

Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Ki Tisa

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This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Ricky and Dianna Zauderer and Family
in memory of our dear mother and grandmother, Erika Zauderer ז"ל ו"ל אסתר בת חיים ז"ל ו"ל

This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Jack Oziel
in honour of his children

Shifting from Mikdash to Mishkan

Rabbi Adam Friedmann

The sin of the Golden Calf breaks up the Torah's lengthy narrative about building the Mishkan. It comes after the building instructions, and before their execution. The Torah's narrative flow raises the question of the actual chronology of events. Which came first, the Mishkan or the Calf? This question is debated by the various commentaries on the Torah. Rashi argues that the command to build the Mishkan was a response to the sin of the Calf. (commentary to Shemot 31:18) Ramban assumes the opposite. According to him, the plans for the Mishkan were revealed directly after the Torah was given on Mount Sinai. (commentary to Shemot 25:2)

These opposing positions point to different understandings of the purpose of the Mishkan. Ramban (ibid.) views the Mishkan as an extension of the Mount Sinai experience. The communication between G-d and the Jewish People didn't end when the fire and sounds departed from the mountain. They continued via the Mishkan, where G-d's presence rested on the Ark and spoke to Moshe. Within Rashi's view, the Mishkan was likely a vehicle for atonement. It was a way to maintain a connection with G-d, despite the rupture in the relationship caused by the sin of the Calf. Variations on this kind of argument are presented in Midrash Tanchuma (Terumah 8), and by Seforno (in his *Kavanot Hatorah*).

Both of these positions are strained when it comes to explaining the To-

rah's narrative flow. This is especially true for Rashi. If the Mishkan came about as a result of the Calf, then why does the Torah place two of the portions describing the Mishkan *before* describing that episode? This question is somewhat less pressing for Ramban. According to him, the Torah is simply presenting the events as they occurred. Nevertheless, it still seems like the Torah's presentation is intended to teach us something.

There is a third explanation that addresses both the chronology of events and the Torah's narrative flow. The plan for the Mishkan was, in fact, revealed to Moshe at Sinai. After the sin of the Calf, however, the purpose of the Mishkan changed, though the physical structure stayed the same. This is why the Torah places the story of the Calf in the middle of the Mishkan narrative.

Close reading of the descriptions of the Mishkan before and after the episode of the Calf indicate that something changed:

1. In Parshat Terumah, the objects that compose the Mishkan are described in sequence, from the inside out: the Ark and other internal vessels, and then the structure (coverings, walls, courtyard, etc.). In Parshat Vayakhel the order is reversed, moving from the outside in.

2. In Parshat Terumah the Mishkan isn't even called a Mishkan; it's called a Mikdash (Shemot 24:8). The term Mishkan comes into use later, in Parshat Pekudei (ibid. 38:21)

The manifestation of G-d's presence engendered by the Mishkan also shifts. In Tetzaveh, G-d says that through the Mishkan His presence will come to rest on the entire Israelite camp, and become a permanent fixture in their lives. (ibid. 29:43) In Pekudei, when the Mishkan is actually built, G-d's presence is concentrated in the building itself and excludes every Jew. Even Moshe couldn't go inside initially. (ibid. 40:38)

Considering these differences, the results of the sin of the Calf start to come into focus. Before the sin, we were meant to build a Mikdash. The purpose of this building was to establish a point of contact with G-d via the Ark and other vessels and to sanctify (*k-d-sh*) the entire camp, elevating it to a new level of spiritual awareness. After the sin, the same building served as a Mishkan. The purpose of this building is its structure. It is a cordoned-off zone which houses G-d's presence (*Shechinah*) so that it can exist in proximity to the Israelite camp *despite* the fact that the camp itself is unworthy of G-d's presence.

The Mishkan, in both its forms, reflects G-d's love for us. Initially, as a Mikdash, it was meant to create the closest intimacy. In the end, as a Mishkan, it was a way of ensuring the relationship continued even when direct contact was impossible. We should follow G-d's example in our own relationships.

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After witnessing the destruction and exile of the Northern Kingdom, we are presented with the hopeful rise of King Chizkiyahu. Chapters 18-20 detail the actions of Chizkiyahu, with parallel sections in Yeshayahu (36-39) and Divrei HaYamim II (29-32).

