

# Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Miketz

27 Kislev 5771/December 4, 2010

Vol.2 Num. 14

## Miriam's Kick

R' Mordechai Torczyner

Rav Yitzchak Nissenbaum was a student of Rav Chaim Volozhin, as well as the Netziv, in the last decades of the Volozhin Yeshiva. He was one of the great talmidei chachamim to support the early Mizrachi movement, until his murder in the Warsaw Ghetto. In his writings on Chanukah (מועדים, pg. 134) Rav Nissenbaum noted that three women represent three groups of Jews from the Hellenic period:

- Yehudit represents the nationalists; with her courage and intelligence she saved her city and nation from destruction;
- The mother of seven sons represents the pious population; her personal piety, and the way she educated her children, serves as a model for all;

Miriam bat Bilgah represents the *mityavnim*, who accepted the Greek demands and absorbed the Greek culture.

We are accustomed to learning from the first two of these women, but I believe we should also learn from the third.

The gemara (Succah 56b) presents the story of Miriam bat Bilgah, who was part of a family of kohanim, saying that she changed her religion and wedded a Greek officer. When the Greeks entered the Beit haMikdash, she kicked at the top

of the altar with her sandal and declared, "How long will you consume the money of Israel without standing for them in their time of trouble!?" In retaliation, the Jewish leadership disabled her family's shechitah-station in the Beit haMikdash, and they sealed her family's storage area for their equipment. The sages challenged this action, asking, "But do we punish a man because of his daughter?" Abbaye explained that we assume that children's speech comes from parental influence, and that we even punish the entire family because of the principle, "Woe to the wicked, and woe to his neighbor."

The gemara's emphasis upon Miriam's last action is enlightening; when Miriam left Judaism the authorities did not punish her family, and when Miriam married a Greek officer they did not punish her family. It was only with Miriam's kick that the leadership responded. What lesson can we learn from this kick, and the harsh response?

Miriam's kick is reminiscent of another kick, also reported in the gemara (Avodah Zarah 3a). The sages describe an ultimate time when Gd will summon the nations to judgment, and they will argue that had they been given the Torah, they would have embraced its mitzvot. Gd will respond, "I have an inexpensive mitzvah, named Succah. Build a Succah." Immediately each family will construct a succah,

and then Gd will test them by producing the great heat of a mid-summer sun. Those who had volunteered for this mitzvah will kick their succot and depart.

That gemara then challenges Gd's demanding standard for these non-Jewish nations, pointing out that Jews also leave the succah in inclement conditions. They then clarify that the failure is not in **departing** the succah; the failure is in **kicking** the succah.

Kicking is an act of great disrespect; one kicks a stone, or something in the gutter that is unworthy of one's contact. Further, kicking the succah demonstrates that their only investment in the mitzvah is for its reward; in the absence of reward, the mitzvah is worthless to them.

The same applies to Miriam bat Bilgah. Certainly, adopting Greek religious practices and marrying a Greek officer betrayed her heritage – but it could be rationalized as attraction to the wealth and power of the occupying nation. Only her kick of the altar, and her denunciation of the Divine for declining to reward our korbanot, displayed utter disdain for the Jewish Gd. This triggered the harsh communal response toward her, and toward her family, in those dark days before the redemption of Chanukah's miracles.

The gemara regarding Miriam includes a positive note, pointing out that Yesheav, the family of kohanim who were neighbors of the Bilgah clan, profited from the decline of Bilgah. Normally, we say, "Woe to the wicked and woe to their neighbors," and so Yesheav, too, should have suffered! However, because the family of Yesheav was exposed to the influence of Miriam's family and remained righteous, they were rewarded for their steadfast loyalty to Gd in those troubled pre-Chanukah times. At this time of our own Chanukah, may all of us be similarly rewarded for remaining strong, and may we see miracles of our own.

## Parshah Questions

Dovid Zirkind

Answers are provided on page two.

