

Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Haazinu/Succot

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This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Paul and Chavi Jacobs to commemorate the Yahrzeit of Paul's mother, Pearl Schraub Jacobs, Perel Hadassah bas Yosef, a"h

Witnesses for the Defense?

In a pure world, a witness is an unbiased reporter of fact; people who saw an agreement executed or a crime committed describe what they watched. In our era, a witness may not be a person at all; an uninvested doorbell camera may testify to the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

At the start of our parshah, Moshe calls upon Heaven and Earth to listen as he reiterates our covenant in poem form. (Devarim 32:1) As Rashi notes, this continues Moshe's repeated request for Heaven and Earth to be witnesses. (Devarim 4:26, 30:19, 31:28) Using Heaven and Earth as cold witnesses is logical; they were the start of Divine creation, and Tanach teaches that they will remain at the end. [See Kohelet 1:4-5. It is unclear whether "Heaven" refers to extraterrestrial space or to the entire spiritual realm, and whether "Earth" refers to our planet or to the entire material realm.]

At first glance, we might treat Heaven and Earth like the impartial doorbell camera, but a midrash offers ways to see these witnesses as invested in the results of their testimony. (Sifri, Devarim 306)

Role Models

One view sees Heaven and Earth as role models in their consistency:

G-d told Moshe: Tell Israel: Look at the heavens I created to serve you; have they ever changed their conduct, or has the Sun perhaps said, "I will not rise in the east and illuminate the entire world"... Look at the land I created to serve you; has

it ever changed its conduct, have you planted and it did not sprout, or have you planted wheat and barley grew, or has a cow said, "I will not thresh and I will not plow today?"

By this read, Heaven and Earth are still remote; their connection with us is only as ever-ready models of good behaviour.

Agents of Punishment, and Reward

In a second approach, the testimony of Heaven and Earth is far from objective. Much as we use the term "bear witness" to describe calling people to judgment for their crimes, Moshe envisions Heaven and Earth as witnesses for the prosecution against the Jews. Thus our midrash reports:

Rabbi Benayah said: When one is judged guilty, only the witnesses strike him first, as in Devarim 17:7, "The hand of the witnesses shall strike him first." Then others come along, as the verse continues, "And the hand of the nation later." So, too, when Israel does not fulfill the Divine will, what does it say of them? Devarim 11:17 says, "And G-d will be outraged, and He will close the heavens," and then punishment will come along.

Of course, the Torah also presents Heaven and Earth as instruments of reward, providing rain and produce. Therefore, Rabbi Chizkiyah ben Manoach wrote that Moshe invokes them as witnesses in our favour, as well, to testify that we deserve reward. (Chizkuni to Devarim 30:19) [And see Iyov 16:18-19 and 20:27-28, in which

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Iyov argues that Heaven and Earth would testify to his advantage, and Tzofar responds that they would testify to his detriment.]

Our Team

But our midrash also offers a third approach:

"Lend an ear, Heavens" – For Israel has not fulfilled the mitzvot given to them from heaven. These are the mitzvot given to them from heaven: Intercalating years, setting months, as in Bereishit 1:14. "And the earth will listen" – For they did not fulfill the mitzvot given to them in the earth. These are the mitzvot given to them in the earth: *leket, shichichah, peah, terumah, maaser, shemittah* and *yovel*.

Within this approach, Heaven and Earth are far from dispassionate; they are our allies, partners in our success or failure.

This midrash emphasizes the negative that will come if we fail as partners, but along the way it acknowledges a great, empowering truth: Our mitzvot are intertwined with the most basic elements of the universe, the creations which arrived first and remain at the end. When we fail, Heaven and Earth fail. But when we succeed, Heaven and Earth share in our success. Yes, their consistency inherently critiques our lapses. Yes, G-d uses them to respond to our failures. But Moshe also identifies them as potent partners, desiring and enabling our success. Heaven and Earth want us to be found innocent!

torczyner@torontotorah.com

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Summary

The chapter picks up right where Chapter 18 ends, with Queen Izevel learning that Eliyahu has executed the prophets of Baal. She responds with a message to Eliyahu telling him that she intends to kill him. Afraid, Eliyahu flees to the Kingdom of Judah and seeks safety in the desert. There, he prays to G-d, asking that He take his life. (19:1-4)

