

# Toronto Torah

## Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Beshalach

11 Shevat, 5775/January 31, 2015

Vol. 6 Num. 20

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### A Love Supreme

Yisroel Meir Rosenzweig

On the night of December 9<sup>th</sup>, 1964, one of the most significant pieces of music in jazz history, if not the history of music in America, was recorded. The John Coltrane Quartet went into a studio in Englewood Cliffs, NJ and recorded 'A Love Supreme.' The album was the culmination of years of evolutionary growth. Accompanying the music, Coltrane wrote a poem that detailed the deeply personal vision of the work. That vision was, quite simply, an expression of thanks to G-d for the profound changes that Coltrane had undergone in the decade leading up to the recording of 'A Love Supreme'.

Coltrane, like an unfortunately large number of jazz musicians of the 1950's, had fallen into a serious heroin addiction. When things reached a boiling point in the summer of 1957, Coltrane made the decision to quit. Understandably, the experience was transformative, and it would become the catalyst for the music and poetry of 'A Love Supreme.' In one particularly poignant line of the poem, Coltrane writes, 'I have seen G-d. I have seen ungodly – none is greater nor can even compare to – G-d. Thank you G-d.'

The lifestyle of a heroin addict is certainly one that can be described as "ungodly". Coltrane had lived through that, but had also seen the other side of the coin. He had been released from the prison of drugs. This gave him freedom, heightening his musical gifts and his ability to connect with his sense of spirituality through his talents.

On a national plane, the Jews leaving Egypt had also experienced the

ungodly, as well as the G-dly. This metamorphosis appears to be the theme of a midrash (Shemot Rabbah 22:3):

*Just as they [the Jews leaving Egypt] purified their hearts and sang praises, as it is written, "And the nation saw Hashem and believed in Hashem...then Moshe and Bnei Yisrael sang," so, too, a person is required to purify their heart before they pray.*

The Jewish nation had been oppressed in every way imaginable while enslaved in Egypt. As midrashim explain, they had also sunk deep into the muddy world of idol worship that dominated Egyptian culture. [See Vayikra Rabbah 22:8.] Now, as they stood at the shores of the Sea, the Jews were given the experiences necessary to enable them to be purified of all that they had seen and even taken part in. The Torah describes how the entire nation saw the incredible miracles of *Yetziat Mitzrayim* [the Exodus], all culminating with the splitting of the Sea. After having seen the ungodly, as well as the G-dly, they could truly say, "Who is like you, G-d!" as Coltrane would on his own level, based on his own life, millennia later.

The transformative experiences of *Yetziat Mitzrayim* and of, on his own level, John Coltrane breaking his heroin habit, can provide a road map for our own lives. The midrash we cited above identifies a specific context in which we can push ourselves to imitate these experiences: *tefillah* [prayer]. In many regards the classic structure of our prayers, especially *shacharit* and *maariv*, draws greatly from the events of *Yetziat Mitzrayim*. For example, that same midrash cited above teaches that the belief in G-d that the Jewish nation

demonstrated at the Sea led to their song. So, too, we link the experience of redemption with prayer by reciting the blessing of *Ga'al Yisrael* [Hashem, who has redeemed Israel], and then immediately beginning the *amidah*.

Our midrash also instructs us to purify ourselves before praying, and perhaps another line of Coltrane's poem can help us to connect with this practice. He wrote, "Help us to resolve our fears and weaknesses. In you all things are possible. Thank you G-d." These beautiful words are spoken with the humility that comes only from having been rescued from a dark place. Given our own history as a nation, we, too, can speak these words with that sense of humility and truth. It seems appropriate to link Coltrane's words with the blessing of *Ga'al Yisrael* that immediately precedes the *amidah*: *Rock of Israel! Arise to the aid of Israel... Blessed are You, Hashem, who has redeemed Israel.* At this critical moment, we plead for redemption: Hashem help us! Redeem us from our fears and weaknesses!