- To whom was Reuven referring, when he said *את שני בני תמית* (Baal HaTurim Bereishit 42:37)
- What does the word *והמש* mean? (Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Rashbam, and Radak to Bereishit 41:34)
- Why did Yosef not contact his father? (Ramban Bereishit 42:8, Midrash Tanchuma Yashan p. 66, Daat Zekeinim MiBaalei haTosafos Bereishit 42:1)
- For children: What can be learned from the words *נער עברי עבד*? (Rashi Bereshit 41:12)

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This Toronto Torah is dedicated in memory of Freda Garten (Goldman) פריידל בת מרדכי הכהן, loving mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, by Fay and Mendy Goldman, Tamara, Danny and Reece Goldman, and Jeff Goldman, on her first yartzheit. May her neshama have an aliyah.

**To whom was Reuven referring when he said, *את שני בני תמית*?**

- Although ultimately Reuven did ensure that Binyamin was brought home, as he promised Yaakov, the **Baal Haturim** suggests that the power of this statement was not to be undone. Reuven's sons would not die from his promise, but Datan and Aviram, his grandchildren, would rebel against Moshe's leadership and pass away as a result. The Baal Haturim concludes that the words "*et shinei*" have the same numerical value as "*eilu Datan va'Aviram*".

**What does the word *והמש* mean? (41:34)**

- **Rashi** – Yosef was encouraging Pharaoh to work zealously during the seven years of plenty. The same term is used during the exodus from Egypt to describe how the Jewish people left hastily (Shemot 13:18).
- **Ibn Ezra/ Radak**– As a tax, Pharaoh should collect one-fifth of all produce during the years of plenty to store for the years of famine. According to this definition, *v'chimeish* comes from the same root as the number five. **Rashbam** notes that until this point it was common for Pharaoh to collect one-tenth of the produce and Yosef was suggesting that the tax be doubled to one-fifth. In Parshat Vayigash (47:26) Yosef implemented this tax for the future, even after the famine concluded.

**Why did Yosef not contact his father?**

- **Ramban (42:9)** – The brothers unknowingly stood before Yosef and bowed to him, which seemed like a fulfillment of Yosef's earlier dreams. But

as they bowed, the Torah tells us that Yosef remembered his first dream and how he was shown that all of the brothers would be present, and at this stage Binyamin was still not with them. Thus, Yosef realized that before he could send for Yaakov, which he saw as a fulfillment of the second dream, he needed to make his first dream come true and bring Binyamin down to Egypt as well. Had Yosef not felt it was necessary to realize those dreams this would have been considered a terrible lack of *kibud av*.

- **Daat Zekeinim (42:1)** – At times in this story Yosef takes specific measures to ensure that the Egyptians in the palace not discover his own identity and that of his brothers. This may be part of a pact (*cherem*) that not only included the brothers, but G-d himself, that they would never tell their father.
- A second possibility is that Yosef was waiting for an opportune time. First, he was a slave and it would have hurt his father to discover him in such a position. Then Yosef ended up in prison and the same concern arose. Finally, Yosef became a leader in Egypt and he feared that his father would never believe a message that his missing son was a leader of such a powerful country. In addition, he was certain his brothers would have feared for their lives and run. This, too, would have caused their father tremendous pain. Therefore, Yosef waited until he had the brothers together and they could return to Yaakov, reassure him that Yosef was alive and bring him

peacefully to Egypt.

**For children: What can be learned from the words (41:12) *נער עברי עבד*?**

**Rashi** teaches us that even when the wicked do something proper, they do it in a wicked way. The butler stood before Pharaoh and told him that Yosef was capable of interpreting his dream, but he presented Yosef in a degrading light: Yosef is a child, he is an *Ivri* and he is a slave.

### Torah In Translation Tzlach, Drashot 34 (Bio on pg. 3)

Why is the observance of Chanuka so fundamentally different than that of Purim? On Purim, beyond the mitzvah of reading the Megilla, the day was established as a day of Simcha, Mishteh and Seudah. Chanuka, on the other hand, has none of these, save the lighting the candles.

Furthermore, Since the Yevanim contaminated many items in the Mikdash, for example, the "Solet L'minachot" (flour for the flour offerings) and the "Yayin L'nisachim" (wine for the wine libations), why was the "Shemen" (oil) of the menorah singled out by Hashem for the "Nes" (miracle) of Chanuka?

In order resolve these difficulties, we must understand the goal of the Yevanim. Their intention was to defile the holy Beit HaMikdash by using it to serve their gods. As a result of their acts of contamination, the Greeks converted the Mikdash into a house of Idolatry and caused the Shechinah (Divine presence) to depart from the Mikdash. Would the Shechinah ever return? There was room for despair.