Eliyahu falls asleep and is awoken by an angel, who presents him with bread and water. Eliyahu eats, drinks and then falls back asleep. Again, an angel awakens Eliyahu and presents him with food and water, which he eats. (19:5-7)

With renewed strength from this food, Eliyahu travels for 40 days and nights until he reaches Mount Chorev. On the mountain, he enters a small cave and goes to sleep for the night. At that moment G-d calls to Eliyahu and asks him why he is there. Eliyahu responds that he is acting zealously on behalf of G-d, since the Israelites have rejected Him, and that Eliyahu is G-d's only prophet still living. (19:8-10)

In response, G-d asks Eliyahu to leave the cave. Once outside, G-d passes be-

fore Eliyahu first with a great rock-shattering wind, then with an earthquake, and then with a fire. In each of these instances, the natural phenomenon does not capture G-d's essence. Finally, Eliyahu hears a small, still voice. Upon hearing the voice, Eliyahu covers his face. (19:11-12)

Once again, G-d repeats His question, asking Eliyahu why he is there. Eliyahu responds word-for-word with his initial answer. In response, G-d gives Eliyahu three instructions. First, to travel to Damascus, where he is to anoint Chazael as the new king of Aram. Then, to anoint Yehu son of Nimshi as the new King of Israel. And finally, to anoint Elisha son of Shafat as his own prophetic successor. Collectively, these three leaders will kill all but the non-idolatrous Israelites, which number 7,000. (19:13-18)

The chapter concludes with Eliyahu successfully recruiting Elisha as his successor. (19:19-21)

Insight

It is important to realize that Mount Chorev is Mount Sinai. Meaning, G-d's revelation to Eliyahu mirrors the one

experienced by Moshe generations earlier. At this location, G-d asks Eliyahu the same question twice, and both times Eliyahu offers an identical answer.

Rabbi Moshe Alshich explains that in His question, G-d is urging Eliyahu to remember Moshe's experience on Sinai. On Sinai, in the cave in which Eliyahu now stands, Moshe learned the Thirteen Attributes of G-d's Mercy (the ones that we repeat so often at this time of year). Now, G-d wants Eliyahu to recall G-d's mercy. Instead, Eliyahu responds, both times, by testifying to his own zealotry, and how he alone is faithful to G-d. Eliyahu seems to have missed the point. Accordingly, it is of little surprise that G-d responds by firing Eliyahu and replacing him with Elisha. Eliyahu is no longer suitable; the people need a leader who is more compassionate and caring. Future chapters will display how that works out.

janstandig@torontotorah.com

It Happened in Israel: Herod's Sting**Rabbi Steven Gotlib**

The Talmud (Bava Batra 3b-4a) depicts, in gruesome detail, the rise of Herod. A servant of the Hasmoneans, Herod heard a Heavenly Voice state that any slave who would rebel at that moment would be successful. With his Divine promise in hand, Herod rose up and killed his masters. Herod, however, realized that he as a slave could not truly become a king of Israel as a slave, due to the rabbinic explanation of the verse, "One from among your brothers you shall set as king over you." (Devarim 17:15) He then proceeded to slaughter the rabbinic sages as well, sparing only Bava ben Buta to keep as a personal counselor.

Herod proceeded to blind Bava ben Buta, and then approached him without being recognized. "See, sir, what this evil slave is doing," Herod said. Bava ben Buta replied, "What can I do to him?"

"Curse him," Herod suggested, but Bava ben Buta refused, saying, "The book of Kohelet teaches that we should not curse kings"

"He isn't a king, though," Herod retorted, but Bava ben Buta refused again, saying, "Even if he were just a rich man, Kohelet 10:20 teaches that we should not curse rich people. And even if he were just a leader, Shemot 22:27 teaches that we should not curse the leaders of our people."

"But," Herod said, "that's only when such a leader is acting as one of your people." Once Bava ben Buta acknowledged that a large part of his reluctance was due to his fear of Herod, Herod said to him that word would never get to Herod since the two of them were alone. Nevertheless, Bava ben Buta quoted again from Kohelet 10:20 that a bird could carry

the news. He again refused to curse the newly self-appointed ruler.

