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Parshat Tzav

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The Power of Man

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Why offer animals to an incorporeal, immortal and unhungry G-d? How could the ritual described in the opening verses of our parshah atone for sin? Indeed, a parade of prophets rebuked their listeners for bringing korbanot as though fulfilling a rote task of feeding G-d. [See this week's haftorah, from Yirmiyahu 7.] But if we are not providing a Divine meal, then what *are* we doing with a korban?

In the 16th century, Rabbi Moshe Isserles ("Rama") published *Torat Ha'Olah* to explain the Beit haMikdash and its services on philosophical and mystical levels. In it, he presented no fewer than **thirteen** reasons, culled from many centuries of diverse texts, to explain the roles of korbanot. His eleventh explanation emphasizes the power of human behaviour to shape our universe.

Rama referred to Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra's 12th century comment on korbanot: "When one gives each portion at its proper time, then the [owner], who has a place in the next world, escapes [harm]. Thus the word *l'chaper* [to atone] means *lateit kofer* [to present a ransom], etc." (Commentary to Vayikra 1:1) In other words: the korban is a lightning rod, absorbing punishment which had been meant for its human owner. As Rama explained, "A decree expressed via the constellations will not shift, if a bad fate has been decreed for this person. Hashem causes the decree to be fulfilled upon another [i.e. the korban], to save this person."

This view is problematic, though. If a

transgressor repents, as required before bringing a korban of atonement, then let G-d annul the decree! Why must anyone suffer? To understand Rama's approach, we need to grasp what happens when a person sins.

Most of our world's rules are either **Real** or **Perceived**.

- The "Real" arena includes laws of weather, health and physics. These are immutable, applicable regardless of anyone's personal preferences or cultural ideals.
- The "Perceived" arena includes government legislation, social manners and popular fashion. These are conventions, binding only to the extent that we honour them. Even the term "laws" does not sit easily in this category.

The precepts of Judaism occupy an in-between space, bridging the two arenas. On one hand, the Torah expresses its laws as immutable Divine requirements. On the other hand, Judaism softens the impact of law, saying: "G-d desires the heart. (Sanhedrin 106b)" "Whether one does more, or one does less, the essence is that one intend to serve Heaven. (Menachot 110a)" "G-d considers intent [to fulfill a mitzvah] as though one had fulfilled the mitzvah. (Berachot 6a)" Apparently, the laws of Judaism are flexible, in ways that a snowstorm, Ebola and gravity are not.

Along the same lines, the power of repentance to achieve Divine forgiveness also suggests that mitzvot are malleable. With sincere regret, and deeds of repair, the sin is wiped away; indeed, the sin may even be converted

into a mitzvah! (Yoma 86b) This is why we ask: why should a Divine decree of punishment be irreversible? Why do we need a korban as a proxy for the penitent sinner?

Rama's eleventh explanation for korbanot addresses this by shifting Judaism's laws back into the first arena, arguing that spiritual law occupies the realm of the Real. Teshuvah is effective, but a price must be paid for violating Divine law; once a judgment for guilt has been issued, one can no more cancel the penalty than one could wish a virus into oblivion.

The reality of spiritual activity explains more than korbanot. It elucidates how Yitzchak's unwitting blessing of Yaakov could have been effective, how Bilam's curse could have been powerful even if it ran counter to the Divine will, and why a Rosh Hashanah decree of drought must exact a toll even if the community should repent later in the year. (Rosh Hashanah 17b)

Rama's idea also reveals the power of mitzvot. Our tzedakah, Torah study and observance of Shabbat are more than checked boxes on a list of communal expectations; they are deeds which affect the universe in meaningful ways, as part of the Real category. The specifics of that impact lie in the foggy province of mystics, but the essential point is clear: Let us see our mitzvot not as private deeds which are meaningful only in our circle, but as real-world interventions, with a radiance as powerful as the brilliance of the sun.

torczyner@torontotorah.com

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Summary

After two chapters summarizing Sefer Yehoshua and introducing Sefer Shoftim, Chapter 3 finally begins to discuss the specifics of the shoftim ("judges") who ruled over the Jewish people after they entered Israel. The chapter begins with a notice that the Jews are living among various Canaanite nations, and that this experience would test how true they would stay to Hashem. However, we are told that soon after, the Jews intermarry with those nations, and begin to worship their gods, specifically Baal and Asheirah. As a punishment for the first time this occurs, Hashem gives the nation into the hands of the king of Aram Naharayim, Kushan Rishatayim, and he enslaves them. Hearing the cries of the nation in its eighth year of slavery, Hashem appoints Otniel ben Kenaz as a leader, he overthrows Kushan Rishatayim, and there is calm for the next 32 years.

