

# Toronto Torah

## Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Lech Lecha

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This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Archie and Tobey Crandell  
to mark the fourteenth yahrtzeit of Tobey's mother, Rochel bas Peretz Yehudah z"l

### An Abrupt Introduction

This week, Hashem meets Avraham Avinu, with a commandment to "Go forth from your native land and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you." (Bereishit 12:1)

However, a midrash informs us that the incredible story of Avraham already began in Ur Kasdim, when Avraham was thrown into a furnace because he wouldn't worship the idols of that time, and he was miraculously saved. (Bereishit Rabbah 38:13) Why doesn't the Torah begin with this special story, instead of leaving us to learn it from a midrash? Why aren't we introduced with a story that actually explains why Avraham was chosen to be the messenger of the word of Hashem in the world, which will conclude with the covenant between Hashem and Avraham's descendants - Bnei Yisrael?

We may offer two explanations, based on ideas from Rabbi Chaim ibn Attar (*Or haChaim*) and the Maharal of Prague.

#### 1: Begin with Commandments

The *Or haChaim* (Bereishit 12:1) explores why the relationship of Avraham and Hashem starts from the commandment of "Go forth from your native land" and not with a revelation of Hashem to Avraham. With Moshe Rabbeinu, Hashem first reveals Himself in the fiery bush to Moshe, and only afterward does G-d command him to do things. But with Avraham, Hashem begins the relationship with commandments. Why is that?

The *Or haChaim* explains that there is a difference between starting a rela-

tionship and continuing it. Avraham Avinu is the beginning of the relationship between Hashem and the Jews; a relationship with Hashem that will last for eternity must be based on the observance of Hashem's commandments. Only later can Avraham merit revelation from Hashem. Moshe Rabbeinu is continuing an existing relationship.

Based on this, perhaps the Torah skipped Avraham's sacrifice because he wasn't commanded to do so. The story of the relationship begins with observance of Hashem's commandments.

#### 2: Lower the Bar

The Maharal (*Netzach Yisrael* 11) asks why the Torah introduces Noach as a righteous man who found favour with Hashem and was therefore selected, but the Torah doesn't tell us anything about the righteousness of Avraham, and why Hashem chose him. He answers that when Hashem chooses Avraham, He is also choosing the entire Jewish nation. The Torah emphasizes, that the Israelite nation is chosen, regardless of their religious status and level of observance. Bnei Yisrael will carry on being the chosen people, and have this special relationship with Hashem, even if they sin, and even when they are distant from Torah. Had the Torah indicated that Avraham was chosen by Hashem because of his unique righteousness, we would have thought that the relationship of Hashem with Israel is dependent upon the righteousness of his offspring. Now that the Torah indicated that Avraham was chosen without mentioning his greatness, we learn that the Jews are chosen forever, even when they sin.

### Rabbi Yehuda Mann

Given this explanation, we can understand why the story of Avraham begins without the story of Ur Kasdim. Had that story been first, we would have thought that the relationship between Hashem and Avraham and the entire Jewish nation was dependent on our living up to Avraham's righteousness.

#### 3: Complementary Approaches

One might argue that these two explanations contradict one another. According to the *Or haChaim* the relationship between the Jews and Hashem must be founded on Torah observance, and according to the Maharal there can be a relationship even when we falter religiously! But perhaps the two approaches are actually complementary.

As the *Or haChaim* says, the basis of the relationship between the Jews and Hashem is the Torah, and our observance. However, one who is having difficulty accepting and observing everything, in entirety, and therefore feels distant from Hashem, should not give up, as we can see in the Maharal's approach. One shouldn't think that he doesn't have a relationship with Hashem, we remain children of Hashem, and always as part of the Jewish nation. Knowing this, we will have the power and inspiration to do more, and eventually to keep and observe all of Torah and mitzvot.

