

# Toronto Torah

Yeshiva University Torah miTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshiyot Behar-Bechukotai

24 Iyar 5773/May 4, 2013 / 39 Omer

Vol.4 Num. 30

To sponsor an issue of Toronto Torah, please call 647-234-7299 or email [info@torontotorah.com](mailto:info@torontotorah.com).

## Get busy!

Rabbi Ezra Goldschmiedt

The Talmud (Berachot 32b) presents us with a list of four items that need constant *chizuk* (encouragement): Torah study, good deeds, prayer and *derech erez*. Lest we misinterpret this last item – indeed, *derech erez* is a term with multiple definitions – Rashi informs us that *derech erez* refers to one's occupation. The efforts of craftsmen, businessmen and soldiers, all of these are included in *derech erez* and require constant encouragement and reinforcement. Our core principles of Torah, *avodah* and *gemilut chasadim* (Avot 1:2) need constant strengthening, but the work needed to maintain an environment that can promote those values needs our attention just as much.

Is this the only value of an occupation? It would seem that our parshah values one's involvement in the workforce in a similar vein. In listing the benefits of properly observing the Torah, we are told that "your threshing will extend until the grape-harvest, and the grape-harvest will extend until the sowing time. You will eat your bread to satiety and you will live securely in your land." (Vayikra 26:5) The Torah promises that our work will produce an ideal environment in which to live: One of security and relaxation. In that setting, we will have an abundance of free time to devote to our three core principles mentioned above.

Upon further analysis, however, we see that this cannot be the meaning of the verse. G-d promises to bless the Jewish people with plenty, but it doesn't seem that those riches will provide us with an easy and carefree environment. The season's wildly

successful yield leads our threshing right into the grape-harvest, which is immediately followed by next year's sowing. There is no time to rest! Should we be so noble as to aspire to Torah study and greater spiritual growth, we could pose the question asked by Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai (Berachos 35b): "If a man ploughs in the ploughing season, and sows in the sowing season, and reaps in the reaping season, and threshes in the threshing season, and winnows in the season of wind, what is to become of the Torah?" Some may consequently be inclined towards Rabbi Shimon's answer and shun such worldly involvement, but as the Talmud notes, his path has not had a record of success for most. How, then, do we respond to Rabbi Shimon's challenge? Moreover, how do we understand this promise of G-d as a blessing and not a curse?

Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin, by no means the average working man, explains our verse and its message in an entirely different light. The blessing contained in our parshah lies not in a bountiful harvest and wealth, but in the very work that such plenty keeps us occupied with. Rabbi Berlin claims that it is only through riches earned honestly and with intense effort that one can truly "eat bread to satiety." Hard work "warms the one who practices it," allowing him, in body and spirit, to draw the most out of what he takes from this world.

Moreover, our occupations save us from one of the most difficult challenges to our spiritual welfare: boredom. When we don't find ourselves needed for and challenged by our day-to-day activity,

we run the risk of turning to alternative lifestyles that are both physically and spiritually dangerous. Rabbi Berlin notes that particularly in Israel, with hilly regions that cannot be ploughed with animals, one has no choice but to work often and to work hard. G-d is promising us that this work ethic will keep the Jew in the land and in a greater position to live within a productive system conducive to spiritual growth.

It would seem, then, that Rabbi Berlin's answer to the questions we raised above would be to boldly claim the opposite of Rabbi Shimon's concerns. Not *despite*, but especially *through* a life of hard work, one is in the greatest position to grow spiritually. The experiential value of regular, hard and honest work refines a person to a degree that 'the good life' cannot. To be sure, it is possible to work too hard, and time in our daily routine must always be earmarked for Torah, *avodah* and *gemilut chasadim*. However, a generally busy working lifestyle, and the wealth G-d promises it will bring, can actually create the best circumstances for continued service of G-d.

