

# Toronto Torah

## Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Vayakhel-Pekudei/HaChodesh

29 Adar, 5781/March 13, 2021

Vol. 12 Num. 27 (#488)

This issue of Toronto Torah is sponsored by Rabbi Dr. Moshe and Esty Yeres  
for the yahrtzeit of Esty's mother, Rebbetzin Faigie Frankel ז"ל ל"א זצ"ל

This issue of Toronto Torah is sponsored by the families of Irwin, Jim and David Diamond  
in memory of their father, Morris Diamond ז"ל ל"א זצ"ל

### What's in Your Sink?

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Without a doubt, the COVID plague has shown that plumbing fixtures are important, as hand-washing has been a focal activity for all of us. Still, Shemot 38:8 is odd, presenting the Mishkan's *kiyor* (sink) in a way that highlights apparently unimportant elements:

- The text specifies creation of the *kan* – the seemingly mundane base on which the *kiyor*'s basin sits;
- The text highlights that the *kiyor* was made of recycled mirrors;
- The text goes out of its way to identify the donors, "assembled women, who assembled at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting".

Why are these details highlighted in our parshah's summary of the construction of the Mishkan?

On a basic level, these details underscore the *kiyor*'s important washing function. A kohen who wishes to serve in the Mishkan must wash his hands and feet from the *kiyor*, in an act called *kiddush* – consecration. This is not about removing dirt; a kohen who merely steps out of the Beit HaMikdash for a moment must wash upon re-entry. (Mishnah Kelim 1:9; Rambam, Laws of Entry into the Sanctuary 5:1-4) The point is sanctification, which warrants our special attention.

From a broader perspective, washing in the *kiyor* calls to mind the many other occasions when we dedicate our physical bodies for a spiritual purpose. This may also be why the text emphasizes that the women's mirrors

were converted into the *kiyor*: mirrors represent physical beautification, and here they became a vehicle for spirituality. This theme of the physical enabling the spiritual may also explain the Torah's emphasis on the "assembled women". The Torah describes the assembled women as *tzov'ot*, and a midrash quotes Hashem telling Moshe to accept the mirrors which were used "to create this entire *tzava* [nation] in Egypt." (Midrash Tanchuma, Pekudei 9)

More deeply, the imagery associated with the *kiyor* presents a deeper sanctification; washing in the *kiyor* represents mystical connection with Divine spiritual influence. We see this in Melachim I 7:29, which describes the *kan* base of the *kiyor* in the Beit HaMikdash; the *kan* bears engravings of lions, oxen and cherubim – entities featured on the Divine throne in Yechezkel 1:10 and 10:14! Rabbi Moshe Isserless explained (Torat haOlah 1:14):

- The base of the sink represents our world, a "footstool" for the Divine.
- The assembled women who donated the materials are *tzov'ot*, like the celestial servants of G-d who are described as *tzeva ma'alah*, the assembly in Heaven.
- The *kiyor*'s water represents the Divine influence, received on the hands of the kohanim.
- This influence is conveyed from the kohanim to the world through their activities, represented by their washed feet.
- Divine influence is described rabbinically as a radiant lens, like the

mirrors which composed the *kiyor*.

Washing in this *kiyor*, whether as consecration, conversion of physical to spiritual, or mystical channeling of Divine influence, highlights the importance of our deeds each time we prepare to perform mitzvot. In fact, sometimes preparation is even its own mitzvah. For example: in Shemot 12:28, regarding the original Korban Pesach in Egypt, we are told, "And Bnei Yisrael went and did as Moshe had commanded." On this a midrash comments that the text teaches "reward for going, and reward for doing." Commenting on that midrash, Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin wrote, "Preparation which is recorded in the Torah is of value equal to the mitzvah itself." (Birkat haNetziv to Mechilta d'Rabbi Yishmael, Bo, Pischa 12)

May our preparations for Pesach this year – the "routine" preparation we would do in any year, the more complicated preparations due to the pandemic, and the special preparations we make because Erev Pesach is Shabbat – be accepted before Hashem as mitzvot unto themselves, like the preparations of the Jews in Egypt long ago. May these preparations enable us to recline at our Seder and truly see ourselves as having left Egypt. And may we merit to celebrate the Seder together in Jerusalem, with a rebuilt Beit HaMikdash.

