

Toronto Torah

YU Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Kedoshim (*Diaspora*)

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(Not) Just Scales

Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

Around the middle of our parshah, the Torah warns us against any "dishonesty in judgment, in measures of length, weight, or volume." It then continues to say, "Just balances, just weights, a just *ephah*, and a just *hin*, shall you have. I am Hashem your G-d, who brought you out of the land of Egypt." (Vayikra 19:35-36) While the Torah mentions the Exodus in relation to various mitzvot, this still demands explanation: why is this great event of leaving Egypt mentioned in regard to what seems a mundane and self-evident mitzvah – not to cheat?

In the commentators we find several explanations:

- Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra notes that the Exodus is already mentioned in relation to a previous prohibition against injuring the stranger, as we ourselves had been strangers in Egypt. (ibid. 19:34) Our verse continues from there.
- Rashi, offering two different explanations, sees this phrase as a threat: it warns either (a) that the redemption from Egypt is conditioned on the keeping honest measures, or (b) that G-d could distinguish between a firstborn child and others, and so He is certain to "exact punishment from him who secretly stores his weights in [corrosive] salt to deceive unknowing people."
- Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin (Ha'amek Davar) writes that the salvation from Egypt proved that G-d

controls what seems to us as nature. Therefore, he argues, one who learned this lesson from the Exodus will not try to undermine the integrity of scales, as that would show a lack of belief in G-d omniscience.

Following in the footsteps of these sages, we may try and offer another solution to this question. In order to do so, we shall first look at a similar mitzvah, mentioned in Devarim 25: "You shall not have in your pouch alternate weights, larger and smaller... You shall not have [them] in your house." The Torah continues to promise that for keeping just measures, "You will endure long on the soil that the Hashem your G-d is giving you."

The mitzvah is fundamentally the same, but the focus shifts the Exodus to living in Israel. Another difference is that in Vayikra the transgression is simply called "corrupt", Devarim adds the adjective "revolting". Why the changes?

It seems that these differences are rooted in a third distinction, drawn by the Talmud (Bava Batra 89b): the prohibition in Vayikra is against using false scales and measures for the sake of deception, while the one in Devarim bans the use of such scales and measures even in one's own house, and even as a chamber pot.

Now we can understand why the Torah describes the offense differently in each source. In Vayikra the context of the

prohibition is between man and his fellow, and thus transgressing it is a corrupt act that requires correction. In Devarim, on the other hand, the context of the prohibition is between man and himself, as the use of false measures carries a threat to the integrity and truthfulness of the user – even if he does not aim at cheating anyone else. Thus, it is not only a wrong but also revolting – a corruption of the soul.

The same reasoning stands behind the emphasis on Egypt in Vayikra and Eretz Yisrael in Devarim. Egypt is the house of slavery and bondage, and to be redeemed from Egypt means to wage war against the temptation to deceive, usurp and control the weak and the unknowing. Eretz Yisrael, on the other hand, is the land in which one can be in the imminent presence of Hashem, the true G-d. In order to remain in the holy land, we must be truthful and sincere, not only to the other, but also to ourselves.

Of course, leaving Egypt must happen before entering the promised land. Put otherwise: in order to be true and honest to ourselves, we must first be true and honest to others. Only by treating others in a candid, sincere way, will we gain the right scales needed to become truthful and just ourselves.

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Summary

The seventh chapter of Shoftim describes the miraculous victory of Gideon's army of 300 Israelites over 135,000 Midianites. G-d commanded Gideon to reduce the size of Israel's army from its original 32,000 members, "lest Israel aggrandize itself over Me, saying, 'My own strength has saved me.'" (Shoftim 7:2, Artscroll translation) After sending away 22,000 soldiers who feared fighting, G-d insisted that Israel's army was still too large. He commanded Gideon to once again separate the worthy from the unworthy: "Everyone who laps from the water with his tongue as a dog laps, stand him apart, and [so, too], everyone who kneels on his knees to drink." (7:5) Rashi suggests that "everyone who kneels" refers to those who were accustomed to kneel before idols.