Rabbi Berlin's perspective is not commonly seen in today's world, and it transcends the issues normally raised in debates on this topic. With the ever-increasing polarization of viewpoints in the greater Jewish community, it would be useful to note his words in light of the Talmud's evenhanded statement. Being involved in an occupation is a Jewish value; let us always remember that, and encourage it.

[egoldschmiedt@torontotorah.com](mailto:egoldschmiedt@torontotorah.com)

**THIS SHABBAT AT BAYT  
SHABBATON: JERUSALEM!  
DERASHOT, DIVREI TORAH, SHIUR THEATRE  
SPONSORED BY THE HERSHKOP FAMILY  
FOR THE SHLOSHIM OF  
SHALOM ELIMELECH BEN YISRAEL YITZCHAK HERSHKOP**



**YESHIVA UNIVERSITY  
TORAH MITZION  
BEIT MIDRASH**

We are grateful to  
Continental Press 905-660-0311

Every Shabbat morning we recite a special prayer for the government of the country in which we reside. This prayer actually has its sources in a verse in Tanach; despite watching the Babylonians destroy our first Beit HaMikdash and then exile us to Babylon, the prophet Yirmiyahu then said (Yirmiyahu 29:7), "Seek the peace of the city to which I have exiled you, and pray to G-d on her behalf, for in her peace shall you find peace."

It is difficult to understand why we are supposed to pray for a government that has evicted us from our homes; a mishnah (Pirkei Avot 3:2) provides a possible answer: "Rabbi Chanina, the deputy Kohen Gadol, says: Pray for the welfare of the government, because if people do not fear it, a person would swallow his fellow alive." This approach suggests that we should take a utilitarian approach toward our government; officials attempt to ensure a safe and functioning society, and we pray that they succeed. With the chaos and destruction that resulted from the G-20 Toronto summit still in our memory, it is not hard to see the value in a government and police force which are capable of maintaining law and order.

Despite this obligation to pray for our government, though, it is worthwhile to note a less positive perspective on government. Pirkei Avot (1:10) states, "Shemayah says... Do not become overly familiar with the government." Rambam suggests that the reason we must distance ourselves from government is in order to retain our relationship with G-d. According to Rambam, the more trust we place in the government to take care of us, the less we will rely on G-d, our ultimate Caregiver, leading to a significant

decrease in our active relationship with our Creator.

While the authors of the two mishnayot above lived approximately two thousand years ago, history has proven their approaches true. For hundreds of years Jews have lived in foreign lands where their safety has been far from guaranteed; a government who kept the peace was the best they could hope for. There have also been generations in which Jews believed they could associate closely with the government, and many Jews abandoned their religion in the process.

Thank G-d, we live in a time and place in which we are neither socially oppressed nor forced to abandon our Creator. The Canadian government is arguably the most pro-Israel government in the world. Additionally, we experience complete religious freedom. Should our approach to government differ in light of our new circumstances?

In 1984, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein wrote a letter addressing this issue. He wrote, "A fundamental principle of Judaism is hakaras hatov - recognizing benefits afforded us and giving expression to our appreciation. Therefore, it is incumbent upon each Jewish citizen to participate in the democratic system which safeguards the freedoms we enjoy."

As we prepare to celebrate Yom Yerushalayim, thanking G-d for the amazing miracle that occurred in 1967, let us not forget to thank the kind country in which we temporarily reside as well, until we return to our true home, in Israel.

[afrieberg@torontotorah.com](mailto:afrieberg@torontotorah.com)

## 613 Mitzvot: #254

### Respect the Sanctuary

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

The Torah (Vayikra 19:32) specifies, "You shall rise before the aged, and you shall honor the *zaken*." The word *zaken* is usually translated as *elderly*, but the Talmud explains that in this context, the word *zaken* refers to a *chacham* - one who has acquired the wisdom appropriate for an elderly person. In addition, we are taught to treat the aged with special honour, so long as their deeds have not put them beyond the bounds of those we respect. (Sanhedrin 85a)

The purpose of this honour is not only for satisfaction of the *zaken*; displaying honour also affects the person who shos respect. This is seen in the halachah requiring visible displays of respect for a blind sage. (Minchat Chinuch 257:5, Birkei Yosef Yoreh Deah 244:2)

Sefer haChinuch notes that this mitzvah also benefits society, by providing incentives for religious greatness. To promote the pursuit of wisdom among our children and in our community, we honour those who have achieved it.