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

#### OUR BEIT MIDRASH

**ROSH BEIT MIDRASH**

RABBI MORDECHAI TORCZYNER

**SGAN ROSH BEIT MIDRASH**

RABBI SAMMY BERGMAN

**AVREICHIM**

RABBI ALEX HECHT, NETANEL KLEIN, RABBI CHAIM METZGER

**SEDER BOKER DIRECTOR**

RABBI MOSHE YERES

**WOMEN'S BEIT MIDRASH**

MRS. SHIRA METZGER

**CORRESPONDENTS**

EZER DIENA, RABBI ADAM FRIEDMANN, RABBI BARUCH

WEINTRAUB, RABBI JONATHAN ZIRING

**CHAVERIM** NADAV GASNER, SHAUL HARRIS, ARI KARON, YEHUDA LEVI, SHIMMY NAUENBERG, NATAN SNOWBELL, AKIVA WEITZ, ELI WELTMAN

**CHAVROT** ORLY AZIZA, MINDY CHAPMAN, SHULA DIENA, SOFIA FREUDENSTEIN, TEHILLA HELFENBAUM, ARIELLA MARKUS, SYLVIE MOSCOVITZ, HADASSA NAUENBERG, YEJIDE OMOTOSO, KINNERET WITTY



An affiliate of  
Torah MiTzion and YU

Find Toronto Torah online at  
[tiny.cc/torontotorah](http://tiny.cc/torontotorah)

We are grateful to  
Continental Press

**Summary**

The chapter opens with Shlomo marrying the daughter of Pharaoh and bringing her to live with him in Jerusalem. Shlomo is then praised for his love of G-d and for following the path set out by his father. The king takes a trip to the large altar at Givon, where he offers a large number of sacrifices. (3:1-4)

That night G-d appears to Shlomo in a dream, asking him what gift he wishes to be given. Shlomo responds that he is young and inexperienced. He requests the capacity for discerning judgment, to be able to properly judge and lead the people. G-d responds that since Shlomo did not request something for personal gain such as wealth, long life, or the death of his enemies, he would be granted wisdom as well as wealth and honor. In addition, if he will follow his father in faithfulness to G-d, Shlomo will be granted a long life as well. (3:5-15)

Soon after this dream, two harlots appear before Shlomo for judgment. One woman reports that she and the other woman had given birth to boys within a few days of each other. One night, the other woman had smothered

her child while sleeping, and had subsequently switched her dead baby for the first woman's living one. In the morning, when she got up to nurse her child she discovered a dead baby by her side, who, upon closer inspection, was the baby of the other woman. The other woman responds, saying that the living baby is actually hers. (3:16-22)

Shlomo calls for a sword to be brought, and for the baby to be cut in half and distributed to both mothers. The first woman, out of mercy for the baby, requests for him to be given to the other woman. The other woman is indifferent, and asks for the baby to be cut up. Shlomo rules that the first woman is the baby's true mother. The Jewish people are left in awe of Shlomo's G-d-given abilities for judgment. (3:23-28)

**Analysis**

One of the big questions in this chapter is how Shlomo knew with certainty which woman was the mother. The commentators suggest several possibilities. Malbim, for example, explains this based on a close reading of the statements of the two women. He argues that the way the claims were made already

indicated to Shlomo who was telling the truth. The test with the sword was only confirmation.

The Talmud (Makkot 23b) suggests that Shlomo could have known the truth based on the mercy and indifference shown by the two women. This reading places a lot of judicial weight on human nature, more than might be justified in Halachah in general. The Talmud also states that we have a tradition that a heavenly voice confirmed Shlomo's verdict.

According to all interpretations, this was not a standard judicial procedure. Shlomo anticipated, in miniature, Yeshayahu's prophecy about the Mashiach, who will judge righteously by means of a Divinely granted wisdom. (Yeshayahu 11:2-5) It is this capacity which left the people in awe.

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

**The Israeli Farmer: Kilayim in Ecological Vineyards**

In recent decades, it has become increasingly common to find various "ecological" products. These include herbs, vegetables, fruits, and even cleaning solutions. Over the past few years, there has been a growing presence of "ecological wine," which refers to wine for which the viticulturist tries to grow grapes with as little intervention as possible. For example, ecological vineyards are not weeded of wild plants. Ecological viticulturists claim that the wild plants prevent soil erosion and enable improved rainwater absorption. Avoiding the weeding also means avoiding the use of poisonous materials as well – another important ecological benefit.

However, the Torah prohibits *kilei hakerem* - mixing plants in vineyards. (Devarim 22:9) The prohibition is not only on the farmer but also on the consumer. Clearly, a prohibition against the grapes would render the whole ecological vineyard non-kosher!

