



From the desk of  
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## Office of the Rabbinate of Elad, Rosh HaAyin and Herzelia

Religious Court of Elad \* Batei Hora'ah \* Religious Services \* Marriage Licensing \* Kashrut \* Mikvaot \* Eiruvim

### TORAT

### Parashat Ki Tavo

### HAMELECH

#### Right for the Times

In the *parashah* of *bikurim*, the Torah tells us to bring the *bikurim* to the *kohen* who is in your times. What would we think?! Could one possibly bring *bikurim* to a *kohen* who is not in his times?

Also in last week's *parashah*, when we wanted to know the *halachah* regarding a certain matter, we were told to go to the *kohen*, *levi* or judge of our days. The same question can be asked.

And the same answer can be given. Do not say, "We no longer have to listen to nor respect our Rabbis since they are not of the caliber of the Sages of previous generations." No, each generation was given leaders perfectly suited for that particular time and place. Those are the ones you are to ask; those are the ones you are to respect.

#### Equating Sages

All leadership positions are decided by HaKadosh Boruch Hu, even something so seemingly insignificant as the one who decides which farmer will take a turn drawing water from the well (Bava Batra 91b).

We all know the story of Rabban Gamliel and Rabbi Yehoshua, how they differed in opinion which day should be Yom Kippur that year.

Rabban Gamliel was the Nasi, and he felt that he had to make his stance incumbent upon all of Klal Yisroel. He decreed that Rabbi Yehoshua appear before him with his staff, and his money belt on the day which Rabbi Yehoshua had calculated should be Yom Kippur. At first, Rabbi Yehoshua was reluctant, despondent. But then he was taught that we are to follow the leaders of each generation even if they are mistaken, especially when it comes to *Kiddush Hachodesh*.

The Gemara there goes on to say that we were not taught the names of all of the Elders in the times of Moshe Rabbeinu so that we could always claim that perhaps the Sages of any given generation were on the same level as one or more of those Elders.

Additionally, the Navi equates three of our less significant leaders with three of our greatest [Gidon-Moshe, Shimshon-Aharon, Yiftach-Shmuel] just to teach us that regardless of a person's level, if he is the spiritual leader of that generation, we are to respect him and heed his word.

#### Sages for all Ages

On the one hand, we are to know that there is a concept of *Yeridat HaDorot* – the further we are away from Har Sinai, the lower level each



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generation becomes. Thus, we find (Shabbat 112b): If the great ones of earlier generations are akin to angels, they we may consider ourselves human. But if we view them as human, we must view ourselves as donkeys, and I don't mean righteous donkeys like those of Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa or Rabbi Pinchus ben Yair.

We also find Rabbi Yochanan saying (Eiruvim 53a): the hearts of those of earlier generations were open wide like the [20-amah wide] opening of the *Ulam*. In later generations, like the [10-amah wide] opening of the *Heichal*. And our hearts? Like the eye of a sewing needle! [That's not so wide, by the way.]

Nonetheless, although we ought to know and be aware of the lowering level scholastically and in piety, we still must understand that the Sages in our times were given to us to be our leaders and they are right for us.

### Leaders That Fit

Moreover, we are taught (Kohelet Rabba 1:4) that had Aharon HaKohen been alive in the generation of Yehoyada the High Priest, Yehoyada would still be the High Priest and Aharon would be his underling. The Medrash continues and says that had Aharon HaKohen been alive in the times of Ezra HaSofer (who was

also a Kohen), Ezra would be the Kohen Gadol, not Aharon!

What does that mean? Each generation's leaders are suited for that generation!

The Arizal told Reb Chaim Vital that since there is great darkness and many negative spiritual forces in later generations, therefore, those who keep the Torah steadfastly when times are rough could be accomplishing so much more than great acts of piety with lofty intentions and pure motives of earlier generations.

Hashem knows the challenges of each generation. Says the Sefer Da'at Shraga: If our generation would need the Chofetz Chaim, we would be given him. If we do not have the Chofetz Chaim among us, this means that the Gedolei Yisroel which we do have are the ones we must heed.

### Word to the Wise

Here's a word for the wise! Even if you feel that you are wiser than the current community leader, humble yourself before him! Respect him and follow his rulings!

The Chid"ra sees this message is Sefer Shoftim, where all the trees sought a leader and even the fruit trees had to accept the sovereignty of the simple thornbush.



