

# Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Chayyei Sarah

25 Cheshvan 5773/November 10, 2012

Vol.4 Num. 8

To sponsor an issue of Toronto Torah, please email [info@torontotorah.com](mailto:info@torontotorah.com) or call 416-783-6960

## Intelligent Chesed

Adam Frieberg

It is easy to understand how picking up someone who is waiting for a bus and driving him to his destination is an act of chesed; you have saved the person time and money, and hopefully you have provided them with a more comfortable ride. It is equally easy to understand that no parent would want his teenage daughter to pick up a man she has never met from the bus stop at 11 pm. When helping others, one's own safety must be factored in.

Rivkah, our parshah's paradigm of chesed, enters the latter sort of situation. She arrives at the well, as she does every late afternoon, to draw water for her family. There she meets an unfamiliar man, who runs to her and pleads, "Please, let me sip a little water from your jug?" (Bereishit 24:17) Rivkah is faced with a dilemma, as outlined by Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, great-grandfather of the more recent Rabbi Soloveitchik known colloquially as the Rav. (Beit HaLevi to Parshat Chayyei Sarah) On one hand, she wants to help out this thirsty man. On the other hand, he is a stranger. Further, should his saliva enter the pitcher, the water would be rendered undrinkable. The remaining water would be completely useless to her family, leaving them thirsty until

morning. There wasn't even a cup or bowl for her to use as a receptacle in which to offer the man a smaller portion of water. While the option of spilling out the jug after Eliezer had taken a few sips might seem like the obvious solution, Rabbi Soloveitchik explains that Rivkah understood that such an action was out of the question, as it would have been extremely offensive to this stranger.

With all of these considerations running through her head, Rivkah quickly devised a plan. She decided to first offer the man water to drink, and only afterward to offer his camels water to drink. Her thinking was sharp: anyone would understand if you would dump out a pitcher of water to clean it out after an animal had used it, before refilling it for your own family.

This fascinating approach to a story we have known since kindergarten also provides an answer to the question of why Rivkah fed a person before his animal, despite the halachah that people must feed their animals before feeding themselves. (Mishneh Berurah 167:40) [The Magen Avraham (167:18) provides a more technical answer. He quotes the Sefer Chasidim who says that this story teaches us that the

halachah to feed our animals first does not apply to beverages.]

Rivkah's act of superlative chesed might seem cold, though. Are we to understand that our foremother Rivkah's beautiful act of chesed, in which she went beyond the letter of the law and let the camels drink as well, was nothing more than a creative way to avoid an uncomfortable situation and waste of water? Rabbi Soloveitchik argues otherwise, contending that Rivkah was actually fulfilling Eliezer's plan to the tee. Eliezer was on a search for a woman whose personality exemplified kindness. Yet, he knew that this trait alone would not be enough; he was also looking for a woman who would be wise, with deep emotional intelligence. When he made his deal with G-d [a questionable act in its own right], Eliezer wanted to test Yitzchak's potential wife's traits of wisdom as well as kindness. When Rivkah first offered water to Eliezer to drink and only then offered his camels water to drink, following the exact procedure Eliezer had hoped Yitzchak's future wife would follow, he knew that he was on to something.

Yet, Rabbi Soloveitchik concludes, Eliezer wasn't completely convinced. Performing a nice act in a wise manner wasn't enough. It was, in fact, Rivkah's chesed, going above and beyond the call of duty, albeit in an intelligent fashion, that convinced him. She could have just given the camels a sip, enabling her to dump out the water and refill it, providing a clean pitcher for her family without offending Eliezer. Nonetheless, she went ahead and fed all ten of his camels, providing the liters and liters of water they would need to be satiated. This brings us full circle, restoring our basic understanding of the story: Rivkah was truly a woman of chesed, with intelligence guiding her actions.