After that, the nation returns to their wicked past. This time Hashem allows Eglon, king of Moav, along with Amalek, to capture Yericho and then enslave the Jews for 18 years. Once again, Hashem has mercy on the nation and sends them a saviour, this time the left-handed Ehud ben Gera. Ehud hides a double-edged sword on his right side,

where it could be carried undetected (since only the left side, where right-handed men carried their swords, was regularly checked), and he enters Eglon's room to present him with a gift from the Jewish people. At that point, he attacks and kills Eglon and quickly flees from the area, before Eglon's men realize that he has been killed. Ehud then rallies the Jewish troops, who attack the Moabites, capturing the bridges spanning the Jordan River. The Jewish battalion thoroughly defeats the Moabites, killing approximately 10,000 warriors, leading to a further 62 years of rest.

Finally, we are told of Shamgar ben Anat, the next *shofeit*, who killed 600 P'lishtim and also saved the nation, although the details of his salvation are not specified in the text.

Insight: The Cycle Begins

Despite slightly different circumstances surrounding each specific *shofeit*, the story is exactly the same each time. The Jewish people sin by intermarrying and subsequently worshipping idols, and then find themselves in trouble. Eventually, Hashem has mercy and sends a *shofeit* to save them, but they continually fail to learn from their past, and succumb to the same lusts again and again.

Expressed slightly differently by George Santayana: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." (*Reason in Common Sense*)

This is one of many examples in Tanach of failing to address a recurring sin; how might we try to navigate similar challenges in our own lives, when so many before us have failed?

Ramban (Sh'mot 13:16) explains that one of the best ways to avoid future sins is by truly internalizing our past. Although this is easier said than done, learning about our own earlier challenges is a good first step to reminding ourselves of those past sins. We can then hopefully take those lessons to heart, and constantly remind ourselves to avoid similar situations in the future, and not be forced to repeat it.

ediena@torontotorah.com

Law of the Land: Non-Jewish Police Officers

Rabbi Jonathan Ziring

Running a state committed to halachah presents many challenges that had not been faced by *poskim* (halachic authorities) in thousands of years. These challenges include establishing a halachic framework for allowing security forces, including the army and police, to function on Shabbat. While there is a general intuition among *poskim* that it should be permitted for these personnel to function - as ceasing them entirely would create a threat of *sakkanat nefashot* (danger to life) - the exact parameters are unclear.

A central question that has faced contemporary *poskim* and thinkers is whether or not a potential halachic solution would be to delegate some functions to non-Jews. Perhaps, the most articulate opponent was Professor Yeshayahu Leibowitz. He contended that reliance on "*Shabbat-goyim*" was an attack on the honour of Torah. He felt that doing so would be a tacit admission by *poskim* that halachah is not relevant in the modern world. Consequently, it would be perceived by the community - especially the youth - that the Torah is connected to *galut*, and not to modern Jewish life in Israel. As Rabbi Shaul Yisraeli noted, it was this belief that led many of the early Zionists to abandon their religious lifestyles, feeling that the Torah was antiquated and unable to speak to the challenges of modernity. (*Amud HaYemini* 17)

On the other hand, others pushed back. Rabbi Moshe Tzvi Neria and Rabbi Yisrael Rozen both argued that the claim of Professor Leibowitz would only be true if one believed that an ideal Jewish society would not include non-Jews. (*Techumin* 2, *Teivat Etzbaot Mishtartit BeShabbat*) However, drawing on

Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook's approach, they argued that if, as an ideal, Israel includes both Jews and non-Jews, it would be legitimate within a halachic discussion to argue that part of the role of non-Jews in a halachic Israel would be to enable the functioning of critical security frameworks with minimal Shabbat violation. (*Da'at Kohen* 235),

Rabbi Ilai Ofran has argued that Rabbi Neria also believed that in an ideal world, Shabbat would not need to be violated for security. Therefore, the admission that we live in a non-ideal world, and must rely on less than ideal solutions, does not represent a capitulation by halachah. Professor Leibowitz, on the other hand, thought that such desecration of Shabbat was an inherent a feature, and not a bug. Therefore, a solution must be found that does not rely on work-arounds.

(For the positions of Rabbi Neria and Professor Leibowitz, see *Iyun BePulmus Bein HaRav M.T. Neria LeProfessor Y. Leibowitz* by Rabbi Ilai Ofran in *Maaminim BeMishtarah* (2016) pp. 151-158)

jjziring@torontotorah.com

Biography

Rabbi Aharon Shteinman

Rabbi Elihu Abbe

"One day, a bachur [young student] from Manchester, England, came to see Rav Shteinman... 'I would like the Rosh Yeshiva to give me a beracha that I will succeed in Torah and yiras Shamayim [reverence for G-d],' he said.

"Do you really think that my beracha will help with that?" Rav Shteinman replied...

