



Toronto Torah

Yeshiva University Torah miTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Ki Tavo

18 Elul 5773/August 24, 2013

Vol. 5 Num. 1

WELCOME TO YEAR FIVE OF TORONTO TORAH!

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Tithes and Bikkurim: Fate and Destiny

Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

Our parshah opens with two mitzvot which have a strong similarity in their structure:

- The bringing of the *bikkurim* [first fruits] and the recitation of a *mikra bikkurim* reading when bringing them.
- The proper disposition of *maaser* [tithes] and the *viduy maaser* statement one must say after disposing of all of his tithes.

The act of speaking incorporated in both of these mitzvot may seem, at first glance, identical. However, as we turn our attention to the relevant halachic details we discover certain incompatibilities. One example might be found in a mishnah (Sotah 7:1), where it is ruled that while the *viduy maaser* statement may be recited in any language, *mikra bikkurim* must be recited in Hebrew.

This is not the only distinction; when we look into the content of these readings, we see a radical difference. The text of *mikra bikkurim*, well-known to us from the Haggadah, is mainly focused on the past, telling the story of the Jewish people dating back to Yaakov, and perhaps even Avraham. On the other hand, *viduy maaser* is focused on the present, how the tithe was handled, and the hope to receive G-d's future blessing as reward for proper tithing. Perhaps we might sharpen our understanding of the two mitzvot themselves, and so come to understand the differences between their readings.

Bikkurim are brought at a particular, well-defined time of the year. This

mitzvah occurs in the period in which new fruits begin to grow, a time when the farmer feels a strong sense of singularity and uniqueness – new crops, a new year. The potential is still unrealized, and anything might happen.

At this time it is important to remind the farmer that what seems to him as new is nonetheless also a ring in the ongoing chain of Jewish history. The focus here is on the need to connect to the events that brought us to where we are now. Perhaps that is also the reason why the reading must be recited in Hebrew, even if the farmer does not understand what he says; the message, that the story is broader than the new beginning you see, is still communicated.

Tithes, on the other hand, and the *viduy maaser* reading in particular, come at a very different time for the farmer. The fruits have already been carried from the field to the barn and counted. The farmer knows exactly what was achieved and what was not, and the feeling is a feeling of an end; the fruits that have not grown will not grow anymore, and there is no point in hoping for more. At that point in time the farmer begins to be more careful with his spending, as there is a final number in his ledger.

Here, the Torah interferes and obligates the farmer to raise his head and look about at his surroundings – the Levites who will receive the *maaser rishon* tithe, the poor and weak who will receive the *maaser ani* tithe, and even his own spiritual needs, which will be fed with the *maaser sheni* tithe in Jerusalem.

The focus here is not on the past, and which fruits are visible to the eye, but the faith in a vision of the future paid for by the tithes. This might also account for our permission to change the language of *viduy maaser*; each person's vision of the future might be a little different, and must be expressed in his own language.

Thus, the message rising from the juxtaposition of these two mitzvot is of a dual nature; the pair emphasizes the need to realize from whence we came, with *mikra bikkurim*, as well as to know where we are going with *viduy maaser*. In the language of Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (Kol Dodi Dofek), we must keep before us both the covenant of fate and the covenant of destiny, and not lose sight of either one.

This message, I believe, is particularly important as we approach Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Just as the Torah balanced the experience of enjoying new fruits by connecting it to the past, so Rosh Hashanah, the day of fresh beginnings, is connected to memories and judgment. Just as the Torah connected the season-ending tithes with the future, so Yom Kippur, the closing day of Judgment, is also a day of liberation, marking our purification for a better future.

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WELCOME TO OUR NEW FORMAT FOR YEAR FIVE!

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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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613 Mitzvot: 294 An Eco-Mitzvah? Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Although the Torah clearly places animals at human disposal and permits consumption of meat, several mitzvot are associated with concern for preservation of these animal species. One example is the mitzvah of *oto v'et b'no*, which requires us to avoid slaughtering a mother animal and her young on the same day. [The biblical text is actually worded in the masculine, referring to a male animal and its male child, but the Talmud understands it to refer specifically to a mother, and its young of either gender.]