In sharp contrast to many of the kings of Israel and Judah, Chizkiyahu did what was proper in G-d's eyes like King David. He removed the personal altars, shattered the idolatrous monuments, cut down the cultic Asheirah trees, and ground up the copper serpent that Moshe had constructed in the desert which had been renamed as the idol "Nechushtan." (1-8)

Against Chizkiyahu's meteoric rise, we are reminded of the Northern Kingdom of Israel's exile by Shalmenassar of Assyria because of their sins. (9-12)

In Chizkiyahu's fourteenth year on the throne, Assyria set its sights on the Kingdom of Judah and besieged its fortified cities. Assyria demanded 300 talents of silver, and 30 talents of gold. Chizkiyahu emptied the treasury of the Beit HaMikdash, even sending the gilded doors of the Beit HaMikdash. (13-16) Nonetheless, Assyria sent generals and Ravshakeh, a propagandist, to lay siege to Jerusalem. Radak (commentary to 18:14, 18:19) explains that this hap-

pened when Chizkiyahu stopped sending gifts, but Don Isaac Abarbanel (commentary to 18:17) contends that Assyria always intended to collect the bribe and then attack. Shemuel David Luzzatto suggests that Chizkiyahu's sum did not reach Assyria's demand. (17-18)

Ravshakeh aimed to break the morale of the Judean troops. He first claimed that they were relying on Egypt and Pharaoh, who were too fragile to help. And even if they claimed to be relying on G-d, Ravshakeh claimed that Chizkiyahu had removed all of His altars and told them to only worship in Jerusalem. G-d Himself had sent Assyria to destroy them! (19-25)

Judean officers Elyakim, Shevnah, and Yoach asked Ravshakeh to speak in Aramaic rather than in "Yehudit" (Hebrew) so that the people wouldn't understand him. Ravshakeh responded to them that he is doing exactly as commanded, speaking to the rank and file on the walls. (26-27)

Ravshakeh continued to speak in Hebrew, telling the Jews not to believe Chizkiyahu's false promises and to follow him instead to a land as rich as Israel. Why pray that G-d would help when the idolatries of various cities had failed them? Even the gods of

Shomron, the Israelite kingdom, had failed them. The nation remained silent. Chizkiyahu's officers tore their clothes and reported these events to the king. (28-37)

Insight

The arguments of Ravshakeh exposed the thought processes and worries of the Judean Kingdom, inverting all of the potential positive advances of Chizkiyahu, like removal of the altars, and turning them into blasphemies against G-d. But who was Ravshakeh?

Professor Yehudah Kiel points out in the Daat Mikra edition of Melachim that his name in Akkadian means 'Chief Butler', like Pharaoh's Sar HaMashkim. He was placed as head of the delegation because of his fluent Hebrew.

According to the sage Shemuel (Sanhedrin 60a) Ravshakeh was originally a Jew, who had turned traitor. This not only explains Ravshakeh's insight into the Judean psyche and his knowledge of Hebrew, but also how he knew that Assyria and Sancherev were G-d's messengers – he heard Yeshayahu's prophecies in this regard before he switched sides.

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It Happened in Israel: Can Fate Change?

Rabbi Jonathan Ziring

In Melachim II Chapter 20 and Yeshayahu 38, the narrative of King Chizkiyahu's averted death is recorded. Chizkiyahu falls ill and G-d tells Yeshayahu to inform Chizkiyahu that he will soon die. Chizkiyahu weeps, and before Yeshayahu fully leaves G-d instructs him to inform Chizkiyahu that he will recover on the third day and live for fifteen more years. Chizkiyahu asks for a sign and is told that the sun will go ten degrees backward, which it does.

The Talmud (Berachot 10a-10b) provides an elaborate story that fills in some gaps in the narrative, such as what caused the righteous king Chizkiyahu to fall ill, as well as a more detailed description of the conversation between the king and the prophet. Yeshayahu tells Chizkiyahu that he will die for deciding not to have children. Chizkiyahu protests that he knows prophetically that his son Menasheh will be a wicked king (leading to the destruction of the Temple), and therefore he has chosen to prevent his birth. Yeshayahu responds that he must not get involved in the "secrets of G-d" and must rather fulfill his obligation. Chizkiyahu then asks for the hand of Yeshayahu's daughter in marriage, hoping that their joint merit will prevent Menasheh from becoming wicked. Yeshayahu refuses, asserting that the decree that Chizkiyahu will die is final regardless of the marriage. Chizkiyahu then rebuffs Yeshayahu, telling him that he has a tradition from his family (i.e., from King David) that one can always pray and reverse a decree, even if a sword is to his throat. That prayer is what saves Chizkiyahu, as recorded in the narrative.

Insight

[Dr. Yonatan Feintuch](#) highlights an irony in the story. In the first half, Chizkiyahu is portrayed as believing that fate is set. Thus, he refuses to have children as he sees that his son will be evil. Yeshayahu, however, tells him that he should nevertheless have children. However, in the second half, Chizkiyahu tries to change the decree of his death and the birth of the wicked Menasheh by praying and marrying Yeshayahu's daughter. The latter refuses, as the decree has been set. At this point, Chizkiyahu rejects the fatalism of Yeshayahu.