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

We are grateful to  
Continental Press 905-660-0311

**PARENT-CHILD LEARNING WITH YAIR MANAS  
BEGINS THIS MOTZAEI SHABBAT AT 6:40 PM  
AT SHAAREI SHOMAYIM, 470 GLENCAIRN AVE  
"HONOURING YOUR PARENTS"**



**MEDICAL HALACHAH WITH CME CREDIT  
WITH RABBI MORDECHAI TORCZYNER  
AT BAYT, SUNDAY AT 8:45 AM  
"HUMAN DIGNITY IN MEDICAL HALACHAH"**



With advances in modern medicine, health professionals have the ability to to induce labour in pregnant women through chemical (and sometimes physical) means. Typically, these methods are reserved for situations in which a prolonged pregnancy poses risks to the mother and/or child. However, there are also situations in which labour is induced for the sake of convenience. Within the Jewish community, there have been incidents in which parents induced labour on a Sunday to ensure that the brit milah would conveniently take place the following Sunday morning. (Torat HaYoledet, Chapter 1, footnote 2) Is this practice permitted?

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (Igrot Moshe, Yoreh Deah 2:74) ruled that inducing labour is forbidden other than in cases of medical necessity, for a number of reasons:

- The birth process is dangerous. Though a pregnant woman will inevitably deliver at some point, inducing labour brings about that state of danger earlier than necessary. Because we place a great value on even short periods of life (see Avodah Zarah 27b), one must delay this danger as long as possible.
- From the perspective of the child's health, reducing the time of in-utero development may have negative effects.
- In a general sense, the commandment to "be fruitful and multiply" (Bereishit 1:28) provides a woman with a promise from G-d for protection. There is room to be concerned that a birth brought about via unnatural means is not afforded such protection, leaving the woman in a vulnerable state.

While this prohibition is suspended when medical complications demand induced labour, Rabbi Feinstein stresses that one may not so when the only motivation is social convenience. More complicated, however, are matters of **medical** convenience, when an induced, planned birth would have certain medical advantages over letting birth take place at a natural, but less predictable time.

To be sure, it would be ideal if the best level of care could be provided to mothers at all times, no matter the day of the week or the time of day. In most situations however, this is simply not feasible. Due to limited resources and other factors (e.g. sleep and traffic patterns), the best emergency services and doctors cannot be available 24/7. This being the case, may a woman induce labour in order to assure that her delivery is done by the doctor with whom she feels most comfortable?

A statement approved by Rabbi Feinstein (drafted by Dr. Fred Rosner and Rabbi Moshe Tendler) offers the following: "Induction of labour should be reserved only for those clinical conditions that demand early termination of pregnancy so as to benefit mother or child." In other words, Rabbi Feinstein felt that induced labour cannot be justified on the grounds of simple preferences, even when medically motivated.

In their work Torat HaYoledet (Chapter 1, footnote 4), Rabbis Yitzchak Zilberman and Moshe Rothschild disagree with Rabbi Feinstein. They maintain that with the exception of Shabbat, inducing birth on account of medical preferences is permitted. See there for their reasoning.

*egoldschmiedt@torontotorah.com*

## 613 Mitzvot: #215

### Leftovers

**Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner**

The Torah disapproves of serving leftovers; mitzvah 215 instructs us to eat our korban offerings only within a specific timeframe, after which the remains must be burned. This mitzvah encourages us to treat the offerings as sacred to G-d, rather than as just another meal.

One may eat from different korbanot for different periods of time; per Torat haOlah of Rabbi Moshe Isserles (2:25), the schedule for consumption of a particular korban stems from the

inherent nature of the offering. For example, sin offerings are consumed only for one day, in order to minimize the embarrassment of the sinner and so encourage him to atone for his sins. On the other hand, korbanot of personal celebration may be consumed for two days, since no shame is involved. Consumption is limited to two days, though, lest they sit longer and become inedible, as noted by Rambam. (Moreh haNevuchim 3:46)

*torczyner@torontotorah.com*

## Hitoriri: Jewish Spirituality

### Four Amot in Israel

**Rabbi Baruch Weintraub**

Following Sarah's death, Avraham did something he had never done before: he bought a piece of land in Israel. Why did Avraham wait so long? Why didn't Avraham buy land long before, to settle in the land given to him directly by G-d?

The connection between burial in Israel and ownership of land there is also found in a halachic discussion. Within Jewish law, a lender may sell his intangible rights to collect a debt only by selling a portion of land with it. Rambam (Hilchot Shluchin 3:7) discusses an option suggested by the Gaonim for lenders who do not own land: Since everyone owns four amot (roughly two meters) in Israel, he can use his land in Israel for this purpose.