[torczyner@torontotorah.com](mailto:torczyner@torontotorah.com)

כתוב בתהילים, "כל מצותיך אמונה" (תהילים קיט:פו). השורש של חי התורה וקיום המצוות הוא אמונה. מסביר ה"נתיבות שלום" על הייחודיות של מצות שמיטה המוזכרת בראש פרשת 'בהר', "...שהיא השיא במדרגת האמונה". כאשר האדם מקיים את מצוות השמיטה, הוא למעשה אומר, "זה לא שלי!" צריך הרבה כח של אמונה בכדי להפנים את העובדה שלאדם אין קנין פרטי בעולם הזה, שאנחנו לא בעלי הבית. מהותה של מצות שמיטה היא ייסודה של אמונה זאת.

בשום ציווי אחר בתורה, התורה אינה מציינת את הר סיני ולכן על הפסוק הפותח את הפרשה, "וידבר ד' אל משה בהר סיני לאמר", שואל רש"י, "מה ענין שמיטה אצל הר סיני?" ניתן לענות כי הר סיני היה המקום והזמן בו "ראו" כל עם ישראל, "וכל העם רואים את הקולות", את הקב"ה - את הרוחניות שבעולם. המילה עולם מופיעה מלשון העלם, עולם של הסתר פנים, במעמד הר סיני הכל היה ברור וגלוי ולא היה שום העלם. אולם מאז אותו מעמד עבר זמן רב והזיכרון עומעם. לכן באה התורה לרמוז לנו שקיום מצות שמיטה הוא כלי להתעוררות הזיכרון. מצות השמיטה מלמדת אותנו שלא להזדהות עם העולם הגשמי, לא להיות שבויים בהסתר, אלא להתחבר אל אותה אמת שנתגלתה על הר סיני, יש קיום רוחני לעולם. מצוות השמיטה היא שמזכירה לנו את מעמד הר סיני, אנו שומטים את קיומנו הגשמי בפני הקיום הרוחני.

השמיטה אינה רק תהליך חיצוני לאדם, באדמתו, כי אם תהליך פנימי בנפשו של אדם. התורה מצווה אותנו לסמוך על הקב"ה שלמרות שלא נזרע ולא נעבוד בשדה התוצרת עדיין תתקיים. באותו אופן מצווה אותנו הקב"ה לשמוט מידות בנפש, מידות שאנו חשים שבלעדיהם לא נהיה אותו דבר. אדם עלול לחשוב כי ללא תכונה זו או אחרת הוא יחדל מלהתקיים. מלמדת אותנו מצוות השמיטה כי אנו יכולים לשמוט מידות שליליות שאינן נחוצות לנו בנפשנו ולסמוך על הקב"ה שרק טוב יהיה לנו בשומרנו על השמיטה. זוהי בחינת האמונה והר סיני בנפשו של אדם, אם הקב"ה מורה עליי להתקדם ולהשתנות הרי אני מאמין באמונה שלמה שזה לטובתי ולהצלחתי הבלעדית.

[hhorovitz@torontotorah.com](mailto:hhorovitz@torontotorah.com)

**Torah in Translation  
L'Shem Yichud****Rabbi Yechezkel Landau  
Noda b'Yehudah 1:Yoreh Deah 93  
Translated by Rabbi Yair Manas**

[Preface: *L'Shem Yichud* is a mystical prayer recited in certain communities, particularly among Chasidim, before performance of a mitzvah.]

