

Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Korach

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This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Brian and Robbie Schwartz in honour of their grandson, Ari Spodek ז"ל, on his recent Bar Mitzvah. Mazal tov!

The Fine Line of Holiness

As a response to the rebellion against him, Moshe challenges Korach and his followers to offer incense, together with Aharon, and let G-d demonstrate whom He favours. The challengers' offerings are rejected, and they are burned alive by Divine fire. Afterwards, G-d informs Elazar that the fire pans used by the challengers have become holy and cannot simply be discarded. Rather, they are to be collected and formed into a covering for the altar as a reminder to the Jewish people about the rebellion. But if the challengers were, in the final analysis, unworthy of offering the incense, and their offerings were therefore not bona fide service of G-d, why did their fire pans become holy?

Ramban (17:2) assumes that the offerings themselves **did not** imbue holiness into the fire pans. It was G-d's subsequent command to keep them as a memorial that changed their status. However, Rashi (ibid.) disagrees with this and assumes that the offerings of the challengers really **did** make the pans holy. Two explanations for Rashi's position provide insight into the nuances of the rebellion and its message.

Ramban himself suggests one way to explain Rashi's view. Even though the incense offerings were invalid according to the general rules of the Mishkan, Moshe requested them to be brought, as a test. As a result, each challenger, assuming that he may be the winner, consecrated his fire pan to the Mishkan, for his own future use as Kohen Gadol. Any Jew can consecrate

items in this way. Even though the challengers failed, their fire pans retained that holiness.

Rabbi Meir Simchah of Dvinsk (Meshech Chochmah 17:2-3) sharpens this position further. He notes that if one consecrates an animal as a guilt-offering for a sin they believe they have committed, and then discovers that the sin never occurred, the consecration is cancelled retroactively. However, this is not true if one only thinks one may have sinned and consecrates an animal for the special guilt-offering needed in this scenario of uncertainty. In this case, even if it is discovered that the sin never occurred, the animal remains holy. This is because it was consecrated from a place of uncertainty and was therefore not conditioned on the actual circumstances of the sin. Rabbi Meir Simchah uses these rules to explain the mindset of Moshe's challengers. None of them had been certain that they were best suited to be the Kohen Gadol, but all of them had been intoxicated with the possibility that they *might* be the holy one. As a result, when their offerings were rejected, the fire pans remained holy as in the case of a doubtful guilt-offering.

This nuance reveals something important about the challengers. These were not haughty people consumed by the pursuit of power; rather, they were genuine seekers of G-d who had been misled by a charismatic figure. Korach had seduced them with the idea that the personal holiness they felt inside and the longing they had for G-d could and should be expressed by pursuing

Rabbi Adam Friedmann

the priesthood. He perverted their genuine desires to suit his own needs.

A second approach to Rashi emerges from a midrash that depicts the events of Melachim I (18:20-39), wherein Eliyahu the prophet challenges the false prophets of Ba'al on Mount Carmel. Each side is to take an ox and place it on an altar without fire. The owner of the offering which is miraculously consumed by a heavenly flame is the one who serves the true G-d. Bamidbar Rabbah 23:9 describes the reaction of the ox chosen by the false prophets. It complains to Eliyahu that it will not take part in something which will anger its Creator, and it refuses to budge. Eliyahu appeases the ox, responding that just as G-d's Name will be sanctified by the acceptance of his ox, so too it will be sanctified by the rejection of the false prophets' ox.

Holiness does not always emerge through positive sanctification. Sometimes it appears, as in the case of the rejected incense, through the overwhelming and tragic discovery of the boundaries between us and G-d. The fire pans covering the altar remind us that in the pursuit of holiness a fine line divides between the greatest success and utter failure. This pursuit must be undertaken with proper guidance and an awareness of the risks involved.

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Summary

After King Shlomo died, his son, Rechavam, went to Shechem, where his coronation was set to take place. At the same time, Yeravam ben Nevat, a political refugee who had been a fugitive since Shlomo's time, made his way back from Egypt to the same city of Shechem. He immediately assumed the position of the people's representative, and met with Rechavam to discuss taxation. He offered a simple deal: lighten the tax burden, and the people will serve you happily. However, one does not need a unique ability to read between the lines in order to see the hidden threat – if you will not ease the taxes, then... (12:1-5)

Rechavam consulted the elders, who had been his father's advisors. They advised him to be gentle, so that people would follow him. However, Rechavam went on to get a second opinion from some of his youthful contemporaries, who had grown up with him. They saw things differently, and told the new king that he must demonstrate his authority, lest he be seen as a weak king. Surprisingly, Rechavam accepted the advice of the latter, and the text explains that this was arranged by Hashem so

that the prophecy of Achiyah regarding Yeravam ben Nevat's rise to monarchy would be realized. (12:6-15)

