

Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Vayyelech

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Extraordinary Repentance, Extraordinary Shabbat

Hillel Horovitz

"They asked Wisdom: What should be the punishment of a sinner? She replied, 'Evil should pursue sinners. (Mishlei 13:21)'

"They asked Prophecy: What should be the punishment of a sinner? She replied, 'The sinner should die. (Yechezkel 18:4)'

"They asked G-d: What should be the punishment of a sinner? He replied, 'Let him return, and he will be forgiven, as it is written, 'Therefore, He guides sinners on the path. (Tehillim 25:8)'" (Talmud Yerushalmi, Makkot 2)

This passage teaches us that punishment is an inescapable natural reality – but when the question is put to G-d we are introduced to the concept of repentance, a path which enables the sinner to escape the inescapable. Forgiveness via repentance is a gift from G-d; how else could one avoid the repercussions of his actions?

Another version of this talmudic passage appears in midrash (Pesikta d'Rav Kahana, Shuvah 7; Yalkut Shimoni, Yechezkel 358), with an additional line: "They asked Torah: What should be the punishment of a sinner? She replied, 'Let him bring a guilt offering, and it will atone for him.'" This edition is surprising in its suggestion that repentance is not the only means of achieving atonement; what, then, is the advantage of repentance? Further, how does this midrash distinguish between the voice of G-d and the voice of Torah? Is Torah not G-d's message to us?

Maharal (Netivot haTorah 1) explains that the term "Torah" here refers to the

implement via which G-d created the world, so that the Torah itself is the structure of the world. He cites the midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 1), "G-d looked into the Torah and created His world." Torah represents natural order, and just as there are laws of nature, the Sun rising in the morning and setting in the evening, so the Torah provides laws of the spirit. The Torah establishes that all who enter the world must observe the seven Noachide laws, and that Jews must fulfill additional mitzvot. This is the law which G-d built into Creation, as certain as the path traveled by the Sun.

This natural law of Torah offers the sinner a solution in the form of a korban, but this method is not always available. Intentional sin does not allow for a korban. Even standard methods of repentance are not always possible; the Rambam writes (Hilchot Teshuvah 4), "Twenty-four things obstruct repentance... five of them seal the paths of repentance." What should such people do?

To this the Talmud (Yoma 86b) responds, "Repentance is so great that it overrides a prohibition recorded in the Torah." This form of repentance can burst through the barriers which are found in the Torah's model of Creation. We are empowered with the ability to smash the laws of nature in our deed of repentance. In our midrash, we are taught that G-d created a force of repentance which can even counter the Torah's laws of nature!

Rav Tzaddok haKohen (Pri Tzaddik, Miketz 2) cites the Shelah's statement that G-d tells the Jewish people that

repentance will only be possible when we push ourselves, when G-d will see that we have not given up, and we long to return. The Shelah writes that regarding this the Talmud (Pesachim 86b) states, "Do everything the Master of the House instructs, other than to leave." When G-d says, "Depart from this world, the path of repentance is closed," we respond that we believe that repentance and forgiveness are supernatural, and we break through the walls that separate us from G-d.

We find a similar concept regarding Shabbat, which is termed, "a portion without boundaries. (Shabbat 118a)" The gift G-d has given us is beyond natural comprehension and simple intellect; it is an expanded spirit and elevated state of holiness. Rabbi Chaim Vital cites the Ari to say, "All week we must pray with closed eyes or from a siddur, but on Shabbat we pray with open eyes. The entire world around us is one of Shabbat, and it does not distract us." Shabbat creates a new reality, a reality which breaks the boundaries within which we normally live.

When we reach this Shabbat, Shabbat Shuvah, we blend these concepts of supernatural repentance and of boundless sanctity. These two elements "push the envelope," demanding of a person that he connect with the loftiest elements of his identity in order to create a new reality. When we are given the opportunity of these ten days of repentance, and in their midst to experience a Shabbat, then a day unique in its meaning and power is created, and we enter a most extraordinary realm.

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גמר חתימה טובה

LOOK FOR MORE YOM TOV TORAH IN THE SUKKOT YUT-Go

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לאור זה, נראה לי שניתן לבאר מדוע חיפשו הרומאים מקור בתורה. הרומאים טענו בפני רבי יהושע בן חנניה, שלכאורה היהודים אוחזים בשני עקרונות סותרים – מחד, הקב"ה יודע עתידות, עקרון המניח עולם דטרמיניסטי וקבוע, ללא שינוי. זהו עולם שתמיד נע בכיוון אחד – ומאחר והכיוון בעולמנו הוא מן החיים למוות, הרי שהאמונה בתחיית המתים, המניחה שניתן לעצור את הזרם ולהשיבו אחר, עומדת בסתירה לכך. האם ייתכן כי שני העקרונות יתקיימו בשיטה אחת?