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### OUR BEIT MIDRASH

#### ROSH BEIT MIDRASH

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## ***Shu"t Min HaShamayim***

Rabbi Yaakov HaLevi miMirvish  
1879 edition includes *Keset HaSofer*  
commentary by Rabbi Aharon Marcus  
<http://www.hebrewbooks.org/21989>

### **The Author**

Rabbi Yaakov Levi miMirvish is noted as one of the *ba'alei haTosafot*. He lived in early 13<sup>th</sup> century France and is most famous for this book. The introduction to the book tries to support the theory that he is also the author of the Eshkol and the Sefer Brit Menuchah, but those books are regularly attributed to the second Raavad and Rabbi Avraham ben Yitzchak of Granada, respectively.

### **The Premise**

*Shu"t Min HaShamayim* is a halachic work of questions and answers, but it is unique in its category: The author of the book would pose them as "dream questions" and receive answers from a spiritual teacher. The technique is described as follows: the question is written down, followed by certain "holy Names" being recited with the question in mind, until the supplicant falls asleep. A pen and paper are kept under the pillow, and upon awakening, the answer to the question will be written. This answer often comes in the form of biblical verses and/or cryptic statements, requiring one with wisdom who can "decipher for himself" (Chagigah 11b).

### **The Issue**

The Talmud (Bava Metzia 59b) explains the verse from Devarim 30:12, "[The Torah] is not in Heaven", to mean that Jewish law is to be decided by qualified Rabbis, not based on any heavenly decree. Therefore, halachic authorities state that while one may learn these answers, it is unclear that one may decide halachah based on them. However, *Shut Min HaShamayim* is praised by Radvaz (Shu"t Radvaz 3:532), and Rabbi Chaim Yosef David Azulai (Chida) even answers questions based on the Shu"t Min HaShamayim. (Birkei Yosef Orach Chaim 654:2, Yosef Ometz 82, et al.) Rabbi Ovadia Yosef says one is permitted to ignore the answers, but they are halachically valid. (Yabia Omer 1:41-42)

The introduction to the book posits that at the time of the book's writing, the practices of achieving Ruach HaKodesh (Divine Inspiration) were known and accepted. However, since the time of the Baal Shem Tov, we no longer rely on "holy names" and only upon simple faith.

### **The Book**

This book is extremely enjoyable to read. The clear knowledge of the author, and the striking answers, whether straightforward or explained by the author, are refreshing. The

references to the Heavenly Yeshiva and the halachic debates there paralleling those of earthly yeshivot (3, 13, 55), the disputes between Hashem and the Heavenly courts (3, 69), the unique explanations that occasionally accompany the heavenly answer (5, 25, 29, 33), and the indirect rebukes that accompany some answers (5, 26, 29, 36, 69), make this book even more compelling.

The author includes cases where the answer received was too cryptic and he asked a second time for clarification (10, et al.). On some answers he includes, "this was *actually* the answer I was given." (8, et al) In one situation he verifies that the answer did not come from an "impure" source. (5)

Some of the topics include: the blessings on tefillin, the text of the tefillin, rabbinically prohibited acts on Shabbat, the material of tzitzit, the morning blessings, separation between Shabbat meals, kashering glass, customs, beards and *pei'ot*, kiddush in shul, waiting between meat and milk, and, ironically, using holy Names to obtain the help of angels.

The last question in the book is regarding the time of the future redemption. No answer was given – may it come speedily in our day.

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# 613 Mitzvot: #423: Mezuzah

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Devarim 6:9 and 11:20 instruct the Jew to inscribe those passages upon their doorposts; this is the mitzvah of mezuzah, which *Sefer haChinuch* lists as the Torah's 423<sup>rd</sup> mitzvah. As explained in the Talmud (Menachot 34a), the mezuzah goes on the right side of the doorway, based on the point of view of a person entering the room. The mezuzah is placed in the upper third of the doorframe (ibid. 33a-b), and within a few inches of the outer edge of the doorframe (ibid. 33b).

One who purchases a home should put up a mezuzah immediately, but one who rents a home is only considered a full resident upon living there for thirty days. Therefore, some contend that one who rents a home may not recite a blessing upon putting up the mezuzah until thirty days have elapsed. However, others disagree, contending that where the rental agreement extends thirty days, and it is enforceable in court, one may put up a mezuzah with a blessing immediately. (See Shevet haLevi 6:160) Either way, one who lives in Israel puts up a mezuzah immediately, regardless of the anticipated period of residence. (Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 286:22)

Mezuzah is part of a set of mitzvot which create an environment of awareness of G-d. Alongside Torah study, daily recitation of Shema, and the arm and head tefillin, mezuzah provides a consistent message that G-d is around us.