G-d assured Gideon that the Israelite army, now consisting of just 300 men, would be victorious. He arranged for Gideon to overhear a Midianite soldier describing a dream, in which he had seen barley bread rolling destructively through the Midianite camp. The soldier interpreted the bread as a reference to Gideon. This sign instilled within Gideon and his small army the

confidence to attack Midian, despite being outnumbered 450 to 1. The Israelites struck a strong blow to Midian, capturing and killing two of their leaders, Orev and Ze'ev.

Insight

A midrash notes the significance of the image of barley bread [tzlil] that Gideon was shown to give him confidence of Israel's impending victory: "What is 'tzlil' barley bread?' The Rabbis say: Because that generation was cleared [tzalal] of righteous people. And in what merit were they saved? In the merit of barley bread. And what is this? This is the mitzvah of *Omer* [which was brought of barley]." (Vayikra Rabbah 28:6, Artscroll translation) This midrash notes other periods in Jewish history when the mitzvah of bringing the *omer* served as a source of merit.

Why was the Jews' observance of bringing the *omer* considered so significant that it offset the severe spiritual decline of the majority of the nation? Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler writes that bringing the *Omer* - offering a portion of the crop to G-d before partaking of it - is meant to awaken within us the recognition that

everything in this world is provided by G-d, and must be elevated to be used in His service. If we successfully internalize this, we will not lose our ambition to grow in our service of G-d. (*Michtav me-Eliyahu*, Vol. II, p. 25)

The fact that the Jewish people were so meticulous about the *omer* showed that they still aspired to serve G-d, despite their weakness in resisting the lure of idolatry and other vices. Perhaps, their open recognition that G-d provides all material success, as demonstrated by their careful performance of this mitzvah, made them worthy of benefitting from G-d's miraculous intervention in their military efforts.

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Law of the Land: Electing Non-Jewish MK's**Rabbi Adam Friedmann**

One of the most pressing political and philosophical issues in the modern State of Israel is the conflict between Israel's existence as a democracy and its Jewish national character. This question comes to the fore, practically, with regards to politics. In a democratic system, a state's citizens choose their leadership. In Israel, this results in political representation for the Arab-Israeli population. Prioritizing the Jewish nature of the state, however, puts - at least theoretically - a limitation on this representation.

A parallel halachic question touches on this issue: Does halachah recognize the election of non-Jewish politicians in a Jewish democratic state?

The Torah outlines the laws of future kings of Israel, including the requirement that a king must be selected from among the Jewish people: "You shall place a king over yourself, whom Hashem your G-d will choose. From among your brethren shall you place a king over yourself; you may not set over you a foreigner who is not your brother." (Devarim 17:15) The Talmud interprets this restriction as referring even to converts. Although they are fully Jewish, the Torah limits their political involvement. (Bava Kama 88a) This halachah, as codified by Rambam, has a broader scope than just the office of the king. It includes, "any position of authority in [the people of] Israel...even the one responsible for the water spout who distributes water to the fields, and we need not mention a judge or the president (of the Sanhedrin)..." (Mishneh Torah, Laws of Kings 1:4)

This halachah would seem to limit the political positions of a non-Jew in a Jewish society. At first glance, at least, a

Member of Knesset seems to fit the description of "position of authority".

The question of non-Jewish parliamentarians has engaged the minds and pens of several leading Religious Zionist rabbis. Among these, Rabbi Shaul Yisraeli submits an interesting approach in his work *Amud HaYemini* (12:8). He argues that the position of an elected official in a democratic state is different in both form and substance from the authority positions found in earlier halachic sources. In form, the elected official's reign is limited by time; the classical authority figure of the halachah enjoys a permanent reign, which can be transferred to heirs. In substance, the elected official's power is limited to carrying out the will of the electorate. He cannot impose his will on the people, and will be removed from office if he does. Therefore, argues Rabbi Yisraeli, just as the halachah is unopposed to a business enterprise with Jewish and non-Jewish partners electing to give leadership roles to non-Jews, halachah does not oppose the election of non-Jewish officials in a democratic Jewish state.

This approach envisions modern Israel as the collective partnership of its citizens, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, and argues that this arrangement is halachically viable. If we accept the view of some thinkers (like Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin) that a democracy can fulfill the Torah's mandate to appoint a king, then Rabbi Yisraeli's arguments raise new halachic considerations about non-Jewish involvement in the Jewish state.

