

Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Shavuot

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This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated anonymously
in honour of the grandson born to Dan and Karen Valter
May he grow to Torah, chuppah umaasim tovim!

Attaining Our Full Spiritual Stature

Rabbi Adam Friedmann

The lone mitzvah that we have for the holiday of Shavuot is the sacrifice of *shte'i halechem* - the two loaves. A mishnah (Menachot 10:6) explains how this mitzvah is intertwined with another: the prohibition against eating and using the new year's grain (*chadash*). The mishnah states, "The *Omer* [offering] permits [the new year's grain] throughout the country, and the two loaves permit [the new grain] in the Temple." The new grain is prohibited in two different ways.

- One may not eat it anywhere. This prohibition is lifted once the *Omer* offering is brought on Pesach.
- One may not use it for any offerings in the Beit HaMikdash. This prohibition is lifted on Shavuot, after the two loaves are offered.

After outlining these two stages, the mishnah makes another statement: "One may not bring meal offerings [consisting of new grain]...before the *Omer*. If one brought them before the *Omer* they are invalid. One should [also] not bring them before the two loaves, [but] if one brought them, they are valid." Meal offerings from the new year's grain brought before the *Omer* are invalid, but ones brought after the *Omer* but before the two loaves are valid after the fact. Why should this be true? Presumably, the prohibition should be consistent for the entire period until the two loaves are brought. Either the wrongfully brought meal offerings should always be valid or invalid. What changes between Pesach and Shavuot? The Talmud (Menachot

68b) records that the great sage Rabbi Tarfon was troubled by this question, and it's not clear that he ever found a satisfactory answer.

Rabbi Yehuda Alter, the second Rebbe of Gur, suggests a novel answer for this question. (See Sefat Emet to Menachot *ibid.*) If we look carefully at the Torah's descriptions of the *Omer* offering and the two loaves, we see that the prohibition against using the new grain is expressed in subtly different ways in each case:

- Regarding the *Omer*, the Torah says, "you shall not eat bread or parched grain or the flour of parched grain until that very day." (Vayikra 23:14) There is a prohibition banning use of the new grain.
- Regarding the two loaves, the Torah says that they should be a "new grain offering to G-d" (Vayikra 23:16). In this case, there's no prohibition, only a positive requirement that the two loaves be the first meal offerings brought from new grain.

Rabbi Alter uses this distinction to explain the different rulings described above. Before the *Omer* is offered, the act of bringing a meal offering with new grain is inherently the violation of a commandment. Therefore, this offering is invalid. But after the *Omer* is brought, there is no inherent violation. We are obligated to ensure that the two loaves have the special status of being the first new grain offerings. Bringing an offering from new grain before the two loaves degrades and undermines

this status. But the offerings themselves are valid.

Understood this way, this small halachic nuance provides insight into the spiritual transformation that we are supposed to experience between Pesach and Shavuot. Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook (*Shemoneh Kevatzim* 1:828) explains that the movement from Pesach to Shavuot is the movement from an animal existence to the full spiritual stature of human existence. This is symbolized by the shift from the *Omer* which consists of barley, commonly used for animal feed, to the two loaves that are made of wheat, which is human food.

So too, there is a qualitative difference between refraining from new grain because it is forbidden and refraining because of a positive commandment. It is the difference between acting out of the fear of punishment, and acting out of the recognition and pursuit of a higher moral ideal. The former relates to our animal nature and the need to tame it, the latter to our great spiritual potential as people created in the image of G-d.

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Summary

This chapter deals mainly with one theme, which is the rebuke of Yeshayahu for Bavel.

Bavel, once a proud and powerful nation, will fall and become captive. The Babylonians will go from luxury to humiliation, imaged as a woman who is forced to grind grain and remove her finery. (47:1-3)

Bavel acted arrogantly and cruelly against the people of Israel, and therefore they will be degraded from the royal status they thought they had. G-d, who had allowed Bavel to prosper, will punish them for their sins. (4-7)

Bavel had trusted in their own wisdom and strength, believing they were immortal, but these resources will fail them in their time of need. G-d will turn against Bavel, and despite their attempts to protect themselves, Bavel will not escape their fate. (8-11)

Bavel's astrologers and magicians will also be powerless to prevent their destruction. G-d challenges Bavel to use their magic to save themselves, but it will be futile. Bavel will be consumed by fire and will no longer be a centre of trade or wealth. (12-15)

Insight

In 47:4 the prophet states: "Our Redeemer, G-d of multitudes is His Name, the Holy One of Israel." This statement is included in our prayers, and we recite it in the morning and evening before the *amidah*. One should ask: what is the purpose of this line? Is it a prayer? A description? Maybe a prophecy?

