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# קול תורה

**Parashiyot Nitzavim-VaYeilech**

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## THE ULTIMATE REWARD FOR HAKHEIL

by *Rabbi Ezra Wiener*

Hakheil, which appears in Parashat VaYeilech, is a unique Mitzvah in that "HaAnashim, VeHaNashim, VeHaTaf," "the men, the women, and the children" are to make an appearance in the Beit HaMikdash to fulfill this Mitzvah (Devarim 31:12). All must ascend to Yerushalayim to hear the Jewish king read from Sefer Devarim.

As "Taf" is a general term for children, we must clarify the Torah's intention in using it. Does the term "Taf" encompass all children, including very young toddlers, or does it refer only to children with a certain degree of intellectual ability and understanding? Ramban (31:13) asserts that "Taf" are the children who have the ability to ask questions, those approaching the age of Chinuch. Although these children will not completely understand the Pesukim that are being read, they will certainly appreciate the Mitzvot and even the rebuke found in Sefer Devarim, if their parents guide them by explaining the difficult concepts.

However, Ramban concedes that his understanding of the word "Taf" is inconsistent with the following statement of Chazal regarding Hakheil: "HaAnashim Lilmod VeHaNashim Lishmo'a VeHaTaf... Litein Sechar LeMevi'eihen," "The men come to learn, the women to hear, and the children to give reward to those who bring them" (Chagigah 3a). From Chazal's words, it appears as though "Taf" refers to infants and toddlers, children who will gain almost nothing from the experience of Hakheil; despite this, the parents are rewarded for bringing their children. If the children don't stand to gain anything from the experience of Hakheil, why does Hashem reward their parents for bringing them?

This question can be answered quite practically. Indeed, the infants and toddlers will gain nothing from Hakheil, but they certainly cannot be left home alone when their parents go to the Beit HaMikdash. The strollers, the attendance of so many children, and the need to carry them when they become irritable all contribute to the reward that the parents receive for coming to study Sefer Devarim. This answer is in agreement with Ben Hei

Hei's statement that "Lefum Tza'ara Agra," "according to the suffering is the reward" (Pirkei Avot 5:23).

It is possible, however, that Chazal felt that the parents' reward for bringing their young children to Hakheil is of a different form. Although the infants in attendance may gain very little from the experience, the mere fact that the Torah enjoins the parents to bring their children will serve to set the stage for the parents' ultimate reward. The most gratifying reward for a Jewish parent is to see his or her children embracing the Torah lifestyle. The bringing of the children is a reminder to the parents that the ultimate reward of seeing their children embrace Judaism will have a direct correlation to the effort and energy that they expend in inculcating the lessons of Sefer Devarim into them. We can take almost any mundane experience and turn it into one with Chinuch value. From when our children are very young and through adulthood, their Avodat Hashem all depends on our attitude.

## A MYSTERIOUS MITZVAH

by *Eitan Leff ('18)*

In the middle of Parshat Nitzavim, we find a beautiful yet pragmatic passage about a certain Mitzvah whose exact identity is unspecified. The Torah states (Devarim 30:11-14) "Ki HaMitzvah HaZot Asher Anochi Metzavecha HaYom, Lo Nifleit Hi Mimcha VeLo Rechoka Hi; Lo BaShamayim Hi Leimor 'Mi Ya'aleh Lanu HaShamaymah VeYikacheha Lanu VeYashmi'einu Otah VeNa'asenah'; VeLo MeiEiver LaYam Hi Leimor 'Mi Ya'avov Lanu El Eiver HaYam VeYikacheha Lanu VeYashmi'einu Otah VeNa'asenah,' Ki Karov Eilecha HaDavar Me'od, BePhicha UVil'vavcha LaSoto," "For this commandment which I command you this day, it is not hidden from you, nor is it far away. It is not in heaven, that you will need to say, 'Who will go up to heaven for us and get it for us, to tell it to us, so that we can follow it?' Nor is it across the sea, that you will need to say, 'Who will cross to the other side of the sea for us and get it for us, to tell it to us, so that we can follow it?' Rather, this thing is very close to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can fulfill it."

Aside from the fact that the Torah uses very vague words in formulating this Mitzvah—"HaMitzvah HaZot," "this commandment," "Otah," "it," and "HaDavar," "this thing"—the Torah also notably uses three descriptions of the "closeness" of this Mitzvah: It is not very far away, nor is it in heaven, nor is it across the sea. Wouldn't only one description suffice to illustrate

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the closeness of the Mitzvah, and what *is* this mysterious Mitzvah?