תשובתו של רבי יהושע היא שאכן כן, ושניהם נלמדים מאותו הפסוק ממש – הנך שוכב עם אבותיך וקם העם הזה וזנה. בתוך אותו פסוק עצמו, נמצאת גם ידיעת העתיד, המניחה שטבעו של עולם החומר להתדרדר ולמות, בין מוות טבעי ובין מוות רוחני, אך נמצאת גם ההבטחה 'שוכב עם אבותיך וקם'.

הרומאים טוענים כי קריאה זו עומדת נגד הפשט, והם כמובן צודקים. רבי יהושע בן חנניה משאיר אותם עם עקרון הידיעה בלבד. אך האמת היא, שעקרון זה הוא רק חצי מן התמונה השלמה. עקרון תחיית המתים, העקרון שניתן לשוב בתשובה, שניתן לרסק את השלשלת הסיבתית המובילה בהכרח ל'וקם העם הזה וזנה', עקרון השיבה לחיים, חבוי בתוך הפסוק. אך למצאו יוכל רק המאמין בו כבר.

רעיון התשובה, היכולת להשתנות, לא ניתן להבנה בפשטה של המציאות. חזרה בתשובה מצריכה, פעמים רבות, לקרוא הפוך: להאמין שניתן לעשות את הנראה כבלתי אפשרי. הרומאים לעולם לא יראו זאת. אבל אנו, מאמינים בני מאמינים, יודעים לקרוא במציאות את שתי הפנים – אמנם הידיעה 'וקם העם הזה וזנה', אך גם התקוה – 'הנך שוכב עם אבותיך וקם'.

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מספרת הגמרא (סנהדרין צ"ב): "שאלו רומיים את רבי יהושע בן חנניה: מניין שהקב"ה מחיה מתים, ויודע מה שעתיד להיות? אמר להו: תרווייהו מן המקרא הזה, שנאמר ויאמר ד' אל משה הנך שוכב עם אבותיך וקם העם הזה וזנה. - ודילמא, וקם העם הזה וזנה? - אמר להו: נקוט מיהא פלגא בדייכו, דידוע מה שעתיד להיות"

כוונתו של רבי יהושע בן חנניה הייתה, כי יש לקרוא את הפסוק כך:

"הנך שוכב עם אבותיך וקם" - מקור לתחיית המתים.

"העם הזה וזנה", - מקור לידיעת ד' את העתיד.

שאלת הרומאים מתבקשת – על פי הפשט המילה 'וקם' מתחברת עם המשך המשפט - 'וקם העם הזה וזנה!' ותשובת רבי יהושע היא שלו יהי כדבריהם, מכל מקום 'חצי' משאלתם נענה, שהרי הוכח כי הקב"ה יודע את העתיד.

סיפור זה כולו נראה תמוה ביותר. וכי מה אכפת להם לרומאים האם ניתן להוכיח את תחיית המתים או את ידיעת ד' מן התורה – סוף סוף אין הם מאמינים בתורה עצמה!

ועוד, כיצד חשב רבי יהושע בן חנניה שיוכל לשכנע אותם בקריאה משונה זו, המצמידה את 'וקם' אל חציו הראשון של הפסוק, באופן הנראה הפוך לחלוטין לפשט! השאלה השניה מתחזקת מכך שמייד לאחר מכן מצינת הגמרא שאף לאחר 'הודאתו' של רבי יהושע בן חנניה, מכל מקום רבי יוחנן ורבי שמעון בר יוחאי למדו מפסוק זה הן את ידיעת ד' והן את תחיית המתים.

מענה לשאלות אלו, דומני, נמצא בהערת המהרש"א, כי הלשון 'נקוט מיהא פלגא' אינה מתאימה; הרומאים שאלו שתי שאלות שונות, ואם כן היה צריך לומר 'נקוט מיהא חדא'. הלשון 'נקוט מיהא פלגא' מוכיחה שלפנינו למעשה שאלה אחת, שחציה נענה.

