

# Toronto Torah

## Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Shemot

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This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Golda Brown and Harry Krakowsky to commemorate the yahrtzeit of Harry's father, Joe Krakowsky, Yoseph ben Moshe z"l (28 Tevet)

This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Paul and Chavi Jacobs to commemorate the yahrtzeit of their mother, Eva (Maidy) Heller, Finkel bas Shmayahu z"l (22 Teves)

### What Was Yocheved Thinking?

### Rabbi Alex Hecht

One can only imagine the pain of the Jewish parents whose newborn sons were taken from them following delivery to be killed, in fulfillment of Pharaoh's decree. (Shemot 1:16) The Torah tells us of one case in which a mother, Yocheved, attempted to conceal her baby, Moshe, from Pharaoh's officers. Nevertheless, after three months, it became impossible to hide him any longer; Yocheved put her son in a wicker basket, and placed it in the Nile River. (Shemot 2:2-3)

Although there is every reason to believe that Yocheved did not want her son harmed, it would seem that this action positioned him for as certain a death as handing him over to Pharaoh's officers. What fate did Yocheved expect her son to encounter when she placed him in the river? We may suggest four answers.

#### 1: Death

Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra (commentary to 2:3) explained that Yocheved expected that her son would likely die in the raging river; however, she wanted to at least avoid seeing - or knowing definitively - that her son was killed. This is similar to the Torah's account of Hagar casting Yishmael under a bush after their water supply was depleted, saying, "Let me not see the death of the child." (Bereishit 21:15-16)

This explanation, and the analogy to Hagar, are troubling. As Rabbi Samson

Raphael Hirsch comments (ad loc.), Hagar seems to have been more concerned with her personal emotions than with her son's well-being!

#### 2: Miriam

We may suggest that Yocheved did not abandon Moshe at all; she knew Miriam would look out for him. As Shemot 2:4 informs us, "His sister [Miriam] stood from afar to know what would be with him." (Shemot 2:4)

Further, the Talmud tells us that Miriam had already prophesied that Moshe would live to become the saviour of the Jewish people. She watched the basket in order to see the manner in which this prophecy would be fulfilled. (Sotah 13a) Perhaps Yocheved put Moshe in the river with the understanding that Moshe would indeed be monitored, and that Miriam had foretold his survival.

#### 3: Fooling the Astrologers

In a third approach, a midrash (Shemot Rabbah 1:21) explains that Yocheved believed that placing her son into the river would be the means through which he would be saved: Pharaoh's decree against the newborn boys had been a response to an astrological prediction that a boy was destined to be born who would redeem his people. (ibid. 1:18) Those same astrologers had predicted that this redeemer would be harmed via water. (ibid.) Yocheved reasoned that once this projected saviour was placed into the river, the

Egyptian astrologers would become aware of this and would believe that the threat had been eliminated. Pharaoh would immediately rescind the decree, allowing Yocheved to recover Moshe without fear of discovery.

#### 4: Adoption

Rabbi Avadia Seforno (commentary to Shemot 2:3-4) references our third explanation, and then adds that Miriam was confident that a nearby Egyptian who discovered the basket would adopt the baby. She was not concerned that the Egyptians would suspect Moshe of being a Jew; he alleges that it was not out of the ordinary to find abandoned children who were products of illicit relationships in Egypt. Seforno supports this assertion from the prophet Yechezkel's description of Egypt as the ultimate centre of depravity, to which many Jews in his time were attracted: "Then she increased her adulteries, remembering the days of her youth, when she was promiscuous in the land of Egypt." (Yechezkel 23:19, ArtScroll tr.) Perhaps this was not only Miriam's thought, but also Yocheved's plan.

According to the last three explanations, Yocheved was not sealing Moshe's fate when she placed him into the river. To the contrary, she was confident that this painful action of parting with her son would enable him to survive and fulfill his mission.

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**Summary**

The saga of King David and his son Avshalom started in Shemuel II 13 with the rape of Avshalom's sister Tamar; consequently, Avshalom launched a coup against his father's reign in Shemuel II 15. Or perhaps the story began in Shemuel II 11, when King David took Batsheva and sent her husband Uriah to the front lines of a war, where he was killed. For this act, the prophet Natan predicted in Shemuel II 12:11 that G-d would bring evil against David from within his own house. Either way, in Chapter 18 the forces of King David and Avshalom face each other in battle.

