

# Toronto Torah

## Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Korach

30 Sivan, 5777/June 24, 2017

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This week's Toronto Torah is dedicated by Annie and Shloimie Romberg  
for the yahrzeit of Annie's father, Isidore Schindelheim, Yisroel ben Yosef v' Malka Frimet z"l

### Let the Earth Open Its Mouth

Rabbi Jonathan Ziring

And Moses said, "By this you shall know that it was the Lord who sent me to do all these things; that they are not from my own heart: if these men die as all men do, if their lot be the common fate of all mankind, it was not the Lord who sent me. But if the Lord brings about something unheard-of, so that the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into Sheol, you shall know that these men have spurned the Lord." Scarcely had he finished speaking all these words when the ground under them burst asunder, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up with their households, all Korah's people and all their possessions. (Bamidbar 16:28-32, modified JPS)

A shocking end to a tragic story! Moshe's plea to G-d, that He not only kill the rebels, but devise a new punishment to that end runs contrary to all we know about Moshe. Moshe had defended the indefensible after the sins of the Golden Calf and the Spies. Even during the Korach rebellion, when G-d wanted to punish the nation along with Korach, Moshe stood up for the people. Yet, for Korach himself he has no mercy. What is it about Korach that angers Moshe in this way?

The key may lie in a fascinating literary point noted by Dr. Aviva Zornberg. (*Moses: A Human Life*) The punishment that Moshe requested was that the "earth open its mouth". This, however, came on the heels of Moshe's desperate attempt to persuade Korach with **his mouth**. As the verse notes,

when **he finished speaking**, when he had **nothing left to say and had to close his mouth**, the earth had to take over. The Midrash identifies this verse as the source that the earth is personified, **that it has a mouth**. (Kohelet Rabbah 1)

From the moment Moshe begins his leadership he struggles with his ability to speak, to communicate, arguing that he is "heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue". (Shemot 4:10) Whether this refers to a stutter or a lack of oratory skill is debated by the commentaries, but the point is clear. As Moshe noted, he was worried that he would not be able to convince the Jews or Pharaoh that he was G-d's messenger. However, G-d assures him: "Who gave man a mouth?!... I will be with your mouth!" (ibid 11-12)

While Aharon does often act as his spokesman, Moshe seems to develop eloquence as the Torah progresses, becoming a master educator. Shemuel David Luzzato (Shemot 4:10) argues that G-d ensured that Moshe slowly grew out of his impediment, developing into the inspiring public speaker who was capable of delivering **thirty days** of moving speeches in Devarim. Several commentaries are so impressed by his oratory that they contend his rhetorical limitations were only in Egyptian, but he was always a gifted speaker. And, the Torah makes clear that whatever limitations Moshe's mouth had - he is the only prophet who spoke to G-d "mouth to mouth."

Thus, from the beginning of Moshe's journey as leader he struggled to ensure that he would communicate G-d's message, enabling him to lead as the faithful servant. And G-d was indeed "with his mouth". However, Korach threatened all of that. He wanted to turn back the clock, and confirm Moshe's worst fear - that the people would not trust his mission. He wanted to take away Moshe's credibility as the conduit of G-d, calling into question G-d's role in taking the Jews out of Egypt, denying the authority of the mitzvot taught by Moshe, and undercutting the inspiration Moshe had offered the people.

After Moshe fails to convince Korach with his last plea to reverse course, he has no choice. "My mouth has failed me, but don't let that destroy all I represent." So, he turned to the earth and asked it to open **its mouth**, to ensure that all would know that Moshe, who spoke mouth to mouth with G-d, had faithfully conveyed His word. He had to let all know that G-d spoke from his throat, and his words were not "from [Moshe's own] heart".

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***Shivchei haBesh"t***

**Reb Dov Ber b'Reb Shemuel of Linitz  
Annotated ed. Avraham Rubinstein  
Reuven Mass, Jerusalem 1991**

**About the Author**

Reb Dov Ber was the *shochet* of Linitz (Ilinty), in Podolia, which is today Ukraine. He was close with the Baal Shem Tov (Besh"t), marrying the daughter of the Besh"t's personal secretary, Reb Alexander - who was also the source for many of the stories appearing in *Shivchei haBesh"t*.

