

Jerusalem Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Bechukotai

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This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated in honour of the 55th Yom Yerushalayim celebrated this Sunday, the 28th of Iyar!

Jerusalem: Under Construction

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

How important is Jerusalem? Important enough that its status endures even without a Beit haMikdash.

A mishnah (Ketuvot 13:11) teaches that one may demand that a spouse move to Jerusalem, and refusal would be grounds for divorce. According to the Shulchan Aruch (Even haEzer 75:4), this mishnah's rule applies even in our diminished era, when there is no Beit haMikdash and the walls of Jerusalem are not intact. Why is that?

1: Practical mitzvot remain

We could point to Rambam's twelfth-century statement that the sanctity of Jerusalem was not eliminated when the Beit haMikdash fell. (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Beit haBechirah 6:14-16) The fourteenth century sage Rabbi Shimon ben Tzemach Duran wrote similarly. (Shu"t Tashbetz 3:201) According to these authorities, one may bring korbanot and eat the *maaser sheni* tithe in Jerusalem, even without a Beit haMikdash and without the city's walls.

2: Holiness persists

In a second approach, Rabbi Moshe Sofer (Chatam Sofer Yoreh Deah 234) argued that this law of moving to Jerusalem does not depend on any particular mitzvot "It appears that this power is not because of the mitzvot which depend on being in Israel or Jerusalem, but because of the inherent sanctity of the place." Hashem selected this city and the site of the Beit haMikdash at the time of Creation [see Malbim to Melachim I 8:12], and that special sta-

tus persists regardless of temporary obstacles. [See as well Kli Yakar to Bereishit 13:17, translated by Rabbi Yehuda Mann in this week's Translation column.]

3: A pure population

Alternatively, perhaps the status of Jerusalem stems from its population. When we have a Beit haMikdash, the city of Jerusalem is filled with people who conduct the affairs of mundane life with one eye on the towering locus of sanctity, and so their lives are deemed "pure". As Rav Aharon Lichtenstein explained in [an essay titled Jerusalem: Between Holiness and Purity](#), Jerusalem "involves all areas of life; it is an area of eating and sleeping, of industry and commerce. These activities, however, are conducted in the shadow of the Temple, with a clear sense of standing 'before G-d,' with the rigorous standards of a *makom tahor* [pure place – MT]."

Rav Aharon did not concede that this special status would expire without a Beit haMikdash. He wrote of our own day, "[W]e proudly raise the banner of Jerusalem as a *makom tahor*. Our Jerusalem symbolizes the relationship between the holy and mundane, the interweaving of our service of G-d into all areas of life. We celebrate Jerusalem not only as a symbol but as a reality, in which this blend is actualized."

4: A work in progress

We might suggest one more idea. Despite the Divine selection of Jerusalem, the city has always been a work in pro-

gress. Hashem chose Jerusalem, but Hashem chose us to make that selection meaningful in our world:

- At Hashem's command, Avraham and Yitzchak climbed Mount Moriah and carried out the *akeidah*.
- Upon the word of the prophet Gad, King David purchased a Jebusite granary and brought korbanot there to halt a plague.
- As instructed by his father, King Solomon built the Beit haMikdash in Jerusalem.
- Zerubavel fulfilled Yirmiyahu's prophecy, brought us back from Persia to Jerusalem, and built an altar on the site of the Beit haMikdash.

Hashem selected the site, but Hashem commissioned **us** to make it special.

In that light, it makes sense that a woman or man could expect their family to join them in Jerusalem. Hashem has commanded us, like our forebears, to seek Zion (Succah 41a); what better way than by living there, and carrying out that *makom tahor* life praised by Rav Aharon Lichtenstein?

On this fifty-fifth Yom Yerushalayim, let us re-commit ourselves to lives that will sanctify Jerusalem. If we cannot live there, then we can visit, and we can support institutions that contribute to the sanctity of that great city and the purity of its population. May we soon see her complete rebuilding, with the Beit haMikdash at her centre.

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Summary

This chapter opens with an image: Yeshayahu's beloved invested much time and energy into cultivating a vineyard. The "beloved" is a reference to G-d. Most commentators explain that the vineyard refers to the northern kingdom of Yisrael (see Rashi, Ibn Ezra and Abarbanel to this chapter), but Radak contends that it refers to the Jewish nation as a whole.

