

Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Vayetzte

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This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated for a refuah shleimah for Ephraim and Itai Rimel Ephraim Tzvi Moshe ben Shulamit Tzivya and Itai Yaakov ben Tzipporah and I'zecher nishmat Tzippi Rimel z"l and Noam Rachel Rimel z"l
The Rimel Family were popular *shlichim* in the YU Torah MiTzion Kollel in Chicago, teachers of Torah and *middot* inside and outside the classroom.

Rachel's Jealousy

Rabbi Jonathan Ziring

"When Rachel saw that she had borne Jacob no children, she became envious of her sister; and Rachel said to Jacob, "Give me children, or I shall die [or: I am dead]." (Bereishit 30:1)

In the above verse, Rachel expresses the pain childlessness has caused her. Surprisingly, however, the verse implies that it is not her lack of progeny per se, but the envy of Leah's children that caused her such distress.

Many commentators offer interpretations that deny this inference. Rashi, following a midrashic strain, suggests that Rachel was jealous of Leah's good deeds, and assumed it was Leah's spiritual superiority that led to her having children and Rachel being denied them. Rabbi Dovid Tzvi Hoffman puts this slightly differently – her pain was driven by a desire to be close to G-d. The Yalkut Shimoni insists that this was the cause of her jealousy, noting that Mishlei (23:17) warns: "Do not envy sinners in your heart, but only G-d-fearing men, at all times." (JPS translation) According to this, Rachel's frustration over not having children was compounded not by jealousy, but by the concern that she was at fault, making her barrenness even more unbearable

Chizkuni, following the midrashic concept that the matriarchs knew that Yaakov was destined to have twelve children, thus giving each matriarch three, writes that she was jealous that Leah had more than her share.

Perhaps his intent is that Rachel did not begrudge her sister; rather, upon seeing Leah's fourth child, she became convinced that her own lack of children was permanent, or that even if she would have children, she would never have a family as big as she had dreamed. Indeed, Leah would go on to birth more than half of Yaakov's children, six boys and one girl.

However, several commentaries suggest that the pain was indeed caused by jealousy per se. Ralbag is the most unforgiving, claiming that indeed Rachel only desired children because she was jealous of Leah. He goes farther, contending that it was for this reason that Rachel did not merit children for so long, and that this was why her request to Yaakov incurred his harsh response that he was not in the place of G-d and could not provide her with children. Ralbag even derives from this incident the importance of avoiding envy.

Several commentaries, however, while taking the jealousy literally, offer more charitable reads. They understand Rachel's anguish was deepened by the fact that her childlessness affected her relationship with Yaakov; she was not only pining for children to love, but she felt that her lack was hurting the relationship she already had. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch writes that her pain was caused by her fear that Yaakov didn't care about her pain. She felt that Yaakov should have prayed to have children with her, and worried (perhaps correctly) that Yaakov was not as bothered as she was because he, at

least, had fathered children. Malbim writes an even more surprising answer – he suggests that Rachel thought, as he claims some scientists believe, that excessive love can prevent conception. Thus, she worried that it was specifically Yaakov's love that made her barren. It made her wish she was the "hated" wife, to enable her to have children. According to this, what made this most difficult was that in her mind, she was faced with being able to have only one ideal relationship – either as a parent or a spouse, but not both.

The Torah records all its stories to provide us with guidance. By noting the difficulty that most of the matriarchs had in conceiving children, it allows those similarly struggling to know that they are not alone. By further humanizing the story, but describing the complex emotions that the barrenness caused, whether it be self-blame, the feeling that one's spousal relationship is suffering as well, or even the desire to be like others, the Torah reminds that others have been through our pain and that there is hope. With a tefillah that Hashem answer all those awaiting children, as he did our mothers.

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Summary

After suffering through a devastating plague, and being afflicted with *techorim* [Radak: hemorrhoids] in the previous chapter, the Philistines begin this chapter anxious to rid themselves of the Ark. They ask their priests and sorcerers about the appropriate method to return the Ark to its place. The priests devise a plan to return the Ark, cure the Philistines from their *techorim*, and determine if their suffering truly came from the G-d of Israel. The priests instruct the Philistines to fashion five golden *techorim*, and five golden mice, corresponding to the five Philistine noblemen, and offer them as a sin-offering to the G-d of Israel. To carry the Ark, *techorim*, and mice, the priests order the Philistines to take two nursing cows which had never borne a yoke, tie them to a new wagon, and to lead their children back to their stalls.

