

Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Ki Tavo

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Ending on Top

Adam Frieberg

Adam Frieberg joins our Beit Midrash this year as our newest avreich. Adam grew up in Toronto and attended CHAT, after which he spent two years studying at Yeshivat Lev HaTorah in Israel. Afterwards, he attended Yeshiva University, where he studied Business Management and continued his Torah studies under the tutelage of Rabbi Baruch Simon. He graduated with an undergraduate management degree from YU in May 2009, and then enrolled in YU's rabbinical school, RIETS. Adam then spent two years studying at the RIETS Israel Kollel, and "summering" in Toronto, where he had the tremendous opportunity to learn and grow as the Rabbinic Intern at Shaarei Shomayim Synagogue.

Adam spent his final year of RIETS interning at Beth David Synagogue in West Hartford, CT and concurrently completing his Masters in Jewish Education at YU's Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration, student-teaching two days a week at Manhattan Day School. Adam, his wife, Sara, and their two year old daughter Emunah look forward to the opportunity to learn with, and give back to, their hometown community. Adam will serve as Rabbinic Assistant at Shaarei Tefillah.

If you are a habitual daydreamer, you might find yourself re-living the Pesach seder this week as we begin to read from the Torah. Thanks to the beginning of our parshah, your head could soon be with your family gathered around the seder table, reciting the Haggadah and singing about buying a goat for two zuzim.

Our parshah begins by expounding upon a mitzvah that was briefly stated in Shemot 23:19: The obligation to bring our bikkurim (first produce) to the Beit haMikdash. In fulfilling this mitzvah, each farmer enters the main room of the Beit haMikdash, recites a declaration of gratitude to G-d, places the bikkurim beside the southwest corner of the central altar, bows and departs. The kohen on duty, who

waves the basket of produce in the air as part of the ritual, is then entitled to take the bikkurim for himself.

The farmer's declaration in the Beit haMikdash is particularly interesting. The Torah presents the farmer with a script, which one would expect to include appreciation and gratitude to G-d for a successful harvest. Instead, the farmer is told to recite, "An Aramean [Rashi interprets this as Lavan] tried to destroy my forefather [Yaakov]. He descended to Egypt and dwelled there in small numbers, and there he became a great nation, mighty and many. And the Egyptians harmed us and oppressed us, and they placed hard work upon us. And we cried out to G-d, and He heard our voice, and He saw our oppression and our struggle and our suffering. And Hashem took us out of Egypt with a mighty hand... and He brought us to this place [Israel] and He gave us this land." Only after describing the suffering and redemption the Jewish people had experienced many years earlier does the farmer finally proclaim, "And now, behold! I have brought the first fruit of the ground that You have given me, Hashem!" Why is the opening history necessary?

On the other hand, the text of the original Haggadah is vulnerable to the opposite question. According to Rabbi Esriel Hildesheimer (Melamed l'Hoil 3:65), the text used by our ancestors at their sederim in the time of the Beit haMikdash continued all the way to the farmer's final line, "And now, behold! I have brought the first fruit of the ground that You have given me, HaShem." Only with our descent into exile was that line removed. But why was that line present at the seder? If the farmer's edition is perplexing for including the opening, the original Haggadah is equally perplexing for including the ending! [The Rambam's Haggadah may also have included this line; the Rambam wrote in Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Chametz uMatzah 7:4, "One teaches from 'An Aramean tried to destroy my forefather' until he completes the entire portion."]

A brief comment by Rabbi Chaim ibn Attar (Or haChaim to Devarim 26:5) may help us understand. The Torah introduces the farmer's declaration with the words, "v'anita v'amarta," which are normally translated as, "You shall declare and state." However, Rabbi ibn Attar says that "v'anita וְאָנִיתָ" may be read as a reference to "oni עוני", or poverty. Addressing the term "v'amarta", Rabbi ibn Attar asserts that it expresses elevation and stature. In other words, the concept which we normally employ regarding the Haggadah (per Pesachim 116a), of beginning with our shame and proceeding through the story until we reach our heights, is embedded in the farmer's declaration. The farmer proceeds from shame to greatness in the course of his declaration in the Beit haMikdash.