"Let me tell you something," Rav Shteinman added. "When I was the rosh yeshiva in Kfar Saba, I saw that not all the bachurim had a taste for learning. I went with them to the Chazon Ish, so that he could give them advice about how to acquire a taste for learning Torah. The Chazon Ish told them as follows: 'A taste for learning is like digging a well and finding water. The question is how much one needs to dig... One person digs more, and another digs less. The one who digs more is the one who is rewarded with finding water. In the same way, anyone who learns Torah with diligence...will acquire a taste for it!'"

(Libby Lazewnik, *A Gadol in Our Time*, translated from *Gadol BiKirbeich*)

Rabbi Aharon Yehudah Leib Shteinman was certainly one who dug for Torah with astounding diligence. Rabbi Shteinman was born in Kaminitz in 1914. He grew up in Brisk, and in 1937 he fled to Switzerland to avoid the Polish draft. While in Switzerland, he married Tamar Kornfeld; they were blessed with four children. In 1945, the family made aliyah to Eretz Yisrael. Shortly afterwards the Chazon Ish recommended Rabbi Shteinman for the position of Rosh Yeshiva at a *yeshiva ketanah* (elementary school) in Kfar Saba. Ten years later he was appointed as Rosh Yeshiva of the Ponovezh *yeshiva ketana*.

It is customary for an author of a Torah book to allude to their name in the titles of the books they have written. Rabbi Shteinman authored books on the Torah and on several tractates of the Talmud, he named the books *Ayelet HaShachar*. *Ayelet* is an acronym for Aharon Yehudah Leib, and his wife's name Tamar. Including his wife's name in the acronym is representative of his great respect for her and his appreciation for her self-sacrifice on behalf of Torah. Rabbi Shteinman passed away in 2017 at the age of 103.

eabbe@torontotorah.com

Torah and Translation

Engage in Torah Study and Acts of Kindness

Rabbi A. Shteinman, *Chizuk*, Dirshu Pub. Summer 5764

Translated by Rabbi Elihu Abbe

אנחנו יודעים מה שחז"ל אומרים, "מה יעשה אדם וינצל מחבלי משיח, יעסוק בתורה ובגמילות חסדים," וכמדומה שהחפץ חיים מדגיש, שאם חז"ל אומרים את זה, זאת אומרת שאין עצה אחרת! וגם אם אחד ידמה לעצמו שיעשה דבר אחר, זה לא יעזור לו! אלא רק עצה אחת יש, תורה וגמילות חסדים!

ובזמנים אלו, רואים בחוש, האיך שלא שייך עצה אחרת, ולא שייך לדמיין לעצמנו שיש דברים אחרים שיעזרו.

אנשים חשבו שאם יש להם כסף זה יעזור להם, ואם יש לו כסף הוא יכול להנצל, אבל זה לא מתחיל בכלל! ובדיוק להיפך, זה גורם לקנאה ולשנאה, ורק עצה אחת יש "תורה וגמילות חסדים."

ודרכן של בני אדם כשהם במצב כספי קשה, הם חושבים שהדבר הראשון, היות והמצב דחוק, הוא לתת פחות צדקה... אבל האמת היא בדיוק להפך, אם רוצים לזכות, זה רק ע"י תורה וגמילות חסדים. מה שנותנים ועושים יותר צדקה, יותר חסד, וכן מה שיותר עוסקים בהצלת נפשות, יותר עוזרים להכניס ולקרב ילדי ישראל, רק בזה אפשר לזכות.

ויש לנו לדעת כי אנחנו עומדים כבר מסתמא מאד מאד קרוב לגאולה, ומה שיחטפו יותר, מה שיותר! אז חוץ ממה שזה יעזור לנו להנצל מחבלי משיח, וזה יעזור ג"כ יותר שנזכה יותר מהר לגאולה.

ומי שישתדל יותר, הוא יזכה עם "יותר שמחה" לגאולה. וזה שישתדל פחות יזכה פחות, ויהיה לעתיד לבוא מבוויש. ממילא כל אחד יראה להתחזק, לעזור לתורה, לעזור ליראת שמים, לעזור לחסד...

We know that our Sages say, "What should one do to be saved from the birth-pains of Mashiach (the suffering that will precede the Mashiach's arrival)? Engage in Torah study and acts of kindness." (Sanhedrin 98b) I believe that the Chofetz Chaim emphasized that if our Sages say this, that means that there is no other method! Even if one would imagine that they would be able to (accomplish this through) doing something else, it will not help them. There is only one method; studying Torah and acts of kindness.

In our times we can see clearly that there is no alternative. It is not possible to imagine that other methods will help.

People have believed that if they had wealth it would help them, that if they had wealth they would be saved, but this does not even begin [to be true]. It is exactly the opposite; [their wealth] leads to jealousy and hatred. There is only one method: Torah study and acts of kindness.