Hitoriri:
Jewish Spirituality
Filing our Appeal
R' Mordechai Torczyner

HaShem told Noach (Bereishit 6:13), "The land is filled with violence, and I am going to destroy humanity, with the earth." Noach heard, and accepted; he built a boat, gathered animals and boarded the boat with his family, as instructed. The Creator then rolled back His Creation, and Noach survived.

R' Yishmael ben Elisha was Kohen Gadol at the end of the second Beit haMikdash, millennia after Noach's era, in a period of great despair. R' Yishmael entered the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur and envisioned HaShem majestically perched atop a throne which was elevated, at a distance. HaShem offered R' Yishmael the chance to ask for anything, saying, "Give Me a blessing." R' Yishmael knew that all was lost, but he ignored the distance of that Divine throne, and pleaded, "May it be Your Divine will that Your mercy overcome Your anger, and that You go beyond the letter of the law in dealing with Your children." R' Yishmael refused to accept the Divine judgment. (Berachot 7a)

A Divine decree of punishment displays HaShem's intent, but we are taught that it is not permanent; see, for example, the story of Nineveh. R' Yishmael ben Elisha understood this. R' Akiva made this clear when he told the Roman governor, Turnus Rufus, that HaShem may make a person needy, but HaShem also wants us to help that person. We are meant to ignore Noach's example, and instead to challenge and change reality.

This isn't universally true; there are times when we must accept Divine judgment. Beside a grave we recite tzidduk hadin, biblical verses acknowledging Divine justice - but this is only after the death. Until then, before the Flood, before the Beit haMikdash is destroyed, even after a Divine decree, we pray, appeal, and challenge.

There must be Divine judgment, and even punishment, in order for our deeds to matter, but no judgment is final. On Rosh haShanah we received a verdict, but we have ten days to file our appeal. May we emulate R' Yishmael ben Elisha and R' Akiva and approach HaShem with our challenge, and may our prayers be received positively.

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613 Mitzvot: #207

Niddah

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Under the Torah's 207th mitzvah, a husband and wife are not permitted to live conjugally when the wife is experiencing menstruation; this is termed a "niddah" period. After menstruation concludes, the wife immerses in a mikvah and then they are permitted to each other. Today, due to confusion between menstruation and the discharge associated with a state of "zivah", an additional seven days must pass without any sign of bleeding before immersion.

Many rationales have been offered for

this period of separation, including preserving a woman's physical and emotional health, ensuring a husband's respect for his wife, providing a period of mourning for a lost egg, and keeping a relationship fresh. For more on this, see Niddah 31b; Or Zarua II #454; Sefer haChinuch #182 and #207; Pitchei Niddah 5, R' Shimshon Raphael Hirsch, Horeb, Appendix G; Torah Temimah to Vayikra 15 note 82.

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**Torah in Translation
Subtracting from
the Torah**

Rabbi Herschel Schachter

**Ginat Egoz, Orach Chaim 2:4
Translated by Adam Frieberg**

[Preface: Devarim 13:1 states "The entire message that I command you, shall you observe to do; you shall not add to it and you shall not subtract from it." This is the mitzvah of *bal tigra*, a prohibition against subtracting from the Torah.]

And look in the responsa of the Beit HaLevi (1:42), who presents a new way of looking at the issue, which he quotes from the book *Turei Even*. Regarding defining the parameters of the prohibition against subtracting, he says that having three corners of your garment adorned with tzitzit [neglecting the fourth], or neglecting to insert one of the parchment scrolls in one's tefillin, cannot be said to violate the prohibition against subtracting. No [meaningful] action was taken. This prohibition only applies when you do a mitzvah in a way that is lacking, meaning, fulfilling a mitzvah but in a way that is lacking complete fulfillment.

Look in the Mishneh Berurah (34:2, *Biur Halacha*, s.v. *yaniach*): If only one blood application [on the corner of the altar] was done, when [the sacrifice] required two or four applications, then even though it is ruled that once this has happened atonement has been achieved (*Zevachim* 36b), nevertheless, this action violates the prohibition against subtracting. This is an open rebuke to one who wants to neglect, occasionally, the aspects of commandments that are part of the ideal form of the mitzvah. See more in his words there.

Based on this opinion of the *Turei Even*, this is the definition of the prohibition against subtracting: One should not carry out the mitzvot of the Torah in a way that is lacking. It applies only in such a case, when one sets out to perform a mitzvah in a way that only fulfills one's obligation on the level of minimal acceptability. According to his words it would appear correct to say that although we rule like the *Chachamim* who disagree with *Rebbe*, that the absence of techelet strings on your tzitzit does not cancel out the mitzvah of tzitzit completely, however, one who one has access to techelet strings and does not put in the effort required to place

Rabbi Herschel Schachter was born in 1941 in eastern Pennsylvania, and moved to New York City where he attended Yeshiva University's high school. He went on to pursue his B.A. at Yeshiva College.