Many, including Rambam himself, opposed this assertion, doubting its basis; by what right does each of us own such a portion in Israel? Some suggest this is an inheritance, but others point out that the Geonim did not restrict their suggestion to men whose male ancestors had passed away. Rabbi Tzaddok HaKohen MiLublin (Likutey Maamarim 10), offers an illuminating explanation: The four amot are the place of burial each one of us owns in Eretz Israel.

Why is owning a share in Israel linked so strongly to death and burial? Israel is not only a homeland, a place in which to settle and sit. Israel is also, and perhaps mainly, a destination for our lifelong voyage. Avraham is commanded "Lech Lecha" while in Charan, but is commanded again to "Get up and walk the land" even after arriving in Canaan. Only once Sarah has completed her journey does Avraham purchase the land of her destination, even as he continues in his own travels.

The four amot identified by the Gaonim represent a promise, as well as a demand – everywhere you go, carry Israel with you as your final destination.

*bweintraub@torontotorah.com*

**Torah in Translation  
The Sanctity of Israel  
Rabbi Yitzchak HaParchi**

**Kaftor vaFerach 10  
Translated by R' Mordechai Torczyner**

The sanctity of the land and its stature began from the time it was given to our holy ancestors, not only from the time of conquest. And so Bereishit 40:15 says, "from the land of the Hebrews", and Bereishit 48:21 says, "And He will restore you to the land of your ancestors." The word "Hebrews" is not about the "other side [ever]" of the Euphrates, but rather the name of Ever, the son of Shem, as Ibn Ezra (Shemot 21:2) wrote.

Ibn Ezra also wrote that the purchase of the Cave of Machpelah by Avraham is recorded in order to inform us of the advantage of the Land of Israel over other lands for both the living and the deceased. And regarding Bereishit 33:19, "And [Yaakov] acquired the portion of the field," he wrote, "This is mentioned in the Torah to inform us that the Land of Israel has a great advantage, and possession of a portion there is like possession of a portion in the Next World." The same is true in Bereishit 50:24, "I will bring you up from this land, to the land I swore to give to Avraham, to Yitzchak and to Yaakov."

And so in Bereishit 15:18, "On that day G-d executed a covenant with Avram, saying, "To your seed I will give this land, from the river of Egypt to the Great River, the Euphrates." From that time Avraham acquired it for all of his descendants, for at that awesome encounter G-d told him (Bereishit 15:13), "Know that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs... and the fourth generation will return here." If so, then when they are yet in their oppression and slavery during those four hundred years, this land – the land of the Emorites – is theirs, and Egypt is not theirs...

In truth, the obligation to give the land's tithes began only from the time of conquest... However, regarding mitzvot which are not land-dependent, like the fruit of the fields, it was sanctified from that time. This is why the sages say that Bereishit 12:2, "And I will make you a great nation," applied only in Israel. And so the Euphrates was called "the great river" (Bereishit 15:8); it was only called "great" because of its association with the [already sanctified] Land of Israel. It would not have been called "great" because of the future.

Yitzchak haKohen (aka Ishtori) ben Moshe was born in Florenzia, Spain in 1280, to a scholarly family. His grandfather published works on the Torah's financial laws, and is cited by the Meiri and Sefer haTorah. Many other family members also authored books on Jewish law. Rabbi Yitzchak adopted the last name "HaParchi" – "of the flower" – because of his hometown's name.

Educated in yeshivot in France, Rabbi Yitzchak lived there until Jews were expelled by King Phillip in 1306. He then travelled to Spain, and then Egypt, before ascending to Israel. He settled in Beit She'an, where he practiced as a physician; he was learned in various secular fields, including linguistics, philosophy and astronomy.

In 1322, Rabbi Yitzchak wrote the first formal book of Israeli geography, *Kaftor vaFerach*; the text was first printed in Venice in 1549. Rabbi Yitzchak's goal was to describe the topography and towns of Israel based on his first-person visits. In a sense, Rabbi Yitzchak followed in the footsteps of Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela and other travelers to Israel who recorded their journeys, but Rabbi Yitzchak travelled the entire land for thorough research, and he aimed to describe more than geography. *Kaftor vaFerach* notes the various levels of sanctity of different parts of the land, with their associated laws, principally following the views of Rambam. Rabbi Yitzchak also depicted types of flora found in the Talmud, and he described the various weights and measures used in Jewish law. The customs of Jewish communities in Israel are also recorded in *Kaftor vaFerach*.

