

Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Ki Tavo

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This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Martin and Suri Rosen for the yahrtzeits of Martin's parents, Sam and Elsie Rosen ז"ל ושלום בן אפרים פישל ז"ל עלקא מרים בן קלמן ז"ל

This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by David and Nina Bernstein in honour of Rabbi Torczyner, Ezer Diena, all of the avreichim, and Rabbi Eitan Aviner

"Afflictions of Love"

Rabbi Alex Hecht

The introduction to the *Tochachah* (the Divine warning in our parshah) tells us that afflictions will come about if we "do not hearken to the voice of Hashem, your G-d, to observe, to perform all His commandments and all His decrees that I command you today..." (Devarim 28:15, Artscroll tr.) It would seem that G-d inflicts suffering upon those who fail to observe the Torah.

However, elsewhere, G-d objects to us attributing the misfortunes of others to sin. (Bava Metzia 58b, citing Ivov 4:6-7) Furthermore, not only is suffering often not the result of sin, but G-d may, in fact, inflict it upon those whom G-d especially loves, as King David said, "Fortunate is the man whom You afflict, and from Your Torah You teach him. (Tehillim 94:12, Berachot 5a) How could inflicting suffering reflect G-d's love?

Our sages have offered a range of views to explain how "suffering of love" increases Divine reward:

- Rashi (Berachot 5a) noted that G-d sometimes inflicts suffering upon righteous people so that they will be rewarded in the next world to an extent that exceeds their existing deeds. But why would G-d afflict a person merely to increase his reward?
- Ramban understood that G-d brings "afflictions of love" upon individuals who have committed a small number of unintentional sins, for which suffering in this world will prevent diminishment of reward in the world

to come. (Sha'ar haGamul 10)

- Rabbi Yaakov Yehoshua Falk explained that G-d may bring hardship upon a righteous person in order to atone for the sins of the less righteous, so that they will both receive greater reward in the afterlife. (Pnei Yehoshua to Berachot 5a)
- Rabbi Moshe Teitelbaum proposed that G-d may provide a righteous person the opportunity to attain greater purity, and earn greater reward, by performing mitzvot in the face of difficulty. (Yismach Moshe, Netzavim 4) This is consistent with the dictum, "According to the pain is the reward." (Avot 5:23) Similarly, Rabbi Saadia Gaon suggested that a righteous person's suffering will serve as an example to others, demonstrating that there are those who serve G-d in the face of adversity. (Emunot v'Deiot 5:3)

On the other hand, some suggest that "suffering of love" is less about reward, and more about growth. Rabbeinu Nisim explained that connection to physicality limits connection to the spiritual, and G-d wishes to reduce indulgence in the physical world of those whom He loves, so that they can more effectively bond with the spiritual and infinite. (Derashot haRan 9)

Despite the above rationalizations, Rabbeinu Nisim acknowledges the limits of our capacity to understand the workings of G-d in our world: "One cannot discern in it the justice of the Blessed One's judgments, but must remain foolish, beast-like, in

contemplating them — until he comes and sees what the Blessed One has stored away for the righteous and for the wicked, at which time he will understand their end." (ibid. 8, R. Silverstein tr.) Indeed, the Talmudic sage, Rabbi Meir maintained that Moshe's request that G-d reveal to him why the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper was denied. This is something that only G-d knows, and it is hidden from mankind. (Berachot 7a)

Therefore, we are exhorted against pontificating to others about their suffering, and doing so violates the prohibition against *ona'at devarim* [verbal abuse]. (Bava Metzia 58b, Choshen Mishpat 228:4). True, experiencing challenges may be an opportunity for self-reflection. (Berachot 5a) Furthermore, the Talmud says that if someone goes forty days without experiencing any suffering, it may be cause for concern that their reward will be depleted in this world. ["Suffering", in this context, may be as seemingly insignificant as reaching into one's pocket to remove three coins, and taking out two. (Arachin 16b)] But this does not open the field for others to offer criticisms unasked.

While the *Tochachah* outlines a general system of reward and punishment, ostensibly experienced in this world, it is clear we can't easily understand G-d's ways. We must recognize our limits, taking the opportunity to self-reflect when appropriate, but not displaying hubris and insensitivity to the pain of others.

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Summary

After the brutal rape and death of the concubine of the Levi in Givah, the Jewish people prepare for war against Binyamin to exact justice for the crime. When Binyamin, rather than turning over the people of Givah, prepare to defend them, the Jews ask permission from Hashem, via the Urim V'Tumim [the breastplate of the kohen gadol], to begin the battle. Though they receive permission for two consecutive days, on each day they are routed by Binyamin. Finally, on the third day, nation prepares a surprise ambush. While Binyamin believes they are beating a small group from the national forces, another group destroys Givah. This turns the tide, and the Jews begin to kill tens of thousands of people from Binyamin, burning cities and property, leaving only six hundred men alive.