**About the Book**

*Shivchei haBesh"t* is composed of two parts. The first part includes seventeen stories about the ancestry of the Besh"t, and his life before he became known to the public. The second part presents more than 200 stories about the activities of the Besh"t. Reb Dov Ber wrote that his goal was to tell "the wonders of the honour of the light of Israel and its holiness... to inflame the hearts of people for the service of G-d." At first, the book existed in various

manuscripts which circulated among Chasidim. The Baal Shem Tov passed away in 1760; in 1814, the book was published by Rabbi Yisrael Yoffe.

Because little is known about the Besh"t, and the Besh"t did not write any books himself, *Shivchei haBesh"t* is one of the few sources of material about his life. Reb Dov Ber attributed his stories to the testimony of students of the Besh"t, as well as his own testimony. However, *Shivchei haBesh"t* is not a history text; various attempts have been made to analyze the historicity of its stories, and Professor Rubinstein's edition is one of the better-known attempts.

**Professor Rubinstein**

Professor Avraham Rubinstein was born in 1912 in Poland. He moved to Israel in 1935, completing his doctorate in Philosophy at Hebrew University. He became a professor and department head at Bar Ilan University.

Professor Rubinstein's main focus was in Chassidut, Religious Zionism and Eastern European Judaism. In 1983, he completed his research on *Shivchei haBesh"t*, and died suddenly shortly thereafter. His family, along with researchers, arranged his manuscript for publication.

**The Rubinstein Edition**

*Shivchei haBesh"t* has been printed many times, but this was the first academic edition, opening the text to a broad, non-Chassidic readership. Professor Rubinstein dealt with conflicts between various manuscripts, resolving errors which had crept in over time; his primary source was an unpublished Chabad edition. He also attempted to uncover the authentic stories at the heart of versions which appeared with some variation in different manuscripts. The resulting work also includes explanations of Chassidic concepts, clarifications of the text, short biographies of figures who appear in the text, and more.

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**Israel's Chief Rabbis: *Rabbi Yitzchak Yedidiah Frenkel***

**Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner**

**Rabbi Yitzchak Yedidiah Frenkel  
1912 Poland – 1986 Israel**

**Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv-Yaffo, 1973-1986**

**Biography**

Rabbi Yitzchak Yedidiah Frenkel was born to a rabbinical family of Gerrer chasidim in Luntschitz (Leczyca), Poland, in October 1912. As a teen he traveled to Warsaw, where he became a student of Rabbi Menachem Zemba, Rabbi Meir Shapira, Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman and others. Despite his youth, he became a *chavruta* of Rabbi Zemba.

At the age of 19, upon marrying his wife Chanah Leah, Rabbi Frenkel was ordained by some of the greatest Polish rabbis of his day. The Gerrer Rebbe selected him to serve as Rabbi of Rypin, where he was well-received. However, Rabbi Frenkel desired to ascend to Israel; as reported by Rabbi Uri Dasberg (<http://www.zomet.org.il/eng/uploads/1336.pdf>), Rabbi Frenkel rose from his Seder table when everyone sang "Next year in Jerusalem," and asked, "What are we waiting for?" He then applied to the British Mandate for aliyah.

In 1935, Rabbi Frenkel settled in the Florentin neighbourhood in southern Tel Aviv. Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook, Rabbi Ben Zion Uziel and Tel Aviv Chief Rabbi Moshe Amiel appointed him Rabbi of that area, with words of great praise. During nearly 40 years in this position, Rabbi Frenkel sought to unify disparate ethnic and religious communities. He also promoted Shabbat observance, lobbying the British not to compel Jews to work in factories producing equipment for their military on Shabbat.

In 1973, Rabbi Frenkel was elected Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv-Yafo, as well as head of the local rabbinical courts; he held these positions until his passing in 1986. Rabbi Frenkel also wrote halachic works entitled *Derech Yesharah*, which received the Rav Kook Prize for Torah Literature and

numerous other awards. Rabbi Frenkel was named an honorary citizen of Tel Aviv.