Rabbi Yitzchak wrote other works on medicine, ethics and philosophy, until he passed away in 1355, but he is principally known for *Kaftor vaFerach*.

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

This is also seen from Menachot 84a, "R' Yosi b'R' Yehudah said: The *omer* grain may come from outside Israel. Why does the Torah say [regarding the *omer*], 'When you enter the land'? They were not obligated in the *omer* before they entered the land..." We see that they made the same deduction [that the obligations associated with the land of Israel began only with the entry of the Jewish nation into the land].

**This Week in  
Israeli History  
Cheshvan 26, 2004  
Hatikvah  
Hillel Horovitz**

*Sunday is the 26<sup>th</sup> of Cheshvan*

*Hatikvah* was written by the poet Naftali Herz Imber in 1878, but only in 2004 was it officially named as the national anthem of the State of Israel. Imber composed a poem of nine verses, named *Tikvateinu* (Our Hope), of which the two first verses (with slight changes) comprise the song we know as *Hatikvah*. In 1886, Shemuel Cohen, a farmer from Rishon l'Tzion, put Imber's poem to a tune based upon a Moldovan song he knew from his youth.

*Tikvateinu* evolved through several stages before becoming the national anthem. Rechovot adopted *Tikvateinu* for itself. The song was also published outside of Israel, in 1895, under the title *Ga'aguim* (Yearning). In the same year, the song was published in Israel in a collection of "Zionist songs", under the name of *Hatikvah* (The Hope).

Imber unsuccessfully promoted *Tikvateinu* as the Zionist movement's official song before the fifth World Zionist Congress. In 1903, though, the song was approved at the sixth World Zionist Congress, largely in response to the movement to establish a national homeland in Uganda. The verse, "the eye looks toward Zion" took on new meaning for the opponents of the Uganda initiative. Beginning with the eighth Congress, the newly named *Hatikvah* was sung at the close of each Congress; the eighteenth Congress, in 1933, initiated the practice of standing for the song.

At the opening of the formal declaration of national independence in 1948, all those present sang *Hatikvah*. Unlike the flag and emblematic menorah, though, which were enshrined as national symbols in 1949, the legal status of *Hatikvah* was not raised until 1996. Even then, *Hatikvah* was only discussed as part of a formalization of rituals for the opening of a Knesset session. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of Cheshvan, 2004, the Knesset re-titled the "Flag and Emblem Law" as the "Flag, Emblem and National Anthem Law", naming *Hatikvah* as the national anthem.

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

## Who is the prophet of our Haftorah?

The book of Melachim ("Kings") records the history of Jewish life in Israel from the end of King David's reign until the Babylonian destruction of the first Beit haMikdash. The Talmud (Bava Batra 15a) says that it was recorded by Yirmiyah, who lived through the last decades recorded in the book. In our editions of Tanach, Melachim is split into two parts; the first part begins with the end of King David's reign and continues until shortly after the death of King Achav of Yisrael, and the second part continues from there.

The dominant prophet in our haftorah is Natan, who accompanied King David for many years, promising everlasting kingship. He also rebuked when needed, as in the Batsheva affair. Rav Yehuda Kil, in his introduction to Daat Mikra, suggests that Natan was trained by Shemuel. As our haftorah shows, Natan both conveyed his prophecies and made an effort to ensure their realization.

## What are the main events in our haftorah?

The haftorah begins with a story from late in King David's life; as he ages,

King David finds that his body is cold, and clothes do not help. His servants give him advice that sounds odd to our ears, telling him to find a beautiful girl to serve as a 'human heater'. David's answer is not recorded, and the servants go about finding a girl. Avishag is chosen, and she begins to serve, but King David's opinion is still not heard.

This introduction gives us the impression that King David, the great warrior and ruler, is losing his ability to control the people around him. Even more, it seems that he is controlled by them. The following event proves this impression to be correct: King David's son Adoniyahu decides to seize power, presenting himself as the next king even before his father has passed on. He holds a big feast, inviting an array of dignitaries but leaving out Natan and King David's presumptive heir, Shlomo. It was clear that he is about to announce himself as the new king.