This may explain why the farmer must recount our history, as well as why the seder participant in the time of the Beit haMikdash mentioned our arrival in the land of Israel. These two celebrants are not permitted to be so narrow-minded as to think that their harvest began when they planted, or that their redemption ended upon exiting Egypt. They must understand that, as Jews, we live as part of a larger continuum, a timeline that goes back to our forefathers and that will continue forever.

With Elul in full swing, and Rosh HaShanah just around the corner, this message is apropos. While we may feel that our year wasn't everything we had hoped it would be, surely we accomplished something, and a little more than a week yet remains for our efforts. We begin with our shame and conclude with our heights; no matter the chronological order of our successes and failures, extra effort in Elul will help us to fulfill this principle. Even if we didn't begin on top, we can certainly end that way.

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Of course you forgive me! R' Ezra Goldschmiedt

An important, albeit uncomfortable aspect of the teshuvah process is found in the words of the Mishnah (Yoma 8:9): "Yom Kippur does not provide atonement for transgressions between man and his fellow." To ensure a favourable judgment, sincere prayers and a resolve to be better are not enough. Besides remaining unaffected by the Days of Awe, wrongs we commit against our fellow man can even prevent the efficacy of our personal return towards G-d. As the Mishnah in Avot (3:10) states: "He who is not pleasing to man is also displeasing to G-d." Clearly, attaining forgiveness from those whom we've wronged should be a top priority as we come to the end of the year.

Jewish tradition has incorporated a number of practices to address this issue. Following the advice of Rabbi Nechuniah ben Hakanah (see Megilah 28a), the custom has developed to forgive those who have wronged us before retiring for the evening; many do this by reciting a short declaration of such as part of the bedtime Shema. A similar avenue that encourages the forgiving of others is a portion of Rabbi Avraham Danzig's Tefillah Zakkah, customarily recited in private before the Kol Nidre service of Yom Kippur night.

With the widespread practice of reciting these passages, may one presume that he has been forgiven by those he has wronged? Moreover, under such an assumption, may one forgo the uncomfortable process of actively seeking forgiveness?

For a number of reasons, reliance on these declarations would not be wise. To begin, the assumption that these declarations are recited by those whom one has wronged is not necessarily correct. Despite being printed in standard siddurim and machzorim, both of these prayers are not necessarily recited by all. Additionally, these declarations are not 'magic words' that achieve their result through a mere recital – while some of our prayers do have value when recited without proper intent, these passages are not tefillot in the classical sense. They are simply meant to serve as an expression of the reader's forgiveness; without sincerity, their recital unfortunately has no impact.

Most importantly, there is an indication from earlier sources that the process of forgiveness is meant to include a more profound reconciliation between two parties. The Gemara (Yoma 87a) records that a local butcher had wronged Rav. With Yom Kippur approaching and the butcher showing no signs of remorse, Rav decided to visit the butcher himself to provide him with an opportunity to work things out. If simply granting forgiveness had been a viable option, Rav would have had no need to personally pay the butcher a visit. More likely, an integral part of forgiveness is feeling remorse and, to some extent, engaging in the very same process of teshuvah with our fellow man that we undergo with G-d Himself.

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613 Mitzvot: #187 A Divine Cover-Up Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

The Torah warns us repeatedly against consuming blood, and some see in this a message about respect for the life which is represented in blood. Mitzvah 187 further illustrates our respect for the life populating the animal kingdom, instructing us to cover the blood of birds and *chayot* (undomesticated species), above and below, when performing shechitah. Sefer haChinuch adds that requiring this display of respect helps us avoid a descent into carnivorous cruelty; this is supported by the rule that only the blood of shechitah must be covered.

One must be careful to use his hand, or a handheld implement, when covering the blood; using one's foot would demonstrate disrespect for the mitzvah. (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Shechitah 14:16)

Sefer haChinuch suggests that *beheimot* (domesticated species) are excluded from this mitzvah because they are used for korbanot, and their blood is harnessed for our atonement and purification before G-d.