Through the "Shemen" of the menorah, Almighty God, in His magnificent compassion, produced a wonderful signal that the Shechinah would indeed return to the Mikdash. What did the menorah symbolize? The Gemara in Shabbat (22b) reveals the unique essence of the menorah service: "Edut he liba'ey olam she'hashechinah shorah b'Yisrael", the menorah testified to the world that G-d's Divine Presence rests upon Klal Yisrael. No other dimension of the Mikdash service embodies this testimony. This explains why "hashgacha" (Divine Providence) singled out the menorah for the "nes" of Chanukah. It was this miracle that demonstrated that the Yevanim lacked the ability to remove the Divine Presence from Klal Yisrael.

The Gemara (Shabbos 22b) states:

"The menorah is testimony to all that the Divine Shechinah rests amongst the people of Israel. What is the testimony? Rav declared, it is the Ner Ma'aravi (the western candle) which was lit first and used to light the other candles, and despite the fact that it had the exact quantity of oil as the rest, a miracle transpired and it lasted as long as the rest."

*Continued on the back page*

## 613 Mitzvot: Mitzvah 68, 343, 572, 573 Interest-free loans

Jews are not permitted to engage in loans with other Jews, if the loans involve an interest charge; we may do this only with people who are not Jewish. (A separate rule limits interest which may be charged to non-Jews; see Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 159.)

Charging interest is economically reasonable; in a true 0% loan, even the lender who is repaid on time still loses the opportunity cost as well as inflationary changes for the period of the loan. For one's family, though, one is

expected to transcend the norm and extend a loan without charging interest.

A borrower is not entitled to forgive his right to an interest-free loan; he has no more right than the lender to dissolve the bonds of family that connect every Jew. Indeed, the mishnah (Bava Metzia 5:11) rules that the lender, borrower, guarantor, witnesses and scribe are all guilty for enabling this loan, and this is cited by the Rambam (Hilchot Malveh v'Loveh 4:2) and the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 160:1; see Shach Yoreh Deah 160:1 regarding the scribe).

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Rav Yechezkel ben Yehuda Landau was an influential authority in halacha and a great leader of his people. He is best known for his work of responsa, the Noda BiYehudah. In 1755, he was appointed Rav of the community of Prague, and established a Yeshiva there. Rav Avraham Danzig, author of Chayei Adam, is amongst his best known students.

Rav Yechezkel Landau was highly esteemed not only by the Jewish community, but also by governmental authorities. Thus, in addition to his rabbinical tasks, he was able to intercede with the government when anti-Semitic measures were introduced. Though not opposed to secular knowledge, he objected to "that culture which came from Berlin", in particular Moses Mendelssohn's translation of the Torah.

Although he authored many works, including the Dagul Mervavah on the Shulchan Aruch and the Tziyun le-Nefesh Chayah (abbreviated as Tzlach, named in reference to his mother, whose name was Chayah) on the Talmud, the Noda BiYehudah is famous for his main work which is considered to this day one of the principal sources of Jewish law. Famous decisions include those limiting autopsy to prevent a clear and present danger. This collection of responsa is esteemed by Rabbis and scholars, both for its logic and its independence with regard to the rulings of other Achronim, as well as its adherence to the writings of the Rishonim.

An episode in his life will serve to illustrate Rav Yechezkel's unique leadership and wisdom.

Rav Yechezkel once noticed a small gentile boy of about ten years old, who stood at the corner of a street with his head buried in his hands, crying bitterly. When Rav Yechezkel saw the boy sobbing, he felt compassion for him.

"What is it, my son?" he asked, "Why are you crying?" "I'm an orphan, my mother died, and my father got remarried to a bad woman who treats me terribly. Every morning when it's still dark outside, she wakes me up and gives me a basket full of rolls to sell. If I don't sell every single roll, she beats me."

"Today, I sold all the rolls, but when I was about to go home, I couldn't find my money. Now I don't know what to do. If I go back home, my stepmother will beat me."

Rav Yechezkel asked him, "How much money did you lose?" "Fifty gulden," the boy answered.

"And He has compassion for all His creatures," Rav Yechezkel murmured to himself, quoting Tehillim (145:9). He pulled some money out of his pocket, and to the boy's astonishment, he counted out fifty gulden and pressed them into the boy's hand.