Unfortunately, the vineyard failed to produce any desirable grapes (1-2). Yeshayahu turned to the people of Israel and asked them, rhetorically, "Is there anything that the beloved could have done differently to ensure a more fruitful vineyard?" (3-4) Upset with the results of his work toward the vineyard, the beloved decided to withhold his care from it: he would tear down its protective walls, cease pruning it, and even withhold rain from it (5-6). The prophet then reveals that this image is a parable – the vineyard represents Israel. Just as the vineyard failed to produce proper grapes, so too the people failed to behave justly (7).

Yeshayahu then shifts to warnings of punishment against six categories of sinners, with each category beginning with the expression, "Woe to the person

who commits sin X."

The first sin listed is of wealthy landowners encroaching upon, and subsequently stealing land from, the impoverished. Their properties will be laid desolate. (8-10) Next is against the drunkards who focus on their music and drinking and ignore the word of G-d. Their punishment will be exile, famine, and drought. Additionally, the haughty ones will be made low, and the land will be made desolate. G-d, however, will be exalted through His acts of justice and righteousness. (11-17) The third category is the sinner who mocks and rejects prophecy and rebuke. (18-19) The fourth category are those who distort the truth, turning bitter to sweet and sweet to bitter (20). The fifth category are those who believe that they are wise, when in fact they are not. (21) The sixth and final category are the drunken leaders who accept bribes and pervert justice. (22-23)

Because of these sins, Yeshayahu prophesied that Israel would be destroyed in G-d's wrath like fire destroys straw (24-25). G-d would bring foreign nations from far away to come and destroy the nation, much as a lion destroys its prey. There is no hope for

them (26-30).

Insight

According to Yeshayahu's opening image, the Jewish people are a vineyard. When we fail to act morally, we, like a vineyard, are destroyed. In truth, this image of an overrun vineyard also reflects the physical reality in Israel that existed during our exile. While on a trip to Israel in 1867, Mark Twain observed that the land of Israel, though once beautiful, had become desolate and bare. Almost as though the parable of the vineyard was literal – the land and its bounty had been destroyed. 150 years later, however, this is most certainly not the case. We see the Land of Israel thriving and returning to life. On this Yom Yerushalayim, let us give thanks for Israel, for Jerusalem, and for the fact that our people and our vineyard, is thriving once again.

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It Happened in Israel: Inspiration from the Foxes**Rabbi Steven Gotlib**

The Talmud (Makkot 24b) says that Rabban Gamliel, Rabbi Elazar Ben Azariah, Rabbi Yehoshua, and Rabbi Akiva traveled together to Jerusalem. When they got to the Temple Mount, they saw a fox run out from the Holy of Holies, and they immediately began to weep. Rabbi Akiva, however, laughed. "Why are you laughing?" They asked him. He responded by asking the others why they were weeping. They quoted a verse (Bamidbar 1:51) that, "the non-priest who approaches [the Holy of Holies] shall die." This place is so important that all but the kohanim were told to keep their distance, and now a fox walks all over it? Surely that is reason to weep!

Rabbi Akiva responded that this was exactly why he laughed. He then quoted from the prophet Isaiah (8:2) that, "I will take to Me faithful witnesses to attest: Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Yevrechia." Rabbi Akiva explained that this verse established a connection between these two prophets. Uriah prophesied (Michah 3:2) that Jerusalem would be "plowed as a field," while Zechariah prophesied (Zechariah 8:4) that "there shall yet be elderly men and elderly women sitting in the streets of Jerusalem." Rabbi Akiva continued, saying that until Uriah's negative prophecy was fulfilled, he was worried that Zechariah's positive one would not be either. But, now that Uriah's prophecy was fulfilled, surely Zechariah's prophecy would be as well. The other sages then said: "Akiva, you have comforted us; Akiva, you have comforted us."

Insight

The Talmud (Berachot 61b) tells of a time when the Roman

government decreed that the Jewish people were forbidden to learn Torah. Rabbi Akiva justified his continued teaching of Torah with a parable: A fox walked along a river and saw fish swimming frantically away from nets. The fox suggested that the fish come to dry land in order to avoid the nets entirely. The fish responded that such an idea was foolish, "If we have reason to fear in the environment in which we live, how much more would we have in the environment of our death!" Rabbi Akiva said that the same message applies to the Jewish people as well. If we're already in such a situation when we sit and learn Torah, which is said to be, "Your life and the lengthening of your days (Devarim 30:20)," how much worse would it be if we neglected our Torah study?