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Hitoriri: Jewish Spirituality Crying During Shofar Yair Manas

Once my father was standing on the synagogue platform on Rosh HaShanah, ready and prepared to guide the order of the sounding of the shofar. The shofar-sounder, a G-d-fearing Habad Hasid who was very knowledgeable in the mystical doctrine of the "Alter Rebbe," R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady, began to weep. My father turned to him and said: "Do you weep when you take the lulav? Why then do you weep when you sound the shofar? Are not both commandments of God?"

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, Halakhic Man, pp. 60-61

Rabbi Soloveitchik explains the chasid's distinction between shofar blowing and taking the lulav: Crying on Rosh Hashanah represents the soul's crying for "its origin, for the rock from whence it was hewn." When a person hears the shofar, "He groans bitterly and moans over his inability to leap over the mountains of being that divide his soul from its Creator." In contrast, taking the lulav "affirms the beautiful and resplendent world, which reflects the glory of G-d who fills and encompasses all worlds." Thus the chasid cried before fulfilling the commandment to blow the shofar, but not before taking the lulav.

Rabbi Soloveitchik contrasts this approach with the approach of the "Halakhic Man". The Halakhic Man makes no distinction between blowing the shofar and taking the lulav. Both are commandments from G-d, and consequently, the Halakhic Man is "completely immersed in the cosmos whether on Rosh HaShanah or Sukkot." The Halakhic Man "does not wish to free himself from the world... the task of man is to bring down the Divine Presence to the lower world". (pp. 51-52)

A third approach may be suggested. Theoretically, perhaps one *should* cry upon taking the lulav as well. Having the opportunity to perform mitzvot, to serve our Creator, *should* move us to tears. On his deathbed, it is reported, the Vilna Gaon cried over losing the ability to perform mitzvot.

Whether we cry for shofar blowing but not for lulav, for neither, or for both, we should all strive to perform the mitzvot commanded to us by our Creator.

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**Torah in Translation
Kaddish
with a Living Parent
Rabbi Ben-Zion Meir Uziel
Mishpitei Uziel 1:Orach Chaim 2:3
Translated by R' Mordechai Torczyner**

It is as clear as the Sun that all of these statements [on the value of kaddish] apply only to those who concentrate on the words they produce in reciting kaddish, such that the sacred feeling, the flame of Gd buried in their hearts bursts forth when they recite this prayer, which is entirely an expression of holiness and praise of the Gd of Israel, King of the universe...

Obviously, those who think that kaddish, without concentration and spiritual arousal, will work supernaturally to elevate the souls of the deceased and to kill the living, are in error. Because of their thoughts, they rush to say many "kaddishes" when their relatives pass on, without any concentration or thought, literally like people collecting words. Each rises from his place and races to utter the words of kaddish, and a great confusion of mixed voices is created in the synagogue, this one ahead and this one behind, and the responders are befuddled and they cannot hear kaddish well and respond Amen. They imagine that reciting this "grabbed kaddish" is supernaturally effective, and that reciting more "kaddishes" will increase the levels in which they elevate their parents.

On the other hand, when they can recite kaddish during their parents' lifetimes they are afraid and they tremble as though kaddish were empowered to kill and to snatch their parents from life. They flee from reciting kaddish like one who flees a fire.

I grant that Rivash (Responsa 115) wrote that one should not recite kaddish for his mother while his father lives if his father is upset about this, and so wrote Rama (Orach Chaim 132), "Even one who has his parents may say it if they are not upset about it," indicating that one may not recite kaddish if his parents are upset. However, it is clear to me that they said this only regarding reciting the Mourner's Kaddish as mourners do, when they are not leading the congregation. Since the father is upset, the son may not jump needlessly and recite kaddish; just the opposite, one who responds has great reward. But one who has the opportunity to recite kaddish, such as when he leads the congregation, or when he has learned something for which kaddish is recited, is

Rabbi Joseph Raphael Uziel was the head of the beit din [community court] of the Sephardic community in Jerusalem at the end of the nineteenth century. His son Ben-Zion Meir was born in 1880, and was married in 1893. Several months later, the elder Rabbi Uziel passed away.

