drove the carriage back to the *yeshivah* and parked right under the window. Without leaving the carriage, he muttered some other incantation...and inside the *beis midrash*, the four boys felt themselves drifting, getting heavy, and falling into a deep, deep, sleep.

The *kishufmacher* turned to the *poritz*. "Aha!" he said. "Now, we can get somewhere." He unwrapped Efraim's harp and began to play beautiful, haunting music. As he did so, inside the *beis midrash*, the three *talmidim* slept peacefully, but Efraim jerked awake with a start.

"I must get out!"

TO BE CONTINUED...



DVAR TORAH >>

# LITVAK, CHASSID, SEPHARDI

Three different angles on a *dvar Torah*, one each from Litvish, Chassidic, and Sephardic sources. These can be split between the three *seudos*.

זָה יִתְּנוּ כָּל הָעֶבֶר עַל הַפְּקָדִים מִחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל...

"All who are old enough to be counted should give this half-shekel coin..." (*Shemos* 30:13)

מִיִּן מַטְבַּע שֶׁל אֵשׁ הוֹצִיא הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מִתַּחַת כִּסֵּא הַקְּבוֹד וְהִרְאֶהוּ לְמֹשֶׁה וְאָמַר לוֹ: זֶה יִתְּנוּ, כִּזֶּה יִתְּנוּ

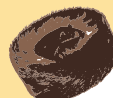
"Hashem took a coin of fire out from under the Throne of Honor and showed it to Moshe, and said, "They should give this!" (*Midrash Tanchuma, Ki Sisa* 9)

**Why did Hashem show Moshe a coin specifically of fire (from under His Throne)?**



PNEI MEIR:

Just as a flame is not diminished when it lights another, one's wealth (coin) is not diminished when it is shared with another, i.e., *tzedakah*.



NOAM ELIMELECH,  
R. NACHMAN OF BRESLOV:

Just as fire is dangerous and destructive if used wrongly but is necessary for life when used correctly, money can be a source of life or destruction.



KOTZKER REBBE:

How can a little coin atone for the *Egel*? When *tzedakah* is given with a fire, a passion in one's soul, it reaches the Throne, and fixes the soul.



OHR HACHAIM:

The half-shekel was an atonement for the sin of the *Egel*. Klal Yisrael had damaged their *neshamos'* connection to Hashem, which is forged in their place of birth—under the Throne. The coin had to come from there to repair it.

# PERSONAL GROWTH AVODAH OF THE WEEK

This section views the procession of parshiyos and Yamim Tovim as a ladder for personal growth. It identifies a theme in the parshah and a related area that needs growth, and assigns a weekly mission based upon it.

## Parshah summary

*Ki Sisa* is about sin and recovery, and maximizing the growth that comes with it. It is not in chronological order, detailing the tragedy of the *Chet Ha'egel* and its aftermath, Moshe's efforts to save Klal Yisrael, and Hashem's forgiveness. Following that, Moshe pushes for a greater level of revelation than he has previously seen. Hashem shares the highest secrets of the 13 *midos*. Also included in the *parshah* are special mitzvos relating to cleansing, purity, and atonement—the half-shekel coins later used for *korbanos tzibbur*, the *Kiyor*, *shemen hamishchah*, and *keto-res*; destroying *avodah zarah* in Eretz Yisrael; *bikkurim*; and the Yamim Tovim. Klal Yisrael are given a *malach*, Moshe's continued communication with Hashem is described, and the people stand in awe of the glow on his face.

*Parshas Parah* is also about cleansing and purity, describing the process for removing *tumas meis*. We read it now to notify people to prepare for Pesach, which is on the horizon. We need to begin paying attention to our purity in order to be able to bring the *korban Pesach*, or in current times, to receive the gifts that come with the season.

## AVODAH OF THE WEEK:

1. Having noticed last week the ways in which Heavenly orchestrated disappointment was a step toward success, it is time to turn our own failures to success as well. The difference between successful and failed people is only how they handle inevitable interim failures. Refer back to a major failure and find the lesson that can be learned from it.
2. The Sfas Emes writes that this is a time for physical and spiritual purification. Find an uncorrected mistake and fix it; you will one day grow from that as well!

