

# Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Chayei Sarah

22 Marcheshvan 5772/November 19, 2011

Vol.3 Num. 8

To sponsor an edition of Toronto Torah, please email [info@torontotorah.com](mailto:info@torontotorah.com) or call 416-781-1777

## Yitzchak in Conversation with G-d

R' Dovid Zirkind

As Eliezer, the ever-faithful servant of Avraham, returns home with a wife for his master's son, the Torah depicts a scene that is simple and yet simultaneously full of emotion and anticipation. Yitzchak is out in the field and when he looks up he can see the camels in the distance. Rivkah, too, looks up, and she sees her future husband from afar; she falls from her camel in excitement!

What was Yitzchak doing in the field? The Rashbam assumes that he was in field for the very same reason any land owner would be, to tend to his crops. But our sages saw much more in this small detail of the story. A Gemara (Berachot 26b) tells us that Yitzchak was there to recite Minchah, the prayer which he is credited with establishing. Following this suggestion, the Kli Yakar (Bereishit 24:63) understands that the story conveys the great power of the Minchah prayer; as quickly as Yitzchak completed his prayer, he was answered with the arrival of his bride. Seforno disagrees with the Kli Yakar, noting the absence of any reference to Yitzchak's act of prayer. In fact, the Torah tells us "And Yitzchak went to pray in the field and he lifted his eyes..." meaning, the arrival of Rivkah was prior to the start of his prayer! According to Seforno, Yitzchak intended to go and pray in the field, but Rivkah appeared before he had the

chance. Seforno's suggestion seems peculiar. Why would the Gemara derive the source for Tefillat Minchah from Yitzchak if he was unable to complete the prayer?

The title of Tefillat Minchah is equally surprising. The morning prayers are appropriately referred to as Shacharit – morning; the evening prayers are similarly named Arvit – evening; but Minchah does not appear to be titled for the time of day it is recited. The Baalei HaTosafot point out (Pesachim 107a) that the Minchah (a sacrifice offered from grain) was brought multiple times each day, and the afternoon tefillah does not deserve this title any more than Shacharit does!

Rav Baruch HaLevi Epstein (Pinsk, 1860-1941) suggests that a closer look at the Korban Minchah may shed light on its unique connection to this middle Tefillah of each day. The owner of an animal who donates from his herd to the Beit HaMikdash is typically described as adam – the person who donated the sacrifice (Vayikra 1:2); however, when detailing the laws of the Minchah, the Torah refers to the nefesh – the soul who presented it (Vayikra 2:1). Rabbi Yitzchak (Menachot 107a) explains that the Minchah, which is a sacrifice of grain, is brought by the poor who are unable to afford a more expensive animal. By referring to the owner as a nefesh the Torah encourages

him, saying that his donation is seen in so positive a light that he is the equal of one who offered his entire soul to G-d.

Tefillat Minchah embodies a similar ethic. While the other prayers are bookends at the start and finish of every day, the central prayer, the shortest prayer, is the one regarding which the Talmud (Berachot 6b) reminds us to be most vigilant. More, the Tur writes (O.C. 232) that the significance of Minchah is a function of its position in the middle of the day. While it may be easy to remember to pray first thing in the morning or before going to sleep, remembering Minchah in the midst of a busy day is no small deed. Like the Korban Minchah, which on the surface seems relatively insignificant, Tefillat Minchah reflects the consciousness of the nefesh that stands to recite it: Nothing in his day can distract him from his awareness of and conversation with G-d. That consciousness speaks louder than any prayer, regardless of length.

This returns us to Seforno's depiction of the original Minchah as an interrupted experience. While we strive to perfect each of the daily Tefillot, the Seforno reminds us that the greatness of Minchah is not in its words but in the connection with G-d it reflects. Yitzchak, the founder of this prayer, is described by the commentaries both as toiling in his field and as preparing to pray, because the two enhance one another. He is securing his physical existence and providing for the family he hopes to lead, all while thinking of G-d. To focus on whether or not he had sufficient time to daven that day or what exactly he might have said is to miss the point entirely. No matter where Yitzchak was, no matter the weight he felt on his shoulders, his desire to converse with G-d was never in question.