While still in his twenties, Rav Ben-Zion Uziel founded a yeshiva, Machazikei Torah, for Sephardi students. In 1911 he was appointed Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Yafo, and in that position he welcomed Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook's arrival as Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of the city. Throughout his career, "Love truth and peace," from Zechariah 8:19, was framed and hung in his office.

During World War I Rav Uziel lobbied the Ottoman government so persistently that they exiled him to Damascus. He remained politically active, becoming President of Mizrahi in 1919. He represented Jewish Mandate Palestine in various causes, such as the founding of the Jewish Agency. He joined delegations to the League of Nations (1926), Iraq (1927) and the US (1929). In 1939 he joined protests against the British plan to convert the Mandate into a bi-national Jewish/Arab state.

Rav Uziel left the Holy Land to become Chief Rabbi of Salonika for three years in the 1920's, before returning to become Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv. In 1939 he was appointed Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Mandate Palestine. He continued in this post through the end of the British Mandate, and until his death on the 24th of Elul in 1953 he served as Sephardic Chief Rabbi of the State of Israel.

The religio-social challenges of the Mandate and early State periods were of great interest to Rav Uziel. He supported women's suffrage, and he worked on a unified form of prayer for Ashkenazim and Sephardim. He published responsa on every major issue of his time.

Rav Uziel published extensively in newspapers and periodicals, and he won the Rav Kook Prize for Torah scholarship in 1944. Rav Uziel ordained Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, who would go on to become a giant in Israel's Sephardic community. Rav Uziel's responsa were published in the *Mishpitei Uziel* series of books, and his general writings appear in many more books.

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prohibited from refusing due to his father's anger, and his father is prohibited from being upset. The entire Torah, its mitzvot and its prayers, are the source of life.

This Wednesday is the 25th of Elul.

In the year 445 BCE (according to certain chronologies), Nechemiah, a leader of the Persian Jewish community, communicated regarding the situation in Jerusalem, "Those who remain from the captives there in the land live in a very bad state and in shame, and the wall of Jerusalem is broken through and its gates have been burned." (Nechemiah 1:3)

Nechemiah succeeded in convincing Cyrus, the Persian king, to permit him to ascend to the land and re-build the walls. When Nechemiah arrived, he discovered the full extent of the devastation and determined boldly to re-build the walls "such that there would never again be such shame." (2:17) This reconstruction would establish the city anew as the home of an honoured population.

The work continued despite continual intimidation by the nations who dwelled in the land. The Samaritans attacked the builders directly, mocked them and their work, and lobbied the Persian king to halt the construction. Only half of the builders could work, while the other half took up arms to protect them. Guards were appointed for night watches against enemy assaults.

Nechemiah also faced internal troubles, primarily from the poverty of the Jewish nation. To aid in the efforts, Nechemiah provided financial support, and also forgave the tribute he was licensed to collect for himself. As Nechemiah recorded, the work was finally completed successfully on the 25th of Elul.

This construction reminds us of the twentieth century, and the decree of a distant king permitting Jews to return to Israel and build it up. Local residents attempted to uproot Jewish settlement, and the Jews faced degrading poverty, famine and bitter hopelessness. Nonetheless, this population laid the foundation for the Beit haMikdash, and establishing a hold in the land that would endure for centuries.

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What is the message of our haftorah?

Like the other haftarot of the seven weeks of consolation, our haftorah pledges redemption and comfort. (See last week's Haftorah article for background on these haftarot.)

In the verses of our haftorah, G-d promises the Jewish people that even as darkness will cover the land and envelop the nations, the nation of Israel will be illuminated by Divine light. (Yeshayah 60:1-2) Those who had oppressed the Jewish nation will be forced to acknowledge Divine supremacy. (60:3) The victory will be so total that those who reject the nation of Israel will meet destruction. (60:12) The consolation for our physical suffering is its reversal; in place of abandonment, hatred and shame, we will become mighty. (60:15) The haftorah concludes with a promise that the future Temple will never be destroyed, and that once its time comes, G-d will hasten its construction. (60:22)

Is that it?

This message of consolation is surprising, though. Other prophecies of redemption describe a marvelous world that contrasts sharply with our own – a world of global unity, conversion of a heart of stone to a heart of flesh, and knowledge of G-d filling the land. In contrast, our haftorah speaks of a different sort of autonomy and empire.

