

Toronto Torah

Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Ki Tavo

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This issue is sponsored by Jeffrey and Rochel Silver to welcome the new avreichim and their families, Sara and Adam Friedmann & Elliezza and Yaron Perez, to the Beit Midrash and to our community

On Religious Joy

Yaron Perez

Rabbi Menachem Froman z"l, the former Rabbi of Tekoa, would make noise during Megilat Esther not only when they read *Haman*, but also when they read the word *dat*. [In context, *dat* means "law". However, in contemporary use *dat* means "religion".] One may presume that this act of protest was based on Rabbi Froman's view that our day has seen a narrowing of thought regarding religion, and the meaning of being religious.

Often, that which is "religious" is seen as detached from normal human experience. For example, note the way people pray for the sick. We desire to express our emotional reaction, to pour out our heart before G-d, but we often turn to the ritual *Mi sheBeirach* prayer, or a psalm of Tehillim chanted formally, giving a more "religious" aura to the occasion. Simply expressing a thought from the heart feels too "irreligious".

Another example is joy. Many see joy as, at best, a general human value. It might even be perceived as an irreligious value, or a lack of seriousness and a demonstration of human frivolity.

In our parshah, Moshe presents the Jewish people with the curses which will befall them should they fail to fulfill the Torah. In the middle of this maledictory passage, the Torah explains that all of these curses will come upon us because "you did not serve Hashem your G-d with joy and a good heart, due to your plenty." (Devarim 28:47) Based on this verse, Rambam writes, "The joy which

G-d has commanded us to have, rejoicing in performing mitzvot and in love of G-d, is a great form of worship. One who refrains from this joy deserves punishment, as it is written, 'Because you did not serve Hashem your G-d with joy, etc.'" (Hilchot Shofar, Succah v'Lulav 8:15) According to Rambam, the Torah commands us to pursue joy as part of each mitzvah we fulfill.

Commenting on the same verse, Rabbeinu Bechayye sees joy not only as part of each mitzvah, but as an independent mitzvah which is expressed through the performance of other mitzvot. He writes, "The text blames him for serving G-d without joy in that service, because one is obligated to pursue joy while involved in mitzvot. Joy in fulfilling a mitzvah is its own, independent mitzvah. Separate from the reward for the mitzvah itself, there is reward for the joy. Therefore, the Torah punishes the individual who performs the action of the mitzvah, while he fails to pursue joy in its performance."

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov takes another step forward, contending that joy is actually a separate, independent mitzvah. He writes, "It is a great mitzvah to rejoice perpetually, and to strengthen oneself to distance sadness and 'black bile' with all of one's strength. Every malady which befalls a person comes from corruption of joy." (Likutei Moharan, Torah 24)

The skeptic will challenge, "Where is the broken heart of the penitent sinner? How can I rejoice, knowing that I fail to fulfill all of my mitzvot? How can I rejoice when life can be so depressing?"

Rabbi Nachman was aware of the reality of life; he also struggled to "rejoice perpetually." Therefore, he continues with the following advice, "The principle is that one must channel all of one's strength to be perpetually joyous. The nature of Man is to draw himself to black bile and sadness because of the injuries and incidents of time. Each person is filled with pain. Therefore, one must use great strength to push himself to rejoice perpetually, and to gladden himself to the extent he can, even by drawing on silly things. Even though a broken heart is very good, that is only true for specific moments. One should establish a daily hour for himself, to break his heart and to express himself [in that vein] before G-d, as we have written. But for the entire day, one must be joyous."

To Rabbi Nachman, a person who spends the day in sadness cannot truly open his heart to life, for he spends his day in thoughts of his deficiencies, falling into depression. In Rabbi Nachman's view, one can reach a true encounter with himself and with G-d, and fulfill mitzvot, only when he acknowledges the good in the world. If he lacks gratitude to G-d, he will come to sin, and therefore to the Torah's predicted punishment.

