

# Toronto Torah

## Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Tetzaveh

Shushan Purim, 15 Adar, 5781/February 27, 2021

Vol. 12 Num. 25 (#486)

This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Paul and Chavi Jacobs  
to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> yearzeit of Chavi's father,  
Lipmann Heller, Yom Tov Lipmann ben Meshulem Feivish z"l

### More Than a Deodorizer

### Ezer Diena

One of the most discussed questions of Parshat Tetzaveh relates to the placement of the section commanding Moshe to build the mizbach hazahav, the golden altar, upon which the incense was offered. Although this altar is located near the menorah and shulchan, which were mentioned at the start of last week's Torah reading, Hashem only instructs Moshe to build it at the very end of this week's reading, after the instructions for literally every single other vessel, and even after detailing the inauguration ceremony for Aharon and his sons and the daily sacrifices!

While many answers have been offered, Rambam's understanding of the purpose of this altar leads us to a particularly novel approach. Rambam writes (Moreh Nevuchim 3:45, Friedlander translation):

"Since many beasts were daily slaughtered in the holy place... the smell of the place would undoubtedly have been like the smell of slaughter-houses, if nothing had been done to counteract it. They were therefore commanded to burn incense there twice every day, in the morning and in the evening (Shemot 30:7, 8), in order to give the place and the garments of those who officiated there a pleasant odour... If there had not been a good smell, let alone if there had been a stench, it would have produced in the minds of the people the reverse of respect; for our heart generally feels elevated in the presence of good odour, and is attracted by it, but it abhors and avoids bad smell."

Rambam argues that the purpose of this altar was to serve as a form of deodorizer for the Mishkan/Beit haMikdash. It makes sense, then, that the instructions to build it should only come after the instruction to offer many of the sacrifices whose smell it will be covering up, which are detailed in the section immediately preceding it.

Rabbeinu Bachya (Shemot 30:1) strongly disagrees with Rambam: Did Hashem really assign the incense just to get rid of a bad smell? Virtually every time we see incense in Tanach, it plays a tremendously important role, from ceasing plagues to being the high point of the Yom Kippur service. Additionally, the punishment for offering the incense for private use is *kareit* (Divine excommunication) which seems particularly severe if it really only serves to make the Beit haMikdash smell nice.

Perhaps a defence for Rambam's position may be found in a passage from the Talmud (Berachot 43b). The Talmud cites Rabbi Zutra bar Tovia, who in turn cites Rav, that the source which requires us to recite a blessing for scents is different from the source for blessings for physical pleasures. The source is the verse, "Every soul should praise G-d" (Tehillim 150:6), since the body does not benefit from scent, but the soul does.

Rabbi Zutra bar Tovia's statement is somewhat hard to understand; smell is one of our bodies' senses, and we definitely appreciate smells on a physical level. If so, why couldn't the blessing on scents be included in the

Talmud's ruling (Berachot 35a) that it is prohibited to benefit from this world without a blessing?

Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein (Aruch haShulchan Orach Chaim 216:1) explains that when Rav said that the body does not "benefit" from smell, he was referring to nutrition. Food nourishes the body, but scent does not. Scent, explains Rabbi Epstein, does serve as a form of nourishment, but for the soul – although we can sense it with our bodies, good smells are primarily a spiritual experience.

This also explains why we incorporate *besamim* (spices) as part of the havdalah ceremony; the Sages explain that on Shabbat we gain an "extra soul" (Beitzah 16a), so when we lose it, we require some *besamim* to nourish our soul, which is now lacking. (Midrash Sechel Tov, Shemot 16:29)

Thus, when Rambam talks of the need to have a positive smell in the Mishkan, he is not just talking about a utilitarian need. Just as korbanot serve as a form of "pleasant smell" for Hashem, we, too, require a "pleasant smell," and not because we demand the physicality of it, but for the opposite reason. Our sense of smell allows our souls to benefit from this world in a manner that they otherwise could not. For this reason, the Mishkan and Beit haMikdash need to always smell wonderful, so that they can provide us the ultimate spiritual nutrition.