In 1967, Rabbi Schachter earned his M.A. in Hebrew Literature from the Bernard Revel Graduate School and was ordained by RIETS, where his father, Rabbi Melech Schachter, zt"l, was a Rosh Yeshiva. That same year he joined the faculty of RIETS, becoming its youngest Rosh Yeshiva, and he remains a Rosh Yeshiva there to this day. In addition, he serves as the Rosh Kollel in RIETS' Marcos and Adina Katz Kollel. Rabbi Schachter has written three sefarim - *Eretz HaTzvi*, *B'Ikvei HaTzon*, and *Ginat Egoz* - which provide insight into a wide spectrum of topics.

At the age of 22 Rabbi Schachter became an assistant to Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik and developed an extremely close relationship with him as his student. Through hundreds of personal encounters, as well as thousands of hours he spent listening to Rabbi Soloveitchik's lectures, he learned many of the Rav's halachic positions. Rabbi Schachter has recorded these positions, along with other thoughts he heard from Rabbi Soloveitchik, in many volumes, including *Nefesh haRav*, *MiPinei haRav* and *Divrei haRav*, as well as numerous essays in a range of Torah journals.

Rabbi Schachter serves as a world renowned authority of Jewish law, fielding questions from rabbis and lay people from around the world. Rabbi Schachter has published positions on the major issues grappled with by today's Orthodox community, including determination of the time of a person's death, the importance of honesty and ethical conduct, and the public role of women in the Jewish world. He also serves as a leading halachic authority for the Rabbinical Council of America and the kashrut division of the Orthodox Union, and he speaks frequently in Toronto.

Rabbi Schachter is expected to speak this coming Succot, Thursday evening October 4, at 7:30 PM, at Congregation Bnai Torah.

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them on his tzitzit has violated the prohibition against subtracting.

**This Week in
Israeli History
Tishrei 11, 1946
The Eleven Points
R' Ezra Goldschmiedt**

This Thursday is the 11th of Tishrei.

In 1939, Britain's House of Commons approved the "White Paper," outlining a vision of a single state for Jews and Arabs. Claiming that this was the original intent of its own government's 1917 Balfour Declaration (which, until this point, had been understood as a framework for an entirely Jewish state), Britain made efforts to minimize changes in the area's demographics, significantly limiting Jewish immigration and prohibiting sale of Arab-owned land to Jews.

Around 1946, Britain began to reconsider its one-state solution. Together with the United States, they drafted what became known as the Morrison-Grady Plan, a proposal for how to split the territory among Jews and Arabs. The plan was less than favorable to Jews, particularly through its exclusion of the Negev region from a potential Jewish state. Though most of the Jewish population was located in northern and central Israel, the Negev was ripe for Jewish settlement; the rulings of the White Paper served as the only real obstacle.

In response to the looming threat of the Morrison-Grady Plan, Jewish community leaders took action. With help from JNF, private traders and other organizations, significant parts of the Negev were purchased from Bedouins, circumventing the White Paper's restrictions. On the evening following Yom Kippur, when many British forces were on break and suspicious activity was less expected, about 1,000 Jews drove into the Negev and established eleven communities overnight. Political realities made it difficult for the British to reverse what had been done; these "Eleven Points" significantly changed the facts on the ground, foiling the Morrison-Grady Plan and securing the Negev for a future state of Israel.

Many are familiar with the practice of beginning sukkah construction immediately after Yom Kippur; it would seem that this is an auspicious time for the mitzvah of settling Eretz Yisrael as well!

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The haftorah of Shabbat Shuvah is composed of two parts; the first part comes from the book of Hosheia, and the second from Yoel. Some also add a passage from Michah.

Who was Hosheia?

Hosheia ben Be'eri prophesied during the time of kings Uziah, Yotam, Achaz and Chizkiyahu of the southern "Yehudah" kingdom, but he directed his messages primarily to the northern "Yisrael" kingdom, which was led by King Yeravam ben Yoash. Authorship of the book is attributed to the Great Assembly at the start of the second Beit haMikdash (Bava Batra 15a); it is not clear whether Hosheia wrote down any notes, or whether all was recorded by his students.