Traditional sources clearly describe the mezuzah as protecting residents of the home; see Menachot 33b, in which Rav Chanina of Sura says that the mezuzah is placed close to the outer edge of the doorframe in order to maximize the space which will be under its protection. [See also Avodah Zarah 11a and Zohar Vaetchanan, pg. 266a.] However, halachic authorities emphasize that protection is not the focus of the mitzvah. Rambam wrote (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Mezuzah 5:4), "The practice has spread, to write on the external surface of the mezuzah, opposite the blank space between paragraphs, Shin-Daled-Yud [a Name of G-d]. There is no loss in this, for it is on the outside. However, those who write the names of angels inside, or the Holy Names, or a verse or a seal, are in the category of those who have no share in the next world. It is not enough for these fools that they annul the mitzvah! They also take a great mitzvah, the declaration of the unified Name of G-d, love of G-d and service of G-d, and treat it as an amulet for their personal benefit, as it has entered their foolish hearts that this is something meant to provide them with pleasure in this vain world!" Rabbi Yosef Karo, himself an experienced mystic, wrote regarding this, "When one places a mezuzah one does not intend to guard the house, but rather to fulfill the mitzvah of G-d. The automatic result is protection of the home." (Kesef Mishneh to Hilchot Mezuzah 5:4) [See also Igrot Moshe Yoreh Deah 2:141 and Yabia Omer 8:Yoreh Deah 28.]

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## Biography

### Rabbi Chaim Palaggi

Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

Rabbi Chaim Palaggi (also pronounced Palachi) was born in 1788 in Smyrna, Turkey. He was a grandson of the famous Turkish Rabbi Yoseph ben Chaim Hazan (a.k.a. Chikrei Lev). About his childhood, we have his own testimony, in his book *Tzavaa Mechaim*: "From the day I made up my mind and up to the age of twenty, I learned Torah day and night without a break, for I had no business with anything in this world".

Rabbi Chaim was a student of Rabbi Yitzchak Gategno, and received his ordination from his grandfather, Rabbi Hazan. However, he refused to receive any rabbinical position as long as his father was still alive. Only at the age of 34 did he accept a post as Dayan (rabbinical judge) and Rosh Yeshiva in Izmir; nine years later he became the head of the Jewish court there. In this position, he helped to establish a Jewish hospital in Izmir, cooperating with Moses Montefiore and Benjamin de Rothschild. He also established a kollel for advanced torah scholars.

An interesting ruling Rabbi Palaggi issued to his followers was a prohibition against smoking, due to addiction. Smoking's health risks were not yet known, and the reasoning given by Rabbi Palaggi was his concern for the honour of Shabbat. People who are addicted to smoking, he argued, suffer through Shabbat.

Rabbi Palaggi was involved in defending the Jews at the time of the "Damascus affair" in 1840. Eight Jews from Damascus were accused of murdering a Christian monk for ritual reasons, and the whole Jewish community stood in grave danger. Rabbi Palaggi made contact with Montefiore and Rothschild, moving them to help the Damascene Jews; in the aftermath, seven Jews involved in the case were saved, and the Sultan issued a law banning farther blood libels.

At the age of 69, Rabbi Chaim Palaggi was appointed as Chacham Bashi, the chief Rabbi of the Turkish empire. He was also an extremely prolific writer. Seventy-two of his books were printed, and another 14 remained in manuscripts; another forty were destroyed in a fire.

Rabbi Chaim passed away at the age of 81; his Yahrzeit is this Friday, 17 Shevat.

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## Torah and Translation

### Competing with G-d in Torah?

Rabbi Chaim Palaggi, Pnei Chaim, Beshalach

Translated by Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

"ויצא העם ולקטו דבר יום ביומו" – איתא במדרש רבה פרק כה סימן יג וזה לשונו: "אני נתתי את התורה שתהיו עוסקים בה יום יום... שאשביע לכם לחם מן השמים יום יום, שנאמר 'ויצא העם ולקטו דבר יום ביומו'. ולא עוד, אלא שאני מברך אתכם יום יום שנאמר 'ברוך ד' יום יום'. וכשאתם עושין רצוני אני קורא אתכם עמוסים".