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## Summary

The opening chapter of the book of Melachim describes King David's final days, and his efforts to secure his son Shlomo as his successor. We are told that David was ill and was unable to be warmed by clothing. His servants found a beautiful woman named Avishag to serve as David's attendant to warm him. The text notes that they were not intimate. (1:1-4)

Meanwhile, Adoniyahu, David's son from his wife Chagit, began to conduct himself in the manner of the king, as he prepared to claim the throne upon his father's imminent death. Some of David's advisors, including Yoav and Evyatar, supported Adoniyahu in this endeavour. Adoniyahu invited the leaders of the tribe of Yehudah to a lavish feast, and noticeably excluded his half-brother Shlomo. (1:5-10)

The prophet Natan learned of Adoniyahu's plan, and told David's wife Batsheva that it was imperative that David affirm his intention to pass on the throne to her son Shlomo. Batsheva spoke to David (1:11-21), Natan supported her concerns (1:22-27), and David confirmed his oath to G-d to

designate Shlomo as his successor. (1:28-31)

David ordered Natan and Tzadok to publicly anoint Shlomo, and demonstrate his kingship. Natan and Tzadok took Shlomo to Gichon on David's mule, anointed him, sounded the shofar and proclaimed his kingship. David instructed that Shlomo sit on his throne upon his return to Jerusalem, in order to show that he was the designated successor. (1:32-40)

Evyatar's son Yonatan informed Adoniyahu and his supporters of the public display of Shlomo's legitimacy. (1:41-48) Adoniyahu's supporters dispersed in fear, and Adoniyahu pleaded with Shlomo for his life. Shlomo told Adoniyahu that if he would pledge loyalty, his life would be spared. (1:49-52)

## Insight

In the beginning of our chapter, we are told that clothing was ineffective in warming David. The Talmud notes that this was a punishment for an incident in which David demonstrated insufficient respect for clothing. Many

years earlier, when David apprehended Shaul, who was pursuing him, and had the opportunity to kill him, David instead tore Shaul's garment. (Shemuel I 24:5) Rabbi Yose ben Rabbi Chanina commented that David's punishment was evidence that "anyone who treats clothing with contempt will ultimately not benefit from them." (Berachot 62b) Why is it considered so objectionable to display lack of respect towards clothing, or to inanimate objects in general?

In his explanation of the prohibition of *bal tashchit* (destroying wastefully), Sefer haChinuch (529) wrote that G-d wants us to be sensitive people who "love goodness and productivity, and cling to it," thereby causing "goodness to cling to us." He noted that the way in which we relate to inanimate objects can impact the way in which we relate to and treat others. For example, if we sensitize ourselves to the destruction of inanimate objects, we will likely be more sensitive to human suffering, and will endeavour to prevent it. This lesson is especially relevant to clothing, which protects us from the element, and helps maintain our modesty and dignity.

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# The Israeli Farmer: Tithing Hydroponic Produce

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Does soilless cultivation fit biblical or rabbinic definitions of cultivation, to require tithing in Israel? Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky asks this in his *Derech Emunah* commentary to Rambam's Mishneh Torah, Laws of Terumot 2:1.

## Growth in Air

First, Rabbi Kanievsky discusses the "aerogarden" model, in which plants grow without any sort of medium, as garlic and onion bulbs can sprout in the open air. He contends that such a plant is exempt from tithing; leaving the plants in the open air is not an act of cultivation, even where one intends for the plants to grow. These plants may be compared to mushrooms, which do not require tithing.

## Growth in Water

Rabbi Kanievsky then discusses pure hydroponics, in which one grows plants in a pure liquid medium. His initial instinct is to exempt such growth from tithing, due to the lack of soil. The Talmud Yerushalmi (Kilayim 1) may support this position, as it states that one who plants "upon the sea" is exempt. However, one might contend that hydroponic cultivation would be different; in those other cases, the medium is considered inhospitable for growth. Therefore, one who plants in a hydroponic medium designed for cultivation might require tithing rabbinically.

We might even contend that the laws of Shabbat demonstrate that this form of cultivation fits the **biblical** definition of "planting". We are not allowed to place plants in water on Shabbat if they have flowers which would be caused to open (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 336:11); doesn't this demonstrate that water qualifies as a planting medium? However, Rabbi Kanievsky dismisses this as evidence,

arguing that the Shabbat prohibition may also be rabbinic, due to the appearance of cultivation.

Rabbi Kanievsky also notes that the Chazon Ish (Sheviit 22:1 and 26:4) compared hydroponics to planting in solid-bottom pots [as opposed to pots that have holes in their bottoms, linking them to the ground]. This comparison leads the Chazon Ish to leniencies for hydroponic cultivation during shemita. The comparison to solid-bottom pots would support the idea that cultivating hydroponically does not meet the biblical definition of growing plants, and would only require tithing rabbinically.