## Parshah Questions

R' Meir Lipschitz

(Answers are found on the back page)

- Who was Keturah? (Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Rashbam, Kli Yakar, and Siftei Chachamim to Bereishit 25:1)
- How old was Rivkah when she married Yitzchak? (Rashi to Bereishit 25:20, Ibn Ezra to Bereishit 23:2, Tosafot Yevamot 61b "v'chen")
- Did Yishmael repent? (Kli Yakar Bereishit 25:1, Rashi Bereishit 25:9, Bava Batra 16b, [Rashi Bereishit 21:9 and 21:17 with Siftei Chachamim], Rosh haShanah 16b, Ritva to Kiddushin 68b, Ritva to Yoma 38b)
- For Children: What do we learn from the way the Torah tells us Sarah's age of death? (Rashi Bereishit 23:1)

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

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

## Shabbat: Day of Silence? R' Mordechai Torczyner

Jewish literature is replete with praise of Shabbat for its regenerative and social elements:

- Shabbat is a day of rest from creativity, time to curl up with a good book, time to recharge.
- Shabbat is an opportunity to connect with spouses, children and friends.
- Shabbat is a chance to gather as a religious community, for study and prayer and – of course – kiddush.

In one example of many in our liturgy, the song *Mah Yedidut*, an educational poem traced to 11th century Germany, describes the day as a time for eating, singing, sleeping and enjoyment.

Nonetheless, a significant stream in halachic tradition identifies Shabbat as a day to retreat from everything and everyone, and communicate solely with G-d:

*Rabbi Chanina said: Only with difficulty did they permit greetings on Shabbat. Rabbi Chiyya bar Abba said: When Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai saw his mother speaking a great deal, he would say, 'Mother, it's Shabbat!' (Talmud Yerushalmi, Shabbat 15:3)*

*One may read nothing on Shabbat or Yom Tov, beyond the books of the Prophets and their explanations. This even applies to works of wisdom and knowledge. (Rambam, Commentary to Mishnah, Shabbat 23:2)*

Lest one think these represent views of extreme pietists rather than mainstream law, the former is codified

in Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 307:1, the latter in Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 307:17. [The latter source does note that Rashba permitted reading 'books of wisdom'.]

Dedicating Shabbat to pursuit of G-d is logical; the origin of the day is in the Divine act which brought our world, and us, into existence. Would it not make sense for us to focus on our Creator? Should we not use this day to mark ourselves as products of that Divine deed, and so create a personal awareness of our createdness – an awareness which might then remind us of our Divine mission during the rest of our week?

Of course, converts to this view of Rabbi Chanina, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and Rambam would then need to identify other time for recharging, bonding with family and connecting with community. However, one who truly valued those purposes could pare time from the working week to serve them; perhaps family time could mean more than the default "time when work is halachically prohibited."

Whether one embraces the contemplative version of Shabbat in entirety or not, this view should give us pause. On Friday night, at sunset, we enter more than a day of joy and relaxation. We enter a temporal zone identified as Divine territory, we identify ourselves as Divine creations, and we are blessed with the opportunity to re-dedicate ourselves to the Divine mission for which we were placed in this world.

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

## 613 Mitzvot: Mitzvah 114 Executions on Shabbat R' Mordechai Torczyner

Mitzvah 114 instructs Jewish courts not to carry out executions on Shabbat, but rather to wait until Sunday. Jewish law maintains that it is unfairly oppressive to a criminal to delay his execution, but we hold up this person's death until after Shabbat to permit him to participate in the national Jewish celebration of Creation. [According to the Rambam (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Shabbat 24:7), this applies to other judicial penalties, as well; all are delayed until after Shabbat.]

The Sefer haChinuch saw an underlying positive message in this mitzvah, writing, "This may be compared to a great king who invited his citizens to a meal one day, and who did not bar anyone from entry... G-d instructed us to sanctify and honour the day of Shabbat for our benefit and merit, and this also honours the day." Everyone's Shabbat observance is meaningful for G-d, even that of a criminal who has met the rigorous standards for capital punishment. Each individual's mitzvot matter.

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

## Hitoriri: Jewish Spirituality The Death of Sarah R' Baruch Weintraub

"נסמכה מיתת שרה לעקידת יצחק, לפי שעל ידי בשורת העקידה שנודמן בנה לשחיטה וכמעט שלא נשחט, פרח נשמתה ממנה ומתה" (רש"י בראשית כג,ב)

איזה מסר נוכל ללמוד מסיבת מיתתה של שרה?

נראה, כי חז"ל רצו להדגיש בפנינו כי יש ללמוד מנסיון העקדה ותוצאותיו שני שיעורים שונים זה מזה. השיעור הראשון הוא השיעור שנלמד בשבוע שעבר, בעת קריאת המלאך לאברהם. שיעור זה מתואר על ידי הרב קוק (עולת ראייה):

"רחמי אב ואהבתו שנשמה טהורה היא הנה לבת אש קדש, הולכת ישרה מאהבת אלקים הטהורה ורחמיו על כל מעשיו"

קריאת המלאך באה להוכיח כי אין כל סתירה בין תחושת המוסר הטבעי לבין הצדק האלקי. היפוכו של דבר – הרגשות הטבעיים של אהבת אב לבנו הם למעשה אחד מהאופנים להתגלות אהבת ד' בעולם.