How could they lose, if G-d told them to fight?

There are many aspects of this tragic story that are difficult to understand. However, one of the strangest is that the Jews lose the first two days of battle, despite seemingly having been told by G-d to fight. Rashi and Malbim (20:8) note this and point out that on

the first two attempts, the Jews ask **how they should fight** (who should lead the battle), but do not ask **whether they should fight**; they assume it. The third time, when they ask whether they should continue, thus opening themselves up to the possibility that the war is unjustified, does G-d assure them that they will be victorious.

Avital Goldner (Megadim 14, <https://bit.ly/2kLmyJi>) suggests the following. While the actions of Binyamin were indeed terrible, and as implied in the previous chapter, even S'dom-like, that does not mean that the Jewish people can take the destruction of an entire tribe as the obvious course of action. That kind of retribution cannot be assumed – it needs explicit Divine sanction. She argues that the problem is even deeper. At some level, each side was justified. The Jews were clearly correct that the actions of the people of Givah needed to be punished, and that there had to be consequences to Binyamin covering for the criminals rather than bringing them to justice. On the other hand, it is not clear that the punishment for failing to execute justice is death.

She suggests that G-d allowing for His final decision to be delayed was a way of allowing each side to retract, in an attempt to prevent the disastrous consequences that were caused by the intractability of the two sides. She suggests that a similar dynamic is at play when G-d enforces Eliyahu's decree for a famine as punishment for the idolatry of the Jewish people under Achav, although G-d eventually forces Eliyahu to appear to Achav to retract the decree, even before the Jews repent.

The ambiguity inherent in this story is a feature of the final chapters of Shoftim, where all of the characters seems to be morally dubious, highlighting the level to which the Jewish people have sunk.

jziring@torontotorah.com

Holy Land Halachah: Electing Women

Rabbi Sammy Bergman

Many female candidates ran for Knesset this week. Since it's election season, it's worth exploring the halachic question of whether we may elect a woman as a member of Knesset. In 1920, when Israel held its first governmental elections, Rabbi Ben-Zion Meir Hai Uziel, the first Sephardic Chief Rabbi of State of Israel, wrote a responsum addressing this issue. (*Shu"t Mishpitei Uziel Choshen Mishpat IV:6*)

Rabbi Uziel begins by quoting a midrash (Sifri, Devarim 29:16), which indicates that we are commanded to appoint a king as monarch over the Jewish nation, and not a queen. Furthermore, the Rambam (Laws of Kings 1:5) extends this male specification to include "any position of authority." At first glance, the Rambam's understanding of the Sifri would explicitly prohibit appointing a woman as a member of Knesset.

However, Rabbi Uziel suggests that a woman may serve as a member of the Israeli Knesset for the following reasons:

- The prohibition against appointing women to positions of authority is not an irrevocable disqualification of women from leadership positions. Rabbi Uziel proves this from the opinion of Tosafot. Tosafot (Niddah 50a, s.v. *kol ha-kasher*) deal with the question of how Devorah the prophetess was permitted to serve as a judge if women are invalid judges. One of Tosafot's answers is that Devorah was different because the congregation "accepted her [as leader] over them because of her association with the Divine presence." Rabbi Uziel proves from this comment of Tosafot that in a time of necessity, there is no prohibition against appointing women to positions of authority.
- The prohibition of the Sifri may not be authoritative, since it's not mentioned anywhere in the Talmud. In fact, Rabbi

Uziel suggests that Tosafot argue against the Sifri. According to one opinion in Tosafot, a woman may serve as a judge, as Devorah did. Even according to Tosafot's other opinion, which is that Devorah merely taught men how to judge, one can still prove that women may participate in the judicial debate when legal cases are heard. They are only unable to perform the formal function of accepting testimony in court.

- Even if we accept the position of the Rambam and Sifri, the prohibition against women holding leadership positions would only apply if the Sanhedrin formally appointed them. However, Rabbi Uziel argues based on Rabbeinu Nisim, that merely accepting a woman as a leader, "as a man would accept his relatives," is permissible. (Chiddushei haRan to Shevuot 30a v'lo.) When the Knesset is elected, the nation is merely agreeing that its members will "be in power to attend to all their communal needs." Even the Rambam would agree to such a process.