In both of these stories, a fox represents a reason for Jews to despair. Yet, in both stories, Rabbi Akiva continues to console his people. Even in the darkest of times, Rabbi Akiva teaches that we still learn Torah. And, when faced with the tragedy of foxes in the Holy of Holies, we can recall G-d's promises to return us to our homeland. As we mark Yom Yerushalayim this week, we can see firsthand how our lasting faith and continued Torah study has been rewarded.

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Biography

Rabbi Ephraim Luntschitz

Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

Rabbi Ephraim Luntschitz was born in Luntschitz, Poland, around the year 1550. [The name Shlomo was added later due to severe illness.] He studied under Rabbi Shlomo Luria ("Maharshal"). Later he moved to Lvov, in today's Ukraine, where he headed a small yeshiva.

In 1604, as the great Maharal of Prague neared the end of his life, he asked Rabbi Luntschitz to come and serve as his assistant, setting him up as a successor. Indeed, after the Maharal's passing in 1609, Rabbi Luntschitz stepped into the giant's shoes, serving as the city's Chief Rabbi until his own death ten years later.

Rabbi Luntschitz was known for his rich and complex *derashot* (sermons), in which he interweaved commentaries such as those of Rashi, Ramban, Rabbeinu Bahya ben Asher, Rabbi Yitzchak Arama (*Akeidat Yitzchak*) and Don Isaac Abarbanel, together with his own original ideas.

His sermons were aimed not only at explaining the words of the Torah and our sages, but mainly at teaching and preaching the Torah's moral lessons. He highlighted the problems of hatred and divisiveness that undermine social solidarity, and he was particularly critical of the rich for their neglect of the needs of the poor. Rabbi Luntschitz emphasized the dignity of man as created in G-d's image, and demanded that his listeners respect any and every human being, regardless of their social or economic status.

Another topic which Rabbi Luntschitz frequently addressed in his sermons was the problem of *galut* (exile) – how had the chosen people descended to such a pitiful state? Rabbi Luntschitz identified three problems as causes for the extended *galut*: wealthy Jews' attempts to mix with their non-Jewish counterparts; "empty and reckless" Jews who are immersed in the pursuit of luxury; and finally, the Rabbis themselves, who did not elevate themselves above their petty disputes.

Rabbi Luntschitz wrote many books, but is most famous for his *Kli Yakar*, which integrates exegetics and sermons. His balance of rational, emotional, and mystical motifs appealed to the mainstream of later generations, who included his *Kli Yakar* in the standard printed *Mikraot Gedolot*.

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Torah and Translation

The Power of Seeing Jerusalem

Rabbi E. Luntschitz, *Kli Yakar to Bereishit 13:17*

Translated by Rabbi Yehuda Mann

והקרוב אלי לומר בכל זה, שהקנה הקב"ה אל אברהם את הארץ לקנות שמה שני מיני תועלת, האחד, רוחני והוא נקנה בראייה לבד. ואחד, גופני והוא נקנה מכי דיש אמצרי.

הרוחני הוא, כי שם מקום מקדש של מטה מכון כנגד בית המקדש של מעלה...

וכל המסתכל במקום הקדוש שהוא מיד נתלבש רוח טהרה וקדושה... ובראייה לחוד סגי לאדם לקנות השלימות שהוא במקום אשר קרא לו אברהם (בראשית כב יד) 'יראה'...

ולא בכל מקום בארץ האדם זוכה לשלימות זה כי אם במקום הנקרא ה' יראה והוא הר המוריה ובית אל...

על כן נאמר כאן לאברהם שא נא עיניך וראה מן המקום אשר אתה שם. הורה באצבע ששלימות זה הרוחני הנקנה לו בראייה לחוד לא נקנה לו כי אם מן המקום אשר הוא עומד בו והיינו בית אל...

ותועלת רוחני זה לא יסור מזרעו עד עולם, כי אף בזמן שביית המקדש שלמטה אינו בבנינו מכל מקום הבית המקדש שלמעלה המכוון נגדו נצחי לא יסור לעולם ובכל זמן יורד ממנו השפע על זרע אברהם המקודש.

ומטעם זה שלמים וכן רבים נכספה נפשם לעמוד במקום הקדוש ההוא כי רצו את אבניה וגו'.

