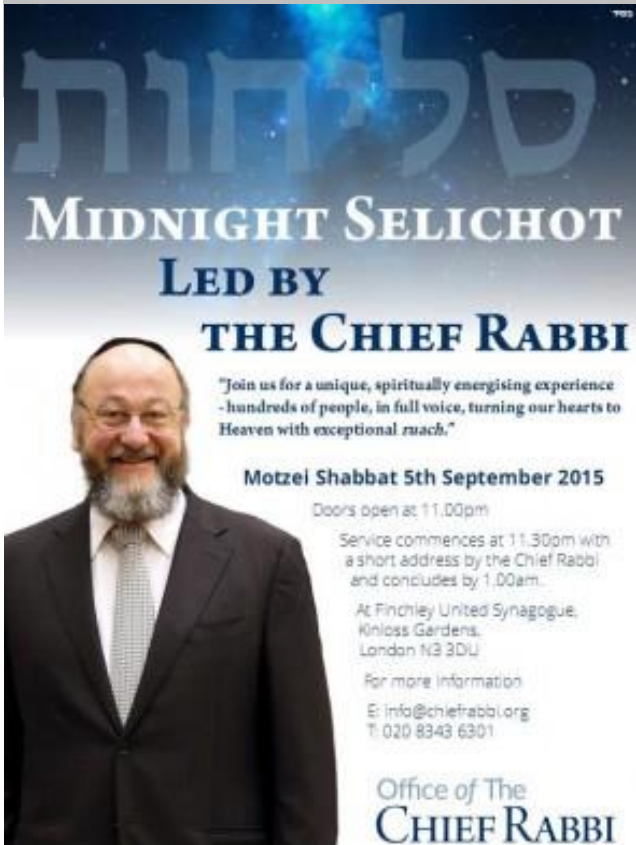


Coming Up...

Full details of all our events are available on our Facebook page, or call the Bayit on 0208 209 1319 to speak to one of the team.

- Watch out for your local svivot, which are relaunching over Sukkot with incredible Sukkah crawls! To find out more, contact your local Rosh or email svivot@bauk.org
- We are excited to be joining with the Chief Rabbi's service for the first night of selichot on Motzei Shabbat 5th September, in Kinloss shul. See <http://kinloss.org.uk/in-the-news/midnight-selichot/> for details
- Selichot will be held every evening at the London Bayit from 6th – 21st September. For information, contact chinuch@bauk.org



סליחות
MIDNIGHT SELICHOT
LED BY
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Motzei Shabbat 5th September 2015

Doors open at 11.00pm
Service commences at 11.30pm with a short address by the Chief Rabbi and concludes by 1.00am.
At Finchley United Synagogue, Kinloss Gardens, London N3 3DU
For more information
E: info@chiefrabbi.org
T: 020 8343 6301


Office of The
CHIEF RABBI

- The Northern Bayit will be hosting Rosh Hashana Tefilla services, and both the Northern and London Batim will be holding services on Yom Kippur. For information, contact chinuch@bauk.org
- London Limmud kicks off on Monday 7th September, with Lord Robert Winston as our special guest speaker! Contact chinuch@bauk.org for details

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ושבתה הארץ Shabbat Lashem 'שבת לה' שופטים - Shoftim

Practice What You Preach

Tamar Shevach

In this week's parasha, Moshe instructs the Jews regarding numerous commandments they need to observe. He tells them that when they appoint a king, the king:

"...shall write for himself two copies of this Torah... it shall be with him, and he shall read from it all the days of his life."

(Devarim 17:18-19)

God wants the king to have a Torah - with all its commandments - in his personal possession at all times. Why?

Often, we'll see people in positions of power who have one set of rules for themselves and a completely separate one for everyone else. Why do so many of those 'in charge' believe that a different set of rules applies to them and to those they are in charge of? The answer is because sometimes, power can go to your head and you can forget that you still have to answer to THE Boss – the One we call God.

This is precisely the reason God wants every king not only to possess two Torah scrolls, but to actually keep one with him at all times. Every place a king goes (except unclean places), the Torah goes with him as well. Clearly, there are many perks that come with being a king, and a king is certainly entitled to all of them. But his underlying behavior must be to abide by God's rules, not his own.

God tells the Jewish people that leaders and their followers must all live by the same rules. Whether teacher and student, parent and child or Madrich/a and Chanich/a. If we preach laws and rules, we must set an example by following and keeping them as well. After all, how can one expect the people who follow their example to live by God's laws if they can't keep to them ourselves? If we give advice readily to others, we should apply it to ourselves. Practice what you preach and you'll find that others will respect you and your words. You will also respect yourself and be humbled, knowing that there is always a higher power and position that the one you are in.

Tamar Shevach is in Shevet Na'aleh and was a Madricha on Bet Chalutz Machane 5775

Shabbat Lashem is sponsored this week by Jane & Barry Rose and Barbara & David Cohen and their families on the occasion of the wedding of Hannah and Ezra on 18th August. Mazal tov!

Editor's Corner

Shalom!

We are back from an incredible summer: over 300 people on machane in Wales and Holland, over 170 Israel Machane participants and our madrichim on Kaytana in Israel had educational and inspiring experiences with Bnei Akiva. We can't wait to welcome you all back for Winter Machane!

We are already looking towards the new year, with plans for meaningful programmes over the Yamim Noraim. See the back page for details!

Shabbat Shalom!