King David divides his troops among three leaders – Yoav, Avishai, and Itai. King David wishes to participate in the battle himself, but the fighters point out the impact were the king to be harmed. [See, as well, Shemuel II 21:17.] King David accepts their point, but warns them to treat his son Avshalom gently. (18:1-5)

The war takes place in a forest, with many falling due to the dangers of the forest, not the battle. Avshalom himself is in this category, as his long hair (see

14:25-26) is caught in the branches of a tree. The soldier who finds him refuses to kill him, due to King David's command, but Yoav orders Avshalom killed and buried in the forest. Avshalom's forces scatter. The text also notes a monument Avshalom had built for himself in place called Emek haMelech. [It is generally accepted that this is not the monument known today as [Yad Avshalom](#).] (18:6-18)

Achimaatz ben Tzaddok (see 15:27 and 17:17) wants to inform King David of the results of the battle, but Yoav discourages this, knowing that King David will grieve at his son's death. Instead, Yoav sends an anonymous man from Kush. Nonetheless, Achimaatz insists on going and he arrives first – but recognizing the king's concern for his son, he pretends not to know Avshalom's fate. The Kushite then gives King David the news. King David's reaction appears in the next chapter. (18:19-32)

**Insight**

King David's request to spare Avshalom is startling. Avshalom caused all of the death and destruction incurred in his rebellion. Avshalom

performed unspeakable acts, such as taking his father's concubines for himself. (16:22) And Avshalom was ready to kill his father; King David may not have known the details, but we witnessed an example in 17:1-4. Why did King David insist on sparing him?

Radak (18:5) credits unlimited paternal mercy, while Malbim (ad loc.) explains that King David could not believe that Avshalom wished to kill him. But Ralbag (ad loc.) offers a different approach: King David viewed Avshalom's revolt as a Divinely orchestrated response to his actions with Batsheva. In King David's mind, Avshalom bore no guilt for his role.

Ralbag's explanation flies in the face of Jewish philosophy; we hold people responsible for their actions regardless of how those actions serve Divine ends. (Rambam, Hilchot Teshuvah 6:5) Nonetheless, Ralbag's insight rings true from the perspective of a parent; right or wrong, parents often forgive children for their actions, blaming themselves instead. This may have been King David's error.

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**The Israeli Farmer: Dairy Farms on Shabbat****Rabbi Adam Friedmann**

The Talmud (Shabbat 95a) states that milking a cow on Shabbat is prohibited because it is considered *mefarek* (removing, or extracting). *Mefarek* is a derivative of *dash* (threshing), which is one of the 39 *melachot* which are prohibited on Shabbat. The overwhelming majority of early authorities are of the opinion that milking is biblically prohibited.

This prohibition presents an immediate challenge to any Jew who owns dairy cattle. These cows experience extreme discomfort if not milked regularly. Refraining from milking such a cow over the course of Shabbat thus constitutes *tza'ar baalei chayim* (causing suffering to animals). A solution to this issue was formulated by Maharam of Rothenburg in 13<sup>th</sup> century Germany (cited in Rosh Shabbat 18:3). Citing Talmudic precedent, he argued that rabbinic prohibitions on Shabbat may be suspended in the face of animal suffering. Therefore, one may ask a non-Jew to milk a cow, since asking a non-Jew to perform *melachah* is only rabbinically prohibited.

The realities of mass dairy farming in the early days of modern Israel raised new challenges. The early Zionist farmers prided themselves on the use of exclusively Jewish labour. In addition, there was a point when the British prohibited Arabs from entering Jewish settlements, because of a contagious disease found in Arab communities. Further, the loss of an entire day's worth of milk each week also amounted to a huge financial loss for the farms. This situation generated a variety of rabbinic responses. Rabbi Avraham Yeshayah Karelitz (Chazon Ish, Hilchot Shabbat 56:4) allowed for the leniency of milking where one will not benefit from the milk; some early authorities ruled that milking is only prohibited when one's goal is to retain the

milk. Therefore, milking onto the ground or into a container which contains something that will ruin the milk (e.g. soap) is permitted. Rabbi Ben-Zion Uziel (Responsa Mishpitei Uziel, Orach Chaim 10) was even more lenient. Taking up the minority view that milking is only a rabbinic prohibition, he permitted farmers to milk the cows in an abnormal way and retain the milk.