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Biography

The Chazon Ish

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

On 11 Cheshvan 5639 (November 7, 1878), a son was born to Rabbi Shemaryahu Yosef Karelitz, Rabbi of Kosova, and his wife Rasha. They named him Avraham Yeshayah, but the world came to know him by the title of his halachic and talmudic magnum opus, *Chazon Ish*.

Rabbi Avraham Yeshayah Karelitz was taught by his father, primarily. He spent some time in the yeshiva in Brisk, but left after two years; accounts of why he left vary. Rabbi Karelitz devoted himself to energetic study in his youth. He wrote that he preferred to be silent, speaking only to convey a fully formed idea.

At the age of 27, Rabbi Karelitz married Basha. After the *shidduch* was arranged, it became clear that Basha's family had been less than forthright regarding their financial circumstances and Basha's age – she was significantly older than Rabbi Karelitz – and some of Rabbi Karelitz's family members wished to cancel the *shidduch*. Rabbi Karelitz insisted on going ahead, lest Basha be embarrassed.

Basha supported the couple by running a store in the various places where they lived. Rabbi Karelitz continued to grow in scholarship, and he was counseled by the great Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzinski. With the help of Rabbi Grodzinski and Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook, Rabbi Karelitz moved to then-Palestine in 1933, settling in Bnei Brak.

Rabbi Karelitz did not hold any official rabbinic position in Bnei Brak, but by this time he was recognized as a leading scholar. Scholars from around the world approached him for advice, and he ruled on practical issues like use of greenhouses during *shemitah*, automated milking on Shabbat, and voting in Israeli elections. Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion met with Rabbi Karelitz regarding drafting women and yeshiva students, and his student Rabbi Chaim Yaakov Goldvicht formed the Hesder program, blending army service and yeshiva study, under his guidance.

This space is far too brief to sum up the life and impact of Rabbi Karelitz, who passed away in 1953 but whose life continues to influence the direction of the State of Israel. It would be worth reading the biographical *Pe'er haDor*, *Maaseh Ish*, and *HeHazon Ish*.

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Torah and Translation

The Honour of Torah and its Scholars

Rabbi A. Y. Karelitz, *Emunah uBitachon, Hashlamot 29*

Translated by Rabbi Adam Friedmann

אם אמנם מצות כיבוד של חכמים ויראתם הם מן מצוות המעשיות, כמו מצות קימה, לפתוח ראשון, לא ישב במקומו, לא יסתור דבריו - הם יסוד בנפש, ראש וראשון בחובת הלבבות. כי הלא הכבוד הוא רגש הגדול מאחיו, ועל פיו משקל כל ערכי החיים. הכבוד בתלמיד חכם משמש להכנעה לחכמת התורה, לקבלת מלכותה קבלה רצויה, קבלה ענוגה ונעימה...

הנה דבריו מבוארים, שת"ח שעסקו בתורה שלא לשמה לא נגרע בזה ת"ח חשיבותו, והאומר עליו מאי אהנו לי' רבנן בכלל מבזה ת"ח ובכלל אפיקורס. וכש"כ בת"ח העוסק בתורה לשמה. ובעל המוסר שמתנשא בלבו נגד ת"ח ומשפיל אותו בלבו, וכש"כ כשמשפיל אותו בפני אחרים, שהוא בכלל מבזה ת"ח, שדינו כאפיקורס ונכרת חלקו מארץ החיים, ומגלה פנים בתורה. שעל פי התורה להעמיד ברום המעלה במחשבה ובמעשה את הת"ח, שזהו כבוד התורה וכבודו יתברך...

ומה נורא הוא המראה, כי אנשים עטופים בטליתות של תלמידי חכמים ומקושטים באיצטלאות דרבנן, ומרצים למוסר וחסידות כל היום - והם המה מכת מבזי הת"ח, מכת מגלי פנים בתורה. ואם אמנם שוגגים הם, וכוונתם רצויה, אבל מה רב הוא ההפסד, ומה גדול ההרס בביהמ"ד.

Even though the mitzvot of respecting [Torah] scholars and revering them are among the action-based mitzvot, such as standing up [before a respected person] and [allowing him] to speak first, not sitting in his place, and not contradicting his words, the foundation [of these mitzvot] in the soul is first and foremost as a duty of the heart, for respect is an emotion that is greater than its fellows, and it gives weight to all values in life. The respect for Torah scholars serves to subdue one to the wisdom of the Torah, to accepting its sovereignty with a welcome acceptance, an acceptance of joy and pleasantness...