Apparently, Chizkiyahu took the lesson regarding fate to heart, but went beyond Yeshayahu. Yeshayahu believed that the future cannot be changed, but that does not exempt one from performing mitzvot, whatever their consequences. Chizkiyahu, however, went farther – arguing that if Yeshayahu was correct that he was obligated to move forward, that meant that the future was not set in stone. Feintuch further notes that the Talmud Yerushalmi (Makkot 2:6) indeed records that the view of Prophecy is that a sinner cannot escape punishment by repentance, but G-d corrects Prophecy and invites repentance. Thus, Chizkiyahu's position aligns with the final position of the Yerushalmi, against that of Prophecy and the prophet, Yeshayahu.

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Biography

Rabbi Yosef Albo

Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

The details known of Rabbi Yosef Albo's life, especially his childhood, are few. He was born in Spain in approximately 1380. It is clear from his works that he learned under Rabbi Hasdai Crescas, author of *Or Hashem* and one of the greatest Jewish philosophers. We also know that in 1403 Rabbi Albo sat in a Beit Din with his teacher, judging a local family affair in Daroca, then part of the kingdom of Aragon. From this and one other surviving responsum, it is clear that Rabbi Albo had a strong grasp of Talmud and Halachah.

His most famous historical appearance, however, was in the Disputation of Tortosa of 1413-1414. Rabbi Albo, representing the Jews of Daroca, together with other contemporary Jewish sages, argued against Christian priests led by the Jewish apostate Gerónimo de Santa Fe. The disputation was far from being free and authentic, as any Jewish attempt to respond to the Christian charges was met with the threat of the accusation of heresy, a very serious charge. In the aftermath of the disputation, the Christian side claimed victory, and Torah texts were subject to censorship. Worse still was the moral blow: some of the Jewish representatives in the dispute were forcibly converted, and the Christians used their conversions to convince other Jews to do the same. Reportedly, thousands of Jews converted, willingly or otherwise, and Aragonian Jewry suffered a blow from which it never fully recovered.

After the disastrous end to the disputation, Rabbi Albo wanted to write a book in which he would be able to freely present his views about Judaism and religion in general. The book, *Sefer Halkarim* (The Book of Principles), became a cornerstone of Jewish philosophy. In it, Rabbi Albo tries to define the most fundamental principles of any revelation-based religion, and then demonstrate the unique view of Judaism regarding these principles. While the book is not considered to be groundbreaking in its novelty, it is seen as a broad and eloquent presentation of Jewish philosophical thought.

Rabbi Yosef Albo is believed to have died in 1444.

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Torah and Translation

The Perfection of a Beehive

Rabbi Yosef Albo, Introduction to Sefer ha'Ikarim

Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

ולחיות החקירה הזאת גדולת הערך ויקרה מאד ראוי שנתחנן לשם החונן לאדם דעת ותבונה שיחנן אותנו דעה בינה והשכל באופן שיהיה בפעולתנו זאת מן הנעימות האלקיות, אשר הוא דבק בכל הפעולות האלקיות, כמאמר משה רבינו עליו השלום בתפלתו שאמר ויהי נועם ד' אלקינו עלינו ומעשה ידינו כוננה עלינו ומעשה ידינו כוננהו.

ובאורו כי בכל פעל יפול בו הנעימות מב' פנים, אם מצד הפעולה בעצמה היותה שלמה בתכלית השלמות כפי מה שיגזור טבע חמרה, ואם מצד הפועל, רוצה לומר היות בפעולה ההיא נעימות ושלמות מיוחד מצד התיחסה אל הפועל...

כאלו תאמר שאף על פי שאין מדרך הדבורה כפי טבע חמרה שימצא בה ההבנה לבנות הבתים ההם מהשעוה שהדבש כנוס בתוכה בתמונת הששיות, להיות הפועל מבחר הפועלים נתן בה הבנה לבנותם בתמונה הזאת, להיותה דומה לעגולה שהיא התמונה הטבעית, ויש לה יתרון עליה, שבתמונת הששיות יתמלא כל השטח והפנוי אשר במוגשם ממשושים סמוכים זה לזה כדי שלא ישאר מקום פנוי וריקים ביניהם, מה שאין כן בעגולה... גם לא בנאום מרובעים, כי אף על פי שבסמיכת בתים מרובעים זה לזה יתמלא כל השטח והפנוי אשר במוגשם, הנה להיות תמונת המרובע יותר רחוקה מלהדמות אל העגולה שהיא התמונה הטבעית מן המשושה לא בנאום ממנו, וכל זה נמצא לדבורה מצד היותה פעל הקל יתברך, שראוי שימצא בה יתרון מזה הצד על מה שיגזור טבע חמרה, וזהו הנעימות אשר מצד הפועל הנמצא בפעולות האלקיות.

ועל כן היה משה מתפלל לד'... ולרמוז אל הנעימות ואל ההדר אשר מצד הפועל אמר "ומעשה ידינו כוננה עלינו", כלומר בצירוף אלינו, ולרמוז אל הנעימות אשר מצד הפעולה בעצמה אמר "ומעשה ידינו כוננהו".