As the Sefer haChinuch explains, this mitzvah reminds us that HaShem is watching the species, and wants these animals preserved: "Among the roots of this mitzvah is that a person will recognize that G-d supervises all types of living things as species, and with His supervision they endure forever, for His supervision over entities is what causes their continued existence." [The Sefer haChinuch then continues to claim that the extinction of an entire species is impossible because it would thwart the Divine will; one could suggest

several ways to resolve his comment with present-day reality.] The mitzvah applies specifically to domestic species of beast, but commentators note analogous laws prohibiting cutting down fruit trees and requiring that we send away a mother bird before taking the eggs.

Slaughter of an animal and her young is prohibited even if the two acts of *shechitah* are performed by different people. Therefore, one who sells an animal for *shechitah*, and who then sells her young to someone who is likely to slaughter it, must inform the purchaser that this could be a problem. Classically, such warnings were issued at four times during the year, when people traditionally prepared meat dishes for feasts: Erev Rosh haShanah, Hoshana Rabbah, Erev Pesach, and Erev Shavuot. (Chullin 83a)

This mitzvah remains relevant even in a time when there is no Beit haMikdash, and it applies for men and women alike.

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Biography
The "Orchot Tzaddikim"
Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

The name of the author of *Orchot Tzaddikim* ("Paths of the Righteous") is unknown to us, but he did explain his intent in writing this book of ethical instruction. In the Preface, he declared, "This book of traits was written and sealed with the ring of wisdom, to teach man wisdom, for this book to be a tool in the hand of each individual to repair, internally, his traits and deeds. The craftsman armed with a tool can complete his task; without his tool in his hand, he can do nothing."

Our anonymous writer subscribed to the *tabula rasa* approach touted by Rambam, Aristotle and members of the Muslim schools of philosophy. In the preface, he wrote, "Man, at first, without a teacher, acts as a beast, but his heart is as a slate, prepared for writing upon. If the slate is in the hand of a fool, he inscribes it with futilities, and it is of no more use. However, if a sage writes upon it the order of his affairs, needs and obligations, then from the slate he will support his children, and achieve great benefit." The author intended his work to provide the education for that blank slate.

Orchot Tzaddikim is divided into chapters focusing on individual traits, like Joy, Memory, Alacrity and Silence; the chapters operate in pairs, presenting oppositions like Mercy and Cruelty, and Anger and Appeasement. Each trait is praised for its positives, with warnings presented for its pitfalls. Nothing is without value, and no pursuit is perfect for all situations.

The author's esteem for his own work is not self-praise; the great majority of the material in the book's 28 chapters is drawn from popular medieval works, including Rabbi Shlomo Ibn Gabirol's *Tikkun Midot haNefesh* (Repair of the Traits of the Spirit), the Rambam's writings, the anonymous text *Mivchar HaPnimim*, Rabbeinu Yonah's *Shaarei Teshuvah* and Rabbeinu Bahya's *Chovot haLevavot*.

It is assumed that *Orchot Tzaddikim* was written in the 15th century. The first known printing of *Orchot Tzaddikim* was actually an incomplete Yiddish translation, published in Isny, located in what has since become Germany. Some forty years later, the Hebrew manuscript was published in Prague. Today the text is available online at <http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/mahshevt/orhot/shaar-2.htm>.