Regarding your fourth question, about the proper version of *L'Shem Yichud*, which has newly spread and been printed in siddurim: I reply that before you ask me about the version, it would be more appropriate to ask whether saying it is appropriate at all. In my opinion, it is an evil sickness for our generation. Previous generations did not know of this prayer, and did not say it at all. These people toiled their whole lives in Torah and in mitzvot, all according to the Torah and according to the halachic authorities, whose words flow from the source of living waters, the vast sea of the Talmud, regarding which it is said, "the integrity of the upright shall guide them." They bore excellent fruit, and their kindness exceeded the heavens.

However, in our generation people have left G-d's Torah and the source of living waters, the two Talmuds, Bavli and Yerushalmi, to dig for themselves broken cisterns. Each one raises himself in the arrogance of his own heart, saying, "I am the one who sees, the gates to heaven are open for me, and for me the world exists." These people are the destroyers of the generation.

For this orphaned generation I say that G-d's paths are just, and the righteous walk in them, and the *Chasidim* stumble in them [This is an alteration of Hoshea 14:14, in which the prophet says that *sinners* will stumble in them.] I have much more to say on this matter, but just as it is a mitzvah to say what will be heard, so too is it a mitzvah not to say something that will be ignored. (Yevamot 65b) G-d should have mercy upon us...

As far as his honour's suggestion that it would be good to have a strong connection between our speech, thought, and action [via the *L'Shem Yichud* recitation]: The Great Assembly established prayers and blessings for us, and there is nothing that is not hinted to in the text of the prayers and blessings. A blessing awakens our speech and thought, and each mitzvah that is preceded by a blessing does not need anything else before it, just the blessing. If there is no blessing, my practice is to say, "Behold, I am doing this to fulfill the will of my Master," and this

Rabbi Yechezkel Landau was born on October 8, 1713, to a family that was able to trace its lineage back to Rashi. After studying in yeshivot in Ludmir and Brod (Ukraine), Rabbi Landau was appointed to the Beit Din in Brod at the age of twenty-one. When he was 32, Rabbi Landau became the Rabbi of the Ukrainian city of Yampol, where he attempted to mediate in the Rabbi Yaakov Emden – Rabbi Yonatan Eibeschutz controversy. His involvement in the controversy brought him to the attention of the community of Prague, where he was appointed Rabbi in 1755, and where he established a yeshiva.

Rabbi Landau is commonly known as the *Noda BiYehudah*, the work of responsa that he named for his father, Yehudah (based on Tehillim 76:2), and the *Tzlach*, short for *Tziyyun l'Nefesh Chayah*, the work of Talmudic insights that he named for his mother, Chayah. He also wrote on Shulchan Aruch. Many of his writings were destroyed in a fire in 1773, and this motivated Rabbi Landau to publish the works that were not destroyed. He died in Prague in 1793.

This translated responsum is notable for two reasons. First, Rabbi Landau changed the word "sinners" to "Chasidim," to imply that the Chasidim were acting incorrectly. Second, it is reported that some Chasidic Rabbis had close relationships with Rabbi Landau, and therefore many Chasidim refrain from their normal practice of saying "L'shem Yichud" before performing mitzvot on the *yahrtzeit* of Rabbi Landau (the 32<sup>nd</sup> day of the Omer).

[ymanas@torontotorah.com](mailto:ymanas@torontotorah.com)

is enough, and nothing else is necessary. We are meant to focus only on the meaning of the words; repair of celestial realms is accomplished inherently, through our actions...

I have already revealed my thinking on the matter, that silence would be better, and let the matter sink into oblivion. In thought, too, one should think only about the meaning of the words. One will walk securely on this path, and will not stumble in any way. There is no point in elaborating more on this matter...

**This Week in  
Israeli History  
28 Iyar 1967  
Yom Yerushalayim  
R' Mordechai Torczyner**

*28 Iyar is Wednesday*

The 1947 partition plan promoted by the United Nations proposed to internationalize Jerusalem for ten years, after which the city's residents would vote on joining either the Arab state or the Jewish state formed from British Mandate territory. That concept disintegrated with the Arab invasion of the new State of Israel in May 1948; what took its place was a split city, with Jordan controlling the "Old City" and East Jerusalem, and Israel in control of West Jerusalem.