After preparing the wagon, the Philistines were told to load the Ark onto the wagon, place the *techorim* and mice in a chest alongside the Ark, and to send the wagon off. The priests explain that if the wagon with the Ark would travel toward Beit Shemesh it would prove that the G-d of Israel had

inflicted the Philistines with the plague they had suffered. Otherwise, the Philistines could be assured that the plague had happened by chance. The Philistines follow the priests' instructions and indeed, the cows lead the Ark straight toward Beit Shemesh, crying for their children as they march.

Happy to see the Ark, the Levites in Beit Shemesh unload the Ark, and the chest containing the golden *techorim*, and mice, and place them on a large stone. In celebration, the Jews of Beit Shemesh bring sacrifices to G-d. However, the merriment quickly turns into mourning. G-d strikes a multitude of the Jews of Beit Shemesh for gazing into the Ark. Horrified by the tragedy, the people of Beit Shemesh wonder: who could possibly withstand the presence of Ark? [For discussion of the sin of Beit Shemesh, see Radak, Abarbanel and Malbim.]

Insight

The poignant scene of the nursing cows, crying for their children as they faithfully lead the Ark directly back to its place, evokes our compassion. Why were these poor creatures subjected to

unbearably cruel treatment in performing such an honourable task?

Perhaps Shemuel intends the reader to contrast the dedication of the cows with the failure of the Philistines to appropriately honour the Divine presence manifested by the Ark. The grotesque offering of the Philistines is striking. How could they believe an offering of *techorim* and rodents could be desirable to G-d? Although they described it as a sin-offering, the Philistines clearly offered the golden idols solely for the purpose of ridding themselves of their afflictions. They had no remorse for stealing or dishonouring the Ark. Even as they returned it, they were unconvinced that G-d had even punished them. In stark distinction, the cows leave their own infant children to carry the Ark to its appropriate place, despite their own affliction. The story inspires the reader to ask: am I more like the cows or the Philistines?

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Holy Land Halachah: Aliyah Without Parental Consent**Rabbi Adam Friedmann**

Deciding to move to Israel and fulfill the mitzvah of living in the land can be the realization of a personal dream, but it isn't always one that is shared by the whole family. Honouring parents, another important mitzvah, can come into conflict with the desire to live in Israel. What is the halachic resolution to such a conflict? This question was asked to Rabbi Shaul Yisraeli by Religious Zionist youth workers in America. They wondered if it was right for them to encourage aliyah, even in the face of parental opposition.

Rabbi Yisraeli begins his analysis (Amud HaYemini, sec. 22) by noting a general guiding principle in the mitzvah of honouring one's parents. Namely, that this mitzvah is limited by all others. A child is not required to carry out the request of a parent that contradicts another mitzvah. (Bava Metzia 32a; Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Mamrim 6:12) There is a debate about whether the mitzvah to settle the Land of Israel is biblical or rabbinic, but either way, it is a binding commandment. Therefore, at first glance, the answer seems simple. A child has no halachic requirement to comply with a parent's demand that he or she not make aliyah.

However, a Talmudic anecdote complicates the matter. The Talmud (Kiddushin 31b) relates that Rabbi Asi, who lived in Israel, realized that his elderly mother in Babylon needed his assistance. He asked Rabbi Yochanan if it was permitted to leave Israel in order to honour his mother. Rabbi Yochanan was unsure, but ultimately permitted Rabbi Asi's departure. Rabbi Yisraeli interprets this story based on another rule that one who cannot earn a proper livelihood is permitted to leave Israel. This is because such a lifestyle is not called "settling" in the proper sense. Similarly, Rabbi Asi's story teaches us that one who is in Israel, but is concerned that their parents' wellbeing is not being taken care of, is not

considered "settled" and is therefore exempt from living in Israel.

A further complication arises from the halachic principle that one who is engaged in a mitzvah is exempt from other mitzvot. Perhaps the immediate requirement to attend to a parent's needs outside of Israel means that the mitzvah to make aliyah never comes to bear on the child. Rabbi Yisraeli distinguishes between two cases. If one's parents require regular assistance, then the child providing this care is considered constantly engaged in the mitzvah of honouring parents and the mitzvah to live in Israel is duly pushed off. This is true even if the parents are supportive of aliyah. However, if a parent does not need or want assistance, and they are simply opposed to aliyah, the mitzvah to live in Israel is still operative. Rabbi Yisraeli concludes that a child in the latter situation is permitted, and even commanded, to move to Israel. There is, likewise, no prohibition for youth leaders to encourage aliyah in such a case.