**Legacy**

Rabbi Frenkel reached out to Jews of all ethnicities and backgrounds, creating opportunities for communities to grow together. His initiatives, which have since spread throughout Israel, include *hakafot sh'niyot* for the night after Simchat Torah, and a public celebration of *Az Yashir* on the seventh night of Pesach. [Per Rabbi Dasberg, the *Hakafot* initiative was begun in 1945, to replace the Jews of Europe who could not dance on their Simchat Torah.] President Yitzchak Ben-Zvi presented Rabbi Frenkel with a special award recognizing these efforts.

Rabbi Frenkel promoted peace. He tried to unify the Jewish underground groups battling against the British; he was close with Lechi commander Yitzchak Shamir, leading to a relationship decades later between Rabbi Frenkel's son-in-law, Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau, and Prime Minister Shamir. He also prioritized helping needy people. Rabbi Frenkel publicly lobbied the Polish government to allow Jews to emigrate in 1969. In the 1980's, he and Rabbi Moshe Feinstein permitted a widow awaiting *chalitzah* to re-marry, based on an understanding that she would never have married her husband had she known that she would need *chalitzah* from his brother. (Igrot Moshe Even haEzer 4:121)

Memorializing the victims of the Shoah was high on Rabbi Frenkel's agenda; he organized the establishment of monuments for massacred communities. In 1963, he led Kaddish at the site of the Warsaw Ghetto, on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Uprising. He organized burial in Israel for bones found at the time in Treblinka, and he led the drive for a monument in memory of the victims at Babi Yar.

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## Biography

### Rabbi Avraham Price

Adam Friedmann

Rabbi Avraham Price was born in 1900 in Stopenitz, Poland. His father, himself a rabbi, was a student of Rabbi Avraham Borenstein of Sochaczew, a Chassidic Rebbe and leading posek, known for his *Avnei Nezer* books of responsa and halachah. Price's father placed him in Rabbi Borenstein's tutelage at a young age. He studied in the yeshiva at Sochaczew for several years, receiving ordination there in 1919.

Seeking to support himself and his young family, now-Rabbi Price moved to Berlin 1923, setting up and managing his own bank. Financial solvency independent of his rabbinic functions would become a lifelong priority. He worked for a half a day, and spent his evenings learning and teaching in the community. In 1931, Rabbi Price left an increasingly turbulent Berlin for Paris. He would ultimately flee to Toronto in 1937.

In Toronto, Rabbi Price was hired to head Yeshivat Torat Chaim in Toronto, and he became the Rabbi of the Chevra Shas Congregation. During his tenure at the yeshiva he trained hundreds of students, many of whom went on to become prominent community members. He also granted ordination to many students. Notable amongst them was Rabbi Gedaliah Felder, who went on to become the preeminent Orthodox rabbinic figure in Toronto.

Rabbi Price possessed a prodigious mind and a capacity for incisive and very original thinking. Over the course of his life he wrote many works: Two volumes of homiletic discourses, two of general talmudic and halachic analysis, two volumes of commentary on the medieval work *Sefer Mitzvot Gadol* by Rabbi Moshe of Coucy, and three on the *Sefer Chassidim* of Rabbi Yehudah HaChasid from the same era. For his efforts, he was awarded the prestigious Rabbi Kook Award for Torah Literature in 1965. This award, which is granted yearly by the Municipality of Tel Aviv, had never before been awarded to a non-Israeli.

Rabbi Price was also a leading figure in the Jewish community in Toronto. Amongst his notable achievements, aside from teaching, were his work to bring Jewish refugees to Toronto during and after World War II, and his expansion and improvement of the Toronto Eruv.

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## Torah and Translation

### Holiness Achieved Via the Body

Rabbi Avraham Price, Imrei Avraham II Korach #1

Translated by Adam Friedmann

מהראוי לדקדק בדבריו של קרח בהתרעמו על משה: כי כל העדה כלם קדושים ובתוכם הד' ומדוע תתנשאו על קהל הד'. ופירושו: לא אתם לבדכם שמעתם בסיני אנכי הד' אלוֹקִיךְ אלא כל העדה שמעה....

אלא שכבר הסברנו בכמה מקומות שטעותו העקרי של קרח אשר הביאתו לידי חטא ועון הוא כאשר החזיק בשיטה רעיונית "ובתוכם הד'". כלומר, הוא לא האמין שפעולתו של האדם יש להן כל יחס לקדושת בני אדם, אלא הקדושת הד' היא נמצאת "בתוכם" -- בלבותיהם של בני אדם, מבלי משים מה הם מעשיהם. ודת המחייב את האדם למצות מעשיות לא הכיר קרח כלל.