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**Summary**

The last chapter of Melachim I opens with a fragile optimism, as the prophet reports that for three years there has been no war between the Kingdom of Israel and Aram. The prophet expands and describes the good relationship between the northern Kingdom of Israel, led by Achav, and the southern Kingdom of Judah, led by Yehoshaphat. When Yehoshaphat comes to Samaria to visit Achav, Achav offers to wage war against Aram together, in order to gain back the land of Ramot haGilad. (22:1-5)

Achav consults with 400 of his false prophets as to whether he should go, and all of them recommend that he do so. Yehoshaphat asks him to reconsider with the counsel of a true prophet, and the true prophet Michayahu ben Yimlah is summoned. Michayahu assures them that there won't be many victims from Israel in that war. Nevertheless, he prophesies that Achav will eventually die in this war. (22:6-26)

Achav imprisons Michayahu, and indeed goes to war against Aram. He decides to dress up in order to be able to

hide from the army of Aram, and thus to escape Michayahu's prophecy. In the meantime, the king of Aram commands his army to fight only against Achav, and not against his soldiers. During combat they notice Yehoshaphat and mistake him for Achav, but then decide to let him escape. At that moment, a soldier of Aram shoots an arrow at a random Jew, unwittingly striking the disguised Achav himself. Achav is injured internally, and he commands his rider to flee the war zone. By the time Achav gets back to his base, he has already bled to death. Achav is buried in Samaria, the capital of the Kingdom of Israel. (22:27-37)

The text reports that the carriage of Achav was stained with his blood, and that dogs came to lick up the blood. Achaziah, his evil son, succeeded him as king. (22:38-54)

**Insight**

The authenticity of one's relation to Hashem is discussed profoundly in our chapter. On one side we find the 400 false prophets, who are only serving as "yes men" for their leader, but on the other side we find the one and only

true prophet, who stands by his truth even at the price of prison. The Talmud (Sanhedrin 89a) states, "No two prophets prophesy in identical language," and [Professor James A. Diamond](#) reads this statement as a profound message for our lives as well:

"[A]ny authentic relationship between G-d and a human being is rooted in dialogue unique to the particular moment and individual involved and thus inimitable. Authentic relationship can never be programmatic. Hundreds of individuals parroting verbatim each other's purported divine communication evidences a platitude that belies claims of it emerging from their 'relationship' with G-d."

As Professor Diamond cites from Martin Buber: Hashem has truth, but He does not have a system. He expresses his truth through his will, but His will is not a program. (*Israel and the World*)

*irakovsky@torontotorah.com*

**It Happened in Israel: Rabbi Yosi in the Ruins****Rabbi Adam Friedmann**

The Talmud (Berachot 2b) tells the story of Rabbi Yosi, who was once travelling and entered one of the ruins of Jerusalem to pray. While he was doing this, Eliyahu HaNavi came and stood guard over the door. When Rabbi Yosi was finished, Eliyahu asked him what he had been doing inside the ruins. Rabbi Yosi responded that he had been praying. Eliyahu asked him why he didn't stop on the side of the road to pray (as standing in a destroyed building is dangerous). Rabbi Yosi replied that he was worried about bandits who may have attacked him if they had seen him praying on the roadside. Eliyahu responded that in this case, Rabbi Yosi should have recited an abridged prayer.

The story pauses to list three halachic lessons that Rabbi Yosi learned from Eliyahu:

- 1) that one shouldn't enter a ruined building
- 2) that one may pray on the road
- 3) that one who prays on the road should recite an abridged prayer

Eliyahu then asks Rabbi Yosi what he heard in the ruins while he prayed. Rabbi Yosi responds that he heard a voice cooing like a dove and saying, "Woe to the sons who, because of their sins, I have destroyed My house and burned My abode and exiled My children among the idol worshippers." Eliyahu responds that this voice emerges every day, three times a day.

Eliyahu adds that when Jews in the synagogue call out, "May His great name be blessed" G-d nods his head and says, "Praiseworthy is the king who is praised this way in His house! And what will be of the father who exiled his sons among the idol worshippers! And woe to the children who were exiled from their father's table."

Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook (*Ein Ayah*, Berachot 1:8) explains that this story details the tragic and unnatural situation after the destruction of the Temple. The Temple's loss was not only terrible in and of itself. It also severely diminished the efficaciousness of our attempts at connecting with G-d and impacting the world.

This loss expresses itself in three areas: the acts of the righteous (represented by Rabbi Yosi's prayer), the Temple service (represented by the three daily soundings of the voice parallel to the daily sacrifices), and the general communal worship of the Jews (represented by the Jews in the synagogue). The result of our disconnect from G-d is that instead of these practices producing an observable impact on the world, only the holiest people (like Rabbi Yosi), at select times, can detect a faint response (symbolized by the dove's coo).