## Growth in Water with Nutrients

Finally, Rabbi Kanievsky turns to discuss soilless planting in which nutrients are added to the water. If there were pieces of soil involved, it would certainly fit the biblical definition of planting, like a talmudic case of planting in a bog. (Tosefta Kilayim 1:14) This form of planting also seems to fit the talmudic case of *metelaya*, in which seeds were placed into water along with a clod of earth; the Talmud considers this a normal form of cultivation. Therefore, plants grown in such a medium would require tithing, biblically.

Rabbi Kanievsky does not discuss the use of water which has been enriched with dissolved nutrients.

It is also worth noting that where the soilless cultivation takes place indoors, there may be additional room to exempt them from tithing, based on Raavad to Hilchot Maaser 1:10. See the Star-K's position [here](#), as well.

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## Biography

### Rabbi Shaul Yisraeli

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Rabbi Shaul Yisraeli was born in Slutsk, Belarus, in 1909, to a rabbinic family. His father was exiled to Siberia for the crime of teaching Torah, and was not heard from again. Rabbi Yisraeli fled Russia for Poland in 1933, and from there he migrated to then-Palestine with the aid of documents sent by Rabbi Kook.

Rabbi Yisraeli studied in Yeshivat Mercaz haRav under Rabbi Yechiel Michel Charlap, and he received ordination from Rabbi Charlap and Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer. In 1938, Rabbi Yisraeli was chosen as the first Rabbi of Kfar haRoeh, itself the first moshav to choose a Rabbi. Here Rabbi Yisraeli applied halachah to the needs of communal farms, addressing issues like shemittah, Shabbat milking, and the Torah's many laws of farming. This led to his first published book, Eretz Chemdah, on the laws of farming. Residents said of Rabbi Yisraeli, "He turned us into almost-rabbis, and we almost turned him into a farmer."

During his time in Kfar haRoeh, Rabbi Yisraeli taught in local schools, including Rabbi Moshe Zvi Neriah's famed Yeshivat Kfar haRoeh, and he developed a curriculum for Jewish thought. In 1949, he helped found the rabbinical association of HaPoel Mizrachi, which he led for many years; he also edited their journal, HaTorah v'haMedinah, and articles he wrote in that capacity were collected in a book, Amud haYemini, on matters related to running a Jewish country.

In 1953, Rabbi Yisraeli joined the Chief Rabbinate's Rabbinic Council, in which he became very active. In 1959, Rabbi Yisraeli began to deliver a weekly shiur (lecture) in Yeshivat Mercaz haRav, at the invitation of Rabbi Zvi Yehudah Kook; he continued to do this for 36 years, until shortly before his passing. In 1965, Rabbi Yisraeli was appointed to the rabbinic Supreme Court of Appeals; at this point he left Kfar haRoeh. His books, Chavat Binyamin and Mishpotei Shaul, collect his judicial rulings; the name of the former book includes the names of both of his parents, Chavah and Binyamin. In 1982, Rabbi Yisraeli was appointed as Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Mercaz haRav, along with Rabbi Avraham Shapira; he served there until 1993. Rabbi Yisraeli passed away in 1995.

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## Torah and Translation

### A Leader Among the People

#### Rabbi Shaul Yisraeli, The State and the Rabbinate

Translated by Rabbi Adam Friedmann

מחלוקת בגמרא (ערכין י"ז, א') פרנס לפי הדור, או דור לפי הפרנס.

מעשה הבחירות במינויו של רב לתפקידו משקף את השיטה של "פרנס לפי הדור", את הצורך למצוא את הפרנס שידע ללכת כנגד רוחו של כל אחד, כבקשתו-תפלתו של מרע"ה: "יפקוד ד' אלקי הרוחות לכל בשר איש על העדה" (במדבר כז: ז), את ההכרח שהפרנס יהא מכיר את רוחו של כל אחד, את נקודות התורפה וכן גם את נקודות האורה שישנם בזרמים השונים, להוציא יקר מזולל ולמצוא שפה וגויסה לכל אחד.

פרנס לפי הדור, לפי הרגשותיו, לפי חולשותיו לפי כאביו ולבטיו. אשר ידע גם לקיים בעת הצורך את התפקיד הקשה והבלתי נעים ביותר שהוטל בשעתו על מרע"ה אחר חטא העגל - "לך רד", רד מגדולתך, ממעמדך, מקדושתך ופרישותך... רד והורד אתך את לוחות האלקים, את לוחות הברית, לעם, למרקדים ולמחוללים, למצחקים מסביב לעגל. לך רד, ואל תסתפק בך עצמך וביהושע תלמידך, אם באמת ובתמים הנך מנהיג העם.