In the thought of Rambam and Rabbeinu Bechayye, joy is far from a non-religious or anti-religious value. Rather it is an inseparable part of each of the Torah's mitzvot, and perhaps, according to Rabbi Nachman, it may even be its own mitzvah. May we merit a good and joyous year.

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Da'at Mikra Tanach

Mossad haRav Kook (1971-2003) Heb. English edition in progress

History

In 1963, a steering committee convened to plan a new biblical commentary. The *Da'at Mikra* edition would be based on traditional sources and methods, would adhere to Jewish tradition, and would reflect modern methods of exegesis, as well as discoveries in history, geography, archaeology, ancient languages, and related fields. Israel Prize-winner Yehuda Kiel led the effort; individual volumes were edited by scholars including Kiel, Amos Chacham, Yehudah Elitzur, Yechiel Moskowitz, and Mordechai Zer-Kavod. The Hebrew set was completed in 2003, and an English translation, "The Jerusalem Commentary", was begun at that point.

The result of the *Da'at Mikra* project is a commentary which features a literal, philology-based approach to translation, and which tends to quote traditional commentaries supporting that approach. The *Da'at Mikra* edition also cites research into the language

and life of the Ancient Near East, and incorporates relevant points from the Dead Sea Scrolls, Septuagint, Elephantine papyri, Josephus and similar sources.

Lengthy introductions to each volume tend to address points of history relevant for the book, parallels to other books of Tanach, and questions raised by that particular book. The *Da'at Mikra* volumes are also known for their maps, illustrations and photographs, meant to enhance the reader's comprehension of Tanach. A valuable atlas volume complements the series.

Advantages

The *Da'at Mikra* edition is most useful for a reader of Tanach who wants to draw upon modern scholarship without becoming bogged down in debates regarding authorship of the Torah and its historicity. The maps serve as valuable aids, and the authors' attention to linguistics can be most helpful. Individual volumes offer special assistance, such as the Hebrew complementary text accompanying the Aramaic sections of Daniel and Ezra.

The books are generally divided into units, each of which may consist of a few sentences or a few dozen sentences. These sections are often bracketed by introductory and summary paragraphs, which highlight key observations relevant to the text and help the reader to perceive the bigger picture while studying the meaning of each verse.

Caution

As always, readers should be aware of the authors' biases, and particularly in favour of literalism. Most of Tanach lends itself to reading on multiple levels, but *Da'at Mikra* authors often choose a particular approach to a section, and pursue it without mention of others. The extent to which this takes place varies from author to author.

For a review by a reader who wanted a less traditional bent, see Michael Avioz, *The Da'at Mikra Commentary Series: Between Tradition and Criticism*, JBQ 34:4 (2006): <http://bit.ly/2cpfACH>.

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Israel's Rabbis: Rabbi Ovadia Yosef**Rabbi Jonathan Ziring****Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef**

Born in 1920 in Iraq

Died in 2013 in Jerusalem

Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel from 1973-1983

Biography

Born in Baghdad, Rabbi Yosef was recognized as a genius and budding scholar at a young age, penning his first work at age 9. In 1933, his father sent him to Yeshivat Porat Yosef, where he forged a formative relationship with Rabbi Ezra Attia, who ensured young Ovadiah was able to continue studying in yeshiva even when his father later had hesitations. He began teaching in 1937, and caused early controversies by publicly disputing halachic rulings of the Ben Ish Chai, which were seen as authoritative in Baghdad. He moved to Israel, spent some time in Egypt, and later returned to Jerusalem. He became a significant *posek*, writing many influential halachic works, both for scholars and laymen. He became a judge on the Jerusalem Rabbinical Court in 1958, Chief Sephardic Rabbi of Tel Aviv in 1968, and Chief Sephardic Rabbi of Israel (Rishon LeTzion) in 1973. After finishing his term, he founded the influential political party, Shas.