After addressing the legality of the issue, Rabbi Uziel adds that electing women as members of Knesset won't lead to a breach of modesty. Since the men and women of the Knesset are engaged in the mitzvah of solving the problems of the community, there is no need to worry about licentiousness.

sbergman@torontotorah.com

Biography

Rabbi Moshe Amiel

Rabbi Adam Friedmann

Rabbi Moshe Avigdor Amiel (1883-1946) was born in Grodno, Lithuania. His talents for learning were recognized at a young age – when he was thirteen, his father sent him to the Telz Yeshiva, and later to study with Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik in Brisk and Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky in Vilna. At the age of eighteen he received ordination, and at twenty-three he began his rabbinical career, taking up posts in Lithuania, Russia, and Belgium. In 1936 Rabbi Amiel made aliyah, and he served as the Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv until his death.

Rabbi Amiel was known for his incisiveness and broad range of knowledge. A master orator, he was inspiring and unafraid to criticize views he found inappropriate. His published works cover a broad range of topics and showcase his erudition. His multi-volume work *HaMidot L'Cheker HaHalachah* (*Axioms in Halachic Analysis*) seeks to distill a set of distinctive logical forms which underlie all of Talmud study and work their way through the medieval and modern commentaries. His book *L'Nevuchei HaTekufah* (*For the Perplexed of the Generation*) is a philosophical discourse directed towards those confused about the prospect of synthesizing traditional Jewish beliefs and modern thought. He also wrote extensively on the social challenges which faced the Jewish community during his lifetime.

A leading Religious Zionist figure, Rabbi Amiel was one of the first rabbis to publicly join the Mizrahi movement, an affiliation which persisted throughout his career. He also dedicated his time to establishing Jewish educational institutions. During his time in Europe he established large and thriving yeshivot, and networks of elementary schools. In Israel he founded Yeshiva Yishuv HeChadash in Tel Aviv, and it became the exemplar for the Bnei Akiva yeshiva system.

Rabbi Amiel's worldview was unique and complex. He was an outspoken Religious Zionist who viewed Israel as the obvious location for Jewish religious revival, and he supported the study of secular subjects in religious schools. At the same time, he maintained a lukewarm stance towards secular Zionism and did not support the establishment of a secular state. His carefully considered and strongly held positions mark him as a steadfast and original thinker.

afriedmann@torontotorah.com

Torah and Translation Faith and Analysis

R' Moshe Amiel, L'Nevuchei haTekufah 45

Translated by Rabbi Adam Friedmann

כבר האריכו גדולי הראשונים שלנו והאריות שבחבורה זו, כמו הרמב"ם ורבנו בחיי הדיין הספרדי בספריהם "מורה נבוכים" ו"חובת הלבבות" והראו מק"ן טעמים, כי אין אנו יוצאים ידי חובתנו באמונה בלבד, אלא על כל אחד ואחד חוב נוסף על כך לחקור על מציאות ד' ומהותו האמיתית, כפי השגתו וכח הכרתו, ומי שמתעצל בזה דומה ל"חולה שהוא בקי בחליו ובדרך רפואתו סמך על הרופא שמרפא אותו בכל מיני רפואות והוא מתעצל לעיין בחכמתו לדעת, אם הוא מתעסק בעניינו בדרך נכונה אם לא..."

אבל מאידך גיסא מי איננו יודע שתכלית הידיעה שלא נדע, ואם גם יהיה חכם יותר משלמה המלך בשעתו, ויחיה ימי משותלח וישוב תמיד אל החקירה והידיעה, לא ידע אלא שאינו יודע. וכבר פי' בזה את הכתוב: "וירא העם וינועו ויעמדו מרחוק" "ומשה נגש אל הערפל אשר שם האלקים" (שמות כ'), כי זה היה ההבדל בין העם הפשוט ובין משה רבנו. "וירא העם" המה דמו שהם רואים ויודעים, ומי שמדמה כך הוא רחוק מאד מ"אורחא דמהימנותא" וזהו "ויעמדו מרחוק", אבל משה ידע שאינו יודע, וזהו "ומשה נגש אל הערפל" במקום שאין העין שולטת "אשר שם האלקים"; כי דוקא מי שיודע שאינו יודע הוא נגש אל האלקים, רק זה תופס ומשיג את האלקות כדבעי למעבד.

ואם ישאל השואל: מה הועילו חכמים בחקירתם ומה יתרון לחכם מן הכסיל, כיון שאחרי כל החקירות והכרכורים אינו יודע יותר מן הכסיל? הנה התשובה בצדו: "תכלית הידיעה שלא נדע" וזו גופא היא ידיעה גדולה.