One approach is taken by Rabbi Ovadia Seforno and in the translation of Targum Yonatan. They hold that this verse is a prayer of the prophet to G-d to save the Jews so they would not perish along the Babylonians. This can be well understood in the context of the prayer invoking this passage, in which we ask G-d to redeem us.

A second approach is taken by Rashi, Radak and Abarbanel. They explain that the verse describes the purpose of the actions described in the chapter: G-d will strike the Babylonians so the Jews will be redeemed from their oppressors.

A third approach is taken by Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra. He explains that the verse is a prophecy of the repentance of the Jews. After witnessing of all the wonders, they will recognize that G-d is their Redeemer.

A fourth approach is taken by Rabbi Eliezer of Beaugency. He explains that the prophet is trying to lift the spirits of the people, to tell them that they should not give up on the faith that G-d will execute His plan against Bavel. This approach can also be seen in Shemot Rabbah (15:16).

Last, the Malbim and Metzudat David hold that this verse is a description of the source for all of the wonders of the chapter- stating that all these great miracles will not happen from a human being, but rather from G-d, the Redeemer and the G-d of multitudes.

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Siddur Insights: Finding Our Share in Torah

In the *amidah* for Shabbat and Yom Tov, we ask Hashem to "make us holy through Your commandments and grant us our share in Your Torah." (Koren-Sacks translation) The Artscroll commentary, based on the Abudraham, notes that "the performance of mitzvot in itself elevates a person and makes him more prone to absorb sanctity. Alternatively, the word *kodsheinu* can be related to *kiddushin*, betrothal. G-d has *betrothed* Israel, as it were, by allowing us to perform His commandments."

The second opinion brought down is reminiscent of an idea shared by Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook in the sefer *Metziot Katan*. Exploring the idea of faith (*emunah*) as opposed to knowledge (*yediah*) of Hashem, Rav Kook writes that knowledge is fleeting while a relationship lasts forever. Knowledge can always be forgotten over time, unless it is given a permanent place in the heart. Such a place can be made by being given something to serve as a constant reminder of the nature of the relationship - like a wedding ring which is always worn as a reminder of the commitment that was made. The Torah serves much the same purpose - as a constant reminder of G-d's love for the Jewish people. More than that, though, the Torah also serves as a lens by which we can then view the entire world around us and a mechanism through which we can achieve our unique potential.

Rabbi Yeshayah Horowitz, also known as the *Shalah*, wrote (Parshat Korach 3) that the mystical idea of there being 600,000 letters in the Torah is because each letter was assigned to one of the original 600,000 souls of *Klal Yisrael* that

was present at Har Sinai. Rabbi Moshe Yechiel HaLevi Epstein (*Be'er Moshe* Parshat Korach 56) takes this idea even further, noting that if even one of those souls was missing, *Klal Yisrael* would have been unable to accept the Torah, since a letter would have been missing.

Rabbi Baruch Simon extends this notion even farther (*Imrei Baruch* Parshat Bamidbar 2) by pointing out that this means that the Torah is not only meant for *gedolim*, but for every member of *Klal Yisrael*. Each and every Jew, whose soul stems from one of those original 600,000, has their own letter of the Torah to fill in, in order for the Torah to be complete and ready to be accepted. Even one Jew who is unable to find and accept their unique place in Torah renders the entire Torah incomplete, so it falls on the shoulders of every individual to make sure that they themselves, and others, are truly able to embrace their share of Torah.