## RIDDLE ANSWERS:

1. The entire story of the *Chet Ha'egel* needs to be read during the *aliyos* of *kohen* and *levi* because they are the ones who did not take part in it. We would never read it to a *yisrael*—how can we embarrass him by subjecting him to a reading of the sins of his forefathers?
2. The word ונתנו, “and they will give,” is a palindrome. This is because giving goes both ways—it benefits the one who gives, as well as the one who receives.
3. The Torah describes part of the spices for the *shemen hamishchah*, a מֶרְדֵּכַי (Shemos 30:23). *Targum* translates it as מִיָּרְא דְכֵיָא, which is similar to מֶרְדֵּכַי (see *Chullin* 139b). This may be used to refer to Mordechai because it is a spice derived from the blood of a wild beast, just as Mordechai was a *tzaddik* born from the wicked Shimi ben Geirah (see Chasam Sofer).
4. The five *aveiros* were:  
a) עָשׂוּ לָהֶם עֵגֶל מִסֵּכָה (לא תתורו אנכי, violation of מן הַדֶּרֶךְ)    b) וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלֶּהָ אֱלֹהֵיךָ  
c) וַיִּשְׁמְחוּ לוֹ    d) וַיִּצְבְּחוּ לוֹ    e) וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלֶּהָ אֱלֹהֵיךָ  
The five defenders were the *Avos*, Moshe, and Hashem Himself.
5. In this week's *parshah*, Yehoshua thought he was hearing sounds of war. The *dor haftlagah* didn't understand what people were telling each other. Yosef understood the brothers speaking *Lashon Hakodesh*, even though they thought he did not.

Did you notice that the story of the haftorah, besides relating to the depth of the parshah or day, usually sounds like it is right out of current events?

# HAFTORAH FROM THE HEADLINES

## HAFTORAH SUMMARY

The *navi* Yechezkel carries a message of exile and redemption, using a theme of *tumah* and *taharah*, and ending with a prediction of Eretz Yisrael's future prosperity.

Hashem rebukes the people for becoming complacent in their land, leading to impurity and sin and causing *chillul Hashem* and *galus*. Hashem promises to redeem them, not because they deserve it but just to staunch the tremendous *chillul Hashem* their exile is causing. He then describes growth and prosperity that will be found in the produce of Eretz Yisrael with the redemption, saving us from shame in the eyes of the nations.

## CONNECTION TO PARSHAS PARAH

In the description of the redemption, Hashem says He will purify us by sprinkling purification water upon us, just like the *parah adumah* service. *Parshas Parah* is read to prepare us for the reliving of *geulas Mitzrayim*; the haftorah describes the process of purification to prepare for the coming *geulah*.

## CONNECTION TO PARSHAS KI SISA

The central theme of both *Parshas Ki Sisa* and the haftorah is *teshuvah* and redemption. The haftorah stresses repeatedly that the redemption will be to save Hashem's name from the shame being caused by the lowly state of Klal Yisrael. Moshe used much the same argument in his *tefillos* to gain acceptance for Klal Yisrael after the *Chet Ha'egel*.

## RIPPED FROM THE HEADLINES

Eretz Yisrael, once repeatedly described by *goyim* such as Mark Twain as dry and inhospitable, is again flowering and fruitful. Jewish pride worldwide is much on the upswing. Surprisingly, all this seems to be credited to a heretical regime in Eretz Yisrael, without full *teshuvah* by Klal Yisrael. In the haftorah, Hashem clearly indicates that he will bring these recoveries even before we are deserving of it—for *kedushas Hashem*.

>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

“Certainly. Everyone should have a Rebbe. My husband goes to see the great Mezritcher Maggid.”

The businessman's thoughts began to spin. If the Rebbe had a Rebbe, the Rebbe's Rebbe must be greater than the Rebbe himself. After all, he was the Rebbe's Rebbe, and a Rebbe is greater than his *talmid*. “Why should I go to Reb Zushe for *brachos*,” he asked himself, “if I can go to his Rebbe? The greater Rebbe probably gives greater *brachos*! If I am successful in business now, I'll probably be doubly successful with the *brachos* of the great Mezritcher Maggid!”