And from his words [of Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin in *Nefesh HaChaim* 4:3] it is clear that the fact that a Torah scholar does not learn with proper motivation does not, G-d forbid, detract from his importance. And one who says regarding him, "How have the Sages benefited me [with their learning]" (see *Sanhedrin* 99b), is counted among 'those who belittle Torah scholars' and among the heretics. And all the more so regarding a Torah scholar who learns with proper motivation. A pious person who is arrogant regarding the Torah scholar in his heart, and belittles him in his heart, and all the more so in front of others, is counted among 'those who belittle Torah scholars', and he is judged like a heretic and is cut off from the land of the living, and he distorts the Torah. Because according to the Torah one should give pride of place in thought and action to the Torah scholar, since this constitutes honour of the Torah and honour of G-d...

How awful is the sight, of people who shroud themselves in the cloaks of Torah scholars and adorn themselves with the clothing of the Rabbis, and hold forth on ethics and piety all day, and they are from the groups of 'belittlers of Torah scholars', from those who distort the Torah, and even if they do so accidentally and their intentions are desirable, nevertheless how horrible is the loss, and how terrible the destruction in the Beit Ha-Midrash.

Stories of the sages' treatment of their parents add to the legal descriptions of this mitzvah: "When Rabbi Tarfon's mother wished to ascend into bed, he would bend down and elevate her. When she wished to come down, she would come down on top of him. Rabbi Tarfon praised himself for this in the study hall, but the sages replied: 'You have not yet reached half the honour due your mother! Has she ever thrown a wallet into the sea before you, and have you then abstained from embarrassing her?'" And, "Rav Yosef, upon hearing the sound of his mother's footsteps, would say, 'I

will arise from before the arrival of the Divine presence!" (Kiddushin 31b)

The Talmud teaches that one is also obligated to honour an older brother (Ketuvot 103a). According to Ramban, this is specifically while the parents are alive, because they wish for him to be honoured. However, the Minchat Chinuch understood Ramban to require such honour even after the parents have passed away. One must also honour an older sister; see Torah Temimah to Shemot 20, note 86.

Weekly Highlights: May 11 – May 17 / 6 Iyar – 12 Iyar

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
Shabbat May 10-11				
8:50 AM	Ezer Diena	What is Molech?	BAYT	<i>Pre-Shacharit Parshah</i>
Derashah	R' Alex Hecht	Feelings as Mitzvot?	Clanton Park	Main Shul
After minchah	Ezer Diena	Fasts of Behab	The Conservatory	343 Clark Ave W
After minchah	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Gemara Avodah Zarah	BAYT	Simcha Suite
Sun. May 12				
10:00 AM to 11:20 AM	Mrs. Lori Grysman Rabbi Azarya Berzon	Echoes of Bereishit in Rut Why are the Dibrot Special?	Midreshet Yom Rishon Yeshivat Or Chaim	Women Light Refreshments
Mon. May 13				
7:00 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Legal Ethics: Judaism & The Racially Diverse Workplace	Shaarei Shomayim	<i>CPD/EDI Accredited Laypeople welcome</i>
Tue. May 14				
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Yeshayah: Chapters 17-18	Shaarei Shomayim	
7:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	The Book of Yehoshua	129 Theodore Pl.	Men
Wed. May 15				
10:00 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Leading Anti-Semites 2: Martin Luther	Beth Emeth	<i>Fee; register at torontotorah.com/anti</i>
12:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	The Ethical Challenge 1: Shabbat & The Accountant	Zeifmans LLP 201 Bridgeland Ave.	<i>Lunch served; RSVP rk@zeifmans.ca</i>
7:30 PM	Ezer Diena	Leisure in Halachah 1: Shouldn't I Be Learning?	BAYT	Rabbi's Classroom
7:30 PM	R' Alex Hecht	Non-Jews in Jewish Law	Shaarei Tefillah	
Thu. May 16				
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Shemuel: Chapters 9-10	49 Michael Ct.	Women
8:30 PM	Ezer Diena	Gemara Beitzah	ediena@torontotorah.com	Men, Advanced
Fri. May 17				
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: Peiot and Shaving
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