His Halachic Rulings

We have previously reviewed Rabbi Binyamin Lau's intellectual biography of Rabbi Yosef (<http://bit.ly/2cATAok>) where Rabbi Lau outlines the guiding principles of Rabbi Yosef's approach to Halachah. (The book contains approbation from Rabbi Yosef.)

The primary goal was *lehachzir atara leyoshnah*, to return the crown to its glory. In the early years of the State, Ashkenazi rabbis had near hegemony over *p'sak*. In the 1950's, the Chief Rabbinate issued several decrees, ruling that the

Ashkenazi *p'sak* on issues such as *yibum* (levirate marriage) and weddings during the three weeks should be universally accepted. Rabbi Uziel, then Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel, agreed for the sake of unity. Rabbi Yosef disagreed, arguing that Sephardim should take pride in their traditions and follow the positions of Rabbi Yosef Karo. Much of Rabbi Yosef's *p'sak* was aimed at ensuring Sephardim would not lose their halachic identity. For example, he insisted that Sephardi women not say blessings on time-bound commandments, ruling like Rabbi Karo over Rabbi Moshe Isserles.

To this end, he minimized the importance of Sephardic communities which followed the Chida or the Ben Ish Chai., rather than Rabbi Yosef Karo. He often disagreed with authorities such as Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu and Rabbi Shalom Messas who maintained these other traditions, which was particularly notable in family purity law.

As part of his devotion to the rulings of Rabbi Karo, Rabbi Yosef lessened the importance of Kabbalah in Halachah. Ironically, this aligned him with Ashkenazi rabbis more closely than with Sephardic rabbis like Rabbis Eliyahu and Messas, in whose communities Kabbalah was a more decisive factor.

Rabbi Yosef also stressed the need for being lenient when possible. He used his encyclopedic knowledge to combine positions that would allow for leniency, making Halachah easier to follow. He famously used his erudition to permit all of the *agunot* from the Yom Kippur War to remarry.

His influence across the Jewish world was evident when over 800,000 attended his funeral in 2013.

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Biography

Rabbi Shalom Rokeiach of Belz

Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

Rabbi Shalom Rokeiach was born in 1781 in Brody, home to a large and flourishing Jewish community. A great-grandson to Rabbi Elazar (1665-1742), author of *Maaseh Rokeach*, he was destined for greatness. Unfortunately, his father passed away at a young age, and his mother, Rivka Henna, sent the eleven-year-old boy to be raised by her brother and his uncle, Rabbi Yissachar Dov Ramraz, Rabbi of Skohl, Galicia. Soon, the impressively bright young scholar was married to his uncle's daughter, Malka.

While in the town of Skohl, Shalom met Reb Shlomo Lutzker, a close disciple and aide to Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezeritch – the *Maggid* of Mezeritch, a key figure in the second generation of Hasidism. Against his uncle's will, he secretly went at night to learn from Reb Shlomo, and his wife concealed his activities.

After a few years, Rabbi Shalom felt mature enough to publicly announce his association with the Hasidic movement, and he went to Lublin to learn by the *Chozeh*, Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchak Horowitz, who became his main mentor (*rabbo muvhak*).

At the beginning, Rabbi Shalom refused to accept any rabbinical position, and tried to make his living from trade. After repeated failures, though, he was directed by the *Chozeh* to accept an offer from Belz to become the local Rabbi.

In addition to his genius in Talmud and Halachah, Rabbi Shalom quickly gained fame as a mystical healer of body and soul. Many stories are told among the Chasidim relating to the revelation of Eliyahu HaNavi he merited by learning for one thousand nights without sleep, and about his special abilities as a seer of the future. For these abilities he was known as a 'Sar', meaning a powerful minister.

Rabbi Shalom succeeded in creating a movement of thousands of Chasidim, which ranks to this day as one of the largest Chasidic sects. He returned his soul to heaven on the 27th of Elul, 5615 (1855), and his yahrtzeit will occur this Friday.

