

Toronto Torah

Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Sh'lach

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This week's Toronto Torah is dedicated in honour of our Evening of Tribute honourees
Leora & Michel Grunbaum and Ruthie & Michael Mammon

IF G-d wants us?

Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

While trying to convince the people that entering the land is indeed the right thing to do, and that it can be done, Kalev and Yehoshua use a somewhat strange argument: "If G-d wants us", they propose, "He will bring us to this land, and give it to us – a land which is flowing with milk and honey." (Bamidbar 14:8) Reading this, we are surprised; can it be that the only two righteous spies had doubts about G-d's intention to bring them into the land? What is the meaning of the conditional 'if' opening this sentence?

Commentators suggest different interpretations of this difficult wording:

- Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg, in his *Haketav Vehakabbalah*, claims that the Hebrew word *im* (if) can sometimes mean "in truth". (see Mechilta D'Rabbi Yishmael, BaChodesh 11)
- Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch explains the conditional to mean "If we are deserving, then G-d will take us".
- Rabbi Chaim ibn Attar (Ohr haChaim) suggests that the two righteous spies used this language cunningly, so the people would think that they were adding to the arguments of the other spies, and therefore let them continue speaking.

An innovative fourth approach is hinted at by the Targum Yonatan, who translates these words as follows: "If G-d's Will will be within us, it will bring us to this land..." (the word *banu* understood as "be within us"). This

novel reading turns the tables; instead of understanding the 'if' conditional as referring to G-d, it is now directed at the people: Can we incorporate G-d's Will into our own?

Such an incorporation of G-d's desire is crucial, for without it, one is not really committed to the cause. First, it is just too easy to abandon something if one was never really invested in the first place. But the dangers of non-identification run even deeper. As many studies have shown, confidence depends, to an important degree, on one's sense of being in control of his destiny. For example, it is much easier to drive fast when you are the one sitting in the driver's seat, than if you are watching the speedometer needle climb while seated in the passenger seat – regardless of who is the driver.

It seems to me that with the conditional 'if' the two spies hoped to stimulate real commitment. The sway the ten spies had on the nation, they felt, was made possible by the detachment the people felt from their mission and destination. The Children of Israel did not feel like real agents in this voyage to the promised land; instead, they had been taken out of Egypt, had been given the Torah, and then had been made to travel in the desert. They had not yet taken an active role, making their own decisions, calling their own shots. Yehoshua and Kalev demanded that they do just that – pronounce that they are not merely a trailing cargo dragged after the clouds of glory, but rather they are a people with a sense of destiny and purpose.

Alas, this was too late, and perhaps too little. The people, used to being slaves in Egypt and to being led by G-d and His faithful servant in the desert were not able to shoulder the responsibility of their own destiny. Instead, upon hearing the two spies' report they projected it on G-d. Unprepared to pronounce – or even to contemplate – their own will, they thought they heard Yehoshua and Kalev asking about G-d's Will. Tragically, in their mind, the question was distorted: not "Do you want to join G-d?", but "Does G-d want to join you?" Thus, what should have been an empowering move only contributed to the feelings of doubt and fear.

The end is well known: our forefathers needed to wander for forty years in the desert, partially as a punishment and partially as a long course in self-reliance. (See Guide for the Perplexed 3:32.) But the lesson of the Spies' question is clear for us, in our own generation: "Ask not what G-d can and would do for you, ask what you can do for the service of G-d."

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***The Lonely Man of Faith*
Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik
Doubleday, 1992**

Background of the Book

The Lonely Man of Faith is based on a series of lectures which Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik delivered as part of a program titled "Marriage and Family", sponsored by the National Institute of Mental Health, at Yeshiva University. The ideas developed in these lectures were later published as an essay in the *Tradition* journal in 1965. Subsequently, the essay became popular across wide swathes of the Jewish community and has been published in stand-alone volumes in both English and Hebrew.