והרב מהרש"י ז"ל פירש "אני קורא אתכם עמוסים" לשון חיבה... ויתבאר אצלי בסייעתא דשמיא על פי מימרת רב הונא בריה דרב יהושע בבבא בתרא כא ע"א דבר מבואה אבר מבואה אחריתי מצי מעכב דמצי אמר ליה קא פסקת לי לחיות... והטעם שמעכבים על ידו כתב מהרשד"ם חושן משפט רנט דכיוון דהיורד לאומנות חבירו נקרא "רשע" לכך מעכבין על ידו שלא ירשיע את עצמו... ומהאי טעמא אם לא חשש לזה והרשיע את עצמו מותר לשנאתו...

והשתא נראה דזהו כוונת המאמר והוא דהסברא דמבחוץ היה דהגם דהקב"ה ירד על הר סיני ונתן לנו את תורתו מכל מקום כיון דהוא משתעשע בה בכל שעה כדאמרו חז"ל... מן הראוי היה שלא לישוב ולקבוע מקום ללמוד תורה בפרהסיא בתדירות וללמדה לאחרים דזהו אומנותו של הקב"ה.... איכא איסור דיורד לאומנות חבירו.

לאפוקי מכל אלו החששות באו חז"ל במאמר שלפנינו והם אמרו דמלבד דליכא חשש איסור אלא דאדרבא מצוה רבה איכא לשקוד בתורה יום יום, וזה אמרו אני נתתי את התורה שתהיו עוסקים בה יום יום...

ולאפוקי מסברא זרה זו דאיכא טענת "פסקיה לחיותה" דנקרא רשע, אמר חייכם שאני אשביע לכם לחם מן השמים יום יום... אלא ודאי דאיסורא ליכא... שיוור לאומנות חבירו מותר לשנאתו כנזכר.

וסיים דבריו "וכשאתם עושים רצוני אני קורא אתכם עמוסים..." ורוצה לומר דמלבד דליכא איבה ושנאה, אדרבא, אני מחבב אתכם חיבה עזה.

"And the people went out and gathered [the manna] each and every day." The following is in Midrash Rabbah (Shemot Rabbah 25:13): "I have given you the Torah for you to engage in it daily... so that I will feed you bread from heaven daily... Furthermore, I will bless you... and when you follow My desire, I will call you *amusim* (lit. burdened)."

Rabbi Maharsh"i z"l explained "I am calling you *amusim*" as language of affection... To me, this midrash is clarified, with G-d's help, by the statement of Rav Huna son of Rav Yehoshua (Baba Batra 21a), that a resident of a street can prevent another resident [from engaging in the same trade], for he can say to him, "You are severing my livelihood"... The reason he can prevent this, wrote Maharashdam (Responsa Choshen Mishpat 259), is that one who interferes with his fellow's trade is called wicked, and so we can prevent him from making himself wicked... Therefore, if he does not pay attention and he makes himself wicked, we are licensed to hate him...

Now, it appears that this is the meaning of the midrash. One could have thought that although Hashem descended on Sinai and gave us His Torah, still, since He learns it at all times... it would be appropriate not to sit and establish a place for continual Torah study in public, and to teach others, for it is Hashem's trade... and the prohibition against interfering with one's fellow's trade would apply.

In order to refute these arguments, the Sages made this statement. They said that not only that there is no concern for a prohibition here, but just the opposite, it would be a great mitzvah to engage in Torah study daily. This is what is meant when G-d says, "I have given you the Torah for you to engage in it daily..."

And to contradict this strange idea that the claim of "You are severing my livelihood," which would label someone wicked, might apply, He said, "I will give you bread from heaven daily"... There certainly is no violation... for there is license to hate one who interferes with his fellow's trade, as mentioned above.

He concluded by saying, "And when you follow My desire, I will call you *amusim*"... meaning, not only is there neither hostility nor hatred, but just the opposite, I hold great affection for you.

