

# Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Ki Tavo

18 Elul, 5771/September 17, 2011

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## The Blessing of a Stiff Neck

R' Mordechai Torczyner

*Am k'sheh oref*, the Divine description of Jews as a "stiff-necked people", was not originally intended as a compliment. It certainly was not a prescription, either! Rather, it was a statement of Divine frustration, *kaviyachol*, an epithet used by G-d three times over in the wake of the Golden Calf to justify His decision to separate from the Jewish people:

- "They are a stiff-necked people; leave me alone and I will rage against them and destroy them" (Shemot 32:9-10).
- "I will not ascend among you, for you are a stiff-necked people and I might consume you en route" (Shemot 33:3).
- "You are a stiff-necked people; in a moment I will ascend among you and destroy you" (Shemot 33:5).

Nonetheless, the sages of the Talmud saw great value and Divine purpose in our stubborn strength. They described three brazen entities – Jews among humanity, dogs among animals, and roosters among birds - and they said of this brazen character, "Had the Jews not received the Torah, no nation could have stood before them." (Beitzah 25b; see also Maharsha there) Brash *chutzpah* can undermine our internal spiritual life, and in commerce among humanity it brands us as uniquely difficult, but it has been key in our Torah commitment and instrumental in our survival. No matter how hard we are

hit, no matter how many ways we are hit, we keep moving forward.

A stiff neck has been the story of the Jew from the start. From the wilderness Jew who heard a Divine death sentence and yet marched forward to Canaan, to the Zevulunite who was vassal to the Canaanites and yet rallied to the call of Devorah and Barak, to the Aragonese Jew who was forced to sit through Christian sermons but raised his children to perform mitzvot, and so on through the centuries to our own day, Jewish history has not a trail of tears but a monument to courage. A frustrated Martin Luther wrote, "But the Jews are so hardened that they listen to nothing; though overcome by testimonies they yield not an inch" (*Table Talk*, Hazlet translation). He meant this as an insult, but we wear it as a badge far more native to our identity than the yellow stars and red hats forced upon us by Muslim and Christian governments from the ninth century CE forward.

This week we read the *tochachah*, a warning of horrific punishments which may befall the Jewish nation, should they depart from the service of G-d. Over the centuries, we have had many opportunities to compare our suffering to these Mosaic predictions. Whether the massacre of Jews by Roman forces two thousand years ago, the slaughter by Mohammed's armies at Khaibar in the seventh century, the pillaging of Jewish communities during the Crusades, the

numerous expulsions from European lands in the Middle Ages, the Chmielnicki Massacres of 1648-1649, or the horrors of the Holocaust, we have endured not only the explicit *tochachah*, but also every inconceivable manifestation of its ultimate curse: "Gd will also bring upon you every ailment and every blow which is not recorded in this scroll of the Torah." As Prime Minister Begin noted to President Carter, in the Holocaust we were not merely decimated, we were tertiated– and we suffered such high ratios of destruction multiple times in our history.

Nonetheless, G-d designed the Jew with a boldness which cannot be cowed. It is a strength tailored to the demands of the Torah, to the high standards of personal conduct and spiritual achievement set by Avraham and Sarah. It is a brashness which makes us dangerous, but which also makes us capable of great heights. This is the double-edged sword of our stiff neck.

As we prepare to approach our Creator on the Day of Judgment, we would do well to look at our own indomitable streak and decide how best to harness that strength. Our brash *chutzpah* is meant not to sow discord among ourselves and undermine our service of G-d, but to defend against descent and to fuel our rise. Elul is the time to investigate the way we deploy our stiff neck, and correct our course as needed.

The *tochachah* appears twice in the Torah, once in Parshat Bechukotai and once in this week's reading of Ki Tavo. In the former it ends positively, with an invocation of G-d's covenant with our ancestors. The second edition seems to end depressingly differently, though, with a prediction that we will be sold as slaves and "*ein koneh*", "there will be no buyer." However, Rav Betzalel Zolty saw in this ending an upbeat note. He contended that the clause should be read, "there **can be** no buyer." A Jew, even imprisoned and enslaved, always retains his freedom. (Hillel Goldberg, Tradition 38:2) May this ever be so.