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Torah and Translation

“Those who know the blast of the shofar”

Rabbi Shalom Rokeiach

Midbar Kadash (Moadim), Rosh HaShanah

Translated by Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

”אשרי העם יודעי תרועה ד' באור פניך
יהלכון” (תהלים פט). הנה אמר דוד לשון
”יודעי תרועה” וצריך טעם למה לא אמר
”אשרי העם שתוקעין”, (ומהו לשון
”יודעי”)?

ונראה לפרש דיודע בספרים דהתרועה מרמז
האיך האיש ישראל צריך לשבר לבבו לפני א
ל-עליון ברוך הוא. ובוזה שמתבייש עצמו
לפני השם ברוך הוא - ודרך המתבייש הוא
אזיל סומקא ואתי חיוורא - ועל ידי זה גם כן
למעלה אזיל סומקא שהוא מדת הדין ואתי
חיוורא שהוא מדת החסד והרחמים. וזה
מדת החסד הוא על ידי הארת אור פניו,
שעל זה מורה נתאדם פני התוקע.

ועל זה מרמז ”אשרי העם יודעי תרועה.”
ונתאדם פני התוקע, ומרמז על ”ד' באור
פניך יהלכון”, היינו אזיל סומקא ואתי
חיוורא.

וזה עיקר תלוי בידיעה. ולכך בשבת שאין
תוקעין גם כן האיש ישראל יודע על מה
שהשופר מרמז, האיך שצריך האיש ישראל
להתבייש עצמו ממעשיו. ולכך אמר דוד
”יודעי תרועה” לכלול בוזה גם כן על שבת
קודש (שנעשה הכל בידיעה לבד). וזה
”בשמך יגילון כל היום” כי כשהקב”ה מאיר
אור פניו נמשך ממילא שמחה וחדוה...

וזה שכתוב ”ובצדקתך ירמו” דיודע דמת
הסתכלות נקרא בשם ”צדיק” כמו שכתוב
”צדק צדק תרדוף” שהוא מצוה לילך אחר
בית דין שידונו אותו לאמיתו. וכך כל איש
ישראל בפרטות צריך להעמיד לו שופטים
ושוטרים לדון אותו האיך להסתכל על
מעשיו, ועל זה מורה ”ובצדקתך” היינו על
ידי מדת הסתכלות שנתת להם על ידי זה
רימו, שנתרומם קרן ישראל.

“Fortunate is the nation that knows the blast of the shofar; Hashem, they walk in the light of Your countenance.” (Tehilim 89:16) David used the words, “Those who know the blast”, and we need to explain why he did not say, “Fortunate is the people who blow the shofar”? (And what is the meaning of ‘knowing’?)

It seems correct to explain that it is known in texts that the shofar blast hints at how a Jew must break his heart in front of G-d. Through this he is embarrassed before Hashem, and usually one who is ashamed loses the redness in his face and becomes pale. Through that, in heaven as well the redness, the trait of strict justice, departs, and whiteness, which is a trait of generosity and mercy, enters. And this trait of generosity comes via the ‘light of His countenance’, as demonstrated by the redness in the face of the one who blows the shofar.

This is hinted in the words, “Fortunate is the nation that knows the blast of the shofar.” And the face of the one blowing the shofar reddens, and hints at “Hashem, they walk in the light of Your countenance,” that is, redness should depart and paleness should come.

This is a principle which depends upon knowledge, so that even on Shabbat, when we do not blow, still the Jew knows what the shofar hints at, how much a Jew should be embarrassed by his deeds. That is why David formulated “know the blast”, to include the holy Shabbat (in which all of this is being done by knowledge alone). And that is the meaning of “In Your name they rejoice every day (ibid. 89:17)”, for when G-d radiates light, happiness and rejoice come automatically...

