

Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Shoftim

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This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Rabbi Dr. Mervyn and Joyce Fried and Family

in memory of Mervyn's father, נתן בן יוסף מאיר הכהן ז"ל

Judges and Officers in Our Homes

Rabbi Yehuda Mann

For the third time, the Torah tells us the laws of the accidental murderer (brought also in Bamidbar 35 and Devarim 4) and the need for him to go to one of the cities of refuge in order to be saved from a relative of the deceased who wants revenge.

In this parshah, the Torah adds another law that says that there is a need to "prepare the way." (Devarim 19:3) A mishnah (Makkot 2:5) explains that this is an instruction to establish special roads that lead to the cities of refuge, which will prevent the accidental murderer from getting lost and not finding his way to the city.

Rabbi Avraham Yeshayahu Karelitz ("Chazon Ish") raises this question: Why is it that the Torah gives a special commandment to help the accidental murderer to find the city easily, while there is no commandment to prepare special ways to get to Jerusalem in order to help those who make a pilgrimage for every Jewish festival? The Chazon Ish gives a beautiful and educational answer- it all depends on what we want to expose ourselves and our children to.

We, as parents and as educators, have an interest in exposing our children to positive figures, and at the same time we do not want to expose them to negative figures. The Torah wanted to provide us with the experience of seeing those who are going to perform a mitzvah - to see those who are going to Jerusalem and hoping to experience a

spiritual uplifting. For that reason, we don't want to help them find the way easily. We want them to come knocking on our doors, to enter our house and ask for directions, and at the same time we will show our children - "Look, this person is seeking to do a mitzvah."

On the other hand, we don't want ourselves or our children to be exposed to accidental murderers. We don't want them to see a person who has blood on his hands and is careless about the lives of others. For that reason, we don't want him to approach us and ask for directions, and therefore we provide the murderer with clear ways to his destination.

Rabbi Chaim Yaakov Goldwicht (*Asufot Ma'arachot* Bamidbar pg. 72), discusses the Talmudic idea that any person who sees the *sotah* in her disgrace should then avoid drinking wine and become a *nazir*. (Sotah 2a) The simple reason is because we see that drinking wine may bring a person to commit adultery, and for that reason he should become a *nazir* and avoid wine. Rabbi Goldwicht then asks: why it is necessary to become a *nazir* in order to avoid wine? A person will do that naturally once he sees the disgrace of the *sotah*. He doesn't see her when she is enjoying the transgression, but rather he is seeing when she is being humiliated, disgraced and even in danger, so why is it important for him to go to an extreme and become a *nazir*?

Rabbi Goldwicht explains that we learn from this that when a person is exposed

to a negative person, even when that person is suffering and seemingly in an unappealing situation, he subconsciously finds this person's conduct normal and legitimate. For that reason, the person who witnesses the *sotah* should become a *nazir* and prohibit himself from drinking wine.

That is our concern also with exposing ourselves and our children to an accidental murderer. He is now running for his life and is in grave danger, but once we see this thing and find it normal and legitimate, we might lose our sensitivity to careless bloodshed.

To conclude with the opening of our parshah: we need to place judges and officers in our gates. Perhaps, beyond the obligation to set officers and judges in the gates of cities, we should also place spiritual judges and officers in our homes in order to prevent ourselves from witnessing things that will cause us to lose our sensitivity.

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Summary

In the previous two chapters Yeshayahu began a series of rebukes and warnings to ten entities, starting with Babylon and the Philistines. Now Yeshayahu addresses Moav, descendants of Lot. There is a long history of animosity between the Jews and Moav, starting with Moav hiring Bilam to curse the Jews (Bamidbar 22), continuing with an attack by Moav on the Jews in Israel (Shoftim 3), and then wars in the time of King David (Shemuel II 8) and King Achav. (Melachim II 3, and recorded from Moav's perspective in [the Mesha Stele](#))

Yeshayahu predicts the devastation of Moav in the impending Assyrian invasion, and later at the hands of the Babylonians. (Rashi to 15:1 and 15:9) Moav's cities will be demolished; the list of cities echoes a list found in Bamidbar 32, when we conquered that land. There will be grief and public acts of mourning, including pulling out hair, wearing sackcloth, and wailing. (15:1-5) The refugees of Moav will flee to Tzoar – much as Lot and his daughters fled from Sdom to Tzoar, along the way conceiving the first Moabite. (Ibn Ezra to 1:5)

