

Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Reeh

1 Elul, 5779/August 31, 2019

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This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Jeffrey Silver, wishing the Beit Midrash much success and mazal in its eleventh year, and welcoming our new Sgan couple, Rabbi Sammy and Dr. Ahuva Bergman, and our new Avreich couple, Netanel and Eliana Klein

Close Encounters of the Third Kind

Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

The first tithe we separate from Israeli produce (*maaser rishon*) was introduced in Bamidbar 18:21-24; it goes to the Levi. In our parshah we find the laws of two additional tithes, each one separated in particular years of the seven-year shemita cycle. One of them, *maaser sheni*, is eaten by the owner in Jerusalem (Devarim 12:11-12; 14:22-27). The other, *maaser ani*, is given to the poor, the orphan and the widow (ibid. 14: 28-29).

We would have expected the Levi's presence to be limited to *maaser rishon*, which is targeted for Levites. Nonetheless, the Torah emphasizes the requirement to give to the Levites even when describing the other tithes:

- *Maaser sheni* - "And you shall rejoice before Hashem, your G-d, you and your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levi within your cities..." (ibid. 12:18-19; see also 14:27)
- *Maaser ani* - "At the end of three years, you shall take out all of the tithes of your crop, in that year, and place it at your gates. And the Levi, because he has neither portion nor inheritance with you, and the stranger, and the orphan, and the widow, who are in your cities, will come and eat and be satisfied..." (ibid. 14:28-29)

The Torah's inclusion of the Levi in the latter tithes brought our Sages to a surprising claim. *Maaser rishon* is

meant solely for the Levites, but the Levi may receive the other two tithes as well: "Give him his portion [*maaser rishon*]. If he does not have his portion, give him *maaser sheni*. If he does not have *maaser sheni*, give him *maaser ani*..." (Sifri Devarim 108, as quoted by the Malbim to 12:12. For other versions, see Rashi to 12:8, Torah Temimah, and the variants in the Finkelstein edition of the Sifri) We could explain the Levi's inclusion in *maaser ani*, if he is indeed needy. But why would there be a reason to give the Levi *maaser sheni*, which the owner is meant to eat?

Perhaps the Levi's right to *maaser sheni* is a function of the Torah's explanation for the mitzvah: "You shall consume the tithes of your new grain... in the presence of Hashem your G-d, in the place He will choose to establish His Name, so that you may learn to revere Hashem your G-d forever." (ibid. 14:23)

Ramban explains how the act of eating *maaser sheni* in Jerusalem can bring the eater to revere G-d: "For the priests and the judges who stand there before G-d, teachers of the Torah, will teach him awe of G-d and instruct him in Torah and mitzvot." (Commentary to Devarim 14:22) In other words: eating *maaser sheni* is supposed to be a meal of spiritual elevation.

While Ramban does not explicitly mention the Levites as teachers, it is very possible that they are also included among the Torah teachers who live in

Jerusalem. [See Devarim 17:8-9, and Sifri Devarim 123.] It would not be far-fetched, then, to assume that inviting a Levi to partake in *maaser sheni* would be considered by the Torah as an integral part of the mitzvah.

In light of the above, we may surmise that the Torah advocates three kinds of encounters with the Levi:

1. The Levi is a professional worker in the Beit HaMikdash, who is paid for his work via *maaser rishon*;
2. The Levi is a person in need, helped and sustained by *maaser ani*.
3. The Levi is a teacher and inspirational figure, who is invited to join the feast of *maaser sheni* to elevate it and help give it its spiritual dimension.

It seems to me that while all three kinds of encounters are meaningful, we should aspire that as much as possible, our connection with the Levites of our times – our Torah scholars and teachers and Rabbis – should be of the third kind: a meeting of inspiration and elevation.

bweintraub@torontotorah.com

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Summary

Our chapter opens by introducing a man named Michayhu, later identified and generally known as Michah. Michah admits to stealing 1100 silver coins from his mother, and returns the money to her. She surprisingly dedicates the money to G-d (Malbim to 17:3; according to others, such as Metzudot, to foreign gods) with the stipulation that her son make a graven/molten image out of it. After he refuses this donation, she has a smaller portion of the silver (either 900 or 200 coins; Malbim and Radak to 17:4) crafted into an idol. We are then told that despite his original opposition, Michah created items to serve this idol, and that he consecrated one of his sons to be a priest to it.

The remaining portion of the chapter discusses Michah's recruitment of a Levite to serve as a priest to this idol, and how happy he is that a man from the tribe that ministers to Hashem will now be the priest for his idol. The identity of this Levite is not revealed here; however, Rashi and Radak to 17:7 understand that this individual is the man identified in 18:30 as Yonatan, the son of Gershom, the son of Menasheh. The Talmud (Bava Batra 109b; cited in

Rashi, Radak, Minchat Shai and Metzudot there) explains that "Menasheh" is really Moshe, and that the letter "nun" was added to his name to avoid identifying him clearly, thus protecting his honour.