Our medieval sages, and the "lions of the study group", such as the Rambam and Rabbeinu Bechaye, the Sephardic judge, in their books "Guide for the Perplexed" and "Duties of the Heart" [respectively], have already dealt at length, and proven with 150 proofs that we do not fulfill our obligations with faith alone. Rather, each individual has an additional obligation to investigate G-d's existence and His true essence, according to his reach and the ability of his understanding. And whoever is lazy in this regard is similar to a "sick person who is an expert on his disease and how to heal it, and relies on a physician who uses all kinds of treatments to treat him, and he is too lazy to analyze with his mind and ascertain whether he is doing his work properly or not..."

On the other hand, who does not know that the purpose of this knowledge is in fact for us "not to know"? And even if a person would be wiser than King Shlomo in his time, and would live all the days of Metushelach and constantly return to analysis and knowledge, he would only come to know that he does not know. We have already explained the verses: "The people were scared and they recoiled and stood at a distance," "And Moshe approached the mists where G-d was" (Shemot 20), that this was the difference between the simple people and our master Moshe. "The people were scared" thinking that they saw and knew. And someone who thinks this way is very far from "the ways of faith", and this is the meaning of, "They stood at a distance". But Moshe knew that he did not know. And this is the meaning of "And Moshe approached the mists," a place where the eye cannot see, "where G-d was". Because specifically the person who knows that he does not know is the one to approach G-d. Only this person grasps and apprehends G-dliness as is necessary.

And if the questioner will ask: What benefit comes to the wise from their analyses, and in what is the wise person greater than the fool, if, after all the analyses and [mental] gyrations he does not know more than the fool? The answer is attached [to the question]: "The purpose of knowledge is to know that we don't know". This in itself is great knowledge.

How does one distance himself from jealous instincts? Sefer haChinuch (Mitzvah 416) contends that a human being can avoid jealousy: “Do not express shock, asking how one could possibly keep his heart from desiring the treasures he

has seen in another person’s domain... Only fools who are evil and sinful would say this. A person can prevent himself, his thoughts and desires from anything he chooses.”

To be continued...

Weekly Highlights: Sept. 21 – Sept. 27 / 21 Elul – 27 Elul

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
שבת Sept. 20-21				
10:30 AM	R' Alex Hecht	Parshah Analysis	Clanton Park	After Hashkamah
Before Avot	Ezer Diena	Daf Yomi	BAYT	Rabbi's Classroom
After minchah	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Gemara Avodah Zarah	BAYT	Simcha Suite
Motz. Sept. 21				
11:00 PM	R' Alex Hecht	Does G-d Desire Sin?	Kehillat Shaarei Torah	
11:15 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	S. Y. Agnon's BaDerech The Journey of Selichot	Shaarei Tefillah	
11:20 PM	R' Sammy Bergman & Shaarei Shomayim Rabbis	Instrumental Kumsitz	Shaarei Shomayim	
12:30 AM	Ezer Diena	Full Forgiveness or Delayed Punishment?	Aish Thornhill	
Sun. Sept. 22				
8:15 AM	Ezer Diena	Mikvah Before Yom Kippur	Yeshivat Or Chaim	
9:15 AM	R' Sammy Bergman	Chagigah, Chasidut, Chevra	Shaarei Shomayim	Teens
9:15 AM	Netanel Klein	Hamilton Housewarming: Mitzvah or Minhag?	Adas Israel Hamilton	
Tue. Sept. 24				
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Yeshayah	Shaarei Shomayim	
7:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Book of Shoftim, 4	129 Theodore Pl.	Men
8:00 PM	Ezer Diena	Did it Happen, #2 - Aleinu	BAYT	Gruda Bais Medrash
Wed. Sept. 25				
6:00 AM	Ezer Diena	Gemara Succah	BAYT	WW Classroom 2
8:00 PM	R' Alex Hecht	Health #4: Defining Death	Shaarei Tefillah	
8:00 PM	R' Sammy Bergman R' Jesse Shore	Night Seder: All Things Shabbat	Shaarei Shomayim	New program Open to All!
Thu. Sept. 26				
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	The Book of Shemuel	49 Michael Ct.	Not this week
8:30 PM	Ezer Diena	Gemara Beitzah	ediena@torontotorah.com	Men, Advanced
Fri. Sept. 27				
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

11:00 AM Sunday, Beit Midrash Rotation: Contemporary Halachah: Ezer Diena, Mikvah before Yom Kippur

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, Coming Soon

Seder Boker for Men with Rabbi Moshe Yeres, at Yeshivat Or Chaim

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, Pntei Halachah