The destruction of Moav is graphic. The grass dries out, wealthy leaders abscond, streams are filled with blood,

and the lion comes for them. (15:6-9, as explained in Ibn Ezra and Abarbanel)

The opening of Chapter 16 (16:1-5) then presents an opaque interlude calling upon an unidentified party to shelter refugees and mentioning a righteous king on David's throne. Commentators offer a range of possible explanations, including –

- This is a call to Moav to flee to Israel; we will shelter them under our righteous king (Malbim);
- It is a summons to Moav to shelter our refugees from the Assyrian invasion. Yeshayahu pledges that we will then help the Moabite refugees, under King Chizkiyahu, when Assyria attacks them. (Ibn Ezra)
- This is a demand to Moav to repay our historic kindness to them, by sheltering our refugees. Avraham and Sarah took in Lot after his father died and took care of him; Avraham saved Lot and the refugees of Sdom after the war of the kings; Avraham's merit saved Lot, and therefore Moav, in the destruction of Sdom; Boaz protected Ruth. But when we were in need, Moav didn't want to share their resources with us, and hired Bilam to attack us instead. So Yeshayahu calls upon Moav to change their ways and take care of our refugees, and then the

seed of David – a descendant of Moav – will protect them. (See Radak.)

Ultimately, the land of Moav will be left in ruins. The dominant image is the (ruined) grapevine; this fits the historical viticulture in the area of Moav. Tears replace joy; in their misery and hopelessness, the Moabites cannot even appeal to their gods. (16:6-12) All of this will happen in precisely three years. (16:13-14, as explained by Rashi)

Insight

In 15:5, Yeshayahu says, “My heart cries out for Moav.” Why would Yeshayahu cry for our long-time enemies?

- According to Radak and Ibn Ezra, Yeshayahu is only quoting Moav.
- According to Malbim, Yeshayahu is calling out to the Moabite warriors, warning them that their efforts will be futile.
- But Rashi, citing Bamidbar Rabbah 20:1, explains that Yeshayahu is actually weeping for the pain of Moav. Rabbi Zev Wolf Torbavitz explained that this is an example of the mercy of our prophets, who even care for our foes. (Ziv Mishneh to Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Tefillah 12:15, and see Tzidkat haTzaddik 47)

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Siddur Insights: Hashem Sefatai Tiftach

G-d, open my lips, and my mouth will declare Your praise. (Tehillim 51:17)

Each Amidah opens with this verse from Tehillim. The Talmud (Berachot 4b) writes that it is “an extended prayer,” and thus not considered a break between the final blessing of Shema and the Amidah. Accordingly, reciting it does not break the juxtaposition between the blessing of redemption and the Amidah (*semichat geulah le-tefillah*).

What is the purpose of invoking this verse? On one level, it reminds us that prayer is hard, and thus we begin each prayer with a prayer that we be able to pray.

A second perspective emerges from ancient siddurim. Professor Uri Ehrlich (Kovetz Al Yad v. 18 p. 1) notes that in the Cairo Genizah, fragments of prayers were found in which this verse came at the end of a series of verses of praise from Tehillim. Thus, he suggests that this is part of an early version of Pesukei D'Zimra. While we now read **chapters of praise** before the blessings of Shema, at some point, the custom seems to have been to read **verses of praise** (the literal translation of Pesukei D'Zimra) immediately before the Amidah.