Although this narrative immediately follows the story of Shimshon, most commentaries note that this must have taken place earlier in the period of the Judges. See Ralbag, Radak and Rashi to 17:1, although Rashi to 17:2 cites and rejects an opinion that Michah was Delilah's son.

Food for thought

The name change of "Moshe" to "Menasheh" is not the only significant name change in the story of Michah and his idol. In verses 1-4, Michah is referred to as Michayhu, whereas from that point on, he is known by his shortened name. Why the sudden switch?

Malbim to 17:1/17:5 notes that this switch happens when Michah serves the idol for the first time, and explains that his name is changed negatively once he begins serving the idol. Although Malbim does not elaborate, it is commonly understood that the

name Michayhu is a compound of "Mi" and "KaHashem", meaning, "Who is like Hashem?", a name which praises G-d's greatness. [This phrase is also used in Tehillim 113:5.] When Michah is loyal to G-d, he can be known by his name praising Him, but once he strays, his name must be cut down and changed to something that is less opposed to his actions against Hashem.

Although many of us are named in honour or memory of others, many Hebrew names themselves thank or praise G-d for what He has done for us. How can we take steps to make sure that we live up not only to our namesakes, but to our names as well?

ediena@torontotorah.com

Holy Land Halachah: Shacharit After Nighttime IDF Duty Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

The goal of our new Holy Land Halachah column is to summarize the approaches of contemporary Israeli rabbis to practical cases which have come before them. Note that these summaries do not reflect all views, and should not be used as psak.

**Rabbi Asher Weiss, Minchat Asher 2:9, 21st century
Available at: <http://bit.ly/2ZeVcyk>**

Question: IDF soldiers are up throughout the night for operations of various kinds. They return to the base about an hour before first light, exhausted. May they go to sleep, anticipating rising in time to recite Shema? Or must they be concerned that they might oversleep?

One could argue that there is no obligation to stay awake. At the time when the soldiers return to their base, there is no duty to recite Shema. Therefore, one could argue that they are not obligated to put themselves in a position of responsibility for the mitzvah, by staying up. Further, if they go to sleep then they will be in a position of *oness*, physically incapable of performing the mitzvah, when the obligation begins.

On the other hand, we are taught that one should not begin a meal or haircut close to the time for davening minchah, lest he miss the opportunity to daven. (Shabbat 9b, Orach Chaim 232) And yet, there is no similar prohibition against going to sleep at that time, so perhaps this also supports allowing the soldiers to go to sleep. Rabbi Weiss continues to show that other sources could be read to require staying up, or to permit going to sleep, such as in discussion regarding

entering a boat before Shabbat, and whether a kohen must enter a synagogue in order to provide the *birkat kohanim* blessing.

Rabbi Weiss concludes that there can be no responsibility to obligate one's self in a mitzvah. However, the Torah desires that we do so, unless there is a great need to do otherwise. This desire is clear in the Talmudic statement that Moshe longed to enter Israel not for its material pleasures, but for its mitzvah opportunities. (Sotah 14a) Rabbi Shemuel Wosner ruled similarly, regarding going on vacation or for business to a place where there is no minyan or no Sefer Torah. (Shevet haLevi 6:21) And indeed, the siddur of Rabbi Yaakov Emden states that if one is not permitted to start a meal close to the time for minchah, then certainly one may not go to sleep at that time, half an hour before the earliest time to daven minchah. This is an extreme position, but it illustrates the value of ensuring one will be eligible to perform a mitzvah.

Rabbi Weiss concludes: "These soldiers, who have been immersed in *milchemet mitzvah* (war which is a mitzvah) throughout the night, may give sleep to their eyes and slumber to their eyelids. They should set an alarm clock to enable them to recite Shema on time. If, due to *oness*, the time passes, 'He who is merciful, will wipe away sin and not destroy, and will greatly suppress His anger. (Tehillim 78:38)'"

torczyner@torontotorah.com

Biography

Rabbi Yaakov Kanaievsky

R' Mordechai Torczyner

Chaim Peretz Kanaievsky was a Chernobyler chasid and shochet who lived in the village of Hornostaipil, about 100 kilometers north of Kiev, toward the end of the 19th century. His first wife passed away when he was sixty years old; on the counsel of the Rabbi, he remarried. The couple's first child, born in 1899, was named Yaakov Yisrael; the world would come to know him as "The Steipler Gaon".