שיעור שונה לגמרי לומד הרב סולובייצ'יק מן העקדה (בסוד היחיד והיחד):

"אף על פי שאני תושב אמריקה זה שנים רבות, עדיין לא סיגלתי לי את ההשקפה הפרגמטית על הדת. לדעתי אין האמונה באה לשרת את צרכי בני האדם... מעולם לא ניסיתי לבאר את תורת ישראל בקטגוריות של בריאות הנפש, שלווה הרוח וכיוצא בהן, אף על פי שגישה זו רווחת כאן... נפשי בוחלת בכל אלו הדרשות הסובבות סחור סחור לנושא אחד: שמיירת המצוות טובה לעיכול המזון, לשינה מתוקה, לשלום המשפחה ולעמדה חברתית.

...הקב"ה אומר לאברהם: "קח נא את בנך את יחידך אשר אהבת את יצחק וכו'..." כלומר אני תובע ממך את הקרבן הגדול ביותר.... אל תשיא את עצמך, כי לאחר שתשמע בקולי ותעלה את בנך לעולה, אתן לך בן אחר במקום יצחק. כשיצחק ישחט על גבי המזבח, תשאר גלמוד וערירי... כמו כן אל תחשוב, כי יעלה בידך לשכוח את יצחק ולהסיח את דעתך ממנו. כל ימיך תהרהר בו. אני מעוניין בבנך אשר אהבת ותאהב לעולם. לילות של נודדי שינה תבלה ותחטט בפצעך הנפשיים. מתוך שנתך תקרא ליצחק, וכשתיקץ, תמצא אוהלך שומם ועזוב. חיך ייפכו לשרשרת ארוכה של ייסורי הנפש. ובכל זאת אני תובע את הקרבן הזה."

לדעת הרב סולובייצ'יק, מהווה העקידה דוגמה לקרבן הנדרש מהאדם הדתי. קרבן שאין ממנו כל רווח – לא גופני ולא נפשי. האדם נתבע לציות מוחלט ועיוור. זהו השיעור אותו עלינו ללמוד מתחילת פרשתנו – מותה של שרה בעקבות העקדה.

יודעים ומאמינים אנו, כי אלו ואלו דברי אלקים חיים. ועל כן, שני המסרים חשובים לנו ביותר: מניעת מותו של יצחק מלמדת אותנו על ההתגלות העליונה של רצון ד', ואילו מותה של שרה – על העובדה כי בעולם הזה עלינו לעבוד את ד' תוך מוכנות להקרבה אישית, אף במקומות שבהם אין, ולא יהיה, כל רווח נראה לעין.

**Torah in Translation**

***Frumkeit***

**Rav Shlomo Wolbe**

**Alei Shur, Vol. 2 2:4**

**Translated by R' Ezra Goldschmiedt**

On the narrow path that leads to truth in the service of G-d, there is a stumbling block called 'frumkeit'. There is no suitable Hebrew [or English - EG] translation for this term.

Frumkeit is a natural, instinctive urge to connect to the Creator. This instinct is also found in animals. King David said, "The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their food from G-d." (Psalms 104:21) "He gives to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry." (Psalms 147:9) There is no need to understand these verses as [mere] figures of speech - animals have an instinctive sense that there exists One who is concerned about their sustenance. This instinct [also] operates in man - on a higher level, of course. This natural frumkeit [instinct] assists us in our service of G-d, and without this natural assistance our service would be extremely heavy upon us. However, frumkeit, like any other instinctive urge that operates within man, is naturally egotistical and self-centred. Accordingly, frumkeit drives a person to do only that which is good for himself - [in contrast, positive] actions between man and his fellow man, as well as wholehearted actions between man and G-d are not fuelled by frumkeit. One who bases his service on it alone remains egocentric. Even if he were to impose many stringencies upon himself, he would not become a man of kindness, and he would not reach [the level of] altruistic service. This is what necessitates that we base our service specifically on intellect...