Content

Rabbi Soloveitchik rejects a picture of religious life as an easy existence where religious beliefs can comfort and console a spirit engulfed by the difficulties of modern life. Because of the totality of the commitment of the religious person, and the depth of the belief experience, religious life is challenging, and at times reaches the level of a crisis. How does one deal with such a crisis? The present volume provides a glimpse into the mind and

heart of a profound religious personality as he carefully describes his own encounter with religious crisis.

The particular issue at hand is that of loneliness. The man of faith, who enjoys an extremely personal, and consequently exclusive, relationship with G-d is, by definition, alienated from all others by this relationship. Rabbi Soloveitchik describes the experiences, questions, and longings of the religious personality and how they shape the pursuits of this personality. He also counterpoises this worldview with that of the man of dignity or majesty who seeks technical mastery over the world instead of fundamental meaning. These two personalities are framed against the disparate descriptions of the creation of man in the first two chapters of Bereishit. Rabbi Soloveitchik goes on to describe the distinct communal needs of each personality type, and, ultimately, how the contemporary person of faith can feel essentially rejected by modern society.

Style

Unlike the author's other works, the present volume is not heavily laden

with either Judaic or general philosophical sources. Rabbi Soloveitchik states at the outset that his goal is not a textually based presentation but an experientially based one. The result is a work which is accessible even to those with limited exposure to the subject matter. The text is divided neatly and logically into ten sections, and the relatively short length of 106 pages is unimposing.

Conclusion

This work is an important read for many different reasons. It serves as an excellent entrée into the thought of Rabbi Soloveitchik, accustoming readers to his style and themes. More importantly, though, it is a deeply insightful and moving work about the raw core of religious life and its expression in contemporary society. Even if the reader cannot identify directly with the author's experiences, he offers a worthwhile glimpse into the life of today's person of faith.

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Adam is currently teaching The Lonely Man of Faith on Mondays at 7 PM at the Terraces of Baycrest. The class is open to the public.

Israel's Chief Rabbis: *Rabbi Avichai Rontzki*

Yaron Perez

**Rabbi Avichai Nisan (Avi) Rontzki
Born 5712 (1951)
Chief Rabbi of Itamar 1984-1988
Chief Military Rabbi of the IDF 2006-2010**

Rabbi Rontzki, a son of Holocaust survivors, grew up in Haifa in a non-observant home. He attended a military academy in Haifa; in 1969 he was drafted into the IDF, where he served as a paratrooper. During the Yom Kippur War, he was the commanding officer of the Shaked special forces unit, which fought mainly against Egyptian commandos in the south.

In 1976, about two years after completing military service, Rabbi and Mrs. Rontzki – who had served together in the IDF – began a journey to religious observance. Rabbi Rontzki explained, "Nothing dramatic happened to me, I was not attacked by a lion in the jungle. We are talking about a long, deep intellectual process, examining the meaning of life. This intellectual path gained greater meaning during the Yom Kippur War. Being the commanding officer of a military unit in this war triggered deep thoughts." (<http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART1/638/461.html>)

Rabbi Rontzki studied in Yeshivat Mercaz haRav. In 1980, he was among the founders of Yeshivat Elon Moreh, and he also taught in Yeshivat Ateret Kohanim. In 1984, the Rontzki family participated in establishing the *yishuv* Itamar, with Rabbi Rontzki serving as its first Rabbi. He established the first yeshiva of the *yishuv*, and served as Rosh Yeshiva.

In 2006, Rabbi Rontzki was recruited to return to the IDF as

its Chief Military Rabbi. On a Shabbat during Pesach 2008, Rabbi Rontzki was staying on a military base in the South when soldiers were summoned to Aza in pursuit of fleeing terrorists. Rabbi Rontzki accompanied the soldiers. Some accused him of violating Shabbat because he was not an operational soldier, but he responded, "The role Chief Rabbi of the IDF is like that of the Kohen anointed for war." (<http://www.inn.co.il/News/News.aspx/305531>) The job does not end with managing kashrut or Shabbat in the military; the essential role is to support military morale. The Rabbi is an inseparable part of the unit, and he must go with fighters on Shabbat, carry a telephone for emergencies, and so on. During Operation Cast Lead, Rabbi Rontzki's impact was clear; unit rabbis battled alongside the fighters, even as they delivered classes and boosted morale. Rabbi Rontzki published a set of books, *Like Arrows in the Hands of Heroes*, on halachah and military service.