Hosheia's prophecies depict his generation as corrupt. They do not fear G-d or their king. (Hosheia 10:13) They rebel against G-d (3:1), abuse other people (4:1-2) and are immersed in drunkenness and immorality (4). The central image of Hosheia's prophecy is a comparison of the relationship between Gd and the nation of Israel with the relationship between a husband and his adulterous spouse. The theme is found elsewhere among the books of the prophets, but Hosheia is instructed to actualize the message by wedding a woman whom he knows will not be faithful to him.

The Talmud (Pesachim 87) informs us that the Divine instruction to Hosheia came as a response to his own declaration that the sins of the Jewish

people would justify the cancelling of the exclusive covenant between G-d and his nation. "Hashem said, 'What will I do for this old man? I will tell him, 'Take an immoral woman and create children of immorality,' and then I will tell him, 'Send her from before you.' If he can send, then I will send Israel away.'" The lesson is learned well when G-d then tells Hosheia to separate from his wife. As the Talmud records, "Hosheia said, 'Master of the Universe, I have children from her! I cannot send her away and divorce her!'" G-d replied, 'You, whose wife is immoral and whose children are born of immorality, and you don't know whether the children are yours or are from others, say this? Israel, my children, children of My tested ones, children of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov... you would say I should trade them for another nation?'" And Hosheia prays to G-d for mercy.

Who was Yoel?

We know little about Yoel ben Petuel, the prophet whose brief book mentions neither his lineage nor his place of origin nor his era. A passage in Seder Olam (20) suggests he prophesied in the time of Menasheh.

The book of Yoel deals with two subjects: The coming of locusts with a Divine promise to defend Israel against this plague, and an invasion of enemies with a Divine promise that they will fall. There are many parallels between the two parts.

What is the message of our haftorah?

The haftorah may be the most important component of this Shabbat, which is

named for the haftorah's opening words, "Shuvah Yisrael," "Return, Israel."

Tosafot (Megilah 31b *Rosh Chodesh*) portray our haftorah as an extension of the three haftarot of punishment that follow Tishah b'Av and the subsequent seven haftarot of consolation. It appears that the connection lies in the type of repentance described in the selections from Hosheia and Yoel.

We begin with, "Return, Israel, to HaShem your G-d, for you have stumbled in your sins." This 'stumbling' is not limited to sinning, but to the nation's general state of collapse. The previous sentence in Hosheia described regarding the kingdom of Yisrael, "They will fall by the sword, their children will be destroyed, their pregnant women will be split open." Yoel's vision of repentance, too, is born from a state of collapse; he declares (2:17), "Between the sanctuary and the altar the priests will weep... saying, 'G-d, have mercy upon Your nation!'"

This repentance does not come from a position of strength, along the lines of Yeshayah's "Seek G-d when He is found, call Him when He is near. (55:6)" It comes from a devastated state. Evil ways have led the population into a blind alley, a world of "I have called to my trusted friends, but they deceived me. (Eichah 1:19)" The straying spouse has suddenly realized that she has no comfort other than her husband – and to her surprise, he receives her warmly.

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Highlights for September 22-28 / 6 - 12 Tishrei

Shabbat, September 22

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

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

Derashah Adam Frieberg, Shaarei Tefillah

5:05 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Daf Yomi: Berachot 52, BAYT

After minchah R' Mordechai Torczyner, The Akeidah in Midrash, BAYT

Sunday, September 23

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

6:00 PM R' Baruch Weintraub, Halachic considerations in actual questions in Israel: Car Accidents, **Hebrew**, 4 Tillingham Keep

40 Min Before Minchah R' Baruch Weintraub, Halachic considerations in actual questions in Israel: The City of Refuge, **Hebrew**, Clanton Park, *men*

9:00 PM Mrs. Pnina Weintaub, Slichot for Women, 12 Midvale

Monday, September 24

8-10 PM Monday night Beit Midrash at Bnai Torah

8 PM R' Baruch Weintraub, Sefer Yonah: "I run from You, to You", Bnai Torah

Wednesday, September 26 Yom Kippur

After musaf, R' Mordechai Torczyner, The Ari's Prayer for Repentance, BAYT, Milevsky Beis Medrash

4:35 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Daf Yomi: Berachot 56, BAYT

גמר חתימה טובה

May we be sealed for a great year!

**7:30 PM THURSDAY OCTOBER 4
RAV HERSCHEL SCHACHTER
AT CONGREGATION BNAI TORAH**