Intellect must guide our service. The moment we abandon intellect and act from frumkeit alone, our service becomes twisted. This exists even in the levels of Torah scholars. Let us try to explain:

An important part of the service is occupied by the commandments between man and his fellow man. Most of the work of perfecting character traits involves these commandments. A large portion of the ethical works are dedicated to them. Now, frumkeit, as we have said, does not drive a person towards these commandments, unless some personal interest becomes gratified in their fulfilment. Our master, Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Finkel, the Alter of Slabodka, said, "And you shall love your fellow like yourself (Leviticus, 19:18) - that you should love your fellow as you love

Rav Shlomo Wolbe was born in Berlin, Germany in 1914. Raised in a non-observant Jewish home, he attended the University of Berlin, and he became interested in Judaism through his association with the Orthodox Students Union.

After completing university, Rav Wolbe learned in the Hildesheimer Rabbinical Seminary, the Montreux Yeshiva in Switzerland, and then the Mir Yeshiva of Poland under the guidance of Rav Yerucham Levovitz and Rav Yechezkel Levenstein. Unable to follow the Mir Yeshiva when it moved into Russia during World War II, Rav Wolbe spent the war years serving as a rabbi in Stockholm, Sweden, where he lived with the family of a yeshiva colleague.

After the war, Rav Wolbe created a school for Jewish refugee girls and eventually moved to Israel, where he served as *menahel ruchani* at the Be'er Yaakov Yeshiva for thirty years alongside its Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Moshe Shapiro. Later, he became the mashgiach of the Lakewood Yeshiva in Israel and opened Yeshivat Givat Shaul.

A unique leader, Rav Wolbe placed an emphasis on the importance of individuality; that each Jew should not view himself simply as a member of the herd, trying to conform to the general Jewish population. To quote one student of his, Rav Wolbe was one of the few contemporary rabbis who had "something unique and important to say to those of us with a Western education." He died in Jerusalem in 2005.

*elgoldschmiedt@torontotorah.com*

yourself. You don't love yourself for the sake of any commandment, but rather [out of] a simple love, and that is how you need to love your fellow man." This approach is completely foreign to frumkeit.

To learn *mussar* is, at its core, to learn with intellect. One who comes to learn it from [a motivation of] frumkeit alone will not *understand* at all that which he learns. The small amount he does understand - he will immediately draw it into his self-centred interests. He will glorify himself over the additional frumkeit he has added for himself.

The work on character traits, efforts in commandments between man and his fellow man and the learning of *mussar* must be based specifically on intellect.

*elgoldschmiedt@torontotorah.com*

**Ha'Aretz  
Kiryat Ata**

**Mrs. Michal Horovitz**

Kiryat Ata was one of several moshavot established by a company called "Nachalat Yisrael" in 1925. The people who founded the moshava came to Israel in the time of the "fourth Aliyah". The moshava was named Kfar Ata to match the name of an Arab village, Kofrata, that had existed there beforehand.

Those years were very difficult for the new moshavot; Arab neighbours, agitated by Jewish success in developing the land that had been barren for so long, tried to destroy every new settlement that the Jews built. This was also one of the factors that led to the 1929 countryside pogroms, which included attacks on Kiryat Ata. The entire Jewish population fled the village following the 1929 attack.

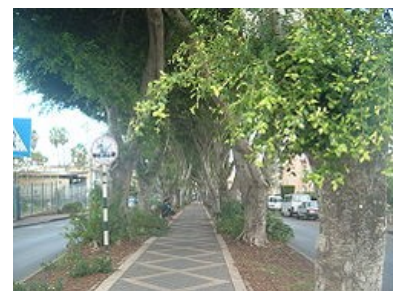
In 1930, a group returned to rebuild the moshava, and in 1934 they established a textile factory which became known all over Israel for its quality. During the War of Independence in 1948, an army base was placed in Kfar Ata, and from that point on the Israeli army used the site to protect the rest of the Galil.

Beginning in 1950, Israel experienced a wave of Aliyah from many countries, and the Israeli government needed to find housing solutions for all the people who came. The government decided to create a number of "ma'abarot"- housing complexes designed for very basic living. The government established three ma'abarot adjacent to Kfar Ata, and the population grew tremendously.

In 1969, Kfar Ata officially became a city and gained the name, "Kiryat Ata". Today, the city has more than fifty thousand residents.

*mhorovitz@torontotorah.com*

*A street in Kiryat Ata (Wikipedia)*



## Who was Keturah?

- **Rashi** states that Keturah was Hagar; she was called Keturah since her deeds were as sweet as the Ketoret (incense in the Beit haMikdash), as she did not befriend any man while she was separated from Avraham.
- **Rashbam** disagrees with his grandfather Rashi. He explains that according to the simple meaning, this woman is not Hagar, but a new wife. **Ibn Ezra** agrees.
- The **Kli Yakar** agrees with Rashi, but asks why she was referred to by a name that described her actions. He explains that when Hagar was sent from Avraham's house with her son Yishmael, it was because Sarah said that both she and Yishmael were idol worshippers. Now that both Hagar and her son had repented, their sins were transformed from being a blemish on their souls into a Heavenly offering, similar to the Ketoret.