It must be noted that there was harsh criticism of Rabbi Rontzki in the media during his service, with claims of religious coercion and extremism in the military.

In 2014, Rabbi Rontzki ran unsuccessfully for Knesset on the *Bayit Yehudi* list.

In 2016, Rabbi Rontzki volunteered to donate a kidney. Pre-donation medical examinations revealed cancer, and he has been battling the disease since then, undergoing a difficult surgery last month. May he have a speedy recovery.

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Biography The Chida

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

In the long list of brilliant, colourful and prolific figures who have populated the Jewish intellectual scene over the millennia, few stand out with the brilliance, colour and prolificacy of Rabbi Chaim Yosef David Azulai, a.k.a. *Chida*.

Born in Jerusalem in 1727 to a rabbinic family which traced itself to the expulsion from Spain, the Chida studied in the yeshiva of Rabbi Chaim ibn Attar (Or haChaim) and under other great rabbis of the time. In 1755 he became an agent of a yeshiva in Chevron, traveling around Europe and North Africa during the following decades to collect funds. In the course of these travels, the Chida interacted with leading scholars, acted as mediator in community disputes, served as Rabbi for communities in Egypt, Italy and elsewhere, and investigated esoteric manuscripts in remote libraries. At the request of the community in Livorno (Leghorn), Italy, he spent the last 25 years of his life there, serving as Rabbi and writing many books.

The Chida published more than 50 books and wrote at least 70 more which have been published since his passing, on topics from history to mysticism to Tanach to Talmud to Halachah to Haggadah to Pirkei Avot to the weekly parshah. His *Shem haGedolim* catalogues and describes nearly 1,300 scholars from the chain of Jewish tradition, as well as more than 2,000 books. His *Birkei Yosef* is a staple for study of the Shulchan Aruch. His responsa, collected in *Chayim Sha'al, Tov Ayin* and *Yosif Ometz*, are a vital part of today's halachic conversation. His *Chomat Anach* and his smaller commentaries on Tanach offer both traditional commentary and mysticism. His *Maagal Tov* collects his thoughts during his travels.

In 1956, on the 150th anniversary of his passing, the Chida's body was exhumed and brought for burial on Har haMenuchet in Israel by Rabbi Yitzchak Nisim (the Sephardic Chief Rabbi of the time), and Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu.

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Torah and Translation

Using a *Segulah* to Save a Life on Shabbat

The Chida, *Birkei Yosef Orach Chaim 301:6*

Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

מעשה באיש אחד שמצא סגולה אחת בספר כ"י מאדם גדול מהראשונים למי ששתה סם המות לכתוב לו, ותכף מקיא האדם וחוזר לבריאותו. ואירע כמה פעמים שאיזה נער או מר נפש בכעסו שתה סם המות וזה האיש כתב קמיעא זו ועשה והצליח, שהקיא אותו הבריא. ויהי היום ליל ש"ק אירע שנערה ישראלית שתתה סם המות והתחילו לה דבקי מיתה ובאו אצל האיש הלז בליל שבת וקם וכתב הקמיעא לנערה ותכף הקיאה ועמדה על בוריה. וביום השבת נודע בעיר כל אשר נעשה ולעזה עליו המדינה שחילל שבת בשאט נפש וכתב ונתן בידה. והוא השיב דפקוח נפש דוחה שבת. והיו מגמגמים בדבר. אי לזאת שאל שאל האיש אם חטא בזה ואם תמצא לומר שחטא אי עבר אדאורייתא או אדרבנן.