Many years passed, and Rav Yechezkel had completely forgotten about this episode. Then

one day, on Chol Hamoed Pesach, there was a knock at the door of his house. When Rav Yechezkel's wife opened the door, she saw a young gentile who said that he wanted to talk with Rav Yechezkel privately. She wondered what this gentile could want from the Rav, and invited him in. When the gentile came before Rav Yechezkel, the gentile asked, "Do you remember me?"

Rav Yechezkel looked hard at the young man, but admitted, "No, I'm afraid I don't."

"I am the orphan you helped many years ago," the young man said. "To this day, I remember how you gave me money. Now I've come to return the favour. I want to tell you something very important that can save the Jews from a great catastrophe."

"What is it?" asked Rav Yechezkel apprehensively. "Last night, there was a meeting of all the bakers at my house. The meeting was led by the priest and my stepmother. They came up with a plan to destroy the Jews in Prague. They know that every year, on the day after Pesach, the Jews buy bread from the gentile bakers. The bakers have decided to poison the bread and to kill all the Jews."

When Rav Yechezkel heard this, his face turned white. But he immediately strengthened himself, and told the young man, "I thank you from the bottom of my heart for coming to me and telling me of this terrible threat to the Jews. Your reward from Heaven will be very great."

For a long time, Rav Yechezkel sat in his room, sunken in thoughts of how he could save the Jews. Finally, he came up with a plan. He called his gabbai and told him to announce that Rav Yechezkel would be giving a derashah that evening in the shul, and that everyone—man, woman and child—must come to hear him speak. The gabbai set out immediately to make the announcement. That evening, the shul was completely packed. Everyone was curious to learn what was so urgent that the Rav had called such an unusual meeting.

Rav Yechezkel stepped onto the platform wrapped in his tallis, and in a sober voice declared, "My fellow Jews, this year there has been a great mistake in the calendar. Pesach should have begun one day later than it did. Therefore, the last day of Pesach will be one day later than we thought. So I forbid everyone to eat chametz on the day after Pesach, because that is really the last day of Pesach."

The Jews listened to Rav Yechezkel in astonishment. But if this was what Rav Yechezkel decided, then they had to follow his decision. And so everyone agreed to extend Pesach one more day.

That morning, the gentile bakers came to

the Jewish ghetto with wagons loaded with warm loaves of bread, as they did every year. They were sure that within a few hours they would sell all their bread to the Jews. But hours passed, and they didn't even sell a single one of the loaves they had prepared for the Jews. The bakers grew tired, the sun burned hotly overhead, and they couldn't understand why no one came to buy their bread. Finally, their patience ran out. They went up to a passing Jew and asked him how come no one was buying bread from them.

"Our Rav told us not to eat bread this year on the day after Pesach," the Jews exclaimed.

The gentile bakers were outraged. They hurried to the local police chief, where they registered a complaint that the Rabbi was preventing them from making a living.

The police chief noted their complaint and ordered that the Rabbi be brought to explain himself.

Rav Yechezkel soon was brought before the police chief. Calmly, he said, "Sir, before I answer the bakers, I would like to make sure that their bread is fit to be sold to the Jewish community. Let us give a dog some of the bread to eat and see what happens."

When the bakers heard this, they looked at each other in fright and wanted to flee, but the police chief commanded that Rav Yechezkel's request be fulfilled immediately. A dog was brought in, and a piece of bread was thrown before it. The dog ate the bread, and after a few minutes, he began to bark and writhe, until he fell dead to the ground. It was clear that the loaves of bread had been poisoned!

The police chief immediately ordered the bakers arrested. Under questioning, they revealed that they had entered into a plot led by the priest and a few other people, and all of them were punished. When the Jews learned of the plot and of how they had been saved, they praised Rav Yechezkel's brilliance. But how had he learned of the terrible plot? The matter remained a secret. As for Rav Yechezkel himself, he recognized what a great miracle Hashem had performed for His people. Rav Yechezkel thanked Hashem for having planted in his heart - so many years ago - the desire to help the gentile orphan. Now he saw fulfilled the words of Shlomo Hamelech, the wisest of all men, who had said, "Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days, it will come back to you."