Natan and Batsheva find a way to stop Adoniyahu, informing King David of Adoniyahu's activities and turning to him to intervene. A miraculous resurrection follows: King David, who had just been described as 'very old', awakens. He

officially appoints Shlomo as the next king, terminating Adoniyahu's claim to the crown. As Batsheva sees this resurrection, she says - "My master, King David, shall live forever."

## What is the connection to our parshah?

Both our parshah and our haftorah discuss choosing an heir and building a dynasty - Avraham with Yitzchak, and King David with Shlomo. In both stories there are threats to address- Adoniyahu for Shlomo, and Keturah's sons for Yitzchak. But our haftorah reveals more about the parshah by contrast rather than by similarity. Avraham's aging is described by the Torah in positive words, as a period in which he is blessed with everything, while David cannot be warmed. Avraham is engaged and active in his son's life, even arranging his marriage, while King David is passive, and needs a wakeup call by Natan to return to life.

Of course, this analysis calls into question the reasons for these differences - but I will leave that to our readers.

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

## Highlights for November 10-16 / 25 Cheshvan - 2 Kislev

### Shabbat, November 10

**7:45 AM** R' Baruch Weintraub, Reasons for Mitzvot and the Parshah, Or Chaim **not this week**

**10 AM** Hillel Horovitz, Parshah (English), Bnai Torah

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

**3:45 PM** R' Mordechai Torczyner, Daf Yomi: Shabbat 38, BAYT

**After minchah** R' Mordechai Torczyner, Gemara Avodah Zarah: Interfaith Circumcision, BAYT

**6:40 PM** Yair Manas, Parent-Child Learning: Honouring Your Parents, Shaarei Shomayim

### Sunday, November 11

**8:45 AM** R' Mordechai Torczyner, Medical Halachah with CME credit: Human Dignity in Medical Halachah, BAYT

**9:15 AM** Hillel Horovitz, Parshah, Zichron Yisroel, Hebrew (Shacharit 8:30 AM)

**After maariv** R' Baruch Weintraub, Contemporary Halachic Questions in Israel, **Hebrew**, Clanton Park, **men**

**8:30 PM** R' Baruch Weintraub, Contemporary Halachic Questions in Israel, **Hebrew**, 4 Tillingham Keep, **mixed**

### Monday, November 12

**8-10 PM Monday night Beit Midrash at Bnai Torah**

**8 PM** Hillel Horovitz, Shemuel II 13-14: Amnon & Tamar, Bnai Torah

**8 PM** R' Ezra Goldschmiedt, Mesilat Yesharim, Bnai Torah, *high school students*

**8-10 PM Monday night Beit Midrash at Clanton Park**

### Tuesday, November 13

**1:30 PM** R' Mordechai Torczyner, Tzefaniah's Finale, Intro to Malachi, Shaarei Shomayim, *Mekorot*

**7:30 PM** Hillel Horovitz, Shemuel Bet: King David's Period of Glory, KST

**8 PM** Adam Frieberg, The Concubine at Givah, Shaarei Tefillah

**8 PM** Yair Manas, Chaburah: Sanhedrin, 33 Meadowbrook

**8:30 PM** R' Baruch Weintraub, Rambam's Laws of Kings: Pilegesh, Shomrai Shabbos, *men*

**8:45 PM** R' Ezra Goldschmiedt, Jewish Clothing Controversies, Week 3, BAYT

### Wednesday, November 14

**10 AM** R' Mordechai Torczyner, Supernatural/Superstition, Week 5: The Soul, BEBY, *Melton*

**12:30 PM** R' Mordechai Torczyner, Business Ethics Lunch: Office Holiday Parties, York University Hillel

**12:30 PM** R' Baruch Weintraub, Business Ethics Lunch & Learn Week 4: Unfair Competition, Zeifmans

**8 PM Roving Beit Midrash** R' Mordechai Torczyner, History of Modern Zionism, Shaarei Shomayim

### Thursday, November 15 Rosh Chodesh Kislev

**8:30 PM** R' Baruch Weintraub, Sotah, Clanton Park

## Coming Up!

**Dec. 1: Shabbaton, Thornhill Community Shul**

**Dec. 2: Shiur Theatre: When Konstantinos Met Sarah**

**Dec. 4: Panel Discussion: Shana Bet in Israel**