Rechavam's answer to the people was indeed resolute and unflinching: "My father tortured you with whips, and I shall flog you with scorpions." Unfortunately, the young advisors were completely wrong in their read of the situation. Rechavam's strong answer only served to prove to his subjects that there was no hope of reform or change in David's house, and so they returned home and appointed Yeravam as their king. (12:16-17)

The rebellion was carried out. The king's tax minister, Adoram, was assassinated, and the Rechavam himself had to flee back to Jerusalem, where he remained the king of only two tribes – Yehudah and Binyamin. The rest of the ten tribes were now led by Yeravam, and Rechavam was told by Shemayah the prophet not to try and take them back militarily, against the Divine plan. (12:18-24)

The chapter ends with Yeravam's fear that his people, when coming to Jerusalem for the holidays, would be con-

vinced to return to Davidic rule. To prevent this he established two golden calves to serve as idols, in Beit El and Dan; he even made up a new holiday to replace the existing ones. This demonic plan succeeded, and his people deteriorated to idol worship, furthering the distance from their brethren in Yehudah. (12:25-33)

Insight

Both Rechavam and Yeravam let fear dictate their moves. They feared to be perceived as weak, and looked for ways to project themselves as strong and tough. This pushed them to unnecessary mistakes which caused the first to lose his reign and the second to lose his share in the World to Come; even worse, they let personal fears tear apart the Israelite nation in a move that proved irreversible.

Leadership, our chapter teaches us, calls for confidence, determination, and above all – faith.

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The Israeli Farmer: Catering During Shemithah**Rabbi Sammy Bergman**

Rabbi Shemuel David Pachimah
Kol MeiHeichal Vol. 7 5768 pp. 85-86

Question: May a catering company acquire produce of the seventh year and prepare it for sale to a yeshiva?

A mishnah states that a dyer may use plants of the seventh year to dye his own clothing, but may not receive payment for colouring someone else's clothing. (Shevi'it 7:3) Rabbi Shemuel David Pachimah explains that colouring clothing constitutes a permitted use of Shemithah produce (Mishnah Shevi'it 7:1), when one intends to benefit directly from the garment being dyed. However, when one dyes a customer's clothing he uses the Shemithah produce as a means of making profit, and thus violates the prohibition against engaging in commerce with plants of the seventh year. (See Avodah Zarah 62a.)

However, Rabbi Pachimah explains that a different mishnah seems to allow working with Shemithah produce for a profit. This mishnah states that if a person tells their worker, "Gather a vegetable for me today", the worker's wages are permissible. (Shevi'it 8:4) Rabbi Yom Tov Lipmann Heller (Tosafot Yom Tov ad loc.) wonders why this mishnah allows the worker to receive payment for gathering Shemithah produce, but forbids compensation for colouring with plants of the seventh year. Rabbi Chaim Eisenstadt (Tosafot Anshei Shem ad loc.) distinguishes between the two mishnayot. According to Rabbi Eisenstadt, as opposed to the worker who doesn't own the Shemithah produce he gathers, and who charges a fee for performing a service, the dyer owns the dye plants of the seventh year and receives payment for selling the dye itself. Therefore, by selling the dye, the dyer violates

the prohibition against engaging in commerce with plants of the seventh year.

Based on the distinction of Rabbi Eisenstadt, Rabbi Pachimah suggests that catering companies **do** encounter the problem of engaging in commerce with Shemithah produce when they sell prepared meals to yeshivot. Unlike members of the kitchen staff, who are paid for the services they perform, catering companies charge based on the food items they sell to the yeshiva, and profit directly from Shemithah produce.

To avoid this issue, Rabbi Pachimah suggests that when catering companies acquire Shemithah produce, they should have in mind to purchase the vegetables as agents of the yeshiva. Furthermore, based on the Talmud Yerushalmi (Shevi'it 7:3), Rabbi Pachimah argues that catering companies must give the vegetables to the yeshiva as a gift, and only charge for the components of the meal they sell. In this way, the catering company will not receive any direct payment for the sale of the vegetables.

Nevertheless, Rabbi Pachimah notes a different obstacle for catering companies. One may only gather three meals' worth of Shemithah produce at one time (see Sefer Hashemithah Chapter 3 note 12). With this limitation, how may a catering company acquire enough produce to serve the entire yeshiva in a permitted way? Therefore, Rabbi Pachimah suggests purchasing the vegetables from a non-Jew, who may gather as much produce as necessary.