Some authorities argue for leniency, based on the following analysis: In a mishnah (Kilayim 5:8), Rabbi Eliezer and the Sages dispute the scope of the prohibition of *kilayim*. According to the Sages' majority opinion, the prohibition is limited only to those plants that are of a species that people normally keep and nurture. As these wild plants are not of types that are typically preserved, they do not cause the grapes to be forbidden. However, some authorities counter the application of this ruling to our case – after all, the viticulturists are interested in these wild plants, as they are beneficial for the prevention of erosion, and to improve rainwater absorption. The point of dispute, then, is regarding which types of plants are included in the *kilayim* prohibition – does the prohibition only apply to those species that are

preserved **for consumption**, or also those that are **beneficial in their very process of growing?**

Even if we accept the requirement to remove the plants, there still remains a question regarding when they should be removed. The Shulchan Aruch rules that when the vines have no grapes on them and their leaves are dry, as in the wintertime, the existence of *kilayim* is still problematic, but it will not cause the prohibition of the vines. (Yoreh Deah 296:12) In accordance with this opinion, some kosher certification agencies ask the viticulturists to remove the plants just before the grapes begin to appear on the vines. However, this leniency is not universally accepted. According to the Levush, only vines that are on their way to completely drying out will not be prohibited because of *kilayim*. If we want to follow his opinion, we must weed out the plants, even when there are no grapes on the vines.

Finally, there is a dispute regarding the *how* of the weeding procedure. The ecological viticulturist wants to weed by cutting the plants, and wants to avoid using pesticides. However, unless poisoned, sometimes the plants regrow, and it may be argued that because the farmer is interested in their existence, the new growth would cause the grapes to be prohibited.

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

## Biography

### Rabbi Gershon Leiner

Rabbi Sammy Bergman

Rabbi Gershon Hensch Leiner was born in Poland in 1839, into a family of Chassidic royalty. His grandfather, Rabbi Mordechai Leiner, founded the Izhibitz-Radzin Chassidic sect, and his father Rabbi Yaakov was a prominent teacher and Chassidic Grand Rabbi as well. Rabbi Leiner grew his reputation as a Torah scholar at a young age. At the age of thirteen, he began teaching Torah publicly and he amazed his listeners with novel insights which spanned all areas of Torah. When his father passed away in 1878, Rabbi Gershon became the Grand Rabbi of his Chassidic court. He married Hudes Hadassah Gelernter. They had one son together, Mordechai Yosef Elazar, who became the Radziner Rebbe after Rabbi Gershon's death.

Rabbi Leiner was a prodigious Torah scholar and a prolific writer. He authored an extensive commentary titled *Sidrei Taharot* on Mishnah Kelim, a long and difficult tractate. His work earned approbations from many great scholars of his time, including Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch and Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan Spektor. He published the teachings of his grandfather Rabbi Mordechai in *Mei HaShiloach*. His other writings include *Sod Yesharim*, which features Chassidic discourses on the Jewish holidays, and *Orchot Chaim*, a commentary on the ethical will attributed to the *tanna* Rabbi Eliezer.

However, Rabbi Leiner's intellectual pursuits extended beyond traditional Torah study. Rabbi Gershon spoke Yiddish, Polish, German, Russian, and Italian. Although he didn't receive a formal secular education, he studied medicine independently and even wrote medical prescriptions in Latin. His intellectual curiosity led to Rabbi Gershon's best-known contribution. He reintroduced *techelet*, the blue dye which the Torah requires to appropriately fulfill the mitzvah of *tzitzit*. Rabbi Leiner traveled to an aquarium in Naples, Italy where he believed he discovered the *chilazon*, the long-lost worm described in the Talmud which contains the blood necessary to produce *techelet*. Rabbi Leiner ultimately produced a blue dye from the worm's blood, and successfully distributed his *techelet* to thousands of Jews. Rabbi Leiner passed away in 1890.

(Based on material from Shaul Magid, *A Thread of Blue*, and David HaLachmi, *Chachmei Yisrael*)

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

## Torah and Translation

### The Priestly Blessings and the Three Festivals

R' G. Leiner, *Sod Yesharim*, The 8<sup>th</sup> Day of Pesach, ch. 29

Translated by Rabbi Sammy Bergman

**ברוך ד'.** היינו שיהי' ישראל בריכה לנטוע בהם כל הטובות. וזה הוא נגד חג הפסח שאז ישראל הם בבחינת קטנות. כי בצאתם ממצרים לא הי' עדיין מכירים מה הם אצל בוראם. ורק השי"ת האיר להם אז למעלה מתפיסתם באורח דילוג, וע"ז כתיב "הוציאך ד' אלקיך ממצרים לילה" שלמעלה מהתפיסה נקרא לילה. ונגד זה האורח דילוג מקריבים ישראל קרבן פסח כמו שכתוב "ואמרתם זבח פסח הוא לד' אשר פסח וגו'" להורות על מה שכתוב (שיר השירים א) "משכני אחרריך נרוצה" שישאל נמשכים ג"כ אחר רצונו ית' ג"כ באורח דילוג, ולכן אכילתו הוא בחפזון.