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Torah and Translation
Levels of Hatred
Orchot Tzaddikim: Shaar haSinah
Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

יש כמה מיני שנאה: יש שונא את חברו עבור שהזיק לו בממונו, או שהכהו, או עבור שביישהו, או שהוציא עליו שם רע. על כל אלו וכיוצא בהן לא ישנא את חברו וישתוק, כמו שנאמר ברשעים (שמואל ב יג כב): "ולא דבר אבשלום עם אמנון למרע ועד טוב כי שנא אבשלום את אמנון" - אלא מצוה עליו להודיעו ולומר לו: למה עשית לי כך וכך? שנאמר (ויקרא יט יז): "הוכח תוכיח את עמיתך". ואם חזר ובקש ממנו למחול לו, צריך למחול לו, ולא יהיה המוחל אכזרי... ואף אם לא יבקש ממנו למחול לו, לא ישנאהו, אלא יתנהג עמו באהבה, ולבסוף יבוא לידי כך שיתקן לו מה שעויות.

יש רעה, והיא שנאת חנם, והיא החריבה בית שני. ושנאה מחמת קנאה היא רעה ממנה. וראוי לאדם לייסר את נפשו להתרחק מהן. ויש שונא את חברו עבור שאינו גומל לו חסד, או שאינו נותן לו מתנה כפי חפצו, או שאינו מלוה לו בשעת דחקו. ראוי לאדם להתרחק מכל זה ומכיוצא בו. אך יקבל מאהבה כל מה שיגזור לו הבורא, ברוך הוא, ולא יבטח באדם...

וגם אומן שונא בני אומנותו - הכל הכל ורעה רבה, כי יחשוב ששום אדם לא יוכל להרויח יותר ממה שגזר לו הבורא. והרעה שבמיני השנאה והקשה שבהן - כגון בני אדם השונאים מוכיחיהם והמייסרים אותם להורותם הדרך הישרה, כענין שנאמר (עמוס ה י): "שנאו בשער מוכיח". ויש שנאה רעה ממנה - כגון בני אדם השונאים עושי טובה ורודפי צדק, כענין שנאמר (תהלים לח כא): "ישטונוי תחת רדפי טוב"...

אמר החכם: אם תרצה שישנאך חברך - בקרהו תמיד, ואם תרצה שיאהבך - בקרהו לעתים רחוקות, ועל זה נאמר (משלי כה יז): "הוקר רגלך מבית רעך פן ישבעך ושנאך". וצריך שתדע, כי מי שישנא בני אדם - גם הם ישנאוהו, והמגביר השנאה בלבו - הוא מביא על עצמו רעה.

There are several kinds of hatred: Some hate others for harming them financially, or striking them, or embarrassing them, or giving them a bad reputation. For all of these and similar cases, one should not hate his peer in silence, as the wicked are said to have done (Shemuel II 13:22), "Avshalom did not speak with Amnon, bad or good, for Avshalom hated Amnon." Rather, he is obligated to inform him, saying, "Why did you do this to me?" As Vayikra 19:17 says, "Instruct your peer." If he then requests forgiveness, one must forgive. The forgiver may not be cruel... And even should he not request forgiveness, one may not hate him, but only deal with him with love. In the end, he will come to correct that which he had corrupted.

There is an evil which is pointless hatred; this destroyed the Second Temple. Hatred resulting from jealousy is even worse; one should take pains to distance himself from these. Some hate a person for not acting generously toward him, or not giving him a desired gift, or not lending when he was in need; it would be appropriate to distance one's self from all of these, and all similar states. One should lovingly accept that which the Creator decrees, and not rely on others...

Also, a craftsman who hates his competitors - this is all futile and a great evil, for he should think that no one can profit more than the Creator decrees for him. And the worst and harshest type of hatred is that of people who hate those who instruct them and rebuke them, to show them the straight path, as Amos 5:10 says, "They hate the instructor at the gate." And there is an even worse hatred: People who hate those who perform good deeds and pursue righteousness, as Psalms 38:21 says, "They hate me, in return for my pursuit of goodness..."

A wise man [Mivchar Peninim 40] said: If you wish your peer to hate you, criticize him continually. If you wish him to love you, criticize him only on rare occasion. Thus Proverbs 25:17 says, "Make your foot rare from your friend's home, lest he be sated with you and hate you." And you must know that when one hates others, they will also hate him, and one who elevates hatred in his heart will bring evil upon himself.