Rashi (30:12, s.v. Lo BaShamayim Hi) believes that the Mitzvah mentioned in the passage is the Mitzvah of learning Torah. The reason the Torah says that the Mitzvah is not in heaven is because if the Torah was in heaven, we would have to go into heaven to learn it; it is a privilege that the Torah is incredibly accessible to us down on Earth. The Rambam (Hilchot Talmud Torah 3:8) also understands that the Pesukim are referring to the Mitzvah of learning Torah. He explains that the words “Lo BaShamayim Hi,” “it is not in the heavens,” teach us that learning Torah eludes people who become haughty through the study of Torah and consider themselves lofty as the heavens. “VeLo MeiEiver LaYam,” “it is not across the sea,” teaches us that Torah likewise is generally not found in those who travel incessantly across the sea, as they have no time for Torah. Alternatively, the Gemara in Eiruvim (53a) explains that “Lo BaShamayim Hi” means that the Torah is not to be found in those who think that their mind is above the Torah and thus think they do not need a teacher, and “VeLo MeiEiver LaYam Hi” means that the Torah is not to be found in those who broaden their mind over it, like the sea, meaning that they think that they know all that there is to be known about a certain topic in Torah.

In contrast to Rashi’s explanation of “HaMitzvah HaZot,” the Ramban believes that said Mitzvah is the Mitzvah of Teshuvah, repentance. This explanation makes sense in context; earlier in the Perek (30:8), Moshe Rabbeinu explicitly promises that each Jew will eventually repent: “*VeAtah Tashuv VeShamata BeKol Hashem,*” “You will return and listen to the word of Hashem,” and now, he teaches that it is an obligation to do Teshuvah. In that light, some of the more obscure references in the passage become clearer. The Pesukim speak of the closeness of the Mitzvah and it being “BePhicha U’Vilvavcha La’asoto,” “It is in your mouth and your heart to do.”

In his Shiurim on the Rambam in Hilchot Teshuvah, Rav Soloveitchik noted that the three components of Vidui (the verbal acknowledgment of sin)—stating the sin, regretting it, and accepting upon oneself to do better in the future—line up perfectly with the three components of Teshuvah (the inner process of returning to Hashem)—ceasing to do the sin, removing the sin from inner thoughts, and accepting upon oneself to do better in the future. Consequently, the Rav defined Vidui as the verbal expression of the inner process of Teshuvah; in other words, Vidui and Teshuvah are all part of one broader Mitzvah of returning to a former state of Avodat Hashem, service of God (see Rambam, introduction to Hilchot Teshuvah). In this dialectic, Vidui is the Ma’aseh, the action, and Teshuvah is the Kiyum, the fulfillment. Thus, if

we take “HaMitzvah HaZot” to refer to Teshuvah, the phrase “BePhicha U’Vilvavcha La’asoto,” “in your mouth and heart to do it,” makes perfect sense; there is a verbal component in the mouth and an inner component in the heart.

May we all be Zocheh to achieve a full and complete Teshuvah to our actual selves, with both the external and internal components, and to keep up that internal state throughout the year.

## It Is Not Too Hard For You

by Ephraim Helfgot (’20)

This week’s Parashiyot, Nitzavim-VaYeilech, include Moshe’s final exhortation of Bnei Yisrael to keep the Torah. Moshe Rabbeinu appeals to the people not to regard the Torah as an impossible set of restrictions: “*Lo Nifleit Hi Mimcha,*” “It is not too hard for you” (Devarim 30:11).

The Midrash Rabbah (Devarim Rabbah 8:3) explains the use of the word “Mimcha,” “for you,” which is unnecessary in context, by adding a few words before it: “It is not hard, and if it is hard, it is only hard because of you.”

The Midrash Rabbah then explains how one causes Torah observance to be difficult by way of a parable: A loaf of bread is tied up high in the air, and below it, a fool and a wise man pass by. The fool believes that it is impossible to reach the bread; it is much too high, and he walks on. The wise man, however, surmises that for the loaf to be suspended so high, someone must have been able to reach it to put it there in the first place; he brings a ladder or a stick and fetches the loaf.

So too, says the Midrash, are the attitudes of fools and wise men in regard to Torah study and observance. The fool looks at the entire body of Torah, from Tanach to Mishnah, from Gemara to Halacha, sees a towering mountain in front of him, and surrenders. The wise man, meanwhile, learns a verse a day, a chapter a day, a page of Gemara a day; eventually, he scales the peak and arrives at the summit, having mastered the entirety of the Torah. Rather than giving in when faced with a tall task, the wise man begins to work.

As the Yamim Noraim bring about changes in our hearts, and we resolve to change our ways for the coming year, we would do well to remember that the path is not always easy, but rather than giving in to adversity, rather than surrendering to the Yeitzer HaRa, the wise response is to redouble our efforts toward self-betterment. The mountain may look unconquerable, but with consistent work, step by step, the peak is reachable.