Indeed, the talmudic sage Shemuel said, "There is no difference between this world and the days of Mashiach, other than tyranny." (Berachot 34b) However, this prophecy is lacking, and it arouses a certain unease. Is this the sum of redemption? Did we suffer millennia of martyrdom just in order to rest easily?

Indeed, Rabbi Yochanan raises this question in the Talmud (Rosh haShanah 23a), asking, "It is prophesied, 'To replace copper I will bring gold; to replace iron I will bring silver; to replace wood I will bring copper; to replace stone I will bring iron.' But what will be brought to replace Rabbi Akiva and his colleagues?"

Chatam Sofer and Rav Yehudah Amital

Rabbi Yochanan's question echoes in the powerful challenge of the Chatam Sofer (Torat Moshe, Parshat Shoftim), "Perhaps we would already have been suited for redemption... for peace between ourselves and the nations... as existed in the second Beit haMikdash. But there is no desire for this. Perhaps we would compromise and accept such a redemption in order to be redeemed, but our holy ancestors would not accept anything short of complete redemption." After all of the pain the nation of Israel has endured, simple nullification of tyranny is insufficient.

To this, my mentor Rav Yehudah Amital zt"l responded in a Yom haAtzmaut address, "It is clear that the Chatam

Sofer's claim that we reject an incomplete redemption was silenced in the years of the Holocaust." Rav Amital continued to explain the joy which reigned in Israel upon the Declaration of Independence despite fear and war, saying, "The Jewish *yishuv* did not forget the sacrifices, the casualties and the terror... Despite the strong emphasis Judaism places upon the value of life, the fall of individuals could not overshadow the present joy of national salvation."

It appears that this is the central message of our haftorah's consolation. Perhaps this prophecy does not describe the most complete redemption; perhaps the most complete redemption cannot be described by a member of this world at all. But this is the greatest consolation G-d could offer the nation of Israel.

The national return to the land of Israel like doves returning to their dovecotes (60:8), the knowledge that our sun will no longer set and our moon will no longer be gathered in (60:20) and that elderly men and women will sit in the streets of Yerushalayim (Zechariah 8:4) – none of this is more significant than a land filled with knowledge of G-d. But as consolation for refugees of the sword, this provides greater comfort.

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Highlights for September 8-14 / 21-27 Elul

Many of our regular shiurim re-start after Succot, but opportunities abound now!

Shabbat, September 8

7:45 AM R' Baruch Weintraub, Rav Kook, Or Chaim

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

After Hashkama Hillel Horovitz, Hebrew Shiur, Bnai Torah

75 min before minchah R' Mordechai Torczyner, Daf Yomi:

Berachot 38, BAYT

After minchah R' Mordechai Torczyner, Aiding and

Abetting, Gemara Avodah Zarah, BAYT

Pre-Selichot Programs

Motzaei Shabbat September 8

11:00 PM Hillel Horovitz, "Tall, Grande and Venti: A Perfect Guide for your Perfect Cup", Kehillat Shaarei Torah

11:00 PM Adam Frieberg, "Can family ties be broken?", Shaarei Tefillah

12:30 AM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Kabbalistic Repentance: The Ari's Letter, Thornhill Community Shul

Sunday, September 9

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

6:00 PM R' Baruch Weintraub, Halachic considerations in actual questions in Israel: Cities of Refuge?, **Hebrew**, 4 Tillingham Keep

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The Length of our Days:

Judaism and Immortality

7:30 PM Minchah 7:45 PM Program Begins at BAYT

Monday, September 10

After maariv R' Baruch Weintraub, Daf Yomi, Clanton Park, *men*

8:20 PM Hillel Horovitz, Shemuel Bet, Week 1, Bnai Torah

Tuesday, September 11

1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, "Chanah's Prayer", Shaarei Shomayim, *with Mekorot*

Wednesday, September 12

8:00 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Living Midrash: The Akeidah, BAYT, *women*

Coming up next week:

Selichot for Women

9 PM September 20th and 23rd

at the Weintraub home

12 Midvale Rd. Toronto