

## The Blessing to be like Fish

### Tiferes Shlomo on the Parsha

האספו ואנידה לכם את אשר יקרא אתכם  
באחרית הימים

*Gather and I will tell you that which  
will happen to you in the end of days*

In Shir Hashirim we read משכני אהרין  
נרוצה. We ask Hashem to draw us to  
Him (משכני) and then we will run after  
and follow Him (אהרין נרוצה).

One of the methods of legal acquisition  
is Kinyan Meshicha, where the  
acquirer “draws” the object into his  
possession.

There are two methods of Kinyan  
Meshicha when acquiring an animal.  
One is by striking the animal and  
causing it to move. The other is  
through calling the animal so that it  
comes.

The same two methods apply in our  
request that Hashem draw us to Him  
and into His possession.

The striking refers to suffering in  
Exile which caused us to turn to Ha-  
shem in Teshuvah. But we have al-  
ready been struck and suffered too  
much, so we ask Hashem to draw us  
towards Him to acquire us in the Final  
Redemption, through the alternate  
method of “calling”, an expression of  
Chessed.

This is the inner meaning of Yaakov’s  
words. At that time, Yaakov wished  
to reveal to his children the time of  
the Messianic Redemption in the end  
of days.

He employs the word יקרא which in  
addition to meaning happen, also  
means to call. The verse can be read  
“I will tell you that He will call to you  
at the end of days”.

Yaakov was Davening that in the end  
of days, after we have already suf-  
fered so much in Golus and cannot  
bear anymore, Hashem should draw  
us to Him through calling to us; not  
through further striking, but through  
revelation, closeness and Chessed.

Before passing away, Yaakov blessed Yosef’s sons,  
Menashe and Ephraim with the blessing Hamalach  
Hagoel Osi which concludes with the words וידגו  
לרוב בקרב הארץ, “May they grow into a multitude  
in the midst of the earth.”

The word וידגו derives from the word דג - fish.  
Yaakov was blessing Ephraim and Menashe that they  
should resemble fish.

Our sages in the Midrash and Talmud, present a num-  
ber of explanations of the significance of this blessing.  
Following the literal meaning of the verse, Yaakov  
was blessing them that they be fruitful and multiply  
like fish.

Further, being submerged under water, fish are im-  
mune to Ayin Hara, the evil eye, which cannot rule  
over things that are hidden. After this blessing,  
Yosef’s descendants were known to be immune to  
the Ayin Hara and had no reason to fear it.

These explanations fit with the blessing that Yaakov  
gives Yosef later in the Parsha בן פורת יוסף בן פורת  
עין, “A charming son is Yosef, a charming son  
upon the eye”. The Talmud teaches that the word  
עין should be read as עולי, meaning that Yosef rises  
above “the eye”. In addition to beauty or charm, the  
word פורת can also mean to be fruitful, deriving from  
פרי פרי.

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, in his famed work  
Kedushas Levi, shares a deeper insight on the signifi-  
cance of the blessing to be like fish.

The word דג is made up of the letters Dalet and  
Gimmel. The Talmud teaches that the word Dalet  
means to be impoverished. Gimmel on the other  
hand means to be a benefactor. Dalet represents a  
state of lowliness and suffering. As the benefactor,  
Gimmel represents a source of blessing, success and  
good fortune.

In the Hebrew alphabet, Gimmel precedes Dalet. But  
in the word דג, the letters are reversed.

When Yaakov blessed Ephraim and Menashe to be  
like fish, he was blessing them with the sequence of  
the letters in the word דג; that when they inevitably  
face hardship and suffering, they should merit to see  
it transformed and followed by greater goodness and  
to then understand how their challenges were what  
led to this greater goodness and success.

This blessing is especially connected to Ephraim and  
Menashe, whose names reflect the life experience of

their father Yosef.

Yosef named his firstborn son Menashe, saying that  
“G-d has caused me to forget... my father’s house”.  
This name embodied Yosef’s pain and his years of  
suffering, having been sold as a slave and finding  
himself in a land far away from his father’s home.