Tensions developed between Israel and Arab countries in 1966-1967, particularly over border skirmishes and PLO activity; in particular, Egypt, Syria and Jordan made active preparations for battle. On June 5, 1967, Israel launched a pre-emptive strike on Egypt's advanced, Soviet-supported air force, and the war began. Troops from Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Iraq invaded, along with support and equipment from many additional Arab regimes.

At the start of the war, Cabinet members Yigal Allon and Menachem Begin argued that Jordan's entry into the war presented an opportunity to return the Old City to Jewish hands, but Prime Minister Levi Eshkol was uncertain. It was only on June 7, the 28<sup>th</sup> of Iyar, when word spread that the United Nations was about to declare a ceasefire, that Moshe Dayan ordered his troops to take the Old City. After Jordanian forces withdrew, Israeli forces continued to take East Jerusalem.

On that day, Moshe Dayan declared, "This morning, the Israel Defense Forces liberated Jerusalem. We have united Jerusalem, the divided capital of Israel. We have returned to the holiest of our holy places, never to part from it again. To our Arab neighbours we extend, also at this hour—and with added emphasis at this hour—our hand in peace. And to our Christian and Muslim fellow citizens, we solemnly promise full religious freedom and rights. We did not come to Jerusalem for the sake of other peoples' holy places, and not to interfere with the adherents of other faiths, but in order to safeguard its entirety, and to live there together with others, in unity."

[torczyner@torontotorah.com](mailto:torczyner@torontotorah.com)

## Who is the prophet of our haftorah?

Yirmiyahu was the last major prophet of the first Beit haMikdash, and his experience may well have been the most bitter of any prophet in Tanach. He lived in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE (according to Seder Olam), and his task was to warn the Jews of his day that time was short and destruction was coming. The nation did not heed Yirmiyahu's words; instead, they beat him and imprisoned him (Yirmiyahu 20 and 37), threw him into a cistern (ibid 38) and threatened to kill him. (ibid)

Rembrandt's *Jeremiah Weeping Over the Destruction of Jerusalem* is hauntingly evocative of the mood of Yirmiyahu's book; the image of the despairing prophet of G-d, leaning upon his book of warnings, backlit by flame and devastation, has captured the imagination of millions over the past four centuries. Indeed, the word "jeremiad" was coined to refer to a prophecy of doom and gloom. Throughout his misery, though, Yirmiyahu carried with him a Divine promise, "I am with you, to save you." (ibid 1:8)

At times, Yirmiyahu was instructed to act out scenes in order to convey a message to the nation. These ranged from wearing a yoke upon his neck to demonstrate the enslavement of the Jews by the Babylonians (ibid. 27), to

smashing a jug to demonstrate the smashing of Judea (19), to purchasing a field and preserving the deed in order to demonstrate our eventual return to the land. (32)

According to the Talmud (Bava Batra 15a), Yirmiyahu authored his own book, the book of Melachim, and the book of Eichah.

## What is the message of our haftorah?

Our haftorah, like Parshat Bechukotai, conveys a message of punishment and reward. Particular sins to be punished are idolatry (Yirmiyahu 17:1-2) and corruption (17:11), as well as a general lack of faith in G-d (17:5).

Interestingly, our haftorah reverses Parshat Bechukotai's structure of presenting blessings for good conduct (Vayikra 26:3-13) and then punishment for bad conduct (ibid. 26:14-41). Our haftorah first presents punishment (Yirmiyahu 17:3-6) and then blessings (17:7-8). Perhaps this is because Moshe addressed an audience that was presently righteous, to warn them away from sin, while Yirmiyahu addressed a sinful audience and attempted to win their allegiance to mitzvot.