A *piyut* from the Yamim Noraim suggests another direction. The *piyut* of *Ochila LaKel* juxtaposes this verse with a verse from Mishlei: “A man may arrange his thoughts, but what he says depends on the Lord.” (Mishlei 16:1, JPS) This suggests

that we are praying specifically that we should be able to properly **verbalize** what is in our hearts. As Ralbag (ad loc.) notes, even one who knows what he would like to say often has trouble saying it properly. The remainder of the *piyut* makes clear that it is the ability to verbalize for which we pray:

I hope in the Almighty, I implore His Presence, I ask of Him to grant me eloquent speech, so that in the congregation of the people, I might sing of His might and utter joyful songs praising His deeds. The arrangements of thoughts belong to man, but [only] from G-d comes eloquent speech. My Master, open my lips and my mouth will declare Your praise. May the words of my mouth be acceptable and the thoughts of my heart — before You G-d, my Rock and my Redeemer. (Adapted from the Machzor Rosh Hashanah, Metsudah)

This highlights that while prayer is referred to as “service performed in the heart” (Ta'anit 2a), it must be verbalized. Furthermore, it matters how we say our prayers – they should ideally be eloquent. As prayers are petitions to G-d **as King**, this makes sense. When approaching a king, having one's heart in the right place is not sufficient. Proper etiquette demands preparing what one will say beforehand. Thus, we begin each prayer reminding ourselves that G-d is King and we must pray properly. On the Yamim Noraim, we emphasize this idea with the above *piyut*, as G-d's status as king is more central during this time.

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Biography

Rabbi Shlomo Elyashiv

Rabbi Adam Friedmann

Shlomo Elyashiv was born in Siauliai, Lithuania in 1841. He studied in the yeshivot of Minsk and Telz, firmly rooting himself in the Lithuanian Talmudic tradition. Though a proficient Talmudist, Rabbi Elyashiv became famous for his mastery of Kabbalah. In his lifetime he was, arguably, the foremost expert in the Lithuanian style of Kabbalistic study, which followed in the footsteps of the Vilna Gaon.

Rabbi Elyashiv had several primary students; the most prominent of these was Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook. When a young Rabbi Kook was Rabbi in the town of Zoimel, the community granted him leave for a month to study Kabbalah with Rabbi Elyashiv. The experience had a life-altering impact on Rabbi Kook; many of his core philosophical ideas can be traced back to Rabbi Elyashiv's thought.

In his later years, Rabbi Elyashiv wanted to move to Israel. By this time Rabbi Kook was the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of the country. Rabbi Kook arranged for Rabbi Elyashiv and his family's move. The elder rabbi made aliyah with his daughter Chaya Musha, son-in-law Avraham (who took on his wife's surname), and grandson Yosef Shalom. The latter would become one of the leading rabbinic figures of his generation.

Rabbi Elyashiv wrote several works outlining his Kabbalistic system. The most popular are the two volumes of *Leshem Shevo Ve'achalomah*, named after the stones in the Kohen Gadol's breastplate. It's based on this work that Rabbi Elyashiv came to be called the "Leshem". In addition to his own writing, Rabbi Elyashiv was instrumental in printing earlier Kabbalistic works, such as Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato's *Adir Bamarom*.

Rabbi Aryeh Levin recounts that when Rabbi Elyashiv died (1926), Rabbi Kook exclaimed, "My father! My father! The chariot of Israel! If we would have merited, we would have seen a column of fire separating you from us, as is fitting for one or two members of a generation!" (see Melachim II 2:12 and 13:14, and Ketuvot 17a) When the community ascended to the Mount of Olives to bury the rabbi, a column of light like a rainbow illuminated the sky until the burial was completed.

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Torah and Translation

The Elevation of Our World

Leshem, Discourses on the World of the Abyss II 3:4

Translated by Rabbi Adam Friedmann

וידוע הוא שכל השתלשלות דכל המציאות כולה בכללותה ופרטותיה הנה נמשך ההשתלשלות לעולם מלמעלה למטה ומפנימי לחיצון כי מהאצילות נמשך הבריאה ומהבריאה היצירה ומהיצירה עשיה וכן מהנשמה נמשך הרוח ומהרוח נפש ומהנפש הדם והבשר וכן כל חלקי הגוף הם כולם מכחות ושפעת הנר"נ שבו ונמשך מפנימי לחיצון ומתעבה בעיבוי אחר עיבוי עד שנעשה שפעת הנשמה למציאת הגוף וכן עד"ז בכל חלקי המציאות כולם...

