



# Bet Haraah בית הוראה Shaarei Ezra שערי עזרא

**Parshat Nitsavim– Vayelech**

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## WARS AND WONDERS—WHEN VICTORY HONORS HASHEM

WRITTEN BY RABBI SHAY TAHAN

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As the war in Lebanon has raged on for nearly a year, recent explosions have taken a significant turn, neutralizing thousands of Hezbollah's advanced fighters and high-ranking commanders. This blow to the terrorist group, which poses a serious and immediate threat to the existence of the Jewish nation, was met with cheers from Jewish communities worldwide. Today, we would like to explore whether such events can be seen as a Kiddush Hashem, sanctifying God's name, or possibly a Chilul Hashem, as they cause suffering to many people, even if they are the enemy.

Although actions like detonating pagers and walkie-talkies and targeting houses storing terrorist ammunition are necessary for self-defense against those who intend to harm us, clarifying the nature of such actions helps us place our faith and trust in the right place. If these acts are considered a Kiddush Hashem, we can take comfort in them, praise Hashem for the success, and pray for continued protection, b'ezrat Hashem.

It's important to remember that when a soldier goes to fight on the battlefield, he must understand that he is not fighting a personal war or even solely for his country. He is fighting Hashem's war, as the enemies of the Jewish people are also the enemies of Hashem, as stated in the Torah.

After Midyan caused the Israelite men to sin in the desert, Hashem commands Moshe to take revenge on behalf of the nation. However, when Moshe gathers the men for battle, he instructs them to avenge Hashem's revenge. Why the shift in wording? Rashi explains that there was no change; rather, the nation's revenge is, in fact, Hashem's revenge. The reason is clear: the hatred toward the Jewish people throughout history is not due to any personal failing or physical characteristic, like a crooked nose, horns, or spreading diseases. The true reason for this hatred is that we represent Hashem in the world. As the cho-

sen nation, we carry Hashem's divine message and serve as a light to the nations. Thus, the hatred is not directed at us personally but at Hashem Himself.

The idea that when we fight a war, we are fulfilling Hashem's will, and that victory in battle is considered

a Kiddush Hashem, is mentioned in several sources. The Rambam (פ"ז מהלכות מלכים הלכה טו), or example, states that "when a soldier goes to war, he should not fear but instead focus entirely on achieving Kiddush Hashem". It is clear from his words that our fight is for the purpose of honoring Hashem, and thus a victory achieves that, while, G-d



forbid, a defeat results in the opposite.

This concept—that our victories over enemies are actually Hashem's victories—is also found in various psukim. In Tehillim (תהילים, קלז), it says, "Hashem saves us for His own sake and to announce His power. The Malbim explains that when we are saved, Hashem's name is glorified, making our victory His. Therefore, when we pray for our soldiers, we don't merely pray for their success for our own safety and prosperity but for Hashem's honor. This elevates the prayer to a higher cause and places Hashem directly involved in the war we fight. There are more psukim indicating that Hashem saves us from the enemy for His sake, such as the pasuk (לד, יט) "I will save this city for My sake," and (שמואל א' יב, כב) "Hashem will not abandon His nation for the sake of His great name."

On the contrary, when our nation is defeated in war, chas veshalom, it is considered a Chilul Hashem (desecration of Hashem's name), as Hashem's name is dishonored. As the pasuk states, "The Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it, and they will surround us and cut off our name from the earth. And what will You do for Your great name?" (יהושע ו, ט). Similarly, King David pleads with Hashem (תהילים קטו): "Not to us, but to Your name give glory, for the sake of Your kindness and truth."

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## WARS AND WONDERS—WHEN VICTORY HONORS HASHEM

Why should the nations say, 'Where now is their God?'"

Moshe Rabbeinu made a similar plea: "Why should Egypt say, 'With evil intent did He bring them out, to kill them in the mountains and to annihilate them from the face of the earth?' (שמות (לב, יב). The Or HaChaim explains that such statements would result in a terrible Chilul Hashem, as the nations would not only discuss it among themselves but also spread this belief to other nations, thus magnifying the desecration of Hashem's name. There are numerous other similar examples in Torah sources.

Therefore, the Rambam writes (Mitzvat Asei 191) that before the people would go to war, the anointed priest for war would address the soldiers with words of inspiration, reminding them that they are risking their lives "to support the faith of Hashem and preserve it, and to take vengeance on those who undermine it, damaging the integrity of nations."