ואולם מאידך, ברור כי זה לא מספיק, והשלמתה של הבחירה על-ידי הכתרה באה להדגיש ולסמל את הצד השני של "הדור לפי הפרנס", את הנכונות לקבל מרות, לקבל עול מלכות שמים. ושימת כתרה של תורה בראש רבה של העיר הרי זו גם הכרזה על הכתרת התורה בראשה של עיר...

כי "לך רד" חשוב רק במידה זאת, שירידה זו צורך עליה וצורך העלאה ההיא, כי "לך רד"... אין פירושו השלמה עם המציאות ומתן גושפנקא של הנהלה דתית למעשה מרקדים ומחוללים מסביב לעגל... אילו היה מספיק מנהיג ירוד, לא היה זה מחייב את משה לצמצם את עצמו ולהוריד את עצמו. כאן היה דרוש תפקיד הרבה יותר עדין, תפקיד יותר גדול - תפקיד של ירידה לצורך העלאה.

There is a debate in the Talmud (Arachin 17a) "[Is] the leader according to the generation, or the generation according to the leader."

The process of electing a rabbi to appoint him to his position indicates the view that "the leader [should be] according to the generation", the need to find a leader who knows to act according to the spirit of each individual, as per Moshe Rabbeinu's prayer-request, "Let the G-d of the spirits of all man appoint a leader over the congregation (Bamidbar 27:17)," the necessity for the leader to recognize the spirit of each individual, the points of vulnerability and points of light which exist in different streams, to extract the precious from the worthless and find a language and approach for each individual.

"The leader according to the generation," according to its emotions, according to its weaknesses, according to its pains and difficulties. Who knows how to fulfill, in the moment of need, the most difficult and unpleasant task which was demanded of Moshe Rabbeinu after the sin of the golden calf: "Go descend." Descend from your greatness, from your stature, from your holiness and asceticism... descend and take with you the tablets of G-d, the tablets of the covenant, to the nation, to the dancers and the merry-makers, to those laughing around the calf. Go descend, and do not doubt yourself and Yehoshua your student, as to whether you are truly and honestly the leader of the nation.

However, on the other hand, it is clear that this is not enough, and that the conclusion of the election (of a rabbi) by means of an inauguration ceremony comes to emphasize and symbolize the second position of "the generation [should be] according to the leader", of the willingness to accept authority, to accept the yoke of Heaven. Placing the crown of Torah on the head of the rabbi of a city is also a declaration of placing the crown of Torah on the head of the city [itself]...

Because "go descend" is important only insofar as this descent is for the purpose of ascent and causing ascent. Because

"go descend"... does not mean acceptance of the reality and giving the rubber stamp of religious leadership to those dancing and merry-making around the calf... If a lowly leader would have sufficed, this would not have obligated Moshe to constrict himself and lower himself. Here a much more subtle and much greater task was demanded - the task of descent for the purpose of causing ascent.

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**7:30-9:00 PM Monday Mar. 1 Legal Ethics**

**Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, Resolving Conflicts of Interest and Maintaining Boundaries**  
CPD accredited, Laypeople welcome, Free of charge, Register at <https://torontotorah.com/cpd>

**12:00 PM Tue. Mar. 2: Health & Ethics Issues Related to COVID**

**With Rabbi Dr. Avraham Steinberg - [www.facebook.com/shaareishomayim/live](http://www.facebook.com/shaareishomayim/live)**

**10:00 AM Wed. Mar. 3: Maimonides: The Rabbi Who Dared to Ask, a 3-part series**

**Rabbi Sammy Bergman, Week 1: The Tumultuous Life of Moses Maimonides**

Register at <https://torontotorah.com/rambam>; there is a fee

**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 Feb. 27**

After minchah at Shaarei Shomayim, R' Sammy Bergman, Groundbreaking 20<sup>th</sup> Century Responsa

**Sunday Feb. 28**

**9:20 AM Contemporary Halachah: Purim on Friday, with Netanel Klein (not this week)**

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

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

**8:15 PM Midrash on the Parshah with Rabbi Chaim Metzger**

**Monday Mar. 1**

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

**Tuesday Mar. 2**

**1:30 PM Megilat Ruth, with Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner *Beginning the Book of Ruth!***

**7:30 PM Shemuel Ch. 1, with Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner (men) *Beginning the Book of Shemuel!***

**Wednesday, Mar. 3**

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

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

**7:30 PM Prepare for Pesach!, with Rabbi Alex Hecht**

**Thursday Mar. 4**

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

**1:30 PM Shemuel Ch. 18, with Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner (women)**

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

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

**Friday Mar. 5**

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

**11:30 AM Shemitah! with Rabbi Sammy Bergman and Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner**

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