ולכך שחק ובזה את המצוה של ציצית ושאל טלית שכולה תכלת חייבת או פטורה. כלומר, אם הרצון של השי"ת הוא "בהפועל" שיעשה האדם את המצוה להטיל תכלת בציצית שלו, אז אין מקום כלל לשאלתו של קרח, ובודאי גם בטלית שכולה תכלת דרוש מאת האדם שיעשה המצוה. אולם קרח לדעתו "ובתוכם הד'", שאין השם יתברך דורש כלל שהאדם יפעל פעולה מצותית, שחק ובזה את המצוה של ציצית שהיא "בפועל"....

וקרח חלק על משה רבינו ואמר כי כל העדה כלם קדושים ובתוכם הד'. כלומר, הגם שאין קדושתו מפאת התנהגותו ובקיום המצות התלויות בגוף, אבל כל שיש בו אמונה בלבו בלבד הרי הוא קדוש. וזה שאמר לו משה: "בקר ויודע את אשר לו". כלומר, מי הוא המאמין המוצנע, שאין שום אדם מכיר מה שבלבו אלא הוא בעצמו בלבד - את אשר "לו". וגם יודע מי הוא הקדוש, כלומר, שגופו קדוש ומתנהג בקדושה....

כי קדושת האדם קשורה במעשיו הנעשים על ידי גופו.

It would be fitting to carefully read Korach's words in his complaints against Moshe: "Because the entire assembly - all of them - are holy, and within them is G-d, and why do raise yourselves up over the nation of G-d?" (Bamidbar 16:3) Its explanation [according to Rashi]: It was not you alone who heard, at Sinai, "I am Hashem your G-d," rather the entire assembly heard it...

But we have already explained in several places that Korach's essential mistake, which brought him to sin, was that he clung to the ideological position of "G-d is within them (*betocham*)." That is to say that he did not believe that man's actions have anything to do with man's holiness. Rather the holiness of G-d is to be found "within them" - within the hearts of people, without any regard for their actions. Therefore, Korach did not at all recognize a religion which obligates man to observe practical commandments.

He therefore laughed and ridiculed the mitzvah of *tzitzit* and asked if a *tallit* made totally of *techelet* wool would require [placing a *techelet* thread among the *tzitzit*] or not. That is to say, if the will of G-d is for the action, that a person should do the mitzvah of putting *techelet* on his *tzitzit*, then there is no place for Korach's question. Certainly, even a *tallit* that is made entirely of *techelet* requires that one do the mitzvah. And, Korach, by his opinion that "G-d is within them," that G-d does not demand at all that a person engage in commanded actions, laughed and ridiculed the mitzvah of *tzitzit* which is an action...

And Korach disagreed with our master Moshe and said, "Because the entire assembly - all of them - are holy, and within them is G-d." Meaning, that even though his holiness is not a function of his conduct and fulfillment of mitzvot which depend on the body, he is holy so long as he holds faith in his heart. And this is the meaning of what Moshe responded to him (ibid. 16:5): "In the morning, G-d will make known who is for Him" - Meaning, who is the believer in secret, as no one recognizes what is in his heart save himself - "who is for Him." And He (i.e. G-d) will also make known who is the holy one. That is to say, whose body is sanctified, acting with holiness...

Because the holiness of a person is tied to the actions he does with his body.

Devarim 25:4 warns, “Do not muzzle an animal while it is threshing.” This has broad applications; one whose animal is working with edible material may not prevent it from eating from that material. Sefer haChinuch counts this as the Torah’s 596<sup>th</sup> mitzvah.