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Biography
Rabbi Shalom Noach
Berezovsky
Rabbi David Teller

Rabbi Shalom Noach Berezovsky was born on the 14th of Av 1911 (5671) in the town of Mosh, close to Slonim. He married the daughter of the Rebbe of Slonim, Rabbi Avraham Weinberg, and moved to Israel in 1935 to help rebuild the Slonim sect of Chassidut, which was nearly destroyed in the Holocaust.

In 1942, the Beit Avraham Slonim yeshiva was established in the Meah She'arim neighborhood in Jerusalem, and Rabbi Shalom began teaching there. In a few years he would become the Rosh Yeshiva. He served as a member of the directorate of the "independent" school system in Israel and on the Council of Torah Sages of Agudath Israel, as well as in the presidency of its committee for yeshivot. At this time he authored the *Netivot Shalom* series and began publishing many previous works of the previous Slonimer Rebbeim. The *Netivot Shalom* series, which has volumes on the parshah, Jewish holidays and general topics in Jewish thought, has achieved widespread popularity, beyond the confines of traditional Chassidic batei midrash. This is in part due to Rabbi Shalom's clear and illuminating writing style, deep and insightful commentary and omission of the heavier Kabbalistic references which characterize many Chassidic works and make them difficult for a general audience to fully appreciate.

Many Slonimer Chassidim began accepting Rabbi Shalom Berezovsky as their rebbe during the end of his father-in-law's life. This sparked a protest, as others felt that Rabbi Avraham Weinberg should remain the leader of Slonim Chassidut until his passing. Today, Slonim Chassidut is divided into two large sects, one headed by the Berezovsky family (under the leadership of Rabbi Shalom's son), and the other headed by the original Weinberg dynasty.

Rabbi Shalom Noach Berezovsky passed away on the 14th of Av, August 8, 2000.

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Weekly Halachah: Up All Night, Now What?

Rabbi Jared Anstandig

If one stays up all night on the first night of Shavuot, what does one do about the once-a-day berachot that are recited each morning?

Birchot HaTorah

Every morning, men and women are obligated to recite Birchot haTorah, blessings thanking G-d for having given us the Torah. Although in most matters of Jewish law the day begins at night, for Birchot HaTorah night follows the day. (Shulchan Aruch OC 47:12) Accordingly, one does **not** need to make a new berachah on the Torah that one studies at night. The question exists, however, regarding one who did not sleep at all.

The Mishneh Berurah (47:28) records two opinions. According to one opinion, if one did not sleep at all during the night, then the previous day's Birchot haTorah are still in effect and one should not recite a new blessing. Others, such as the Magen Avraham (47:12), maintain that the Sages enacted this blessing to be recited every morning, regardless of whether one slept. In practice, the Mishneh Berurah rules that given the doubt, we do not recite the questionable blessing. Nonetheless, he encourages utilizing one of the following options to remove all doubt:

- 1) Have someone who did sleep recite the blessing on one's behalf (and answer "Amen") and then immediately learn Torah;
- 2) Intend during the *Ahavah Rabbah* berachah before Shema that it should double as Birchot haTorah, and then learn Torah immediately following the amidah;
- 3) Take a substantive nap on Erev Shavuot. According to Rabbi Akiva Eiger, all agree that such a person would recite new Birchot ha Torah in the morning.

Washing Netilat Yadayim

Authorities debate as to why we wash our hands in the morning. According to the Rosh, we wash our hands each morning to clean them before services, out of a concern that while sleeping we touched something unclean. Rashba disagrees and believes that the morning handwashing is done daily, before services, just as the Kohanim in the Beit haMikdash would wash their hands before their priestly service. One difference between the views is regarding one who was awake all night. According to the Rosh, there would be no need to wash; since one never slept, one knows that one never touched something unclean. But, according to Rashba, this berachah was established to be recited daily, regardless of sleep.

Here are two options for navigating the situation:

- 1) The Rama rules (OC 4:13) that one should wash without a berachah;
- 2) Mishneh Berurah (4:1) advocates that in the morning one should be sure to use the washroom. Then, according to both the Rosh and Rashba, it is appropriate to wash with a berachah.