And so, the businessman stopped visiting Reb Zushe for *brachos*, and stopped bringing him money. He went instead to the Mezritcher Maggid.

Shortly after he switched rebbes, a business deal failed, and he lost a significant amount of money. Another deal went sour, and then another, and the businessman realized things were going downhill. He understood the pattern, and before it became too late, he quickly rushed back to Reb Zushe for a *brachah*. He apologized for leaving, but Reb Zushe waved the apology aside and blessed him heartily.

Sure enough, the next business venture did well, and the man was back on the road to prosperity.

On a subsequent visit to Reb Zushe, he asked the question that had been bothering him. “Rebbe, I don't understand. Forgive me, but the Rebbe's Rebbe must be a greater Rebbe than the Rebbe is a Rebbe. So why did the Rebbe's Rebbe's *brachah* fail, while the Rebbe's *brachah* succeeded?”

“Sure, I can explain that,” Reb Zushe answered. “I am not a real *tzaddik*. So when you come to me as if I am a real *tzaddik*, it shows that you are not strict and demanding of people. In exchange, *Shamayim* is not demanding of you and will grant you *brachos* you may not deserve. But when you switched to the great Maggid of Mezritch, you made it clear that you judge very exactly who is and is not a *tzaddik*, and that is why you go only to him. So *Shamayim* judged you by the same standard, and I guess your deservedness of *brachos* went down.

“This is the meaning of the *pasuk*: Hashem says, I will be gracious—to whom? To he who says: ‘I will be gracious.’ Hashem says, I will have mercy! To whom? To he who says: ‘I will have mercy.’”



# UP FOR DISCUSSION

See this week's *Circle* magazine for the full comic story and halachic dilemma.

## THE BLANK BOOK

When one discovers that the object he purchased was defective, he has the right to a refund, even if it was not discovered until years later (C.M. 232:3). If he used it in a normal manner before discovering the defect, he is not responsible to pay for the “damage.” If, however, it was used in an unusual manner, the customer may have to pay for the “damage” (C.M. 232:13).



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...וְנִתְּנוּ אִישׁ כִּפְּרֵי נַפְשׁוֹ ... וְלֹא יִהְיֶה בָּהֶם נֶגֶף... (*Shemos 30:12*)

The Torah promises that *tzedakah* saves one from נֶגֶף, plague. Instead, he will be like a גֶּפֶן, vine, to which Klal Yisrael is compared (*Chullin 92*). What is the difference between the two words?

Both גֶּפֶן and נֶגֶף have a ג, *gimmel*, which comes from the word *gomel*, meaning to give kindness. The word גֶּפֶן has a closed פ (*peh*—mouth), and an outstretched arm, the ׀ (five fingers each come from five-part “*oros*,”  $5 \times 10 = 50 = \text{נ}$ ). But the word נֶגֶף has a closed arm (נ), and a stretched-out mouth (פ)! When one gives, לַמַּעַל, with a lot of talking and less doing, he will end up with a נֶגֶף. But if he does it with a lot of doing and keeps the mouth closed, he will be גֶּפֶן! (Ben Ish Chai)



# THIS DATE IN JEWISH HISTORY



Throughout the early 1400s, anti-Semitism stirred throughout Rome and the Catholic Church. Eventually, the Church and government of Rome decided that Wednesday, March 6, 1430, would be the day that all Jews of Rome would have to make an awful decision: convert to Christianity or face the death penalty.

On the appointed day, a bizarre natural disaster befell the city. Rome was shaken by an incredible earthquake, so powerful that many of the archbishops and priests who pushed for the decree died under the rubble. No one doubted the reason for the earthquake. On the very same day that Rome's Jews were supposed to convert or die, Pope Martin V canceled the decree.