Yeshiva University Torah miTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov  
and Clanton Park Synagogue  
present

## The Light of Chanukah

Sunday December 5, 4<sup>th</sup> day of Chanukah  
at Clanton Park Synagogue  
11 Lowesmoor Ave.

9:30 AM Light Refreshments

9:45 AM

### The Miracle of the Oil or the Miracle of the Battle?

Rabbi Yehoshua Weber

Mara d'Asra, Clanton Park Synagogue

10:15 AM

### The Failures and Fantasies of Leadership

#### "BaYamim haHeim baZman haZeh"

Rabbi Yaakov Neuburger

Rosh Yeshiva, RIETS / Yeshiva University

Mara d'Asra, Congregation Beth Abraham, Bergenfield, New Jersey

*Shacharit minyanim at 7:30, 8:15 and 9:00 AM*

This program is for men and women

For more information: 416-781-1777 or info@torontotorah.com



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BEIT MIDRASH

#### Torah In Translation—Continued from page 2

Two miracles took place at the time of Chanuka. The first was that of the Ner Ma'aravi which lit longer than all the other candles. Although this was a miracle from the past, it had terminated when the Greeks entered the Mikdash and defiled it. With the triumph of the Chashmonaim, this miracle was restored. The second miracle, which began on the second day of Chanuka, was the miracle of the small "Pach HaShemen" which lasted for a full seven days beyond its natural capacity. This answers the famous question as to why Chanuka is celebrated for eight days. The first day of Chanuka reflects the miracle of the Ner Ma'aravi, whereas the rest of Chanuka represents the miracle of the Pach HaShemen.

Now we can answer our first question. The miracle of Chanuka precipitated the spiritual joy of experiencing the Shechinah. What is the nature of that joy?

The braisa (Brachos 17a) teaches: "The world to come is not a physical world that consists of eating and drinking, but rather a world in which the righteous sit with crowns upon their heads and enjoy the splendor of the Shechinah."

It would be inappropriate to dedicate the days of Chanuka to Mishteh and physical pleasure. Purim, by contrast, celebrates the physical salvation of the Jewish people, "mi'mita le'chaim", and it is fitting to celebrate the day with Mishteh and Seudah.

Translator's addition: In the light of the Tz'lach's insight that Chanuka is a declaration of the eternal relationship between Shechinah and the people of Israel, we can answer another question: Why was the celebration of the eight days of Chanukah established to commemorate the miracle of the "Pach Hashemen"? Wasn't the military victory a far more significant miracle? [See Chanukah To- Go, 5771, pp. 4-6]

R' Azarya Berzon

## Community News

- Mazal tov to Eli and Renee Rubinstein on the engagement of their daughter, Hadassah, to Jeremy Pertman.
- Mazal tov to beit midrash member, Itamar and Naomi Zolberg, on the birth of a baby boy.

## Schedule for the Week of December 4, 27 Kislev

### Shabbat, December 4

6:30PM Parent/Child Learning, Shaarei Shomayim

### Sunday, December 5

9:15AM Itamar Zolberg: "Teme'im b'Yad Tehorim" b'Ivrit, Zichron Yisrael

9:30 AM The Light of Chanukah: See flyer above

### Monday, December 6

8:45PM R' Meir Lipschitz: Gemara Beitzah Chaburah, Shaarei Shomayim

### Tuesday, December 7

1:10PM Russell Levy, Masechet Pesachim (advanced), Wolfond Center Lunch served, followed by mincha

1:30PM R' Mordechai Torczyner: Yoel, at Shaarei Shomayim, with Mekorot

7:30PM R' Meir Lipschitz: The Thought of R' Shlomo Aviner, 17 Meadowbrook #2, Women

8:00PM Dovid Zirkind: Interactive Parshah Discussion, Westmount Learning Centre

8:30PM R' Mordechai Torczyner: Minchat Chinuch at Clanton Park: How much money for a mitzvah?

### Wednesday, December 8

9:15AM R' Mordechai Torczyner: Hosheia, 239 Franklin Women Babysitting provided

9:00PM R' Mordechai Torczyner: Responsa that changed Jewish History: The Response to Reform, Week 9, BAYT

### Thursday, December 9

8:00PM R' Netanel Javasky: Landmark Halachic Responsa, Bnai Torah

### Friday, December 10/Shabbat, December 11

Shabbaton at Shaarei Shomayim. See website for details.