

Shalshet Spotlight

Parshat Ki Teitzei

Community News

Introducing the Shalshet Shivyoni Newsletter



by Judah, MZ, and Ruthie

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the Shalshet Shivyoni Newsletter! We're thrilled to kickstart this exciting journey of meaningful communication, connection, and engagement within our vibrant community.

A Glimpse into Shalsholet Shivyoni

For those of you who might be new to Shalsholet Shivyoni, we are an intercollegiate community driven by a dual commitment to Halacha and inclusion. Our mission is simple yet powerful: to create spaces where individuals can explore, celebrate, and engage with Jewish identity, values, and intercollegiate connections.

Introducing Our Newsletter

Now, let's dive into the star of the show - our newsletter! As we pilot the Shalsholet Spotlight, this weekly publication will serve as your window into the heart of Shalsholet Shivyoni. Here, you'll find:

1. Community News: Stay in the loop with the latest updates, events, and announcements from Shalsholet Shivyoni. Here we'll share news about upcoming initiatives, including shabbatons, and developments in the broader Halachic and inclusive world.

2. Campus Spotlight: Discover the incredible work happening on various campuses within our community. We'll shine a light on inclusive Halachic activities, events, and initiatives led by passionate students.

3. Dvar Torah: Engage your mind and spirit with our weekly Dvar Torah. Each piece is crafted with care, offering fresh perspectives on Jewish texts, traditions, and inclusive values. It's a chance to dive deep into meaningful reflections and explore your own connection to Judaism.

Get Involved

Our newsletter isn't just a one-way street. We want you to be an active part of it. If you have a thought-provoking Dvar Torah, a campus event to highlight, or any news to share, reach out to us at newsletter@shalsholetshivyon.org. Together, we'll make this newsletter a reflection of our dynamic and engaged community.

Stay tuned for our first Dvar Torah and Campus Spotlight in this issue. We can't wait to embark on this journey with you!

[READ MORE ON OUR WEBSITE](#)

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Campus Spotlight on ... Brandeis!

by [Eliona Kruman](#)

Since its founding in 1948, Brandeis University has welcomed a diverse range of Jewish students. Shira Chadasha at Brandeis became one of the first partnership minyanim on a college campus in 2006. In addition, Brandeis is home to an Orthodox minyan, Conservative minyan, Reform minyan, and Sephardic minyan. All these students join together to celebrate Shabbat and holidays in Hillel and Chabad, as well as participate in Hillel's various affiliate groups, such as the premiere Jewish a capella group Manginah and the Brandeis Klezmer band, to name a few.

A typical Shabbat at Brandeis starts off with services from the respective minyanim and a Shabbat dinner at Hillel. Students will often stay late to sing or chat before moving to the student lounge across the hall to continue their conversations there. On Shabbat day, in addition to Hillel lunch, many students choose to host meals in their dorms. Afterwards, students can be found all across campus, whether resting outside on the green, learning in the Beit Midrash, or playing board games outside the dining hall.

The community experience continues throughout the week, with regular learning events, intramural sports teams, and programming from various affiliate groups. The Hillel lounge is a great space for students to relax, and it's home to the Hillel Organization of Gaming's Wii and video game collection. Students involve themselves in chesed opportunities as well through groups like Challah for Hunger and Sharsheret.

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In line with Brandeis' mission of diversity and inclusion, Hillel also includes the affiliate groups Jewish Feminists at Brandeis and Queer Jews at Brandeis. These groups work to create progress as well as foster a welcoming and safe environment. Shira Chadasha at Brandeis is no exception. In addition to biweekly minyanim, Shira Chadasha has hosted social events, invited speakers, and was involved in the organization of the first intercollegiate partnership minyan Shabbaton with Princeton and UPenn. The board also teaches newcomers how to lead services and read from the Torah. It's a wonderful place to meet like-minded individuals, and is a great introduction for those who want to try something new. Shira Chadasha is known at Brandeis for their beautiful singing and for the passionate group of students who show up week after week to join in.



Brandeis Students Painting the
Shira Chadasha Mechitzah



Learning with Rabba Claudia Marbach
in the Beit Midrash



On Our way to the Shalshelet
Shabbaton

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Dvar Torah

Embracing Patience and Community Growth in Ki Teitzei

by **Ruthie Yudelson**

Hi friends! Ki Teitzei famously contains 74 mitzvot— making it a pretty dense and vibrant Parsha. Upon review, Ribit, or the prohibition on usury, struck me in particular. In Shemot 22:24, the prohibition is to charge interest to “the poor among you”. The moral value is obvious— charging interest to the poor ultimately profits off of another’s poverty. Their lack is the debtors’ gain. There is much to be said for the perverse incentives raised (keeping certain people at a low socioeconomic status to continue charging them for loans) and the economic reality it lends itself towards, but the act itself is obviously oppressive: people who have less pay more.

In Ki Teitzei, the entire commandment is recontextualized. The verses read, “You shall not take interest from your brother: interest of money, interest of foodstuffs, interest of anything that is lent upon interest. To a stranger you may charge interest, but to your brother you shall not charge interest... (Devarim 23:20-21)”. This is no longer a moral imperative (which would apply specifically to those in need, and perhaps indiscriminately to “stranger”s) but a pro-social one. A few books later, as a peoplehood is emerging, interest is seen not as oppressive but as unneighborly— not something you’d do to your brother, regardless of his financial status. In fact, the Ramban on verse 21 explicitly states that as long as rates are within normal limits, Ribit is not a moral issue. Now the act of abstaining from usury takes on a different moral character. As opposed to being a type of charity, it becomes an opportunity for social and communal growth. The brotherhood is especially relevant— interest, at its core, is charging money for time-spent-with-money. It penalizes the slow and rewards instantaneous results. A brother is someone you grow up with. I know exactly how many years it took my brothers to become the men they are today, and I wouldn’t begrudge them one second of that time. We have our whole lives to grow together— we’re in no hurry to arrive at any final state. We’re in this for the long run.

Midrash Rabbah 30 on Mishpatim (as well as Yerushalmi Rosh HaShana, discussed in Bnei Yissachar 2:4) asserts that God keeps all the mitzvot we do. As we look to our neighbor and give them all the time they need, God does the same. I find this unbelievably inspiring in our season of Teshuva— return. When I give this ineffable and holy thing back, lay down the sins that weren’t mine to carry, bring my soul to my maker renewed and ready for the year ahead, God won’t be charging me for the time it took. There is much to be returned. And God is a patient lender.

Just as the law of Ribit expands itself as it traverses the text, broadens itself from moral to familial, I wonder what it would look like for us to expand it in our own understanding: what if we stopped charging each other not just for the time it takes to get money together but also “interest of anything that is lent upon interest”? For the time to accumulate courage? To muster up kindness? To return a text or have a difficult conversation? What if we allowed people the time it took to be ready?

As a burgeoning community, it’s not enough to not cause each other harm. I would think, thank God, that none of us would do the needy dirty. But communal cohesion starts when the question shifts from “how can I avoid doing something bad to someone?” to “how can I treat the person beside me like a brother?”. We are so grateful for the patience you all have shown as we’ve been slowly transitioning a one-off Shabbaton into something larger. And we excitedly anticipate the patience we will need to exercise together— community building takes time. Getting comfortable in new prayer spaces takes time. Coming to terms with the weight of tradition takes time and acclimating to changing realities takes time. May we grant ourselves that time, may God grant us that time, and may we enjoy that time. Brotherhood means we’re in it for the long run.