Our haftorah concludes with a sentence that our Sages imported into the amidah's berachah for health, "Heal me, G-d, and I will be healed, save me and I

will be saved, for You are the source of my own glory." (17:14) This verse is particularly important within a haftorah that identifies G-d as the source of certain illnesses, as punishment; the Jew who has been punished says to G-d, "I know that You have punished me, but I also know that You are my Healer."

## Baruch haGever

The end of *birkat hamazon* includes a verse (17:7) from our haftorah. As the passage is explained by Radak, Yirmiyahu says, "The man who trusts in G-d is blessed; G-d will be his security." However, Rabbi Baruch haLevi Epstein (Baruch she'Amar to Avot 2:2) explains the sentence differently.

Rabbi Epstein suggests that there are two kinds of faithful people. There are faithful people who choose a path toward fulfillment of their needs, and then trust in G-d to help them succeed, but there are rarefied individuals, of even greater faith and deeds, who live to satisfy Divine expectations, and who look only to G-d to fulfill their needs. According to Rabbi Epstein, this verse may be read to refer to both such people: "The man who trusts in G-d is blessed, and [even moreso] the one who makes G-d the repository of his entire trust."

[torczyner@torontotorah.com](mailto:torczyner@torontotorah.com)

## Highlights for May 4 – May 10 / 24 Iyar - 1 Sivan

### Shabbat, May 3-4 - JERUSALEM! SHABBATON AT BAYT

**After Hashkama** R' Baruch Weintraub, Minchat Chinuch

**Derashah** R' Ezra Goldschmiedt

**Luncheon** Shiur Theatre: Claiming Jerusalem

**5:30 PM** Yair Manas, Women's Shiur

**6:25 PM** R' Baruch Weintraub, Shiur b'Ivrit

**6:40 PM** R' Mordechai Torczyner, Daf Yomi

**7:25 PM** Adam Frieberg, Pirkei Avot

**Seudah Shlishit** R' Baruch Weintraub, R' Ezra Goldschmiedt

### Sunday, May 5

**9:15 AM** Hillel Horovitz, Parshah, Zichron Yisroel, Hebrew (Shacharit 8:30 AM)

**10:00 AM Midreshet Yom Rishon**, BAYT, women, refreshments served

- **Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner**: Scholar and Fighter: The Yahrtzeit of Rav Saadia Gaon
- **Mrs. Sara Frieberg**: From Lust to Love: Pesach to Shavuot through the Eyes of their Megillot

**40 min. pre-minchah** R' Baruch Weintraub, Contemporary Halachah in Israel, **Hebrew**, Clanton Park, *men*

**8:30 PM** R' Baruch Weintraub, Contemporary Halachah in Israel, **Hebrew**, 4 Tillingham Keep, *mixed*

### Monday, May 6

**8 PM Monday Beit Midrash: Bnai Torah, Clanton Park**

**8 PM** Hillel Horovitz, Melachim I:20-22, Bnai Torah

**9 PM** Hillel Horovitz, Rav Kook's Ein Ayah, Bnai Torah **not this week**

### Tuesday, May 7

**1:30 PM** R' Mordechai Torczyner, Daniel: Four Beasts

**8:30 PM** R' Baruch Weintraub, Rambam's Laws of Kings, Shomrai Shabbos, *men*

### Wednesday, May 8 Yom Yerushalayim

**10 AM** R' Mordechai Torczyner, Supernatural and Superstition II, Week 5 of 8: Reincarnation, BEBY

**8 PM Chabura Night at BAYT—Resumes May 22**

- R' Ezra Goldschmiedt: Path of the Just
- Hillel Horovitz: Building Personality, per Rambam
- R' Mordechai Torczyner: Medical Halachah

**9 PM Chabura Night at Shaarei Shomayim**

### Thursday, May 9

**8:30 PM** R' Baruch Weintraub, Sotah, Clanton Park

**Look for our Shavuot Night Shiurim next week!**