Once dairy farming moved from manual to machine milking, new questions were raised. It was suggested that on Shabbat, the machine could be attached to the udders of a cow such that the milk would go to waste. Afterward, a nozzle could independently switch the milk output to the regular container. This way, there would be no concrete act of milking. Response to this suggestion was varied. Chazon Ish (Orach Chaim 38:4) objected to this practice, but is known to have allowed it in specific cases of serious financial need. Rabbi Shaul Yisraeli (Amud HaYemini 25) allowed this kind of setup in conjunction with certain additional practices. At a later stage, milking machines were developed which could be attached to the udders while inactive, allowing for milking done purely via timers.

Using some kind of leniency to retain milk from Shabbat has become widespread practice in Israeli dairy farms. However, many consumers choose to be stringent. To accommodate this, providers like Tenuvah label cartons of milk "*mehadrin*" to indicate that they do not contain milk from Shabbat.

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**Biography**  
**Reb Zusha of Anapoli**  
Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

Meshulam Zusil was born in 1730 in the city of Tykocin (now called Podlaskie, Poland). "Zusha," as he was called, and his brother Elimelech, grew up together, engaged in learning of both the "revealed" and "hidden" parts of the Torah.

Although the two brothers became famous in their own lifetimes, it is difficult to know their life stories with certainty; there are contradicting sources even regarding the question of who was older. However, the stories told about them reflect - if not the history - the majesty and greatness of the pair.

While still young, "Reb Zusha" and his brother decided to leave their home and go into a self-imposed exile to improve their humility and atone for their sins. These journeys, on which the brothers went without taking money or food, brought suffering and disgrace upon them. However, they also built their character as holy men in these travels, and much of the Torah taught and stories told by Reb Zusha in his later years originated in his days of wandering.

Eventually, their road took them to Mezeritch, where they met the famous Maggid of Mezeritch, Rabbi Dov Ber, a disciple and successor of the Baal Shem Tov. They both remained there to study under him, in his unique style. It is told, for example, that once the Maggid began to teach Chumash by quoting the verse, "And G-d spoke to Moshe, saying..." The Maggid wanted to continue to the next verse - the content of G-d's words to Moshe, and the planned focus of the session. However, Reb Zusha was suddenly caught up with excitement from the mere fact that G-d spoke. He exclaimed "G-d spoke... G-d spoke... G-d SPOKE!" over and over until he had to be removed from the group due to the disruption he was causing.

Reb Zusha himself became a Rebbe in Anapoli (currently Hanipol, Ukraine), and passed away on the second day of Shevat. On his deathbed, he said to his chasidim: When I get to Heaven, I will not be asked, "Why weren't you like Moshe?" or "Why weren't you like Avraham? They will ask, "Why weren't you like Zusha?"

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**Torah and Translation**  
**In Grief and in Joy**

**Rabbi Zusha of Anapoli, Menorat Zahav, Parshat Shemot**  
Translated by Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

ויאמר ד' ראה ראיתי את עני עמי אשר במצרים ואת צעקתם שמעתי מפני נוגשיו כי ידעתי את מכאוביו" (שמות ג: ז). הנה 'כי ידעתי את מכאוביו' נראה שהוא כעין נתינת טעם אל הקודם - להכי 'ואת צעקתם שמעתי מפי נוגשיו' לפי שידעתי את מכאוביו. וקשה, הרי כיוון שד' יתברך יודע את מכאוביו לא היה צריך לומר 'ואת צעקתם שמעתי', כי גם בלא צעקתם יודע הוא...

דהנה, יש בקרב ישראל תרי גווני בני אדם מעובדי ד' יתברך ברוך הוא. יש שעובדים אותו יתברך בבכיה ודמעה שמצעים עצמן תמיד על צער וגלות השכינה ומורידין דמעות על חורבן בית המקדש, ויש שעובדים אותו יתברך ברנה ושיר ושבח ובהלל ותודות לפניו יתברך... בא הכתוב שאחר זה לפרש ההפרש שביניהם, "הלך לך ובכה נושא משך הזרע" (תהלים קכו: ו), שאותו שעובד אותו יתברך בבכיה ודמעה כנ"ל הוא רק נושא משך הזרע, אבל בא יבא ברנה היינו אותו שעובד לד' יתברך ברנה ושיר ושבח, נושא אלומותיו, שהוא נושא אלומות אלומות רבות ובמקבל שכר טוב על עבודתו השלמה והרצויה... יוצא מזה שאוהב ד' יתברך יותר את העבודה שהוא בשמחה.