[torczyner@torontotorah.com](mailto:torczyner@torontotorah.com)

## Parshah Questions

R' Meir Lipschitz

- What is the problem of not serving Hashem "*meiouv kol*"? (Rashi and Ibn Ezra to Devarim 28:47)
- Why does the Torah state that the first fruits must be brought to the Kohen "*asher yihyeh bayamim haheim*", "of that day"? (Rashi, Ramban, Ibn Ezra, Seforno, Chizkuni and Malbim to Devarim 26:3, Rashi to Devarim 17:9, and Rosh HaShana 25b)
- Who or what is the Torah discussing when it states, "*Arami oveid avi*"? (Onkelos, Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Rashbam, Chizkuni, Seforno, Ohr HaChaim, Netziv, and Chanukat HaTorah to Devarim 26:5)
- For children: Why was Moshe happy about the complaint of Bnei Yisrael in this week's parshah? (Rashi to Devarim 29:3)

[meir.lipschitz@gmail.com](mailto:meir.lipschitz@gmail.com)

## What is the problem of not serving Hashem *meirov kol*?

- Rashi says that the sin was that even when they had an abundance of good, the people nonetheless did not serve Hashem properly.
- Ibn Ezra reads it to mean that the people were distracted from their service of Hashem due to their many desires.

## Why does the Torah state that the first fruits must be brought to the Kohen "of that day?"

- Rashi is perplexed by the apparently superfluous nature of this statement, and asks rhetorically, "To whom else would the fruit be brought? A Kohen of a different generation?" He therefore explains that the fruit must be brought to the Kohen of the day even though he may not be as great as his predecessors. All you have is the Kohen of your generation, as he is. [See also Rashi's comment in 17:9 about the judges of Israel.]
- Ramban claims that this means that the first fruits must be given to the Kohen whose weekly shift it is, and that we may not bring along another Kohen with us, in order to give the fruit to him.
- Ibn Ezra sees this as a

practical statement which teaches that we only have a responsibility to bring the first fruit in the days when we can give them to the Kohen Gadol.

- Seforno claims that even if the Kohen of the day is not as great as others, he must be addressed respectfully since he is the "landlord" of that place, the Beit HaMikdash.
- Chizkuni understands this phrase in a manner similar to the Ramban; he suggests that it means that we may not wait with our produce until it is the week of our preferred Kohen, but rather they must be brought right away and given to the Kohen of that day.

## Who or what is the Torah discussing when it states, *Arami oveid avi*?

- Onkelos reads the phrase to mean "Lavan, the Aramean, sought to destroy my father (Yaakov)."
- Rashi sees in the phrase the kindness that Hashem showed to the Jewish people, when He saved Yaakov from Lavan who sought to destroy us before we even came to exist.
- Ibn Ezra believes the phrase refers to Yaakov himself, and his poor, or destroyed, state when he was living in ארם.

- Rashbam offers a third possibility, reading the phrase in reference to Avraham who was originally an ארמי, and who was exiled from there.

- Chizkuni reads the phrase as Ibn Ezra does, but also notes the need to rearrange the words due to the grammatical difficulty presented by his reading.

- Seforno also believes that the phrase refers to Yaakov, but not to his poor nature. It refers to the fact that since Aram was not his home, he was not able to father generations that were fit to inherit the land of Israel while living in Aram.

- Ohr HaChaim presents a novel approach, suggesting that *Arami* refers to the *yetzer hara*, evil inclination, who is a trickster (the Hebrew for trickster is ארמאי, which uses the same letters as ארמי). He suggests two possibilities as to "avi", "my father", the target of the evil inclination's efforts: Adam, who was tricked and whose exalted status was destroyed by the *yetzer hara* in the form of the snake, or our own G-dly spirit, which can be called the father of the body.

- Chanukat HaTorah posits that the phrase refers to the language of the Arameans – Aramaic – its introduction into the Torah (Bereishit 31:47), and the result of that event in Yaakov's life.

## For children: Why was Moshe happy about the complaint of the Bnei Yisrael in this week's Parsha?

Rashi explains that after Moshe gave, or entrusted, the Torah to the Levi'im, the rest of the people complained that this was unfair. Moshe was happy to see that the people loved the Torah, and wanted it as well.