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This Week in Israeli History: 18 Elul - Birth of the New Israeli Shekel Adam Frieberg

For a country that is just sixty-five years old, Israel has had more than its fair share of currencies. The first currency of the State of Israel was the Palestinian Pound (a.k.a. *Lira Eretz Yisraelit*) [see Toronto Torah 4:41]. Put into circulation on August 18th, 1948, this currency was used until February 24th, 1980.

The new currency introduced in 1980 was called the Shekel, and it replaced the old Lira at a rate of 1 Shekel per 10 Lira. However, this Shekel didn't last long. After just four and a half years, the Shekel was replaced with the New Israeli Shekel at a rate of 1,000 to 1. The Old Israeli Shekel, as it is now called, was short-lived because of the extreme volatility it experienced against the American Dollar, causing hyperinflation during the Old Shekel's brief lifespan.

In 1985, the Knesset decided to fight inflation by implementing an economic stabilization plan devised by Yitzhak Moda'i and Michael Bruno. This broad plan managed to bring annual inflation down under twenty

percent in under two years. Some of the strategies employed involved significantly cutting government spending, and enacting wage control for the unions. The plan also called for serious limits to the amount of money the Bank of Israel would be allowed to print to cover government deficits. In conjunction with this plan, the New Israeli Shekel (Hebrew acronym shin-chet, English acronym NIS) was printed.

Distribution of the New Israeli Shekel began on the 18th of Elul (September 4th), 1985. Maintaining conservative monetary policies, and establishment of free trade agreements with other countries, has helped the Israeli economy stay strong, which in turn has supported a healthy New Israeli Shekel. Foreign investment in Israeli technology, the move toward the information age, and the export of ideas and services instead of large goods have also benefited Israel and its currency. The results are palpable; in the last 13 years, the NIS has risen twenty percent relative to the American Dollar.

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Highlights for August 24 – August 30 / 18 Elul - 24 Elul

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
SHABBAT AUG. 24				
7:45 AM	R' Baruch Weintraub	Reasons for Mitzvot	Or Chaim	Not this week
10:20 AM	R' Baruch Weintraub	Parshah	Clanton Park	
6:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Daf Yomi	BAYT	
7:10 PM	Adam Frieberg	Are Omens Allowed?	Shaarei Tefillah	
Post-minchah	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Roman Muries	BAYT	
SUNDAY AUG. 25				
9:15 AM (8:30 Shacharit)	R' Baruch Weintraub	Parshah Revisited	Zichron Yisroel	Hebrew
10:00 AM to 11:20 AM	Mrs. Sara Frieberg R' Mordechai Torczyner	Message of the Machzor Nevuchadnezzar's Elul	Shaarei Shomayim	Midreshet Yom Rishon for Women
6:30 PM	R' Baruch Weintraub	Attributes of Divine Mercy	4 Tillingham Keep	Mixed, Hebrew
40 minutes pre-minchah	R' Baruch Weintraub	Attributes of Divine Mercy	Clanton Park	Men, Hebrew
MONDAY AUG. 26				
After maariv 8:30 PM 9:30 PM	Avreichim R' Baruch Weintraub R' Mordechai Torczyner R' Baruch Weintraub	Chavruta Opportunities Parshah Medical Halachah Principles of Faith	Shaarei Shomayim	Community Beit Midrash Night
TUESDAY AUG. 27				
40 minutes pre-minchah	R' Baruch Weintraub	Nefesh Shimshon: Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur	Clanton Park	
After maariv	R' Baruch Weintraub	Rambam's Hilchot Teshuvah	Clanton Park	
WED. AUG. 28				
8:00 PM	Avreichim R' Mordechai Torczyner	Chavruta Opportunities Medical Halachah	BAYT	Community Beit Midrash Night
THU. AUG. 29				
8:00 PM	R' Baruch Weintraub	Gemara Sotah	Clanton Park	