Precisely for these reasons, fighting such a war is considered a

milchemet mitzvah (commanded war). The Rambam explains that a milchemet mitzvah is a war against those who come to assault our nation. This means that if enemies attack Jewish territories—whether by firing rockets or through other means—it becomes an obligatory mitzvah to fight against them in order to protect and defend our people.

In addition, we are all familiar with the Torah's commandment: "If someone comes to kill you, rise up and kill them first." This is a moral obligation in the Torah. It applies whether the war takes place within the borders of Eretz Yisrael or anywhere else in the world. If an enemy attacks, we are obligated to stand against them and neutralize them by any means necessary. Of course, using strategy, deception, and surprise attacks are essential components of warfare, as the verse says, "With wise counsel, wage your war" (בתחבולות תעשה לך מלחמה).

### IS LEBANON PART OF ISRAEL'S PROMISED TERRITORY?

The recent conflict in Lebanon raises the age-old question regarding the northern borders of biblical Eretz Yisrael. Where exactly did Hashem define the boundaries, and are we obligated to conquer those areas? Do the mitzvot of terumah and ma'aser apply to those lands as part of Eretz Yisrael, or are they considered outside the borders?

The Torah provides clear guidelines regarding the areas we were commanded to conquer when taking possession of the land.

In the last generation, the term "Greater Israel" has come to the forefront. It is sometimes used in political or religious discussions about the ideal or future borders of Israel, often in the context of messianic or Zionist aspirations. Some interpret it as a call for the re-establishment of Israel's biblical borders. However, the concept varies in meaning, ranging from symbolic or spiritual interpretations to literal geographical claims.

This term refers to the concept of the biblical boundaries of the Land of Israel as promised to the Jewish people in various parts of the Torah. It is often associated with the land described in the Covenant with Avraham (Brit Bein HaBetarim), which stretches from the "River of Egypt" (interpreted by some as the Nile or a smaller river in Sinai) to the Perat River. This expansive region includes parts of modern-day Israel, the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Iraq.

When Hashem promised Avraham Avinu the Land of Israel at the Brit Bein HaBetarim, the pasuk says (בראשית טז) "On that day, Hashem made a covenant with Avram, saying: To your descendants, I have given this land—from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates."

At the blessing at the end of Parshat Ekev, Hashem tells us that we are granted every land we will conquer within the borders mentioned. In the north, the Torah states: "Every place where the

sole of your foot will tread shall be yours—from the wilderness and the Lebanon, from the river—the Euphrates River—until the western sea shall be your boundary." This promise from the Creator clearly places the land of Lebanon within the Promised Land of Israel, or what some refer to as "the Complete Land of Israel", or "The greater Israel".

The Ramban wrote that Lebanon is within the borders of Israel and adds that we were obligated and commanded to conquer it.

Sefer Yehoshua begins with Hashem speaking to Yehoshua and repeating the above command: "Every place your foot will step has been given to you, as I spoke to Moshe—from the desert and Lebanon until the great river, the Euphrates."

The Tribe of Asher is mainly associated with regions that include parts of Lebanon. Following the conquest of the land under Yehoshua, the tribes established their territories, with Asher extending into areas adjacent to Lebanon. The text describes the border of the Tribe of Asher, detailing sections of borders and lists of cities, some of which are border cities that mark the tribe's boundary. With-

in the inheritance of the Tribe of Asher lies the Valley of Acco, north of Mount Carmel, with its northernmost point in the city of Sidon.

The extension of the Land of Israel to include additional territories, such as in the concept of "Greater Israel," has several potential halachic implications. These mainly revolve around commandments that are tied specifically to the land, known as mitzvot hateluyot ba'aretz- (mitzvot dependent on the land). Some key halachic implications include:

**1. Mitzvot Dependent on the Land:** Certain agricultural commandments apply only in the Land of Israel. These include:

- **Shmitta** (the sabbatical year where the land must rest every



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seven years).

- **Terumot and Ma'aserot** (tithes given to the Kohanim, Levites, and the poor).

- **Orlah** (the prohibition of eating fruits from trees during the first three years of their growth).

Expanding Israel's borders would mean extending the requirement to observe these mitzvot in the newly included territories.

2. **Two days of Yomtov:** There is a difference between those who live within the borders of Israel, who observe one day of Yom Tov, and those living outside, who keep two days. Accordingly, if the land were to extend to the greater borders of Israel, this distinction would apply. (According to halacha that follows the Ritva

רמב"ם הל' קדוש ריטב"א ר"ה יח, א; סוכה מג, א (החודש ה, ט"ב)

3. **Inhabitants and Settlement:** According to some opinions, living in the biblical boundaries of Eretz Yisrael may be considered a mitzvah. Expanding Israel's borders could extend the obligation for Jews to settle and inhabit those areas.