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Biography
Rabbi Yosef Albo
Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

Torah and Translation
How Does Prayer Work?

Rabbi Yosef Albo, Sefer haIkkarim 4:18
Translated by Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

The details known of Rabbi Yosef Albo's life, especially his childhood, are few. He was born in Spain in approximately 1380. It is clear from his works that he learned under Rabbi Hasdai Crescas, author of *Or Hashem* and one of the greatest Jewish philosophers. We also know that in 1403 Rabbi Albo sat in a Beit Din with his teacher, judging a local family affair in Daroca, then part of the kingdom of Aragon. From this and one other surviving responsum, it is clear that Rabbi Albo had a strong grasp of Talmud and Halachah.

His most famous historical appearance, however, was in the Disputation of Tortosa of 1413-1414. Rabbi Albo, representing the Jews of Daroca, together with other contemporary Jewish sages, argued against Christian priests led by the Jewish apostate Gerónimo de Santa Fe. The disputation was far from being free and authentic, as any Jewish attempt to respond to the Christian charges was met with the threat of the accusation of heresy, a very serious charge. In the aftermath of the disputation, the Christian side claimed victory, and Torah texts were subject to censorship. Worse still was the moral blow: some of the Jewish representatives in the dispute were forcibly converted, and the Christians used their conversions to convince other Jews to do the same. Reportedly, thousands of Jews converted, willingly or otherwise, and Aragonian Jewry suffered a blow from which it never fully recovered.

After the disastrous end to the disputation, Rabbi Albo wanted to write a book in which he would be able to freely present his views about Judaism and religion in general. The book, *Sefer Halkarim* (The Book of Principles), became a cornerstone of Jewish philosophy. In it, Rabbi Albo tries to define the most fundamental principles of any revelation-based religion, and then demonstrate the unique view of Judaism regarding these principles. While the book is not considered to be groundbreaking in its novelty, it is seen as a broad and eloquent presentation of Jewish philosophical thought.

Rabbi Yosef Albo is believed to have died in 1444.

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מה שהביא האנשים לפקפק בתפלה... זה שהם אומרים: שלא ימלט הדבר מחלוקה אם שנגזר מד' טוב מה על איש מה או לא נגזר. ואם נגזר אין צריך תפלה, ואם לא נגזר איך תועיל התפלה לשנות רצון ד' לגזור עליו טוב אחר שלא נגזר? שלא ישתנה ד' מן הרצון אל לא רצון ולא מלא רצון אל רצון, ובעבור זה יאמרו שלא יועיל כשרון המעשה אל שיגיע לאדם מהשם בעבורו טוב מה, וכן יאמרו שלא תועיל התפלה להשיג טוב מה או להנצל מרע שנגזר עליו.

וזה הדעת אינו נכון, שהשפעות העליונות יושפעו על המקבל בהיותו במדרגה ידועה והכנה ידועה לקבלם, ואם לא יכין האדם עצמו לקבל השפע ההוא הנה הוא המונע טוב מעצמו, שאם נגזר על איש מה על דרך משל שיצליחו תבואותיו בשנה פלונית והוא לא יחרוש ולא יזרע בשנה ההיא, אף אם ימטיר ד' מטרות עזו על פני תבל ארצה לא תצליחנה תבואותיו אחר שלא חרש וזרע, והוא מונע מעצמו הטוב ההוא בשלא הכין עצמו לקבלו...

ולפי זה נאמר שכשנגזר על האדם טוב מה הנה הוא נגזר עליו במדרגה ידועה מכשרון המעשה, וזה כלל יעודי התורה, וכן כשנגזר עליו רע מה הנה הוא נגזר בהיותו במדרגה ידועה מהרוע או בהכנה ידועה, וכשתשתנה המדרגה ההיא או ההכנה ההיא תשתנה הגזרה בהכרח לטוב או לרע.

ומזה יתבאר שהתפלה וכשרון המעשה מועיל לבטל הגזרה בכל עת, וכן אמרו רבותינו ז"ל יפה צעקה לאדם בין קודם גזר דין בין לאחר גזר דין.