And the verse continues, “And with Your righteousness they will be exalted”, for it is known that the trait of inspecting is named “tzadik (righteous)”, as it is written, ‘Righteousness, righteousness you shall pursue,’ which commands us to look for a court which will rule in our case correctly. In the same way, each Jew must appoint judges and policemen to judge him, showing how to inspect his deeds. This is hinted in ‘and with Your righteousness’, that is, that by the trait of inspection You have given to them, by that they will rise, for the horn of Israel will be exalted.

For much of human history, animals were used to transport heavy burdens; this continues in many parts of the world today. The Torah presents three instructions regarding helping others with this form of transportation:

- Shemot 23:5 – Remove burdens from animals which cannot carry them;
- Devarim 22:4 – Help animals rise beneath their burdens;
- Devarim 22:4 – Help others to load their animals.

Sefer haChinuch counts these instructions as the Torah’s 80th, 540th and 541st mitzvot, respectively.

Aiding animals sensitizes us to the needs of Hashem’s creations. Further, though, Sefer haChinuch (#80) teaches that these mitzvot urge us to develop heightened sensitivity for the needs of other human beings. We naturally

empathize with those who are in physical pain, but we need to develop compassion for those who fear financial loss, too, and to be moved to act.

The Torah introduces the mitzvah of unloading burdens with, “If you see **your enemy’s** donkey.” Indeed, one who could help either his friend or his enemy is expected to help his enemy first, in order to bend his inclinations to the purpose of helping others. (Bava Metzia 32b)

Per Rabbi Ovadia Yosef (Yechaveh Daat 5:65), we are obligated to aid motorists whose vehicles are not functioning, whether within these mitzvot or as part of the general mitzvah of generosity. Of course, one must also protect one’s own safety.

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Weekly Highlights: Sept 24 – Sept 30 / 21 Elul – 27 Elul

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
שבת Sept. 24				
After hashkama	Adam Friedmann	Parshah Analysis	Clanton Park	
After musaf	R’ Jonathan Ziring	Derashah	The Conservatory	
5:30 PM	R’ Jonathan Ziring	Daf Yomi	BAYT	Rabbi’s Classroom
Before minchah	Adam Friedmann	Pirkei Avot	Shaarei Tefillah	
After minchah	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Gemara Avodah Zarah	BAYT	Simcha Suite
Motzaei Shabbat	Pre-Selichot			
10:30 PM	R’ Jonathan Ziring	He Who Answered our Parents	Bnai Torah	Refreshments 10 PM
11:15 PM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	The Rally of Chaggai	Shaarei Tefillah	
12:30 AM	Adam Friedmann	A Cry Forever Heeded	Clanton Park	
Sun. Sept. 25				
8:45 AM	R’ Josh Gutenberg	Contemporary Halachah	BAYT	
9:00 AM	Adam Friedmann	What does Rosh HaShanah have to do with teshuvah?	Clanton Park	Breakfast; Members only
9:15 AM	R’ Shalom Krell	Book of Shemuel	Associated North	Hebrew
10:00 AM to 11:20 AM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner Mrs. Ora Ziring	Fear, Awe and Loyalty Why fast on Yom Kippur?	Shaarei Shomayim	Refreshments; Women only
Mon. Sept. 26				
8:30 PM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Rosh HaShanah Week 3: Fear, Awe and Loyalty	Shomrai Shabbos	For men only
Tue. Sept. 27				
1:30 PM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Poetry of Rosh HaShanah 3	Shaarei Shomayim	
Wed. Sept. 28				
10:00 AM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Prophets of Sin & Redemption Week 4: Chaggai	Beth Emeth	There is a fee info@torontotorah.com
2:30 PM	R’ Jonathan Ziring	Narratives of Exodus	Location: Contact carolleser@rogers.com	For women
Thu. Sept. 29				
1:30 PM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Shoftim: Yael’s Deed	49 Michael Ct.	For women
Fri. Sept. 30				
10:30 AM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Issues in Onaah	Yeshivat Or Chaim	Advanced