[meir.lipschitz@gmail.com](mailto:meir.lipschitz@gmail.com)

## 613 Mitzvot: Mitzvah 104

### The Golden Mizbeiach

R' Mordechai Torczyner

There are two *mizbichot* (altars) in the Beit haMikdash. A large *mizbeiach* stands in an outer room called the *azarah*, and a smaller, "golden" *mizbeiach* (*mizbach hazahav*) stands in the *heichal*, an inner room. The latter *mizbeiach* is actually made of wood and coated with gold.

The main use of the *mizbach hazahav* is for daily burning of *ketoret* (see last week's column). The site of this *mizbeiach* is sacred, such

that *ketoret* is burned there even without a *mizbeiach* (Zevachim 59a).

Mitzvah 104 instructs *kohanim* to use the *mizbach hazahav* only for the *ketoret*, the *avodah* (service) on Yom Kippur and the *avodah* of communal sin offerings. Any other use, however well-intentioned, would be considered trespassing and misuse of the Beit haMikdash.

[torczyner@torontotorah.com](mailto:torczyner@torontotorah.com)

**Torah in Translation**  
**Missing Minchah for Business**  
**Rivivot Ephraim 1:166 (R' Greenblatt)**

**איך בונים רגש?  
רב ברוך וינטרוב**

I was asked by a certain individual: He worked in trade all day, selling his wares. At the time to pray minchah, when he saw that it was getting late, he was speaking with a major buyer and was unable to stop, lest he lose money. [After finishing his conversation he realized that] he had forgotten entirely that he had not prayed minchah. He wants to know what he should do in such a situation.

Rav Ephraim Greenblatt was born in Jerusalem c. 1930. He displayed potential to become one of the gedolei Torah of Israel at a young age, learning in the Mirrer Yeshiva and then Yeshivat HaDarom under the likes of Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz, Rabbi Eliezer Man Schach and Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer. His time in Israel however, was cut short at the young age of 18 – due to the financial needs of his parents and nine younger siblings, he journeyed to America to earn a salary with which to support them.

רבנו יונה כתב ספר המעורר לתשובה ומלמד כיצד יש לעשות אותה. הספר קרוי 'שערי תשובה', ונחשב אחד מספרי היסוד בענייני תשובה בפרט ומוסר בכלל. בתחילת הספר אומר רבנו יונה, כי בדרך כלל אדם צריך קודם כל להתחרט על חטאו, ואז יוכל לקבל על עצמו שלא יחטא עוד בעתיד. אך רבנו יונה מציין כי לכלל זה יש יוצא דופן - 'האיש המתניב על דרך לא טובה תמיד, וגבר על חטאיו דורך בכל יום ושונה באולתו'. כלומר, אדם שחטא בחטא מסוים כבר פעמים רבות. במקרה כזה, אומר רבנו יונה, ראשית צריך האדם לקבל על עצמו לעזוב את החטא, ורק לאחר מכן יתחיל בחרטה. על מנת להרגיש חרטה, האדם צריך לחוש בחומרת החטא. כאשר אדם נמצא במצב הוא רגיל לחטא מסוים, הוא אינו יכול לחוש בחומרתו. על מנת שתהליך החרטה יהיה משמעותי, החטא חייב להיות מובן כמשהו רחוק ומאיים.

It would seem that this is explained in Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 108:8), where it states that monetary losses are considered an unavoidable circumstance [oneis], and therefore he may pray Maariv twice. [The ability to make up for a missed tefillah only exists for tefillot missed by accident, and not those missed on purpose or due to gross negligence.] Concerning a loss of profit, it would seem that the ruling should be the same; it should not be limited to situations of financial loss. This is seen from Chayei Adam, cited in Mishneh Berurah, concerning the matter of selling one's wares.

Hardly speaking a word of English, he lived with his grandfather, himself a respected rav, in New York's Lower East Side. There, he found a modest position in the rabbinate while also learning under Rav Moshe Feinstein. Rav Moshe took Rav Greenblatt under his wing like a son, and eventually approached him with the charge to strengthen the Jewish community in Memphis, Tennessee. Rav Greenblatt went there and found himself overwhelmed – the large Jewish community had all of two shomer shabbat Jews. Returning to New York dejected, Rav Greenblatt told Rav Moshe that Memphis was "an ir hanidachat" beyond his ability to develop, to which Rav Moshe responded that he knew exactly what he was getting Rav Greenblatt into. This was a place starving for Torah and growth.