However, this lack of connection and impact is only apparent, not actual. On high, G-d keeps track of our efforts, and the "nodding" of His "head" is symbolic of His desire to bring the fruits of our efforts, which for now exists only in His knowledge, down into reality.

*afriedmann@torontotorah.com*

## Biography

### Rabbi Mordechai Breuer

Rabbi Chaim Metzger

Rabbi Mordechai Breuer was born in 1921 in Karlsruhe, Germany. After making aliyah at age twelve, he studied in Chorev High School in Jerusalem, and continued his studies in Yeshivat Kol Torah and Yeshivat Chevron. He then taught at Yeshivat Bnei Akiva in Kfar HaRoeh. In 1947, Bnei Akiva sent him to Cyprus to help at the Jewish refugee camps which the British had set up. During Israel's War of Independence, he served as the instructor for the Bnei Akiva unit in Birua, Gallilee. He taught at Yeshivat HaDarom in Rechovot together with Rabbi Yehudah Amital and Rabbi Elazar Shach from 1949-1965. He taught Tanach throughout Israel for years at institutions such as Michlelet Yerushalayim L'Banot and Yeshivat Har Etzion.

Rabbi Breuer, and his cousin Professor Mordechai Breuer, were great-grandsons of Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch. They translated his Torah commentary into Hebrew.

Rabbi Breuer's primary mark was left on Tanach studies. First, in the field of the Masoretic Text of Tanach, he proved that the Aleppo Codex we have is the same one referred to by the Rambam, and is uniquely more accurate and precise than other editions. Rabbi Breuer utilized its text and Masoretic notes to make the most accurate Biblical text, now called *Keter Yerushalayim*.

Rabbi Breuer unveiled the cantillation notes used in Torah reading, showing how they demonstrate punctuation and syntax. He wrote a comprehensive book, *Cantillation Notes in the Twenty-One Books and in Sifrei Eme't (Iyov, Mishlei, Tehillim)*. A summary of the book can be found in the introductions to Bereishit and Tehillim in the Da'at Mikra series.

Rabbi Breuer championed a new form of biblical interpretation, focusing on the meaning of the verses independent of midrashic interpretations and rabbinic commentary. His most famous tool was *Shitat HaBechinot*, or Aspect Methodology, to explain apparent contradictions in the Torah. For more, see his *Pirkei Moadot* and *Pirkei Bereishit*.

Rabbi Breuer received the Israel Prize in 1999 for his contributions to Torah Literature. He also taught Tanach and Talmud in Bayit V'Gan, where he lived until he passed away in 2007.

[cmetzger@torontotorah.com](mailto:cmetzger@torontotorah.com)

## Torah and Translation

### Taamei haMikra in Tanach

Rabbi Mordechai Breuer, Daat Mikra Bereishit I pg. 134

Translated by Rabbi Chaim Metzger

1. טעמי המקרא הם סימנים המורים לקורא את נגינת הפסוקים. נגינה זו היתה מקובלת בבתי כנסיות ובבתי מדרשות, והיא הועברה מדור לדור כתורה שבעל פה; עד שבאו חכמי המסורה וקבעו לה סימנים שבכתב.

נגינת הטעמים מתאימה בדרך כלל לחלוקה התחבירית של המקרא. סופי הפסוקים וכן סופי כל חלקיהם מנוגנים בנגינה מפסקת; ומלים המחוברות זו לזו מבחינה תחת מחוברות גם בנגינתם. משום כך טעמי המקרא אינם רק סימני נגינה, אלא הם מורים גם על חלוקתם התחבירית של המקראות.

וזה היא השיטה, שהטעמים מחלקים בה את פסוקי המקרא: כל פסוק מתחלק לשני חלקים; וכל חלק מאלה – וכל חלקי חלקיהם – חוזרים ומתחלקים לשני חלקים, ורק חלק הכולל פחות משלוש תיבות איננו טעון חלוקה נוספת.

1. Cantillation notes (trop) are signs that teach the reader how to read the tune of the verses [of Tanach]. This melody has been accepted in synagogues and study halls, passing from generation to generation as an oral tradition; until the Sages of the Masoretic tradition established written signs for them.