At the age of eleven, Yaakov was sent to learn in Novardok, where he gained a reputation for scholarship and diligence. In 1918, the Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Yosef Yoizel Horowitz, appointed him to establish a branch of the yeshiva in Rogatchov, but there Yaakov Yisrael was conscripted into the Red Army.

Numerous stories are told regarding young Rabbi Kanaievsky's commitment to mitzvot while serving in the army. He remarked on the satisfaction of being beaten because of his commitment to Shabbat observance, and he is said to have avoided wearing a warm uniform during the Siberian winter out of concern for *shaatnez*. Eventually he was discharged, with damaged hearing; some versions attribute this to childhood typhus, others due to the cold to which his ears were exposed while in the army.

Upon being discharged, Rabbi Kanaievsky moved to Bialystok, where he continued to learn and began to publish works of Jewish law. He became Rosh Yeshiva of the Novardok yeshiva's branch in Pinsk, and he married Miriam Karelitz, sister of the Chazon Ish. In 1934, Rabbi and Rebbetzin Kanaievsky made aliyah, moving to Bnei Brak, where the Chazon Ish already lived. For the next fifty years, Rabbi Kanaievsky dedicated himself to studying and publishing Torah, teaching students and counseling the many who approached him for aid. Rabbi Kanaievsky passed away in 1985; more than 150,000 people participated in his funeral.

Rabbi Kanaievsky's best-known work is his *Kehilot Yaakov* collection of novellae on the Talmud. His letters have been published in volumes entitled *Karyana d'Igrita*, and descriptions of his practices have been published in *Orchot Rabbeinu*. Rabbi Yaakov Meir Greenwald consulted Rabbi Kanaievsky frequently on matters of mental and emotional health; he collected the correspondence and published it, with commentary, in a sensitive and insightful work called *Eitzot v'Hadrachot*.

torczyner@torontotorah.com

Torah and Translation

The Soul's Yearning for a Spiritual Life

R' Yaakov Kanaievsky, Chayei Olam 5

Translated by Rabbi Alex Hecht

וכשנתבונן נראה כי הנפש בטבעה אינה רואה סיפוק בהבלי תענוגי עוה"ז, ומשתוקקת להתדבק לרם ונעלה מרום וקדוש, אלא שלא הוטבע בה להשיג בכוחות טבעיים, מהו מרום וקדוש (למען תהי' הבחירה בידו) כ"א בעיון השכל ובסייעתא דשמיא ישיגוהו.

והאומות אשר לא ידעו את ד' בחרו להם איזו ע"ז לעבדה ולהעריצה, ואח"כ מצאו הפוקרים ענין בפילוסופיא להעריצה ולהקדישה ואמרו שזהו הרוחני היותר נעלה שראוי להתמסר לה בכל לב, ובדורות האחרונים שלא מצאו הפוקרים טעם נעים בהתעמקות השכל מצאו להם דרך אחרת להשקית תשוקתם לרוחניות ונעלה...

ועכ"פ גם הפורק עול מחפש איזו דבר להעריצו ולעבדו אם למלכו או לעמו' לשיטתו או למפלגתו, ואמנם אחרי כל זאת מרגישים ריקות ושממון בעומק נפשם ומשתדלים להשקיתה בהבלי הבליים...

ואחרי הכל הבור ריק ומרגיש שחסר לו מה, אשר לא ידע לכנותו. הוא מה שאח"כ למדדש קהלת עה"פ "וגם הנפש לא תמלא." משל למה הדבר דומה? לעירוני (בן כפר) שנשא בת מלך אם יביא לה כל מה שבעולם אינם חשובים לה כלום למה שהיא בת מלך, כך הנפש אילו הבאת לה כל מעדני עולם אינם כלום לה למה שהיא מן העליונים.

ואכן תשוקה זו לרוחניות וקדושה מעידה בנו שתכלית בריאתנו בעולמנו לעבודת ה' קל חי צורינו יוצרנו...

Upon reflection, it is apparent that - by nature - the soul does not see satisfaction in the vanity of the pleasures of this world, and yearns to cling to the lofty and exalted, elevated and holy. However, it is not embedded in her to perceive with her natural means [alone] what is elevated and holy (in order to retain free choice), but rather, this is reached with intellectual analysis and heavenly assistance.

The nations that did not know of Hashem chose for themselves any idolatry to serve and venerate. Later on, the heretics found philosophy to admire and to consecrate, and they said that this was the highest spiritual worth, to devote one's self to it wholeheartedly. In recent generations, when the heretics did not find a pleasant taste in deepening their minds, they found other ways to quiet their yearning for spirituality and elevation...

In any event, the one who throws off the yoke [of Torah] is also searching for something to admire and to serve - whether to [crown it] king over him, or to follow its ideological position or faction. Yet, after all this, they feel emptiness and desolation in the depths of their souls, and they work to silence it with vanities...