והנה, שם במצרים לא היה אפשר להם לישראל לעבוד את ד' יתברך בשמחה, רק בזעקה ובבכיה. ואף על פי כן היה חביב בעיני ד' יתברך כאילו היו עובדים בשמחה, כי מה שלא עבדו בשמחה היה רק מפני שאי אפשר להם... וזהו שאמר הכתוב "ואת צעקתם שמעתי מפני נגשיו", היינו שאף על פי שכל עבודתם הוא על ידי צעקה, מכל מקום אין זה נחשב אצלם חסרון "כי ידעתי את מכאוביו"... ולכן גם על הצעקה והבכיה שהם עובדים בהם את עבודת ד' יתברך יקבלו הם שכר השמחה ממש כאילו עבדו מתוך שמחה.

"And Hashem said, 'I have seen the affliction of My people in Egypt, and I have heard their cry caused by their oppressors, for I know their pains.'" (Shemot 3:7) The [words] "for I know their pains" seems to be a reason given for the earlier words - **for this [reason]** I heard their cry caused by their oppressors, **because** I know their pain. And this is difficult, for if G-d knows their pain, it is not necessary to say "I heard their cry", for He knows their pain even without their crying! ...

Behold, there are two types of G-d-serving people among Israel. There are those who worship Him by crying and tears. They always torment themselves over the pain and exile of the Divine Presence and shed tears for the destruction of the Temple. [However,] there are those who worship Him with joy, song, praise, and thanksgiving... The verse comes to explain the difference between them: "He will go along weeping, carrying the measure of seeds" (Tehillim 126:6), for he who worships G-d by crying and tears can be only the bearer of the **seeds**. However, "he will come with joy" refers to he who worships G-d through joy, singing and praise, and he will be the bearer of the **sheaves**, for he carries many sheaves and receives good reward for his wholesome and desired service... It emerges from this that G-d prefers the worship done through happiness.

Behold, in Egypt, the Jewish people were not able to worship G-d happily, only by shouting and crying. Nonetheless, their prayer was favoured by Hashem as if they were worshipping happily. The reason they did not worship with happiness was only because it was impossible [to do so]... And that is the meaning of the verse, "And I heard their cry caused by their oppressors", that is, although all their worship was by crying, nonetheless this is not seen as a shortcoming, "for I know their pains"... Therefore, even for their crying and weeping through which they worship G-d, they will be rewarded as if they had worshipped with happiness.

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**SPECIAL PROGRAMMING**

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**Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, Infection Control for Doctors and Dentists in the Era of COVID**  
**CME accredited, Laypeople welcome, Register at <https://torontotorah.com/cme>**

**10:00 AM Wed. Jan. 13: Medieval Provence: Creativity and Chaos, a 3-part series**

**R' Sammy Bergman, Week 2: Rabbi Avraham Ibn Daud, Kabbalist, Defender of Tradition**  
**Register at <https://torontotorah.com/provence>**

**DAILY**

**Mon-Thu 10 AM to Noon, with Rabbi Moshe Yeres, via ZOOM (men)**

**Monday/Wednesday: Gemara Succah, Orot haTeshuvah**

**Tuesday/Thursday: Parshah, Tanach: Shemuel**

**WEEKLY**

**Shabbat Jan. 8-9**

**After minchah at Shaarei Shomayim, R' Sammy Bergman, Parshah**

**Sunday Jan. 10**

**9:20 AM Contemporary Halachah with Netanel Klein**

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

**7:30 PM Gemara Ketuvot with Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner (men)**

**8:15 PM Uncovering Midrash with Rabbi Chaim Metzger**

**Monday Jan. 11**

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

**Tuesday Jan. 12**

**1:30 PM Megilat Esther, with Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner**

**7:30 PM Shoftim, with Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner (men)**

**Wednesday, Jan. 13**

**6:15 AM Talmud Ketuvot, with Rabbi Sammy Bergman**

**7:30 PM Genesis Journeys, with Rabbi Sammy Bergman**

**7:30 PM Greatest (Halachic) Hits of COVID: Cancellation Refunds, with Rabbi Alex Hecht**

**Thursday Jan. 14**

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

**1:30 PM Shemuel, with Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner (women)**

**8:00 PM Gemara Beitzah, with Ezer Dena (men, advanced)**

**8:15 PM Gemara Bava Metzia, with Rabbi Sammy Bergman (University women)**

**Friday Jan. 15**

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

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

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