The tune of the trop generally matches the syntactical breakdown of the verses. The ending notes for verses and the notes to mark an end to a segment within a verse are sung in a tune that stops the reader. Words that are joined together syntactically are also connected by their tune. Because of this, cantillation notes aren't simply musical notation, rather they instruct us about the syntactic breakdown of the verses as well.

This is the approach, with which the trop divide up the verses of Tanach: Each verse is divided in half; then each section is again divided in two; each section from these – and all subsections therein – are again split in two. Only when a segment has less than three words does it no longer need to be further split.

2. חלוקת המקרא לפסוקים ולחלקי פסוקים נעשית על ידי הטעמים המפסיקים. ויש להבחין בין ארבע דרגות של מפסיקים: קיסרים, מלכים, משנים, שלישים. הקיסרים מסיימים את שני החלקים הראשיים של הפסוק. שאר הדרגות מחלקות את חלקי הפסוק ואת חלקי חלקין; ולעולם המפסיק את החלק נמוך בדרגה אחת מן המפסיק המסיים אותו חלק.

2. The division of Tanach into verses and different sections of verses is done by disjunctive trop. There are four different levels of disjunctive trop: Caesars, kings, dukes, earls. The Caesars divide the verse into its two primary parts. The rest of the levels divide the verse's sections and subsection; always the disjunctive that further divides the section is one level lower than the disjunctive note that ends the segment.

**Cantillation Levels for 21 Books of Tanach (excluding Iyov, Mishlei, Tehillim)**

Emperors	Sof Pasuk			Etnachta		
Kings	Tipcha	Zakef Katon	Zakef Gadol	Shalshelet		Segol
Dukes	Tevir	Revi'i	Pashta	Zarka	Yetiv	
Earls	Gershayim	Geresh	Munach Lgarme	Tlisha Gedolah	Karnei Parah	Pazer Katan
Footmen	Munach	Mercha	Tlisha Ketanah	Qadma	Mahpach	Darga

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Tuesday/Thursday: Parshah, Tanach: Sefer Melachim

### Shabbat October 16

After 8:00 AM shacharit R' Yehuda Mann, Halachah from the Parshah, Clanton Park

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

After minchah Idan Rakovsky, Weekly Class, Shaarei Tefillah

### Sunday October 17

9:00 AM R' Zev Spitz & R' Yehuda Mann, Semichat Chaver Program, Clanton Park (men)

9:15 AM Idan Rakovsky, Postmodernist Jewish Thought, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university)

9:30-11:00 AM Nusbaum Family Medical Ethics and Halacha Program (CME accredited)  
Helping Patients and Families Deal with Mental Illness, with R' Mordechai Torczyner  
ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/mtethics> Register at <https://torontotorah.com/cme>

10 AM R' Aaron Greenberg, Talmud Eruvin, Yeshivat Or Chaim or ZOOM: <http://bit.ly/jliczoom> 613613 (univ)

### Monday October 18

8:30 PM R' Moshe Yeres, Talmud Shabbat (Chap. 15), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/talmud>

### Tuesday October 19

1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, King Solomon's Arc (Melachim I 1), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt>

7:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 7), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (men)

### Wednesday October 20

6:15 AM R' Jared Anstandig, Talmud: Eruvin, Shaarei Shomayim and ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/erugin>

10:00 AM R' M Torczyner, The Philosophers of Medieval Spain, #2 of 3 ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt>

7:00 PM Idan Rakovsky, Introduction to Talmud, Week 3 of 5, Shaarei Tefillah

### Thursday October 21

8:30 AM R' Chaim Metzger, Trei Asar, Yeshivat Or Chaim or ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/trei> (university)

1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 21), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (women)

8:00 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Beitzah, email [ymann@torontotorah.com](mailto:ymann@torontotorah.com) for location (advanced, men)

9:00 PM Idan Rakovsky, Ramban on the Parshah, Shaarei Tefillah - not this week

### Friday October 22

8:30 AM R' Jared Anstandig, Parshah, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university)

10:30 AM R' Jared Anstandig, R' Mordechai Torczyner, R' Yehuda Mann, Bava Batra Perek 2 *advanced*  
In-person at Yeshivat Or Chaim, on Zoom at <http://tiny.cc/frishiur>

COMING UP!

7:30-9:30 PM Monday evening October 25

Tribute to Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks z"l on his first yahrtzeit

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