His second son was named Ephraim, “because G-d  
has made me fruitful in the land of suffering”. In giv-  
ing this name, Yosef recognised that his suffering was  
part of a plan that ultimately brought him to tremen-  
dous success and accomplishment. Had he not been  
sold into slavery and later ended up in prison, he  
would not have become viceroy of Egypt and would  
not have been able to save his family.

Each of the 12 months of the year corresponds to one  
of the 12 Tribes. The month of Adar corresponds to  
the Tribe of Yosef. Just as Yosef is divided into the  
two tribes of Ephraim and Menashe, in a leap year  
there are two Adars. The zodiac sign for the month of  
Adar is Mazal Dagim (Pisces).

Like the word דג, the beginning of the month of Adar  
was negative, as the Jewish people in the Persian  
empire faced the threat of annihilation under  
Haman’s decree. But in the middle of the month,  
their fortune changed. They defeated their enemies,  
and the festival of Purim was established, transform-  
ing the month of Adar “from anguish to joy and from  
mourning to a festival.”

The blessing that Yaakov gave to Ephraim and  
Menashe to be like fish, was a blessing to every Jew.  
We specifically bless our children to be like Ephraim  
and Menashe and we bless them with the words of  
Hamalach Hagoel Osi, that they too be like fish.

The blessing is a message of hope and strength for  
when we face both the personal challenges in our  
lives as well as our national, collective suffering as a  
people in exile.

As real and painful as the hardship and suffering is,  
we are blessed with faith, resilience and optimism,  
knowing that from the Dalet we will come to the  
Gimmel. We will emerge from our darkness to greater  
light, strength and growth and see a brighter future.

Like this week where we go immediately from the  
fast of the 10th of Teves into Shabbos, we will tri-  
umph over our enemies and we will emerge from the  
darkness of exile to the light of Geulah and the ulti-  
mate and everlasting Shabbos.

## When the 10th of Teves falls on Friday - Part 2

Rabbi Yonason Johnson

To dedicate an edition of Hamaor or to commission a Halachic Analysis topic please email rabbijohnson@gmail.com

This year, the fast of Asarah B'Teves falls out on Erev Shabbos.

In last week's edition we explored the opinions of the Rishonim on whether one should continue fasting until nightfall and whether one should continue to fast even if one Davened Kabbolas Shabbos and accepted Shabbos.

The Halachic conclusion is that if one did not Daven and accept Shabbos early, one must continue to fast until nightfall. If one accepted Shabbos early, the Ram"o makes a distinction between private, where one is not obligated to continue fasting and communal fasts, where one is still obligated to fast until nightfall.

This position is the accepted Halacha as adopted by the Poskim, including the Magen Avraham, Alter Rebbe and Mishna Berura.

Based on this, when Asarah B'Teves falls on Friday, we continuing fasting until nightfall - Tzeis Hakochavim. Davening Kabbolas Shabbos early would not make a difference.

### When to Daven Maariv?

It appears from the Poskim that it is Halachically preferable to not Daven Maariv early, even though they will wait until after Tzeis Hakochavim to eat.

As discussed in last week's edition, the Alter Rebbe writes that according to the Maharam, after davening Maariv and accepting Shabbos, it is forbidden to continue fasting. Even though we do not follow the leniency of the Maharam and we continue to fast until nightfall, one should not Daven early and unnecessarily put themselves in a situation where they will be 'fasting on Shabbos'.

(In communities where they would not get a Minyan or people would not come to Shule if they wait until nightfall to Daven, there is room for leniency to Daven Kabbolas Shabbos and Maariv early).

Some Acharonim<sup>1</sup> write that when a fast falls on Erev Shabbos, they should Daven Maariv a little bit earlier, so that there is time for people to get home in time for Tzeis Hakochavim, in order to make Kiddush and start their meal straight away at the earliest possible time.

This is because after Tzeis Hakochavim the fast has ended and there would be an Issur to continue to fast any longer on Shabbos. When Davening Maariv before Tzeis Hakochavim,

one must say Krias Shema after nightfall before making Kiddush.