THIS WEEK'S SHABBAT TIMES

		
London	19:57	21:00
Manchester	20:10	21:17
Birmingham	20:02	21:15
Cambridge	19:54	21:06
Leeds	19:30	21:13
Liverpool	20:09	21:24
Jerusalem	18:41	19:54

To receive Shabbat Lashem by email every Friday, or for sponsorship details, send an email to shabbat@bauk.org



Insight and Inspiration on the Parasha

Rav Ari Faust, Rabbinical Shaliach

Coming Back to the Roots of our Judaism

The Asherah tree was one of the most diabolical forms of idolatry in the ancient world. In many near-Eastern beliefs this was a mother goddess, and according to some scholars was worshipped in ancient Israel as Hashem's consort. At the times of Israel's spiritual decline, Asherah worship became rampant and became enemy number one for the prophets, who admonished the Jews for building Asherahs "on every high hill" (1 Melachim 14:23).

In our *parasha*, we are taught the prohibition to erecting Asherahs (Devarim 16:21):

"You shall not plant for yourself an Asherah of any kind of tree beside the altar of Hashem, your God."

The prohibition against the Asherah is followed by that against the *Matzeva* – sacrificial pillar (v.23):

"Neither shall you set up a Matzeva, which Hashem, your God hates."

The mention of these prohibitions is inserted in a strange place; it is in direct juxtaposition with the guidelines to establishing a morally upright and just society – "*Justice, justice shall you follow...*" (v.20). Why are the Asherah and *Matzeva* mentioned in this context? Why is the *Matzeva* hated? What lesson can we learn from the Torah's stark opposition to the Asherah in our modern non-polytheistic society?

Rashi points out that the *Matzeva* was not always a negative form of worship, and the patriarchs would erect them to Hashem; *Matzevas* were only prohibited because it was Canaanite pagan custom to worship idolatry with them. By this logic, however, why are all forms of sacrificial worship not prohibited? Just as the pagans worship with the Asherah and *Matzeva*, they do so with altars and other sacrifices which were sanctioned by the Torah?

Ramban suggests the distinction:

"It seems to me [the distinction is] as follows: The idolatrous Canaanites would construct ... great pillars at the entrance to their temples where the priests would stand, and would plant a tree over it, approving the way for those who pass there (and the Christians continue to do so)"

According to Ramban, the Asherah was not only worshipped as a deity, but it also served as an ornate item indicating the entrance to pagan temples and ushering the worshippers in. (The Ramban writes that according to some scholars, this is the precursor to church steeples.) The extra evil of the *Matzeva* and Asherah beyond all other forms of idolatrous worship was that they initiated the way to idolatry and paved the path away from godliness. The Asherah is thus the starting point and root of *Avodah Zara*.

The prohibition against the Asherah and *Matzevah* – the markers of the pagan temples and roots of foreign worship – remind us that in order to live a life of authentic and passionate belief, we must start by being aware of the root of our beliefs, performing them out of choice instead of rote.

When behaviours become norm, they begin to be performed mindlessly. Habitual actions are both hard to break, and also hard to perform passionately. Rav Kook writes (Orot HaTeshuva 5:5):

"Stubbornness to stagnate around a particular idea and use of it to support sinful ways that become habitual ... is a disease that comes from preoccupation in deep bondage and prevents the light of freedom from radiating ..."

While habits and customs are important, complacency is dangerous as it causes us to both justify our negative behaviours and stifle our spiritual growth. It is therefore so important to be constantly aware of our actions and beliefs, to ensure they are genuine, and not simply habit. It is at the root of our beliefs and actions, that the authenticity and passion of our worship is ensured.

A society that fails to uproot its Asherahs is doomed to remain stagnant and complacent, and will ultimately stray to foreign worship. The Torah encourages us to establish a society rooted in authentic, invigorated and passionate belief. We mustn't uproot our customs, but we are encouraged to remain aware of our actions and beliefs in order to enjoy the freedom of renewal and excitement.

Rav Ari Faust is in Shevet Yechiam, and is Shaliach for Bnei Akiva and the Jewish Agency for Israel

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All the Land that You See

Looking at and learning about every corner of our Land

Yavneh

Hannah Sherrard

During the Roman siege of Yerushalayim in 70 C.E. Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai determined that in order for the Jewish people to survive, they had to re-establish their national centre in another area of Israel. His students smuggled him out of the city in a coffin and led him to the Roman leader, Vespasian, to whom he famously pleaded for the city of Yavneh as the new centre for Jewish life. His request was granted; the founding of Yavneh represents the birth of Rabbinic Judaism. It created a way of life centred around Torah learning and Jewish values. Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai decreed that some practises that had been performed only in Jerusalem were moved to Yavneh, such as the blowing of the Shofar on Shabbat.

The Sanhedrin was relocated from Yerushalayim to Yavneh, where they were the focal point for the Rabbinic law, though their power was curtailed – they could not judge capital cases in the way they had in Yerushalayim. Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai was the Nasi. It was at Yavneh that the council famously chose to rule in favour of Beit Hillel over Beit Shammai. At Yavneh the laws of Temple worship were laid out. And it was at Yavneh that the bracha *Velamalshinim* was added to the weekday *Shmone Esreh*, which asks Hashem to vanquish our enemies. This made a total of 19 benedictions and aimed to counter the growing Christian influence.

It is arguable that without Rabbi Yochanan's fast action and vision of another religious centre, the Jewish people would not be as strong as we are today. In this period of comfort following the Three Weeks, we must look back on our past and remember where we came from. Just like, the Jewish people are mighty in a small package.

Hannah Sherrard is in Shevet Eitan and is on Hachsharat Torani in Midreshet Harova in 5776