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Biography
Rabbi Zev Weitman
Rabbi Jonathan Ziring

Rabbi Zev Weitman was born in 1953 in Kiryat Bialik, and he studied in Yeshivat Pirchei Aharon and Yeshivat Har Etzion (Gush). He served in the Israeli army, including during the Yom Kippur War in 1973 [after initially arriving at the base to serve as Chazan for Yom Kippur].

Rabbi Weitman is currently the Rabbi of the Israeli company Tnuva, the Rabbi of the Alon Shvut community, and the head of the Chief Rabbinate's committee on the observance of Shemita. In the past, he has served as the head of the Kashrut division for the Israeli Rabbinate, Rabbi of Kfar Etzion for nine years, and for a brief period, a shaliach - including at CHAT in Toronto.

In his tenure as the Rabbi of Tnuva, he has made several halachic changes. He has ensured that the dairy farms that provide milk for Tnuva stop working for Shabbat and Yom Tov. He has improved the supervision over the dairy production and ensured that the milking is performed by Jews, and he has improved supervision over surgical operations on the cows to ensure they do not become injured in ways that would affect their kashrut, thus affecting the kashrut of the milk. He has further added a *mehadrin* level of kashrut supervision for some of their products. When tasked with taking over the rabbinate's committee on Shemita, he also raised the standards for execution of the *heter mechirah* (a legal sale of agricultural land to non-Jews for the duration of Shemita), to rely on fewer leniencies.

He is a prolific author, having published many articles, as well as a full-length book on the halachic and philosophical issues involved with Shemita in the modern economy, titled *Towards a nationalist Shemita in the State of Israel: A proposal to observe the mitzvah of Shemita in the State of Israel in the modern agricultural reality*. (Hebrew) While much of his writing and teaching is on issues of kashrut, he also writes about other halachic issues.

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Torah and Translation
Shemita Observance in the Modern Economy
Rabbi Zev Weitman, HaMaayan, Tevet 5754
Translated by Rabbi Jonathan Ziring

קיום מצוות השמיטה כיום קל ופשוט יותר מאשר בימי המקרא, בזמן הבית השני ובתקופת המשנה והתלמוד. אין ספק, שגם כיום יש בקיום מצווה זו אתגר גדול ורציני, ועלינו להתמודד עם הרבה בעיות חדשות הנובעות מהעובדה שאנו צריכים ליישם את מצוות השמיטה במסגרת החקלאות המודרנית - שרווקה מרחק רב מאופי החקלאות העתיקה ובעיותיה; אך גם מגוון הפתרונות שיש בידינו היום הינו גדול ורחב, ואין ספק שניתן וצריך לעמוד במבחן זה... בעבר הייתה נראית מצוות השמיטה כבעיה קיומית גדולה, הרי שכיום, לכל היותר, ניתן לראותה כבעיה כלכלית גדולה.

ודווקא בגלל שמצווה זו - מצוות השמיטה - מציבה בפני האומה, מאז ומתמיד, דרישה לדרגת אמונה נשגבה, קובעת התורה שיותר מכל מצווה אחרת תלויה ישיבת עם ישראל בארץ ישראל בקיום מצוות השמיטה. ההגיון הוא בכך שמצווה זו, יותר מכל דבר אחר, מהווה מבחן למידת אמונתו של העם בקב"ה, ולכן הייתה מצווה זו לאבן בוחן מרכזית לזכותו של עם ישראל לרשת את הארץ ולהתבסס בה, כיאה למצווה המהווה את שיא הדרישות של הקב"ה מהאדם...

מה טעמה ותועלתה של מצוות שמיטה כשרק מיעוט קטן עוסק בחקלאות? מה טעם להטיל נטל כבד כזה על כתפיו של מיעוט זה?...?

ומסירות הנפש הדרושות לקיום מצוות השמיטה - הן הן שיביאו להידוק אחיזתנו בנחלת אבותינו... השמיטה מטביעה בלבו של היהודי את האמונה שלמרות שהוא חייב להשקיע ולעבוד לפרנסתו בכל כוחו, הרי שבסופו של דבר יבול אדמתו - מתנת אלוקים הוא. ללא אמונה כזו קשה לציית למצווה קשה כל כך. שהרי רק אם אדם המאמין שאכן ברכת שש השנים תלויה לא בכוחו ובעוצם ידו אלא בברכת אלוקים - מבין שבעצם כל שנה היבול הינו כולו מתנת אלוקים, ואם הקב"ה אסר שנה אחת ליהנות מיבול זה הרי אין זו דרישה מהאדם לוותר על דבר יקר השייך לו, אלא יש בכך צמצום מתנתו הגדולה של הקב"ה לשש שנים מתוך שבע שנים.