What led people to doubt the efficacy of prayer is... that which they say, that the matter cannot escape [the following] dichotomy: either G-d decrees a certain good upon a certain man, or does not decree it. If it is decreed, there is no need for prayer, and if not, how could prayer avail to change G-d's will such that He should now decree good upon a person, after there was no such decree [to begin with]? For G-d does not change from willing to not willing, or from not willing to willing. For this reason, they say that right conduct will be of no avail to receiving good from G-d. Similarly, they say that prayer does not avail to enable one to receive good, or to be saved from an evil which has been decreed against him...

But this understanding is not true, for Divine influences are bestowed on the recipient when he is on a certain level and in a state of preparation to receive them. If a person does not prepare himself to receive these influences, he withholds good from himself. For even if it is decreed on a certain man, for example, that his crops shall prosper in a given year, but he doesn't plow or plant in that year, then even if G-d will [cause it to] rain fiercely upon the land, nonetheless his crops will not prosper as he did not plow or plant, thus withholding from himself the good which he did not prepare himself to receive.

Based on this, we can say that when it is decreed that a person should receive a certain good, it is decreed according to a certain degree of right conduct. This is a principle in the Torah's promises. In the same way, when a certain evil is decreed upon someone, it is also decreed according to a certain degree of wickedness, or of being prepared to do so. And if the degree of wickedness or the preparation will change, so the decree will change for better or worse.

This explains, then, that prayer and good deeds can nullify a [bad] decree at any stage. As our sages said: "Crying [in prayer] is proper for a person both before and after the Divine decision."

Weekly Highlights: Dec. 7 – Dec. 13 / 9 Kislev – 15 Kislev

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
Daily				
Mon-Thu 8:00 AM	Netanel Klein	Gemara Moed Katan	Clanton Park	Men
שבת Dec. 6-7				
8:40 AM	Ezer Diena	Pre-Shacharit Parshah	BAYT	TFBM
10:30 AM	R' Alex Hecht	Parshah Analysis	Clanton Park	After Hashkamah
Before minchah	Ezer Diena	Daf Yomi	BAYT	Rabbi's Classroom
After minchah	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Gemara Avodah Zarah	BAYT	Simcha Suite
Sun. Dec. 8				
8:15 AM	R' Seth Grauer	Multitasking Mitzvot	Yeshivat Or Chaim	
8:45 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Legal Ethics: Advising the Risk-Tolerant Client	BAYT	CPD-approved Laypeople welcome
9:15 AM	Netanel Klein	Rain in December?	Adas Israel Hamilton	
9:15 AM	R' Sammy Bergman	Chagigah/Chasidut/Chevra	Shaarei Shomayim	Teens
Mon. Dec. 9				
8:30 PM	R' Sammy Bergman	Chanukah 5780 #2: Ner Chanukah: Inside or Outside?	Shomrai Shabbos	Men
Tue. Dec. 10				
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Yeshayah, Ch. 24-25	Shaarei Shomayim	
7:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Book of Shoftim, Ch. 6-7	129 Theodore Pl.	Men
Wed. Dec. 11				
6:00 AM	Ezer Diena	Gemara Succah	BAYT	<i>West Wing #2, men</i>
10:00 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Life After Death 6: The Resurrection	Beth Emeth	<i>There is a fee torontotorah.com/life</i>
7:30 PM	R' Alex Hecht	Bringing G-d Into Our Lives #6: Imitating G-d	Shaarei Tefillah	
7:30 PM	Ezer Diena	Learn to Read Esther #1	BAYT Boardroom	New 12-part series
8:00 PM	R' Sammy Bergman	All Things Shabbat: Boreir	Shaarei Shomayim	Open to All!
Thu. Dec. 12				
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Shemuel I, Ch. 14-15	49 Michael Ct.	Women
4:15 PM	R' Alex Hecht	Junior Beit Midrash	Netivot haTorah	
8:30 PM	Ezer Diena	Gemara Beitzah	ediena@torontotorah.com	Men, Advanced
8:30 PM	R' Jeff Turtel	Tzurba MeiRabbanan	Shomrai Shabbos	Men
Fri. Dec. 13				
10:30 AM	R' Sammy Bergman	Bava Metzia: Review	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: R' Sammy Bergman, Lying to Maintain Peace

8:30 AM Wednesday, Ezer Diena, Mishlei

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

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

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

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