ובחג השבועות יתגלה האורח דילוג מכאן אל הפועל בזה שהקדימו נעשה לנשמע שנקראים מחמת זה "עמא פזיזא" (שבת פ"ח.). שהוא ג"כ בלי ישוב הדעת כלל רק באורח דילוג. ומחמת שבימי הפסח הם בבחינת קטנות ומקבלים הברכות ג"כ בבחינת קטנות ולכן כתיב **וישמר** שנצרכים לשמירה...

**יאר ד' פניו אליך.** זה הוא נגד חג השבועות שאז נתגלה מפורש הארת פניו ית' לישראל.

**ויחנך זה הוא מציאית חן וע"ז איתא בגמ' (ברכות נ"ז.)** "הרואה חנינא בחלום נסי נסים נעשו לו," כי כאשר מאיר השי"ת שאהבתו לישראל הוא בדרך חנינה. אז אין עוד עליהם שום קטרוג כלל.

**ישא ד' פניו אליך.** זה הוא נגד חג הסוכות שאז הוא זמן אסיפה לבית שנעשה הגנה לאדם ויש לישראל אז נשיאות פנים מהש"י.

**May Hashem "bless" You.** Meaning that Israel should become a pool to cultivate within themselves all the good. This corresponds to the holiday of Pesach, for then Israel was at the level of smallness. For when they left Egypt, they didn't recognize what they were to their Creator. Rather, Hashem showed them what was then above their comprehension, in a manner of skipping [ahead of their natural level], and about this it is written: "Hashem your G-d brought you out of Egypt at night," (Devarim 16:1) for [the level] above comprehension is called "night". Corresponding to this manner of skipping, Israel brings the Pesach offering as it is written: "You shall say it is a Pesach sacrifice to Hashem," (Shemot 12:27) demonstrating what is written in Shir HaShirim 1:4, "Pull me after You and we will run", that Israel is also pulled after His will in a manner of skipping, and therefore we eat it speedily.

And on the holiday of Shavuot, this manner of skipping is revealed, brought from the potential to the actual, in that they preceded "We will hear" with "We will do", for which they are called "a reckless nation," (Shabbat 88a) which also means without a settled mind but rather "in a manner of skipping". And since during the days of Pesach they are at the level of "smallness" and also receive the blessings at a level of "smallness", therefore it is written **"and He will protect you"**, for they require protection...

**"Hashem will illuminate His face upon you"** - This corresponds to the holiday of Shavuot. For then the illumination of His face is revealed explicitly to Israel.

**"And he will be gracious with you"** refers to the finding of favour. Regarding this, the Talmud states (Berachot 57a) "One who sees Chanina in a dream, great miracles are being performed for him." For when Hashem illuminates His love for Israel in manner of grace, there can be no accusation against them at all.

**"May Hashem show favour toward you"** - This corresponds to the holiday of Succot, for then is the time of gathering to the house which forms a shield for the people. Israel then has favour with Hashem.

**COME LEARN WITH US!**

Click Underlined Lines to Open Zooms. Clickable links also at [www.torontotorah.com/letslearn](http://www.torontotorah.com/letslearn)  
All times ET. Classes are free & open to all, unless otherwise noted

**SPECIAL PROGRAMMING**

**10:00 AM Sun. Mar. 14: A PESACH Midreshet Yom Rishon for Women <http://tiny.cc/myrpesach>  
Mrs. Zahava Stadler, What's the Rush? Matzah and the Arrival of Redemption  
Rabbi Sammy Bergman, Leaving Egypt in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

**8:15-9:00 PM Mon. Mar. 15 Haggadah Night #2!  
Four 10-minute thoughts for your Seder!**

**With: Rabbi Sammy Bergman, Rabbi Alex Hecht, Rabbi Chaim Metzger, Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner**

**10:00 AM Wed. Mar. 17: Maimonides: The Rabbi Who Dared to Ask, a 3-part series  
Rabbi Sammy Bergman, Week 3: A Rationalist Reading of the Torah**

**8:00 PM Wed. Mar. 17  
Rabbi Sammy Bergman, The Mystery of the Fifth Cup**

**8:30 PM Wed. Mar. 17  
Rabbi Chaim Metzger, Creative Seder Ideas**

**DAILY**

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

**WEEKLY**

**Shabbat Mar. 13**

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

**Sunday Mar. 14**

**9:20 AM Contemporary Halachah, 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)**

**Tuesday Mar. 16**

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

**7:30 PM Shemuel Ch. 1, with Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner (men) (not this week)**

**Wednesday, Mar. 17**

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

**7:30 PM Genesis Journeys, with Rabbi Sammy Bergman (not this week)**

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

**8:15 PM Midrash on the Parshah with Rabbi Chaim Metzger (not this week)**

**Thursday Mar. 18**

**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. 19**

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

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