הדברים נכונים לא רק כלפי השב בתשובה על איסורים שעבר, אלא גם כלפי הרוצה לזכות בקיום מעמיק יותר של מצוות עשה. רבים מאתנו מעוניינים לשפר את חווית התפילה שלנו. אלא שעל מנת להתפלל בכוונה מלאה, אדם צריך להרגיש רצון לפנות ולדבר אל הקב"ה, רצון שפעמים רבות אנו חסרים. נראה שגם כאן נכונים דברי רבנו יונה. אדם שכבר זמן רב לא התפלל תפילה בכוונה מלאה, יתקשה לחוש את הצורך בתפילה זו. אמנם לאחר מספר תפילות בהן הוא 'כפה' את עצמו לתפילה בכוונה, הוא יחוש בתוך עצמו את הצורך לשפוך שיה לפני ה', ותפילתו תשתפר באופן משמעותי. למעשה, כתב על כך הרב קוק, בעולת ראי"ה (חלק א, עמוד יא):

However, the question here [is somewhat different as] he had time throughout the afternoon to pray, he didn't pray, and when the time came he was busy. That being the case, he is like "someone who experienced an unavoidable circumstance on the last day" [a term taken from the laws of conditional sales]. Concerning such a case, the law for prayer is debatable, for he had time until that point.

With words of encouragement from Rav Moshe, Rav Greenblatt returned to Memphis, where he served as a rav for 58 years. During that time, he turned Memphis into a thriving Jewish community; he was responsible for the religious revival of thousands of now-observant Jews. Continuing his growth in learning, Rav Greenblatt went on to become one of North America's greatest talmidei chachomim. A visitor to Memphis once asked Rav Greenblatt the million-dollar question: "You could have been a gadol in Bnei Brak, why are you here in Memphis?" Rav Greenblatt responded, "Memphis produces gedolim!"

"כשעברו ימים ושנים בלא תפילה בכוונה, מתקבצות בלב אבני נגף רבות שמרגישים על ידן כבודות רוח פנימית. וכשרוח הטוב חוזר... הולכים בכל תפילה ומתפנים אותם המכשולים, והסכרים הרבים, אשר נקבצו בנחל הנובע של נשמת החיים העליונה, הולכים וסרים. אמנם לא בבת אחת נמנה החסרון, אבל הולך הוא ומתמלא, והצוהר של התפילה הולך ומגלה את אורותיו."

Seemingly, this is alluded to in the words of Magen Avraham (108:11) [who says that forgetting is equivalent to oneis], as explained by Machatzit HaShekel. It seems that since he had much time to pray, and he did not pray, this does not render him negligent. At the last moments he was involved with financial loss – therefore, he has the status of oneis and he may pray maariv twice.

The author of the 7-volume responsa Rivevot Ephraim, Rav Greenblatt currently lives in Israel, where, he still teaches and guides many students.

לסיכום – הן מדברי רבינו יונה והן מדברי הרב קוק אנו למדים עקרון חשוב. איננו יכולים לחכות עד שנרגיש מעצמנו חרטה על מעשינו הרעים, או כמיהה למעשים טובים ולמצוות. עלינו להתחיל בפעולות מעשיות, ומתוך כך בעז"ה, ישונו רגשותינו לעדינותם, ונחוש רתיעה מעברות ותשווקה למצוות. כמו שאמר בעל ספר החינוך (מצוה טז) – "אחרי הפעולות ממשכים הנלכות!"

As a result of this, I advised that henceforth he pray at mincha gedolah [the earliest time one may pray minchah] so that if he were to become involved in trade afterward, he would have no need to worry. Nonetheless, one who forgot as a result of trade would pray maariv twice...

*Our Ha'Aretz feature returns beginning with our Yom Kippur edition, G-d-willing*

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# COME GROW WITH US!