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So too, says the Chid"ra, even a great Torah scholar must respect the town Rabbi even if the said scholar knows more and understands better. He must make sure not to embarrass the local Rabbi or point out any flaws.

### The Chatam Sofer, in the Eyes of Rav Banett

And it was in the days of Rabbi Mordechai Banett. A difficult case of an *agunah* (deserted woman) came to his Beit Din. Reb Mordechai said to send the *sheila* to the Chatam Sofer, who was many years his junior. The Chatam Sofer received the letter, understood its urgency, and immediately sat down and wrote an extensive *teshuvah*. His son, Reb Shimon, wondered how his father was able to write an entire *teshuvah* on such a complex issue without even once glancing at any *sefer*. The Chatam Sofer told him that Hashem gives special assistance to those whose job it is to answer *sheilot* for the public.

Well, the *teshuva* arrived. R' Mordechai Banett glanced at the bottom line and said, "He found a *heter*. Announce that she may marry."

Some of the *Rabbonim* on the Beit Din were taken aback. They said, "Hey! We are also *Rabbonim*. Can we please take a look at the *teshuva* so we can discuss it and decide whether or not we agree with his proofs and arguments?"

Rav Banett replied, "Whatever the Rav of Pressbug [i.e., the Chatam Sofer] wrote is *Torah min HaShamayim*."

### The Chicken and the Gaon

In the neighborhood of the Vilna Gaon lived a G-d fearing tailor. One Friday, he bought a chicken, took it to be slaughtered and brought it home for his wife to salt and cook. By mistake, as it was cooking, she stirred the pot with a dairy spoon.

Her husband went to ask Reb Shmuel, the Av Beit Din, what to do. In the meantime, the wife decided to ask the *sheila* to the Vilna Gaon, who lived nearby. The Gaon ruled that the chicken was not to be eaten. But the Rav of Vilna said that it was fine. So the husband returned to the Rav and asked what to do. The Rav said, "I am the Rav in this town. You may eat the chicken. Not only that, I will come to your house this evening together with the Gaon and we will all partake."

That night, after Kiddush and Hamotzi, Reb Shmuel went to the home of the Gaon and told him, respectfully, that for the sake of the upkeep of Halacha in town, it must be shown that what the Rav says goes. So please escort me now as we go and partake of the chicken.



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Indeed, the two prestigious guests made their way to the tailor's home. The woman of the house was so enamored and nervous, that as she brought out the chicken, her elbow bumped into the candelabra and a significant amount of *cheilev* – forbidden fat, which had been designated for fueling the flame, fell into the food. All were aghast.

Reb Shmuel apologized to the Gaon. He said, "Is this a sign from Heaven that I was not supposed to oppose his Honor?"

The Gaon replied, "No. You are the Rav and your word is the final word. Nonetheless, Heaven had this happen so as to protect me from eating that which I personally had ruled to be unkosher."

From then on, the Gaon refrained from issuing Halachic decisions.

For our purposes, we see from this story how the Gaon was prepared to put his own calculations aside for the sake of respecting the decision of the local Rav.

### Get a Rav

We have learned here the importance of having a Rav to consult with when any question arises. But don't just wait for questions to come up. Make sure to learn Halachot, go to shiurim, be alert, think about the future. This is important in life in general and specifically in building a home.

Sometimes a husband and wife learned things a little differently before their marriage. In general, in matters of customs, the husband's *minhagim* are followed. But in matters of Halacha, it is imperative that the two of them choose together a Rav to follow, someone whom they feel comfortable with, someone who is authoritative and accessible. Contacting him when the need arises will offer clear guidance and will also help peace reign in the home.

It is so important in today's society, to praise all Torah scholars. Let your spouse and children hear how you respect and admire all true Torah scholars. Even if you personally follow a particular Rav for whatever reason, let none of your surroundings ever hear a word or hint of degradation of any Torah scholar, living or deceased.

And once you pick a Rav, go with him all the way. You cannot pick and choose. Oh, I'll ask that Rav for this and the other Rav for that and if this one is too stringent, I'll find one who is lenient. Once you find a Rav who is knowledgeable in Halacha and you feel understands you and your lifestyle, stick with him through thick and thin.

When the need arises, ask a *Gadol HaDor*.

**Ketiva Vachatima Tova,  
Mordechai Malka**