4. **Traveling Outside the land:** One may not leave the boundaries

of Eretz Yisrael if they dwell there, except for learning Torah, getting married, or for their livelihood. Therefore, they can travel to those extra territories if they are conquered.

5. **War and Conquest:** The concept of milchemet mitzvah (a commanded war) includes conquering certain territories that were promised in the Torah. If new land is identified as part of the biblical borders, there may be halachic discussions about the obligation to conquer and settle it.

The River Perat, commonly identified with the Euphrates River, is situated in the Middle East. It flows through several countries, including Turkey, Syria, and Iraq, before emptying into the Persian Gulf. In biblical contexts, the Euphrates River is often mentioned as a significant boundary in the promises made to the Jewish people regarding the Land of Israel.

If one looks at a map, they will be astounded by how far north this river extends and how vast the Land of Israel truly is. While we may not be able to reclaim all of it in our time, Hashem will surely return it to us soon.

## GUIDELINES FOR TIMING YOUR MAASER CALCULATIONS

One of the things that can tilt the scale in judgment on Rosh Hashanah is tzedakah. Since people are accustomed to giving maaser, which is a form of tzedakah, many questions arise about how to calculate it as the year comes to an end. Let's first explain the concept of separating maaser (tithes).

**What's the difference between maaser and chomesh, and is there a source for either?**

Maaser refers to giving 10% of one's income to tzedakah (charity), while chomesh refers to giving 20%. Maaser is the standard practice, while chomesh represents a higher level of giving for those who can afford it. The sources for maaser (giving 10%) and chomesh (giving 20%) can be found in various parts of the Torah, Talmud, and later rabbinic literature.

### Maaser (10%)

1. Torah Sources:

- Maaser kesafim (tithing of money) is not directly mentioned in the Torah as a commandment like agricultural maaser (tithing of produce), but it is based on principles from the agricultural maaser, where 10% of the harvest was given to the Levites (Bamidbar 18:21).

- The idea of giving a portion of one's wealth can be inferred from Yaakov's vow: "And of all that You give me, I

will surely give a tenth to You" (Bereshit 28:22).

2. Talmudic and Rabbinic Sources:

- The Talmud in Taanit 9a mentions that giving maaser is a source of blessing: "Aser te'aser" (Devarim 14:22), which the Talmud interprets as, "Tithe, so that you will become rich."
- The Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh De'ah 249:1) codifies the practice of giving 10% of one's income to charity.



### Chomesh (20%)

1. Talmudic Source:

- The Talmud in Ketubot 50a teaches that one should not give more than 20% of their income to charity, in order to ensure they do not impoverish themselves. However, giving up to 20% (chomesh) is considered virtuous and generous for those who can afford it.

2. Shulchan Aruch:

- The Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh De'ah 249:1) also notes that one who wants to fulfill the mitzvah in an ideal way should give 20% (chomesh), but it cautions against giving more than this except under certain conditions.

Thus, maaser is seen as the standard minimum, while chomesh is an act of greater generosity, with both practices rooted in Torah principles and expanded upon by

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rabbinic tradition.

Another source for chomesh is the Talmud Yerushalmi (beginning of Peah), which explicitly states that one should separate chomesh from their income. However, the Yaavetz (Sefer Mor U'Ktzia) argues that there is no separate concept of chomesh, only maaser. He suggests that the idea of giving 20% means giving maaser twice—10% initially, and if one sees they can give more, they should add another maaser.

### How often should one calculate their income in order to separate maaser?

Ideally, one should calculate their income every few months, whether every 3 or 6 months, but they should not exceed 12 months. Therefore, it is appropriate to fix the time to calculate right on the eve of Rosh Hashanah (Chavot Yayir 224, Aruch Hashulchan 249, 7).

### One who separated maaser and subsequently had a bad business deal that resulted in a loss: can they take back their loss from the maaser they separated?

The Chafetz Chaim (Ahavat Chesed chapter 18) writes that once a person separates maaser, the money is no longer considered theirs. Therefore, they cannot retract their giving or use it to make up for their loss.

### One who calculates their income and finds that they had a gain in one business and a loss in another: can they deduct the loss from the gain for the purpose of maaser?

The Nodah Biyehudah and the Shaar Efrayim argue about this matter. The Shaar Efrayim is more strict than the Nodah Biyehudah, who permits it. The Shevet Halevi rules in accordance with the Nodah Biyehudah (See all in Shevet Halevi 5, 133, 9).