והנה לפום ריהטא היה נראה דלאו שפיר עבד, דאע"ג דהלכה רווחה דמחללין השבת בשביל חולה שיש בו סכנה לעשות לו רפואה, מכל מקום היינו דוקא ברפואה שהוא דרך טבע, אבל בדבר שהוא דרך סגולה לא. והראיה דתנן בשלהי יומא (פ"ח מ"ו. פג א) מי שנשכו כלב שוטה אין מאכילין אותו מחצר כבד שלו ור' מתיא בן חרש מתיר. וכתב הרמב"ם בפ"י המשנה ואין הלכה כר' מתיא ו' חרש במה שהתיר להאכיל לאדם ביום צום הכפורים מחצר כבד כלב שוטה הנשוך, שזה אינו מועיל אלא בדרך סגולה וחכמים סוברין שאין עוברין על המצוות אלא ברפואה לבד, ר"ל בדברים המרפאים דרך טבע וכו', עכ"ל...

אכן ראיתי להרב אדמת קדש ח"א י"ד סי' ו' שכתב בנדונו אי שרי להאכיל תרנגולת נבילה שהוא סגולה לשרטה. והוכיח שם דהרמב"ן והרשב"א פליגי על הרמב"ם ולא שאני להו בין כשהרפואה היא בדרך סגולה לכשהיא בדרך רפואה בטבע, וכתב דהלכתא כוותיהו, והתיר בנ"ד...

אמנם נראה דאפי' לדעת הרמב"ם דאוסר לעבור איסור תורה לרפאת בסגולה, מכל מקום בנדון דידן דעשה מעצמו והצליח במעשיו, דהנערה הקיאה סם המות וחזרה לאיתנה ועלתה בידי הבריא'ה של בתולות ישראל, מודה הרמב"ם דאין בו עון אשר חטא, דהרי פסק הרמב"ם פ"ב (הל' שבת ה"ט"ז) שמע שטבע תנוק בים וכו' נתכוון להעלות דגים והעלה דגים ותינוק פטור. וכל שכן הכא דנתכוון להציל נפש והצילו.

– where he acted without consulting and he succeeded, for the girl vomited the poison and returned to health, so that he successfully healed the daughters of Israel, Rambam will agree that he did not sin. Rambam ruled (Hilchot Shabbat 2:16) that if [a fisherman] heard that a child was drowning [on Shabbat]... And intended to catch fish [with his net] and he brought up fish and the child, he is exempt from liability. This is certainly true here, where he intended to save a life and he did save a life.

Once a man found a *segulah* in a manuscript from a great man from long ago, to write [an amulet] for someone who drank poison, such that he would vomit and return to health. It happened several times that some youth or person of bitter spirit drank poison in a moment of anger, and this man wrote this amulet for him and succeeded, such that they made him vomit and restored him to health. One Friday night, a Jewish girl drank poison and signs of death began. They came to this man on Friday night, and he rose and wrote the amulet for the girl; she vomited immediately, and returned to health. This event became known in the city on Shabbat, and people gossiped that he had violated Shabbat wantonly, writing and giving this to her. He replied that saving lives overrides Shabbat. They were uncertain, and so the man has asked whether he sinned, and if it was a sin then whether it was biblical or rabbinic.

Looking superficially, it seems he did not act correctly. Although the clear law is that we violate Shabbat to heal a dangerously ill person, still, that is specifically for a natural cure, not for a cure via *segulah*. The proof is that Yoma 8:6 says, "If one is bitten by a rabid dog, we do not feed him the dog's liver. Rabbi Matya bar Charash permits it." And Rambam explained, "The law does not follow Rabbi Matya ibn Charash who permitted feeding someone who had been bitten a rabid dog's liver on Yom Kippur, for this works only via *segulah*, and the Sages say we only transgress mitzvot for a cure, meaning for that which cures naturally, etc..."