Observance of the commandment of Shemita today is easier and simpler than in during the periods of the Torah, the Second Temple, or the Mishnah and Talmud. Undoubtedly, even today there is a great, serious challenge in keeping this mitzvah, and we must deal with many new problems arising from implementing the mitzvah of Shemita in a modern agricultural framework, far removed from the nature and problems of ancient agriculture. However, the range of solutions in our hands today is also large and wide and there is no doubt that this test can and should be met... In the past the mitzvah of Shemita seemed like a great existential problem, while today, at most, it can be seen as a major economic problem.

Precisely because this mitzvah, the mitzvah of Shemita, places before the nation, as it always has, a requirement for a lofty degree of faith, the Torah establishes that more than any other mitzvah, the dwelling of the people of Israel in the Land of Israel depends on the observance of the Shemita. The logic is that this mitzvah, more than anything else, is a test of the people's faith in G-d, and therefore this mitzvah is a central touchstone for the right of the people of Israel to inherit the land and become established therein, as befits the mitzvah which is the pinnacle of G-d's expectations of man....

What is the point and benefit of the commandment of Shemita when only a small minority is engaged in agriculture? Why should such a heavy burden be placed on the shoulders of this minority...?

And the sacrifices necessary for the observance of the commandment of the Shemita lead to a tightening of our grip on our ancestral inheritance... Shemita stamps in the heart of the Jew the belief that although he must invest and work for his livelihood with all his might, in the end, the crop of his land will be a gift from G-d. Without such faith it is difficult to obey such a difficult mitzvah. For only if a person believes that the blessing of the six years depends not on his strength and the power of his hand but on G-d's blessing, understands that every year the harvest is completely a gift of G-d, and if G-d forbade benefits from the produce for one year, this is not a demand that man relinquish something valuable that belongs to him, rather it is a contraction of the great gift of G-d to six of seven years.

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All times ET. Classes are free & open to all, unless otherwise noted.

SPECIAL PROGRAMMING

**10:00 AM Sun. June 13: Year-End Midreshet Yom Rishon for Women <http://tiny.cc/junemyr>
Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, Shedding Tears for Moav?
Rabbi Yehuda Mann, Korach, Og & Bilam: Villains with Class**

**10:00 AM Wed. June 16: Giants of Sephardic Jewry, a 4-part series
Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, Week 3: Don Isaac Abarbanel
Free of Charge; Register at <https://torontotorah.com/sephard>**

**7:30 PM Wed. June 16: Religious Zionism, a mini-series
Rabbi Sammy Bergman, Settling the Land: Not Only a Mitzvah**

**8:00 PM Wed. June 16: Jewish Art, a mini-series
Rabbi Chaim Metzger, Human Beings**

DAILY

**Mon-Thu 10 AM to Noon, Seder Boker with Rabbi Moshe Yeres, via ZOOM (men)
Mon/Wed: Gemara Succah, Orot haTeshuvah
Tues/Thurs: Parshah, Tanach: Melachim**

WEEKLY

Shabbat June 12

After minchah at Shaarei Shomayim, Pirkei Avot, R' Sammy Bergman

Sunday June 13

9:20 AM Contemporary Halachah, Netanel Klein (not this week)

10:00 AM Gemara Shabbat, Rabbi Aaron Greenberg (University)

7:30 PM Ketuvot, Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner (men)

Monday June 14

8:30 PM Gemara Shabbat, Chap. 15, Rabbi Moshe Yeres

Tuesday June 15

1:30 PM Megilat Ruth, Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

7:30 PM Shemuel Ch. 3, Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner (men)

Wednesday June 16

6:15 AM Talmud Eruvin, Rabbi Sammy Bergman

7:00 PM Pirkei Avot: Learning to Act, Rabbi Alex Hecht *FINAL SHIUR!*

Thursday June 17

8:30 AM Daniel, Rabbi Chaim Metzger (University)

1:30 PM Shemuel Ch. 20, Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner (women)

7:15 PM Gemara Bava Metziah, Rabbi Sammy Bergman (University women)

8:00 PM Gemara Beitzah, Rabbi Eitan Aviner (men, advanced)

Friday June 18

8:30 AM Parshah, Rabbi Sammy Bergman (University)

10:30 AM Shemitah! with Rabbi Sammy Bergman and Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

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