Finally, Herod revealed his identity and exclaimed that if he had known how tactful the rabbinic sages were, he would not have killed them. He asked Bava ben Buta what he could do to repent for his actions. "He who occupied himself with extinguishing the light of the world should occupy himself with the light of the world," said Bava ben Buta, implying that it would be Herod's responsibility to expand the Temple. Though Herod was originally scared of the Roman government's reaction, he did as Bava ben Buta suggested.

After describing the Roman government's response to Herod's actions, the Talmud states that one who has never seen Herod's expansion of the Temple has never truly seen a beautiful building. As beautiful as Herod's expanded Temple was, Rabbi Yitzchak Arama, author of *Akeidat Yitzchak* (50:1), comments that a place of worship built by such bloodstained hands could never have been the eternal Temple described by our prophets. As such, it was eventually destroyed, and we continue to pray for the Temple to be rebuilt speedily in our days.

sgotlib@torontotorah.com

Biography

Rabbi Chaim Y. Goldvicht

Rabbi Yehuda Mann

Rabbi Chaim Yaakov Goldvicht (1925-1995) was the founder and first Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Kerem b'Yavneh, the first *Yeshivat Hesder* - a yeshiva that blends Torah learning with military service in the Israel Defense Force.

Rabbi Goldvicht learned in *Talmud Torah Eitz Chaim*, under the leadership of Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer, and in *Yeshivat Slabodka* under the leadership of Rabbi Isaac Sher. In addition, he had a close relationship with Rabbi Yitzchak Zev Soloveichik ("the Brisker Rav"), and Rabbi Avraham Yeshayahu Karelitz ("the Chazon Ish").

In 1954, ten graduates from *Yeshivat Kefar HaRoeh* wanted to found a yeshiva for students identified with the *Mizrachi* movement. The leaders of the *Mizrachi* movement at that time approached Rabbi Goldvicht and asked him to stand as the Rosh Yeshiva, and after receiving the blessing of his Rebbe - the Chazon Ish - he accepted the post.

The establishment of yeshivot that blend Torah learning and military service was greatly appreciated by Israeli society, and Rabbi Goldvicht was honoured with the Israel Prize - the highest civilian honour given to Israeli citizens. As the first Hesder Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Goldvicht received the prize on behalf of all of the *Yeshivot Hesder*.

For over 40 years, Rabbi Goldvicht led the yeshiva to great heights and Kerem b'Yavneh was considered one of the world's leading yeshivot. He taught thousands of students from around the world, and many of his students followed his footsteps in the field of the Rabbinat and *Dayanut*, as well as becoming professionals combining business with Torah learning.

Rabbi Goldvicht initiated several ideas, such as opening the first *Rabbanut* Kollel, the first *Dayanut* Kollel, the first Teachers College inside a Yeshiva, and perhaps the most important - the first program for students from overseas that enabled them to experience firsthand the beauty of *Torat Eretz Yisrael* and *Eretz Yisrael*. Many of those students said that those years in the yeshiva inspired them later in life to make Aliyah.

Rabbi Goldvicht was famous for his classes in the field of *Aggada* and Midrash. Some of those classes were transcribed for the book *Asufat Ma'arachot*.

ymann@torontorah.com

Torah and Translation

Spiritual Hands?

Rabbi Chaim Y. Goldvicht, *Asufat Ma'arachot Succot 6*

Translated by Rabbi Yehuda Mann

“ויבוא עמלק וילחם עם ישראל ברפידים. אחרים אומרים אין רפידים אלא שרפו ידיהם מן התורה. לכך בא שונא עליהם, לפי שאין השונא בא אלא על רפיון ידיים מן התורה” (מכילתא בשלח)...

יש לעורר, כיצד מתקשר הרפיון מן התורה לידיים? והרי לכאורה הרפיון הרוחני נובע מן המוח או הלב, ומה טמון ביחוס הרפיון לידיים?