## My FAVORITE EIRUV—SHARON, MASSACHUSETTS

by Rabbi Chaim Jachter

I am often asked which community’s Eiruv is my favorite. I currently serve as an Eiruv consultant for more than sixty communities throughout North America, and I have seen more



Bi'ur Halachah, they rely on the Devar Shmuel's lenient ruling.<sup>10</sup>

A number of authorities adopt a compromise approach that distinguishes between different types of Karpeifiyot.<sup>11</sup> If a Karpeif beautifies the city, carrying is allowed. If, however, humans in no way benefit from the area, it must be excluded from the Eiruv.

#### *Karpeif Exclusion in Sharon, Massachusetts*

Sharon, Massachusetts is replete with many lush forest areas that seem to pose a Karpeif challenge. However, one must understand the community to appreciate how the forested areas are an integral part of the community.

In 2013, *Money* magazine ranked Sharon as the best place to live in the United States. Here is part of *Money's* description of the town:

A half-hour train ride from Boston or Providence, this one-time summer resort has the natural beauty of a more remote place. Forty percent remains open space, and the town jewel, Lake Massapoag, offers a place for residents to swim, picnic, and enjoy concerts on Memorial Beach.

The open space in Sharon is clearly part of the Dirah! Moreover, a major part of the town culture is hiking and outdoor athletics. An incredibly high percentage of the population engages in outdoor activities including hiking in the town's forested areas. The forests are very much integrated in the living space of the town and need not be regarded as Karpeifiyot.

Accordingly, the original Poskim for the Sharon Eiruv, Rav Shimon Eider zt"l and (Yibadeil LeChayim Aruchim) Rav Moshe Heinemann, required that only the most dense and watery<sup>12</sup> of the forests be excluded from the Eiruv.<sup>13</sup> In this manner, the Eiruv would not simply rely on the Devar Shmuel but would satisfy even those who adopt a strict attitude regarding Karpeifiyot. The Sharon community loyally and lovingly maintains these borders and excludes these areas from the Eiruv.

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the general Jerusalem Eiruv has considerably expanded since 1991.

<sup>10</sup> There is considerable debate regarding whether a cemetery constitutes a Karpeif. Rav Eliashiv (Kovetz Teshuvot 1:45) rules leniently, as people visit cemeteries, making it part of the Dirah. Rav Heinemann, though, reports that Rav Moshe Feinstein adopted a strict approach and did not regard a cemetery as part of the Dirah. The Passaic, New Jersey community excludes cemeteries from its Eiruv. An exception even according to the strict view might be cemeteries of special historic and/or national interest, such as Arlington National Cemetery.

<sup>11</sup> See Orchoy Chayim (Ch. 358), Teshuvot Melameid Leho'il (1:65), and Teshuvot Har Tzvi (Orach Chayim vol. 2, Harari VaSadeh p. 249).

<sup>12</sup> Regarding watery areas, see Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 358:11. Rav Heinemann cites Rav Moshe Feinstein, who rules that in contemporary times, even water that is less than three Tefachim deep (approximately 9 to 11 inches) should be regarded as a Karpeif. Although the Mishnah Berurah (Bi'ur Halacha op. cit. s.v. VeHi) considers it a problem only if the water is at least three Tefachim deep, Rav Moshe feels that in contemporary society, unlike in the past (see, for instance, Yoma 77b and Ta'anit 23b), people do not walk through any body of water, even if it is very shallow; thus, no body of water is part of the Dirah.

<sup>13</sup> "Vietnam-like" density and inaccessibility is the way that one of the community members described the areas that are excluded from the Eiruv.

Regarding one of the excluded areas, though, the reality has been changing. It was decided by the relevant Rabbanim that it is no longer necessary to exclude the Hammershop Pond and the Ames Street playground from the Eiruv. In the past, this had been done because the pond area was deemed to be a Karpeif, but that has changed over the last year, as the town of Sharon has invested significantly into cleaning up the pond and its vicinity. During the winter of 2016-2017, a new dam was built to raise the water level, which makes it more conducive for boating, and a new path is currently being built so that the area can be used more regularly. Additionally, the hiking trails between the pond and Lake Massapoag have been better maintained by the local boy scouts.

All of these changes have made this area more fit for recreational usage and part of the Dirah. Upon my suggestion, Rav Noah Cheses (the Rav of the Young Israel of Sharon) even encouraged the community to use it for recreational purposes to further bolster its status as part of the Dirah. This Psak Din was made in consultation with Rav Moshe Heineman and Rav Willig. The recently retired long-term Rav of the community, Rav Meir Sendor, was also included in the decision and is supportive.

#### *Conclusion*

The Sharon Eiruv continues to maintain a high standard regarding the issue of Karpeif and many other areas of Halachic dispute regarding Eiruv. Indeed, the Sharon, Massachusetts Eiruv serves as a model for Eiruv worldwide of how the synergy between the local Rav, Poskim of stature, and a large percentage of lay community members creates and maintains a top-notch community Eiruv.

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