And after all this, the pit is empty, and he feels that he is lacking something, which he does not know what to call. This is what our sages of blessed memory said in Midrash Kohelet on the verse, "...yet his soul is not satisfied" (Kohelet 6:7): "To what can this be compared? To a resident of a village who married the king's daughter. [Even] if he brought her everything in the world, it would be worthless to her, since she is the king's daughter. Such is the soul: Even if all the delicacies of the world were brought to her, it would be worthless to her, since she is from on high."

But this yearning for spirituality and holiness testifies about us, that the purpose of our creation in our world is to serve the Creator, blessed is He, a living G-d, our Rock and Maker...

Shemot 20:13 warns, “You shall not testify as a false witness against your neighbour”; Sefer haChinuch lists this as the Torah’s 37th mitzvah. Of course, the Torah’s prohibitions against deception are not limited to formal testimonies; we are separately warned against theft via deception (Sefer haMitzvot #224-226), swearing falsely (#227), using dishonest weights and measures (#258-259) and employing deceptive pricing (#337). However, the specification of false testimony serves as an additional prohibition for testimony.

The Torah stressed the harm of false testimony, specifically, because undermining the judicial process undermines Torah and civilization. For this reason, our prophets spent considerable time inveighing against corruption in the *beit din* (Jewish court). Pirkei Avot 1:18 echoed this point in noting that honest testimony is part of the foundation on which the world rests: “The world exists on three things: Law, Truth and Peace.” Our Torah is a Torah of Truth, and G-d’s seal is Truth.

This prohibition actually applies beyond the walls of a

courtroom; it applies in any case where one’s description of reality will determine halachah. For example, this would include lying in a way that influences a rabbinic ruling on the kashrut of food. (Minchat Chinuch 37:1)

A witness who is caught testifying falsely may, depending on circumstances, be incriminated as an *ed zomeim*; such a person knowingly poses as witnesses to an event he did not observe, in order the harm the target of his testimony. Jewish courts cross-examine all witnesses on two basic points: the location of the event they witnessed, and the date and time when they witnessed it. If they are proven to have been elsewhere at the time they mentioned, beyond a reasonable margin of error, then the court is confident that these are *edim zomimin*. Where possible, such “witnesses” are given the punishment they had intended to inflict; Sefer haChinuch lists this as the Torah’s 524th mitzvah.

torczyner@torontotorah.com

Weekly Highlights: Aug. 30 – Sept. 5 / 1 Elul – 7 Elul

Most of our classes are still on summer hiatus, but opportunities remain!

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
שבת Aug. 30-31				
9:30 AM	Ezer Diena	Minchat Chinuch: Yichud At Work	BAYT	Rabbi’s Classroom
10:30 AM	R’ Alex Hecht	Parshah: Adding Mitzvot	Clanton Park	After Hashkamah
5:30 PM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	The Place Hashem Will Choose	BAYT	Women’s Shiur Gruda Beis Medrash
Before Avot	Ezer Diena	Daf Yomi	BAYT	Rabbi’s Classroom
After minchah	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Gemara Avodah Zarah	BAYT	Simcha Suite
Mon. Sept. 2				
9:00 AM	R’ Avram Rothman Ezer Diena Aaron Rosenberg	#holyfences Men & Women in the Workplace	Aish Thornhill	Breakfast served
Wed. Sept. 4				
7:30 PM	R’ Alex Hecht	Health and Halachah #1	Shaarei Tefillah	New 5-Part Series!
Thu. Sept. 5				
1:30 PM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	The Book of Shemuel	49 Michael Ct.	Women
8:30 PM	Ezer Diena	Gemara Beitzah	ediena@torontotorah.com	Men, Advanced
Fri. Sept. 6				
10:30 AM	R’ Sammy Bergman	Bava Metzia	Yeshivat Or Chaim	Advanced

For University Men, at Yeshivat Or Chaim

10:00 AM Sunday, R’ Aaron Greenberg, Gemara Shabbat—On Summer Hiatus until 9/15

11:00 AM Sunday, Beit Midrash Rotation: Contemporary Halachah: R’ Alex Hecht: Refusing Patients

8:30 AM Wednesday, Ezer Diena, Mishlei

8:30 AM Friday, R’ Mordechai Torczyner, Parshah

WOMEN’S BEIT MIDRASH for University and Adult Women, at Ulpanat Orot, On Summer Hiatus

Seder Boker for Adult Men with Rabbi Moshe Yeres

10:00 AM to Noon, Mon./Wed. Masechet Megilah, Orot of Rav Kook, Chovot haLevavot

10:00 AM to Noon, Tue./Thu. Parshanut on the Parshah, Sefer Yehoshua, Pninei Halachah