There is great debate regarding whether the prohibition against cruelty to animals (*tzaar baalei chaim*) is biblical or rabbinic. Clearly, though, this mitzvah – along with other biblical sources, like the mitzvah of aiding an animal with its burdens (Shemot 23:5) and the angelic rebuke of Bilam for striking his donkey (Bamidbar 22:32) – conveys a biblical ideal of protecting animals from pain. And indeed, many great authorities have ruled that protecting animals from pain is a biblical mitzvah. (Sefer haChinuch 440; Nimukei

Yosef Bava Metzia 32b; Mordechai Bava Metzia 263; Rama Choshen Mishpat 272:9; Aruch haShulchan Choshen Mishpat 272:2)

Sefer haChinuch adds that this mitzvah teaches us general kindness, “to choose righteousness and stick to it, pursuing generosity and mercy.” He adds, “When we accustom ourselves to do this even for animals, which were created only for service, to have mercy on them and give them a portion of their own labour, then the soul will accustom itself to benefit people and protect them, and not to cheat them of anything they deserve, etc.”

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**Weekly Highlights: June 24 – June 30 / 30 Sivan – 6 Tammuz**

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

| Time                  | Speaker                       | Topic   | Location   | Special Notes             |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|---|--|---------------------------|
| <b>שבת June 23-24</b> | <b>Rosh Chodesh Day 1</b>     |   |  |                           |
| <b>After hashkama</b> | Adam Friedmann                | Parshah Analysis  | Clanton Park   | <b>Not this week</b>      |
| <b>After minchah</b>  | R’ Mordechai Torczyner        | Gemara Avodah Zarah: Why does G-d let idols exist?      | BAYT   | <b>Simcha Suite</b>       |
| <b>Sun. June 25</b>   | <b>Rosh Chodesh Day 2</b>     |   |  |                           |
| <b>8:45 AM</b>        | R’ Jonathan Ziring            | Responsa  | BAYT   | <b>Hebrew</b>             |
| <b>8:45 AM</b>        | R’ Josh Gutenberg             | Contemporary Halachah                                   | BAYT   |                           |
| <b>9:15 AM</b>        | R’ Shalom Krell               | Book of Shemuel (Bet)                                   | Associated North   | <b>Hebrew; Rm 206</b>     |
| <b>Mon. June 26</b>   |                               |   |  |                           |
| <b>7:00 PM</b>        | Adam Friedmann                | Jewish Philosophy: The Lonely Man of Faith              | Terraces of Baycrest   | <b>Open to the public</b> |
| <b>8:30 PM</b>        | <b>R’ Jonathan Ziring</b>     | <b>Frontiers in Biotech 1: Choosing a Baby’s Gender</b> | <b>Shomrai Shabbos</b>   | <b>For men</b>            |
| <b>Tue. June 27</b>   |                               |   |  |                           |
| <b>8:30 AM</b>        | R’ Mordechai Torczyner        | Yeshayah  | Yeshivat Or Chaim  | <b>University men</b>     |
| <b>1:30 PM</b>        | R’ Mordechai Torczyner        | Ezra and Nechemiah                                      | Shaarei Shomayim   | <b>On summer hiatus</b>   |
| <b>8:00 PM</b>        | Adam Friedmann                | Gemara Arvei Pesachim                                   | Clanton Park   | <b>Men</b>                |
| <b>Wed. June 28</b>   |                               |   |  |                           |
| <b>10:00 AM</b>       | <b>R’ Mordechai Torczyner</b> | <b>Jews and Politics 2 of 4: Ethical Taxation</b>       | <b>Yeshivat Or Chaim</b>   |                           |
| <b>2:30 PM</b>        | R’ Jonathan Ziring            | Narratives of Vayikra                                   | <a href="mailto:carolleser@rogers.com">carolleser@rogers.com</a> | <b>On summer hiatus</b>   |
| <b>8:00 PM</b>        | Adam Friedmann                | Why do we do that?                                      | Shaarei Tefillah   |                           |
| <b>8:45 PM</b>        | Yaron Perez                   | Parshah: הפרשה ואני                                     | Shaarei Shomayim   | <b>Hebrew</b>             |
| <b>Thu. June 29</b>   |                               |   |  |                           |
| <b>1:30 PM</b>        | R’ Mordechai Torczyner        | Shoftim: Shimshon                                       | 49 Michael Ct.   | <b>Not this week</b>      |
| <b>Fri. June 30</b>   |                               |   |  |                           |
| <b>10:30 AM</b>       | Beit Midrash                  | Ribbit  | Yeshivat Or Chaim  | <b>Not this week</b>      |

**Coming up!**

**8:30 AM Sunday July 2, Yarchei Kallah, with Breakfast**

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