Those who have the Minhag of always Davening Maariv after Tzeis Hakochavim, do not need to change their custom. However, they should still Daven at the earliest possible time and hurry home immediately after Davening ends.

### Other Opinions and Scope for Leniency

The following are additional insights on the topic which present more lenient opinions.

The Beis Yosef quotes the Raavad, that when the Gemara says that one concludes the fast on Erev Shabbos, it means only until the beginning of Shkiya<sup>2</sup>. This time is already considered an extension of Shabbos and one cannot fast any longer.

Whilst we do not follow the Raavad and rather fast until nightfall, the Raavad's opinion is referenced in Piskei Dinim of the Tzemach Tzedek - Laws of Fast Days, as basis for leniency.

There is a second Teshuvah of the Mahari"l<sup>3</sup> concerning fasting on Erev Shabbos. He writes that for personal fasts "my custom is to fast until after Maariv like the Maharam". However, for communal fasts, he writes "I am personally stringent to complete the fast (until nightfall)... but for others I say דעבד כמר עבד ודעבד כמר עבד - let them follow whichever opinion they wish".

This seems to suggest that even for public fasts, one may eat after Davening Maariv early. He concludes that the main thing is to have intent Lshem Shamayim.

Knesses Hagedolah<sup>4</sup> quotes Sefer Chassidim<sup>5</sup> who writes "When a fast falls on Friday and they read Veychal at Mincha, it is preferable not to Daven Maariv while it is still day and eat immediately. Rather one should delay and not complete (the fast) – ולא ישלים.

It is difficult to understand this Sefer Chassidim which seems self-contradictory<sup>6</sup>. If one should not complete the fast, why not Daven early while it is still day? Perhaps he is saying that while one should not complete the fast, they should still delay their eating until a later time (before Shabbos comes in).

Again, the Halacha does not follow these lenient opinions in relation to communal fast days.

Nonetheless, based on these opinions, as well as the practise of Rabbeinu Yitzchak discussed last week, some Poskim<sup>7</sup> write that there is room to

be lenient in a Shaas Hadechak or for someone who is feeling unwell, to at least be able to Daven Maariv early and eat then, especially if they will wait until after Shekiya.

One should discuss any personal situations or possibility of leniency, with their local Halachic authority.

### A Final Point

Avudraham writes that the fast of Asarah B'Teves has a stringency over all of the other fasts, and were it to fall on Shabbos, we would fast on Shabbos. This is because the verse describing the siege on Yerushalaim on the 10th of Teves uses the phrase בַּעֲצֻם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה, "on that very day". The same term is used to describe the fasting on Yom Kippur. From this we derive that just as one fast on Yom Kippur on Shabbos, the same applies to the 10th of Teves.

The Avudraham is not applicable as Asarah B'Teves cannot fall out on Shabbos. Nonetheless, the Lubavitcher Rebbe suggests<sup>8</sup> that based on the Avudraham, when Asarah B'Teves falls on Erev Shabbos, it is possible that according to all opinions one must fast until nightfall, even after having davened Maariv. Accordingly, the discussion in the Rishonim and Poskim about whether one continues to fast or not, would refer to other communal fast days.

When Moshiach comes, all of the fast days will be transformed into days of celebration. Being that Asarah B'Teves has a stricter dimension relating to the fast, it will be a greater day of celebration in the times of the Redemption.

May Moshiach come before this Shabbos, so that instead of fasting, we will enter Shabbos with the greatest joy of all.

1. See Tehillah Ledovid
2. The Raavad follows the Shitah of Rabbeinu Tam that the sunset over the horizon is only the beginning of Shkiya and not the time that Shabbos comes in. Nonetheless it is the time of Tosefes Shabbos and therefore one no longer fasts.
3. Siman 157. The Ram"o does not source this responsa, but rather follows the Mahari's earlier Teshuvah.
4. OC 249
5. Siman 190. Other editions of the Sefer Chassidim have this in Siman 229
6. Our editions of Sefer Chassidim read – ולא ישלים and they should complete the fast.
7. Nitei Gavriel Volume Chanutah Teshuvah Siman 14
8. Parshas Vayigash 5749