## How old was Rivkah when she married Yitzchak?

- **Rashi** explains that two events happened after the Akeidah: Sarah passed away, and Rivkah was born. Since Sarah was 90 when Yitzchak was born and 127 at her death, Yitzchak was 37 at her death. Since Yitzchak married Rivkah at the age of 40, Rivkah was three years old at that time.
- **Ibn Ezra** claims that Yitzchak was around 13 at the Akeidah, and there is no chronological connection between the Akeidah, Sarah's death and the birth of Rivkah; we can assume that Rivkah was of marriageable age at the time of her nuptials.
- **Tosafot** propose, based on a Sifrei, that she was 14 at the time of her marriage.

## Did Yishmael repent?

- The **Kli Yakar**, as explained in the first question above, assumes that both Yishmael and his mother, Hagar, repented.

- **Rashi** explains that we can see that Yishmael performed teshuvah, since he let his brother, Yitzchak, have the primary role in laying their father to rest.
- The **Gemara in Bava Batra** points out that anyone who is described upon their passing as "expiring" and being "gathered unto his people" is a tzaddik. Since these words were used to describe Yishmael's death, he must have repented.
- The **Ritva (Yoma)** explains that it is fit to name Jewish children "Yishmael" even according to the opinion that Yishmael did not repent, since he was named by Hashem.

## For Children: What do we learn from the way the Torah tells us Sarah's age of death?

**Rashi** explains that the Torah describes her age backwards to teach us that even at 100 she was without sin, and that her appearance was as unspoiled as that of a seven year old.

*russlevy@gmail.com*

# Schedule for November 19-25, 22-28 Marcheshvan

## Shabbat November 19

**7:45 AM** R' Baruch Weintraub, Rav Kook on the Parshah, Or Chaim

**10:20 AM** R' Baruch Weintraub, Parshah shiur, Clanton Park

**1 hour before minchah** Yair Manas, Gemara Sukkah, Mizrachi Bayit **not this week**

**45 minutes before minchah** R' Mordechai Torczyner, Daf Yomi, BAYT

**After minchah** R' Mordechai Torczyner, Gem. Avodah Zarah: R' Meir's Rescue, BAYT

**6:40 PM** R' Dovid Zirkind, Parent-Child Learning I: Angels on Earth, Shaarei Shomayim

## Sunday, November 20

**9:15 AM** Hillel Horovitz, Parshah, **Hebrew**, Zichron Yisroel

**11:50 AM** R' Baruch Weintraub, Rambam: Hilchot Melachim, Or Chaim, *collegiates*

**After maariv** R' Dovid Zirkind, Bava Kama: Introduction to Avot Nezikin, Shaarei Shomayim

**After maariv** R' Baruch Weintraub, Halachic issues in Israel: Appointing Judges, **Hebrew**, Clanton Park, *men*

## Monday, November 21

**8:30 PM** Hillel Horovitz, Siddur: In-depth, Clanton Park, *men*

## Tuesday, November 22

**1:30 PM** R' Mordechai Torczyner, Zecharyah: The Menorah, *Mekorot*, Shaarei Shomayim

**7:15 PM** R' Ezra Goldschmiedt, Ramban on Parshah, BAYT

**8:00 PM** Mrs. Elyssa Goldschmiedt, Malbim on Chumash, TCS, *women*

**8:00 PM** Yair Manas: Minchat Chinuch, Clanton Park, **not this week**

## Wednesday, November 23

**10:00 AM** R' Mordechai Torczyner, Dramas of Jewish History: Rise of the Rabbis, BEBY, with Melton

**12:30 PM** R' Mordechai Torczyner, Medical Ethics: Stem Cell Research, at the York University Hillel

**8:00 PM** R' Mordechai Torczyner, Women's Beit Midrash at Bnai Torah, Tefillah: Write in Your Siddur!

**8:30 PM** R' Baruch Weintraub, Rambam: Hilchot Melachim, Shomrai Shabbos, *men*

**8:45 PM** R' Dovid Zirkind, Gemara Beitzah Chabura, Shaarei Shomayim

**9:00 PM** R' Ezra Goldschmiedt, Ethical Questions for Superheroes, Week 3 of 6, BAYT

## Thursday, November 24

**9:15 AM** R' Mordechai Torczyner, Supernatural vs. Superstition: Ayin HaRa, 36 Theodore in Thornhill, *women, free babysitting*

## Friday, November 25

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