# HALACHAH

## Nefilas Apayim (Tachanun)



### What is the source of the *minhag* to say a *tefillah* while hiding one's face?

When Moshe Rabbeinu describes his *tefillos* for Klal Yisrael after the *Chet Ha'egel*, he refers to three types of prayer: sitting, standing, and lying down: וְאָשַׁב בְּהָרָא אֲרָבָעִים יוֹם וְאֲרָבָעִים לַיְלָה... וְאֲתַנְפַּל לְפָנָי ה' נְרָאשָׁנָה אֲרָבָעִים יוֹם וְאֲרָבָעִים לַיְלָה... וְאֲנִי עֹמְדָתִי בְהָרָא אֲרָבָעִים יוֹם וְאֲרָבָעִים לַיְלָה. We therefore say a seated *tefillah* (*Krias Shema*), followed by a standing *tefillah* (*Shemoneh Esrei*), and then a lying-down *tefillah* (*Tachanun*).

### Why is *Tachanun* canceled so often? Is it an obligation?

The Gemara relates that when R. Elazar was upset with Rabban Gamliel, his wife (Rabban Gamliel's sister) did not allow him to say *Tachanun*, lest it cause her brother to die. He did once, and Rabban Gamliel did die. From this we learn that *Tachanun* is not a full obligation (or she could not have stopped him) and it is extremely powerful (and dangerous). Rav Natronai Gaon writes that *Tachanun* is optional. The *Aruch Hashulchan* notes that in our time, it has been accepted by all Jews and is therefore an obligation. However, it can be canceled for many reasons. Chassidim prefer to avoid it whenever possible because its

power makes it dangerous.

### How is *nefilas apayim* done?

Originally, *nefilas apayim* included full prone position on the floor (without outstretched arms and legs). We no longer do that, but just rest the head on the arm. It is meant to be a form of covering the face.

### Which arm?

The Mechaber writes that one should use his left arm because when doing so, the face is turned to the right, facing the *Shechinah*, which is on his right when he *davens*. The Rama advocates for the right arm, because that puts him on the *Shechinah's* left side of (which is "facing" him), fulfilling the *pasuk*: שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים 2:6. He rules that the head should not be leaned on a hand with *tefillin* on it, so at *Shacharis* when he wears *tefillin*, he should lean on the right (unless he is a lefty), and at *Minchah*, on the left.

### Can one's arm be bare?

*Nefilas apayim* should involve a covering of the face, just as *vidui* in the Beis Hamikdash was said with a lot of distance between people so that one could not hear the other. An object or arm cannot cover itself, so there should be a sleeve.

### Can one do *nefilas apayim* standing up?

The Mechaber says that one cannot rest his arm on something while standing and do *nefilas apayim* that way (for Kabbalistic reasons). The Rivash says it is okay. The *minhag* is to rely on the Rivash only when one is forced to do so, such as when he cannot sit because someone is *davening Shemoneh Esrei* behind him.

### Does one do *nefilas apayim* without a *Sefer Torah* present?

Based on the *pasuk*: וַיִּקְרַע יְהוֹשֻׁעַ שְׂמַלְתּוֹ וַיַּפֵּל עַל פָּנָיו אֲרָצָה לְפָנָי אֲרוֹן ה' (Yehoshua 7:6), one should only do it with a *Sefer Torah* in the room, or inside an *aron* that is within his line of sight (even if it is in a different room). *Tachanun* can then be said while seated regularly. If he says it at the same moment as a *tzibbur* that has a *Sefer Torah*, he can do *nefilas apayim* even without a *Sefer Torah* in the room. In Yerushalayim, one can do *nefilas apayim* even without a *Sefer Torah*.

### Why is *nefilas apayim* not done at night?

*Nefilas apayim* is meant to limit *middas hadin*, but night is the time of *din*. If we were to do it at night, we would increase *middas hadin*. It can be said after *shkiah* if *Minchah* goes late (such as on a fast day).

## THE LAST WORD

A one-liner worth remembering

"DON'T ASK IF YOUR PRAYERS ARE HEARD; CHECK WHETHER THEY ARE TRULY BEING SAID. IF IT TOUCHES YOUR HEART, IT TOUCHES HIS."

—Rabbi Yehoshua Nissan



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