Because this investigation [I will conduct in this book] is very valuable and precious, it would be highly appropriate that we plead before G-d, who gives Man intelligence and understanding, that He confer upon us intelligence, understanding and insight, such that our actions should obtain the Divine beauty which adheres to all Divine actions. As Moshe Rabbeinu prayed, "May the beauty of Hashem our G-d be upon us, and may He establish our deeds upon us, and may He establish our deeds." [See Sifri Bamidbar 143.]

Meaning: for every deed may obtain beauty in two ways – from the deed itself being as complete as possible based on the nature of its material, and from the actor, meaning, the deed may have unique beauty and perfection because it is associated with the one performing it...

As if to say: even though it is not the way of the bee, according to the nature of its material, for it to possess comprehension to build such houses of wax with honey stored in it in hexagonal forms, its Creator, the greatest Actor, placed in it comprehension to build them in that form. It resembles the circular shape which is the natural shape, but it has an added benefit. With hexagonal shapes, the entire area and open space is filled with forms that are beside each other, without any open space between them. As opposed to a circle... They also don't make them square. Even though joining squares beside each other would cause the entire physical space and open area to be filled, the square is less similar to the circle, which is the natural shape, than the hexagon, and so they don't build from it. All of this is found in the bee because it is a creation of G-d, so that it is suitable that [the bee] should have this advantage over that which would be appropriate for the nature of its material. This is the beauty that comes from the Actor, found in Divine creations.

Therefore, Moshe prayed to G-d... Hinting to the beauty and splendour which comes from the actor, he said, "May He establish our deeds **upon us**," meaning joined to us. And hinting to the beauty which comes from the act itself, he said, "And may He establish our deeds."

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Monday-Thursday

10:00 AM - Noon: Adult Seder Boker with Rabbi Moshe Yeres on ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/sederboker> (men)

Monday/Wednesday: Talmud Succah, Orot haTeshuvah of Rav Kook

Tuesday/Thursday: Parshah, Tanach: Sefer Melachim

Shabbat February 18-19

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

After minchah R' Mordechai Torczyner, Gemara Ketuvot, BAYT: Gruda Beis Medrash (men)

After minchah Idan Rakovsky, Parshah, Shaarei Tefillah

Motzaei Shabbat 7:00 PM R' Jared Anstandig, Parent-Child Learning on ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/parent-child>

Sunday February 20

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

9:15 AM Idan Rakovsky, The Thought of Rav Shagar (university)

10 AM R' Aaron Greenberg, Talmud Eruvin, YOC or ZOOM: <http://bit.ly/jliczoom> 613613 (univ) *not this week*

Monday February 21

A New Parshah Podcast: Parshat Vayakhel, with Rabbi Rafi Lipner and Idan Rakovsky

Apple <http://tiny.cc/apodcast>, Google <http://tiny.cc/gpodcast>, Spotify <http://tiny.cc/spodcast>

8:45 AM Idan Rakovsky, Likutei Moharan of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university)

9:30 AM—11:30 AM YARCHEI KALLAH: NOISY NEIGHBOURS IN JEWISH LAW
9:30 AM Preparation of sources, 10:30 AM Shiur by Rabbi Yehuda Mann
At Yeshivat Or Chaim, 159 Almore Ave, and on ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/yarchei>
Individually wrapped breakfasts served / Free of Charge
Please register at <https://torontotorah.com/yk>

2:00 PM Idan Rakovsky, On Parents and Children in the Book of Genesis 3 of 5, ZOOM <http://tiny.cc/idanrak>

7:30 PM Prielle and Idan Rakovsky, Song of the Week, ZOOM <http://tiny.cc/weeklysng>

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

Tuesday February 22

9:00 AM Idan Rakovsky, Likutei Moharan of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university)

1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, King Solomon's Arc (Melachim I 4), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt>

7:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 12), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (men)

Wednesday February 23

6:15 AM R' Jared Anstandig, Talmud: Avodah Zarah, ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/idolsarebad>

10:00 AM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Jews and Food #3 of 5: Shabbat & Yom Tov, ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt>

7:00 PM Idan Rakovsky, Introduction to Jewish Philosophy Week 4 of 5, Shaarei Tefillah

8:15 PM R' Chaim Metzger, Substance Use/Abuse: Tobacco, BAYT & ZOOM <http://tiny.cc/chaimmetzger>

8:30 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Contemporary Halachah Chabura, Clanton Park

Thursday February 24

1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 24), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (women)

8:00 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Beitzah, at BAYT (Gruda BM), email ymanntorontotorah.com for ZOOM options (men)

8:00 PM R' Jared Anstandig, Gemara Bava Batra, ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/torontowbm> (university women)

Friday February 25

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>