## FROM LABOUR DAY TO JUDGMENT DAY

### ELUL LAUNCHES IN SEPTEMBER

<b>BNAI TORAH</b>	<b>September 11 @ 8 PM</b> Tzedakah: Key to Teshuvah? / Chaggai: Cheerleader of Teshuvah
<b>CLANTON PARK</b>	<b>September 11 @ 8 PM</b> 100 Palm Dr. Can History and Torah Get Along? / Studying Idolatry: Who and What?
<b>MARLEE</b>	<b>September 17 SHABBATON</b> Friday night oneg / After Musaf: Teaching non-Jews Torah
<b>BAYT</b>	<b>September 21 @ 8 PM</b> Practical Ideas for a Fresh Start / Do I need to be a Tzaddik?
<b>KST</b>	<b>September 22 @ 8 PM</b> Jonah's Rebellion
<b>THORNHILL COMMUNITY SHUL</b>	<b>September 24 @ 6:20 PM</b> Teshuvah: Short-Term and Long-Term / Rebuilding a Relationship
<b>SHAAREI SHOMAYIM</b>	<b>September 24 @ 11:15 PM (Pre-Selichot)</b> Lessons of the Slichot Tallit / Musical Program / Bereishit: Evolution of Teshuvah

### ONGOING SHIURIM

#### Practical Halachah for the Kitchen (for Women)

15 Tinti Pl. Thornhill • 8pm  
September 6, 13 and 20

#### Women's Beit Midrash

Ulpana • 10 AM-1 PM  
September 8, 15, 22

#### The Limits of Forgiveness (for Men)

Village Shul • 8pm  
September 8, 15

#### Sugyot on Avodah Zarah (for Men)

Clanton Park • 8:30pm  
September 8, 15, 22

#### Talmud Yerushalmi (for Men)

Clanton Park • 8pm  
September 12, 26

#### Shabbat Shiurim

BAYT, Bnai Torah, Clanton Park, Or Chaim  
September 10, 17, 24

#### Chaggai (with Mekorot)

Shaarei Shomayim • 1:30pm  
September 13, 20

#### Song of the Shofar (with Mekorot)

208 Coldstream Ave • 9:45am  
September 15

#### CME Medical Shiur: Pills in Halachah

Shaarei Shomayim • September 19

#### Medical Ethics at York: Autopsy & Cremation

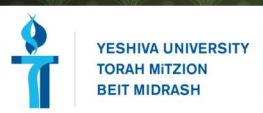
12:30pm • September 21

#### JLIC-HILLEL Shabbation

Niagara Falls • September 17

#### Pre-Selichot Programs

KST • Thornhill Community Shul



Free Admission for all programs

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## Schedule for the Week of September 17, 18 Elul

### Shabbat, September 17

**After Musaf LAUNCH AT MARLEE SHUL** (Teaching Torah to non-Jews, R' Baruch Weintraub)

**6:15 PM** Yair Manas, Masechet Succah, Mizrachi Bayit

**After Minchah** R' Dovid Zirkind, Seudah Shlishit, Marlee

**After Minchah** R' Mordechai Torczyner, Masechet Avodah Zarah: The Trial of R' Chanina ben Tradyon, BAYT

### Sunday, September 18

**9:15 AM** Hillel Horovitz, Parshah Issues—**Hebrew**, Zichron Yisrael

### Monday, September 19

**8:00PM** R' Mordechai Torczyner, Medical Halachah with CME: Pills in Halachah (see flyer) Shaarei Shomayim

### Tuesday, September 20

**1:30 PM** R' Mordechai Torczyner, Chaggai 2, at Shaarei Shomayim, with Mekorot

**8:00PM** R' Mordechai Torczyner, Practical Halachah for the Kitchen III, 15 Tinti Place, Thornhill, *women*

### Wednesday, September 21

**12:30 PM** R' Mordechai Torczyner, Medical Ethics at York: Autopsy and Cremation

**8:00 PM LAUNCH AT BAYT** (Practical Ideas for a Fresh Start, R' Ezra Goldschmiedt; You don't need to be a tzaddik, R' Mordechai Torczyner)

**8:00 PM** R' Baruch Weintraub, Hilchot Teshuvah: Is there a mitzvah to repent?, Shomrai Shabbos, *men*

### Thursday, September 22

**10 AM-1 PM** Women's Beit Midrash at Ulpana, Open to all Community Women

**8:00 PM** R' Baruch Weintraub, From Terach to Today: Sugyot in Avodah Zarah, Clanton Park

**8:00 PM LAUNCH AT KST** (The Rebellion of Jonah, R' Mordechai Torczyner)

### Friday, September 23

**8:00 AM** R' Dovid Zirkind, Friday Parshah Preview, Village Shul

**Pre-Selichot September 24: Shaarei Shomayim, Kehilat Shaarei Torah, Thornhill Community Shul**