However, I have seen that Admat Kodesh I Yoreh Deah 6 wrote in his case, whether one may feed someone non-kosher chicken, as a *segulah* for someone who is insane. He demonstrated that Ramban and Rashba disagree with Rambam, and do not distinguish between cures which are *segulah* and which are natural, and he ruled like them, permitting that...

In truth, it appears that even per Rambam, who prohibits violating biblical law to cure with *segulah*, still, in our case

(continued from last week)

There is great risk in licensing members of society to strike each other. The Torah's laws seem to be alert to this, embedding a prohibition against excessive lashes and lashes inflicted beyond the judicial context. In addition, as explained in the Talmud (Makkot 22a-b), the person receiving lashes is evaluated before and during the procedure to determine that the lashes will not be fatal.

Although the Torah states that there are 40 lashes, in practice a court may never give more than 39. Many authorities understand this as a tradition dating back to

Sinai, but Rambam (Hilchot Sanhedrin 17:1) says it is rabbinic legislation ensuring that the court does not overstep its mandate. [See, too, Minchat Chinuch 594:4.]

Numerous commentators, such as Ibn Ezra, Ralbag and HaKtav v'haKabbalah, note that the text says to strike the criminal "according to his wickedness", but then it gives a fixed number of lashes. Ibn Ezra reconciles the two positions by contending that the judges have discretion to strike heavily or softly.

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Weekly Highlights: June 17 — June 23 / 23 Sivan — 29 Sivan

Many of our classes are going on hiatus for the summer, but opportunities remain!

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
שבת June 16-17				
After hashkama	Adam Friedmann	Parshah Analysis	Clanton Park	
Before Avot	R' Jonathan Ziring	Daf Yomi	BAYT	Rabbi's Classroom
After minchah	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Gemara Avodah Zarah	BAYT	
Sun. June 18				
8:45 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Medical Halachah w/CME: Fertility Treatments	BAYT	Simcha Suite Laypeople welcome
8:45 AM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Responsa	BAYT	Hebrew
8:45 AM	R' Josh Gutenberg	Contemporary Halachah	BAYT	Not this week
9:15 AM	R' Shalom Krell	Book of Shemuel (Bet)	Associated North	Hebrew; Rm 206
Mon. June 19				
7:00 PM	Adam Friedmann	Jewish Philosophy: The Lonely Man of Faith	Terraces of Baycrest	Open to the public
Tue. June 20				
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Ezra: Matrilineal Descent?	Shaarei Shomayim	Last week!
8:00 PM	Adam Friedmann	Gemara Arvei Pesachim	Clanton Park	Men
8:00 PM	R' Jonathan Ziring	BAYT Night Beit Midrash	BAYT	University students
Wed. June 21				
10:00 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Jews and Politics 1 of 4: Picking a Candidate	Yeshivat Or Chaim	
2:30 PM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Narratives of Vayikra	carolleser@rogers.com	On summer hiatus
8:00 PM	Adam Friedmann	Why do we do that?	Shaarei Tefillah	
8:45 PM	Yaron Perez	Parshah: הפרשה ואני	Shaarei Shomayim	Hebrew
Thu. June 22				
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Shoftim: The Mission Begins	49 Michael Ct.	For Women
Fri. June 23				
10:30 AM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Ribbit	Yeshivat Or Chaim	Advanced

This week, our Men's Beit Midrash for University Students at Yeshivat Or Chaim offers:
 Sunday 10:00 AM Gemara Chullin, Rabbi Aaron Greenberg
 Sunday 11:00 AM Kuzari, Rabbi Elan Mazer
 Tuesday 8:30 AM, Nefesh haChaim, Rabbi Jonathan Ziring
 Friday 8:30 AM, Yeshayah, Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

This week, our Women's Beit Midrash for University Students at Ulpanat Orot offers:
 Monday 9:30 AM to Noon, Middot haNefesh through Chassidut, Mrs. Ellieza Perez
 Thursday 9:30 AM to Noon, Netivot Shalom on the Parshah, Mrs. Ellieza Perez