Sefer haChinuch #27, 39: Producing Idols & Human Forms

By Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

In the second of the "Ten Commandments", G-d warned, "You shall not make a sculpture or any picture." (Shemot 20:4) Sefer haChinuch sees here the Torah's 27th mitzvah, prohibiting manufacturing statues for worship. Per Rambam, it also includes commissioning such statues.

Additionally, G-d commanded, "You shall not make with Me gods of silver and gods of stone (ibid. 20:20)," and the Talmud explained that this prohibits making forms of the 'image of G-d', meaning a human form. (Rosh Hashanah 24b) Rabbeinu Chananel (ad loc.) explained that even though G-d has no form, G-d appeared to Yechezkel with the image of a person. (Yechezkel 1:26) Sefer haChinuch records this as the Torah's 39th mitzvah, noting that it applies to forms which are not meant for worship, as well. Per Rambam (Hilchot Avodah Zarah 3:10) and Shulchan Aruch (YD 141:7), the prohibition applies only to three-dimensional forms.

Our sages have understood the biblical text to prohibit creating forms of celestial bodies and angels, as well as human beings. The prohibition also includes creating forms mimicking the different parts of the Beit haMikdash. (Yoreh Deah 141:8) However, animal forms may be sculpted, so long as they are only intended for enjoyment rather than worship. [See Tosafot Yoma 54b.]

If an item has been worshipped by non-Jews in the past, but its own followers have rejected it, then that item does not retain the status of an idol.

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All times ET. Classes are free & open to all, unless otherwise noted.

First night of Shavuot, Thursday-Friday May 25-26

11:30 PM R' Yehuda Mann, The Cheesecake Dilemma: What Berachah?, Or Chaim Minyan

12:00-3:55 AM R' Steven Gotlib, Beis Medrash Track, The Village Shul

12:00 AM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Ivztan: Prequel to Ruth, Aish Thornhill

1:00 AM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Naomi, Ruth and Anti-Gentilism, BAYT

1:00 AM R' Jared Anstandig, May I Cause the Blind to Stumble?, Shaarei Tefillah

1:00 AM R' Yehuda Mann, Majority Rules?, Clanton Park

2:10 AM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Ruth: Book of Aspiration, Ayin l'Tzion/Zichron Yisroel

2:15 AM Idan Rakovsky, Adam, Eve & Freud, Shaarei Shomayim

3:00 AM Idan Rakovsky, May I Eat a Giraffe?, Shaarei Tefillah Youth

3:00 AM R' Yehuda Mann, The Cheesecake Dilemma: What Berachah?, Petah Tikva

3:00 AM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Q & A, Bnei Akiva

3:45 AM R' Jared Anstandig, The Jew Who Didn't Know He Was, Shaarei Shomayim

3:55 AM R' Steven Gotlib, Why Did We Just Stay Up?, The Village Shul

4:00 AM Idan Rakovsky, You Don't Need Your Coffee, Shaarei Tefillah

Fri. May 26 SHAVUOT, DAY 1

5:00 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Tikkun Yom, Clanton Park

6:00 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, AI and Medical Diagnostics: What Could Go Wrong?, BAYT

Shabbat May 27 SHAVUOT, DAY 2

7:40 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Ruth: The Eishet Chayil?, Bnai Torah

30 min pre-minchah R' Steven Gotlib, Big Topics, Village Shul

After minchah Idan Rakovsky, Halachah in the Parshah, Shaarei Tefillah

Sun. May 28

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

Mon. May 29

2:00 PM Idan Rakovsky, The Jewish Zoo, Part 1, ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/idanrak>

8:00 PM Prielle & Idan Rakovsky, Song of the Week, ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklysong>

Tues. May 30

8:00 AM R' Steven Gotlib, Sefer Emunah uBitachon, Village Shul

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

7:00 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 20), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (men)

8:30 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Contemporary Halachah, Clanton Park (women)

Wed. May 31

8:00 PM R' Steven Gotlib, Ashkenazi and Sephardi Differences, The Village Shul

8:00 PM Idan Rakovsky, Shir haShirim, Shaarei Tefillah

8:15 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Contemporary Halachah, Clanton Park

Thurs. Jun 1

8:00 AM R' Steven Gotlib, Jewish Mysticism, Village Shul

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

Fri. Jun 2

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>