When people are in a difficult financial situation, they tend to think that the first thing, since the situation is difficult, is to give less tzedakah... The truth is exactly the opposite. If one wants to gain merit, this is only via Torah study and acts of kindness. The more a person gives tzedakah, the more kindness a person performs, the more a person involves themselves in saving lives, the more one invites in Jewish children and brings them close, only in these ways is it possible to earn merit.

We must know that we are presumably standing extremely close to the Redemption. The more opportunities one grabs, the more they will have. Then not only will this save us from the birth-pains of the Mashiach, it will also help hasten the redemption.

One who invests greater effort will merit greater joy in the redemption. The one who invests less effort will merit less, and will, in the future, feel humiliated. Therefore, every person should strengthen themselves to facilitate Torah, to facilitate fear of Heaven, to facilitate kindness...

We fulfill the mitzvah of Kiddush by reciting kiddush while holding a cup containing wine, because the Torah says to “call Shabbat to mind,” and the Torah links wine and memory (Pesachim 106a). Rashi contended that use of wine is biblically mandated, but Rambam viewed it as a rabbinic obligation. (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Shabbat 29:6)

The Talmud (Bava Batra 97a) states that one may recite kiddush with freshly squeezed grape juice, and most halachic authorities follow this view. However, some prefer wine, for two reasons:

- Magen Avraham (272:3) wrote that we prefer aged, fermented wine. However, one may read Magen Avraham

as discussing a particular situation, in which fermented wine and grape juice will both be consumed at a meal, and using fermented wine for kiddush would avoid requiring a new blessing for the grape juice during the meal.

- Our grape juice is heated as part of its processing, which may reduce its acceptability. (Hilchot Shabbat 29:14).

Some debate whether Havdalah, calling to mind the special status of Shabbat at its end, is a biblical or rabbinic obligation. If havdalah is a rabbinic obligation, women might be exempt; see Aruch haShulchan Orach Chaim 296:4-5.

torczyner@torontotorah.com

Weekly Highlights: Mar. 23 – Mar. 29 / 16 Adar II – 22 Adar II

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
Shabbat Mar. 22-23				
Fri. 5:45 PM	Ezer Diena	Purim’s Enduring Nature	BAYT	Parshah & Kugel
8:50 AM	Ezer Diena	Which <i>Chelev</i> is Prohibited?	BAYT	Pre-Shacharit
After hashkamah	R’ Alex Hecht	Parshah	Clanton Park	
Before minchah	Ezer Diena	Daf Yomi	BAYT	Rabbi’s Classroom
After minchah	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Gemara Avodah Zarah	BAYT	Simcha Suite
Sun. Mar. 24				
9:00 AM	R’ Alex Hecht	Pre-Pesach Breakfast: Is Eliyahu at our Seder?	Clanton Park	For Members
Tue. Mar. 26				
1:30 PM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Yeshayah: Chapters 13-14	Shaarei Shomayim	
7:30 PM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	The Book of Yehoshua	129 Theodore Pl.	Not this week
8:00 PM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Pre-Pesach: Why Do Jews Ask So Many Questions?	Marlee Shul	
Wed. Mar. 27				
10:00 AM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Mysticism and Mitzvot 4: Kabbalah and Shabbat	Beth Emeth	Fee; register at torontotorah.com/kabbalah
7:30 PM	R’ Alex Hecht	Pesach Controversies	Shaarei Tefillah	Special Topic!
7:30 PM	Ezer Diena	Ripped from the Headlines	BAYT	
Thu. Mar. 28				
1:30 PM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Shemuel: Chapters 8-9	49 Michael Ct.	Women
8:30 PM	Ezer Diena	Gemara Beitzah	ediena@torontotorah.com	Men, Advanced
Fri. Mar. 29				
10:30 AM	R’ Elihu Abbe	Kiddushin	Yeshivat Or Chaim	Advanced

For University Men, at Yeshivat Or Chaim
10:00 AM Sunday, R’ Aaron Greenberg, Gemara Shabbat
11:00 AM Sunday, Beit Midrash Rotation: Contemporary Halachah, R’ Alex Hecht: Gebrochts
8:30 AM Wednesday, Ezer Diena, Stories and She’eilot
8:30 AM Friday, R’ Mordechai Torczyner, Parshah

WOMEN’S BEIT MIDRASH
For University and Adult Women, at Ulpanat Orot, with Mrs. Eliana Abbe
9:30 AM Tuesdays: Sefer Devarim, 9:30 AM Thursdays: Tefillah

Seder Boker for Adult Men
10:00 AM to Noon, Monday/Wednesday - R’ Moshe Yeres: Masechet Megilah and Eim haBanim Semeichah
10:00 AM to Noon, Tuesday/Thursday - R’ Moshe Yeres: Parshanut on Parshah and Pninei Halachah