וכנגד תועלת רוחני זה אמר הקב"ה "שא נא עיניך וראה מן המקום אשר אתה רצה לומר מן המקום הקדוש אשר אתה עומד בו, כי בו תקנה השלימות הרוחנית ותזכה לראות פני השכינה. ועל אותו שלימות אמר "לך אתננה ולזרעך עד עולם," כי שלימות רוחני זה לא ימוש לעולם...

It seems likely to me to say regarding all of this, that Hashem granted him the land for him to acquire two kinds of benefits. The first is a spiritual benefit which he would acquire by just seeing the land. The other is a physical benefit which he would acquire by walking the boundaries [of the land].

The spiritual benefit is from the place of the Sanctuary below, which is parallel to the place of the Sanctuary in the heavens...

All who see the place of the Sanctuary immediately are clothed with a spirit of purity and holiness... And by just looking [at the place of the Sanctuary] one can gain this perfection, in the place which Avraham called "Hashem will see"...

And not in every place in the land can one gain this perfection, only in the place which is called "Hashem will see," and that is Mount Moriah and Beth El...

For that reason, Avraham was told here, "Raise your eyes and look out from the place where you are." Hashem pointed, [as] with a finger, showing that the spiritual perfection which is gained by just looking is gained only from the land he was standing on, Beth El...

And this spiritual benefit will never leave his offspring, because even during the time that the Beit HaMikdash of the lower world is not built, the parallel Beit HaMikdash in the heavens will never be gone, and influence constantly descends from it upon the sanctified descendants of Avraham.

And for this reason, the righteous and great have yearned and longed to stand in this holy place, "for they wanted the stones [of Jerusalem]." (Tehillim 102:15)

And for this spiritual benefit Hashem said to Avraham, "Raise your eyes and look out from where you are," meaning from this holy place where you are standing, for there you will acquire spiritual perfection and you will merit to "see" the Divine manifestation. And regarding this perfection Hashem promised, "I will give it to you and your descendants," for this spiritual perfection would never leave...

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10:00 AM - Noon: Adult Seder Boker with Rabbi Moshe Yeres on ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/sederboker> (men)
Monday/Wednesday: Talmud Succah, Orot of Rav Kook
Tuesday/Thursday: Parshah, Tanach: Sefer Melachim

Shabbat May 27-28

After hashkamah R' Yehuda Mann, Halachah from the Parshah, Clanton Park

6:00 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, The Emperor's New Cherubs, BAYT [Gruda Beis Medrash] (women)

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

After minchah Idan Rakovsky, Weekly Class, Shaarei Tefillah

Sunday May 29 Yom Yerushalayim

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

9:15 AM Idan Rakovsky, The Torah of Rav Shagar, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university) - *not this week*

Monday May 30

A New Parshah Podcast: Parshat Bamidbar

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)

2:15 PM Idan Rakovsky, Ethical Issues & Pirkei Avot, Beth Tikvah & ZOOM <http://tiny.cc/idanrak> *Week 3 of 3*

8:50 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Contemporary Halachah, Clanton Park

Tuesday May 31

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

7:00 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 15), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (men)

7:30 PM Prielle & Idan Rakovsky, Song of the Week, ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklysng>— *normally Mondays*

Wednesday June 1

6:30 AM R' Jared Anstandig, Talmud: Avodah Zarah, ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/idolsarebad>— *note new time*

7:30 PM Idan Rakovsky, The Laws of Shabbat, Shaarei Tefillah— *note new time*

8:45 PM R' Chaim Metzger, Intro to Midrash, BAYT & ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/chaimmetzger>- *not this week*

Thursday June 2

9:00 AM Idan Rakovsky, Mei haShiloach, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university)

1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 25), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (women)

7:00 PM R' Jared Anstandig, Contemporary Halachah, Shaarei Shomayim (university women) - *not this week*

8:00 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Gemara Beitzah, email ymanntorontotorah.com for rotating location

Friday June 3

9:00 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>

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10 AM Wednesdays June 15 and 22 at Yeshivat Or Chaim

Nusbaum Family Medical Ethics and Halachah Program

Use of Artificial Intelligence in Medical Decision Making

7:00 PM Monday June 20 at Shaarei Shomayim and <http://tiny.cc/mtethics>

Legal Ethics: Ethical and Effective Crisis Management for Clients

9:30 AM Sunday June 26 at BAYT and <http://tiny.cc/mtethics>