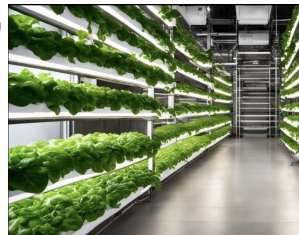
### If one did not give their maaser in a certain year and then suffered a loss the following year, may they deduct the loss from their previous year's gain?

According to both opinions, one may not mix maaser gains and losses from one year to another, as the pasuk states: "Separate maaser that comes out yearly."

## ברכת ירקות מגידולי מים

ואין בידנו להכריע בין עמודי הוראה אלו. ויש דיון רחב בהלכה אם אומרים ספק ברכות להקל כשיש מחלוקת בהלכה, והסוברים כן יורו לברך על גידולי מים 'שהכל'.

אכן כשבא לידנו ירק ואין אנו יודעים אם הוא מגידולי קרקע או מגידולי מים, פסק הגר"ע יוסף (שם ד"ה אמנם) שיש לברך מן הספק 'בורא פרי האדמה' כיון שרוב הפירות והירקות הנמצאים בשוק הם גידולי קרקע, ודנים בזה משום כל דפריש מרובא פריש. אכן יש לעיין בספק זה טובא כיון שבזמננו ניתן הרבה פעמים בקלות לברר איך הירק גדל, ובמיוחד אם הירק מגיע בחפיסה ארוזה עם שם החברה, ניתן להתקשר אליהם ולשאול איך הם גדלים, וכמו כן אפשר לברר על ידי חיפוש דיוז באינטרנט, ולהלכה יש חיוב לברר ספיקות אם אפשר לעשות כן בקל.



אמנם לדידן ישנו כאן ספק כפול, ספק ראשון הוא היכן גדל הירק, וספק שני כיצד לפסוק הלכה למעשה. והוי כעין ספק ספיקא שיש בזה מחלוקת אם בבאהי גוונא צריך לטרוח לברר (עיין כללי ספק ספיקא להש"ך יו"ד סימן קי סעיף לה) ולמעשה פסק הגר"ע יוסף שבספק ספיקא אין חיוב לברר את הספק ולכן יברך בורא פרי האדמה, ועוד שכבר ביארנו לעיל שהגר"ע יוסף כתב שאפילו אם בירך על ירק מגידולי מים ברכת האדמה יצא ידי חובתו.

לאחרונה גיליתי שכמה מהירקות שאני קונה לבית הם מגידולי מים וראיתי שיש בזה מחלוקת הפוסקים אם יש לברך עליהם בורא פרי האדמה או שהכל. אני מאוד מבולבל ולא יודע מה לברך.

שלום. נסכם בקצרה את שיטות הפוסקים ונראה ב"ה איך עלינו לנהוג.

הנה החיי אדם (כלל נא סעיף יז) חידש שהאופה פת ממני דגן שגדלו בעציץ שאינו מנוקב לא יברך המוציא לחם מן הארץ אלא ברכת בורא מיני מזונות.

ועל פי דבריו יש לדון אם על ירקות מגידולי מים שאינם גדלים מן האדמה יברך ברכת שהכל נהיה בדברו. אכן הגאון הגר"ע יוסף (יחווה דעת ח"ו סימן יב) הכריע שייברך לכתחילה שהכל, ובדיעבד אם בירך בורא פרי האדמה, יצא ידי חובתו. אכן יש שרצו לחלוק על זה ולומר שהולכים בזה אחר המין, וכאן הירקות הם מין האדמה ולכן יברך בורא פרי האדמה (שו"ת שבט הלוי ח"א סימן רה הערה רד). ובאור לציון (ח"ב סימן יד הלכה יג) הקשה על דבריו שאיך יברך ברכה שאינה שייכת בו שהרי ירקות אלו לא גדלו באדמה, ולכן כתב טעם אחר לברך בורא פרי האדמה והוא מכיון שהזרע בא מזרע שגדל מן האדמה.

### Leylul Nishmat Tune but Bahiye

Shaare Ezra is a one of a kind, multi-faceted organization that's there for the community. Under the leadership of HaRav Shay Tahan שליט"א, Shaare Ezra feels that proper Halachic guidance should be accessible to everyone, therefore we offer the community the opportunity to call, text, WhatsApp, or e-mail any halachic questions they may have, through the Bet Horaah, where qualified, trained and ordained Rabbis are available to answer your questions in English, Hebrew and Russian. Shaare Ezra is from the community—for the community.

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