והנראה בזה, דהואיל ועיקר פעולות האדם בעולם החומרי נעשות ע"י הידיים, הרי ש"הידיים" הם ביטוי וגילוי של חיי המעשה. ועיקר תפקידנו הרוחני הוא לרומם ולקדש את חיי המעשה. בחינת "שאו ידיכם קודש". וכשישראל מתרשלים במילוי תפקידם הרוחני, וממעטים את גילוי הנקודה הרוחנית הצפונה ב"מעשה הידיים" - זוהי המשמעות הפנימית של "רפו ידיהם". היינו, ניתוק מעשה הידיים ממקורו הרוחני. ורגע הרפיון שהביא על ישראל את הרע העמלקי, נתכנה בתורה "רפידים", זהו רגע החלשות החיבור בין מעשה הידיים לשרשיו הרוחניים.

השלב השני במלחמה ההיא היה "כאשר ירים משה את ידו". ומצאנו בתורה אריכות דברים סביב אותה הרמת ידיים. הרמת הידיים אינה אמצעי. בעצם הרמת הידיים היה טמון סוד הנצחון. הרמת ידי משה סימלה את ה"שאו ידיכם קודש". וקיסרה מחדש את חיי המעשה למקורם הרוחני. וכיוון שכח התפיסה העמלקי נעוץ רק בנתוק חיי המעשה מתוכנם הרוחני, לכן בשעת "הרמת הידיים", בשעה שישראל מעלים ומקשרים את החומר ליסודו הרוחני, אין לעמלק וטומאתו יכולת מגע.

“And Amalek engaged in war with Israel in *Refidim*.” Some suggest that *Refidim* isn't the place they fought, but it describes that their hands were weakened in the field of Torah. Because of that, the enemy came to fight Israel, for the enemies come upon Israel only when their hands are weak in Torah. (Mechilta Beshalach) ...

We must ask: what is the connection between Torah and Hands? Spiritual weakness should derive from the mind or the heart, what is hidden in the association of weakness and hands?

It seems that because most of man's actions in the mundane world are done by the hands, the hands express and represent practical activities. Our essential spiritual mission in this world is to elevate and sanctify practical life. Like the verse, "Lift your hands toward the sanctuary." And when Israel is weak in fulfilling their spiritual mission, and they diminish the spiritual content hidden in "the deed of the hands" - this is the true meaning of "their hands weakened." Meaning, separating physical actions from its spiritual source. The moment of weakness which brought upon Israel the Amalekite evil is called "Refidim" in the Torah; this is the moment when the deeds of their hands became separated from their spiritual roots.

The second stage of the war was "Then, whenever Moses held up his hand [Israel prevailed; but whenever he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed]." We find in the Torah great detail regarding [Moshe] lifting his hands. Lifting his hands was not an intermediary act. Within this practice of raising his hands, is hidden the secret of victory. Moshe raising his hands symbolized the "Lift your hands toward the sanctuary" [mentioned above] newly reconnecting practical life with its spiritual roots. And since the power of Amalek is only when Israel's practical life is separated from its spiritual content, therefore, when hands are raised, when Israel elevates and connects the mundane to its spiritual origins, Amalek and its impurity lack any ability to reach them.

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Shabbat Sept 18

After minchah R' Mordechai Torczyner, Gemara Ketuvot, BAYT: Simcha Suite (men)

***Our Bein hazemanim break begins after Yom Kippur
We look forward to learning with you after Succot!***

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Starting Monday October 4, 8:00 PM

For University Students!

**Idan Rakovsky, The Postmodern Jewish Philosophy of Rav Shagar
3636 Bathurst St. Apt 1605**

Starting Tuesday October 5, 1:30 PM

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Starting Thursday October 7, 8:30 AM

For University Students!

Rabbi Chaim Metzger, A Tanach Chabura: Trei Asar (The Twelve Prophets)

Starting Friday October 8, 8:30 AM

For University Students!

Rabbi Jared Anstandig, Parshah Chabura

Monday October 11, 10:00 AM

Shemitah for the Canadian in Israel!

Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Chief Rabbi of Gush Etzion, Rosh Yeshiva of Machon Lev (JCT)

Founder and Chairman of Sulamot and JobKatif (now L'ofek)

In easy Hebrew, on Zoom at <http://tiny.cc/ravrimon>

Starting Wednesday October 13, 10:00 AM

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, Los Pensadores: Jewish Philosophers of Medieval Spain

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Registration/fee information at <https://torontotorah.com/wednesdays>

Sunday October 17, 9:30 -11:00 AM

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Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

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Rabbi Chaim Metzger

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