אמנם כ"ז הוא רק בסיבתם, אבל תכליתם הוא להיפך. כי בתכליתם הנה הם חוזרים ועולים (בעליית מדרגה) מחיצון לפנימי ומלמטה למעלה עד רום המעלות, כי הרי תכלית כל פרטי הדומם צומח חי הם להנאת ותועלת האדם והולך ומתחלף תכלית כל דבר מדומם לצומח ומצומח לחי ומחי למדבר...

ובדרך זה מתחלף ומתעלה תכלית כל מציאות עד הגיעו לתועלת ותכלית המציאות היותר נעלה ומגיעים תכליות כל מיני הדצ"ח למדרגת האדם ותכלית האדם הרי הוא לפעולות וכחות הנר"נ שבו כי הגוף הוא המקום דהנר"נ בעולם הזה והנר"נ משתמשים בו ועושים על ידו כל פעולותיהם אשר שולחו לזה בעוה"ז שהוא לעשות רצון קונם ושיושלם רצונו ית"ש על ידיהם בכל בריאת עולמו.

והרי נמצא כי כל המציאות הנה הם כולם מתחלפים ועולים מתכלית לתכלית עד תכלית גילוי רצונו ית"ש שהוא לתכלית כוונתו בבריאת עולמו והוא תכלית כל התכליות ועונג כל העינוגים וחמודת כל החמודות ותקוות הכל לשוב לרצונו ית"ש.

It is known that in the emanation of all reality in its totality and its parts, the emanation progresses from above to below and from the core to the periphery. The (metaphysical) world of *Beriah* emanates from the world of *Atzilut* and the world of *Yetzirah* emanates from *Beriah* and *Asiyah* from *Yetzirah*. And so too (regarding the spiritual components of human beings) the *Ruach* emanates from the *Neshamah* and the *Nefesh* from the *Ruach*, and from there the flesh and blood. And so too all the parts of the body [subsist] from the strength and energy of the *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, and *Neshamah* that is within them. [This emanation] progresses from the core to the periphery and adds layer after layer of condensation until the energy of the soul results in the existence of the body. All parts of reality follow this dynamic...

However, all this [descent] is only with regards to the causal structure of existence, but its purpose is the opposite. Because its purpose is to ascend (by levels) from the periphery to the core and from below to above until it reaches the highest possible level. The purpose of all inanimate, vegetative, and animal beings is for the pleasure and benefit of human beings. The purpose of all things moves from the inanimate to the vegetative and from the vegetative to the animal to those who speak [humans]...

In this way the purpose of all reality transforms and ascends until it reaches the greatest goal and purpose. And the purposes of all the species of inanimate, vegetative, and animal beings reach the level of man, and the purpose of man is to actualize the *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, and *Neshamah* in him. Because the body is the seat of the *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, and *Neshamah* in this world and they use the body and by means of it accomplish all of the tasks they were sent to do in this world. Namely, to do the will of their Creator, and that His will be accomplished by them in His world.

We find, then, that all of reality is transforming and ascending from one purpose to another until the purpose of the revelation of His will which is the purpose intended by Him in creating His world. And this is the purpose of all purposes, the delight of delights, and the treasure of treasures, and it is the hope of all to return to His will.

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

6:35 PM R' Jared Anstanding, Never Going Back: Egypt and Beyond, Shaarei Shomayim

7:00 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Pirkei Avot, Clanton Park

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

After minchah R' Jared Anstandig, The Halachic Trip Advisor, Marlee Shul

Sunday Sept 4

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

Monday Sept 5

7:30 PM Prielle & Idan Rakovsky, Song of the Week, ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklysong> *not this week*

8:30 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Getting Ready for Tishrei, Shomrai Shabbos (men)

Tuesday Sept 6

1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Wisdom of King Solomon, ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (men) *not this week*

7:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 15), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (men)

Wednesday Sept 7

6:30 AM R' Jared Anstandig, Talmud: Avodah Zarah, Shaarei Shomayim

After maariv R' Yehuda Mann, Contemporary Halachah, Clanton Park

Thursday Sept 8

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

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

Friday Sept 9

9:00 AM R' Jared Anstandig, Parshah, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university)

10:30 AM R' Jared Anstandig, R' Mordechai Torczyner, R' Yehuda Mann, Ketuvot Perek 1 *advanced*
In-person at Yeshivat Or Chaim, on ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/frishiur>

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