## This Week in Israeli History: 14 Shevat, 1961

### Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion Resigns

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

*14 Shevat is Tuesday*

When the State of Israel was formed in 1948, tens of thousands of Egyptian Jews emigrated to the new Jewish country. However, among the many who remained behind was a small group that came to be known as Unit 131; these were Egyptian Jews who had been trained in covert activities on behalf of the State of Israel.

In the early 1950's, Great Britain was strongly considering removing its military presence in Egypt. This concerned the Israeli government, led by Prime Minister Moshe Sharett; a key obstacle would be removed from the path of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser's military ambitions. A plan was concocted to use Unit 131 to plant bombs in public places, creating an impression of chaos and danger that could lead the British to remain. The strategy was implemented as *Operation Shoshana* in the summer of 1954; a post office, two libraries and a theatre were bombed. The bombs caused little damage, and no injuries; the goal

was only to sow chaos. Agents of Unit 131 were caught, though, and members of the cell were tortured, tried, and either imprisoned or executed.

*Operation Shoshana*, and its subsequent political fallout in Israel, were an international embarrassment for Israel. At first, Minister of Defense Pinchas Lavon was blamed, and David Ben-Gurion was appointed to fill his position. Months later, after further investigations, Prime Minister Sharett resigned, and Ben-Gurion became Prime Minister. However, after still further examination, the initial findings of fault were called into question, and a motion of no-confidence led to Ben-Gurion's resignation on 14 Shevat (January 31), 1961, and new elections. While Ben-Gurion was able to regain the role of Prime Minister subsequently, this was a key event in the downfall of his Mapai party, the merger of the Herut and Liberal parties, and ultimately the formation of Menachem Begin's Likud party.

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### Weekly Highlights: Jan. 30 — Feb. 6 / 11 Shevat – 17 Shevat

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
<b>Jan. 30-31</b>				
<b>9:30 AM</b>	R' David Ely Grundland	Torah Temimah	Shaarei Shomayim	
<b>10:30 AM</b>	Yisroel Meir Rosenzweig	Meshech Chochmah	Clanton Park	
<b>Before minchah</b>	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Daf Yomi	BAYT	<i>Rabbi's Classroom</i>
<b>After minchah</b>	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Gemara Avodah Zarah: Drawing the Stars	BAYT	<i>West Wing Library</i>
<b>7:00 PM</b>	R' David Ely Grundland	Parent-Child Learning	Shaarei Shomayim	<i>with Rabbi Cheses</i>
<b>Sun. Feb. 1</b>				
<b>8:45 AM</b>	<b>R' Mordechai Torczyner</b>	<b>Legal Ethics: The Dishonest Client</b>	<b>BAYT</b>	<b>CPD approved; non-lawyers welcome</b>
<b>8:45 AM</b>	R' Josh Gutenberg	Contemporary Halachah	BAYT	<b>not this week</b>
<b>9:15 AM</b>	R' Shalom Krell	Kuzari	Zichron Yisroel	
<b>8:30 PM</b>	R' David Ely Grundland	Gemara: Mind, Body, Soul	Shaarei Shomayim	
<b>Tues. Feb. 3</b>				
<b>1:30 PM</b>	R' Mordechai Torczyner	The Book of Iyov (Job): Job vs. Bildad	Shaarei Shomayim	
<b>8:45 PM</b>	<b>R' Josh Gutenberg</b>	<b>Intro to Introductions: Biblical Commentators</b>	<b>BAYT</b>	<b>Week 4 of 4</b>
<b>Wed. Feb. 4</b>				
<b>Tu b'Shevat</b>				
<b>12:30 PM</b>	<b>R' Mordechai Torczyner</b>	<b>Business Ethics: The Ethics of Bankruptcy</b>	<b>Zeifmans 201 Bridgeland Ave</b>	<b>Lunch and Learn RSVP rk@zeifmans.ca</b>
<b>8:00 PM</b>	<b>R' Mordechai Torczyner</b>	<b>Medical Ethics: Refusing Treatment</b>	<b>Bnai Torah</b>	
<b>Thu. Feb. 5</b>				
<b>1:30 PM</b>	R' Mordechai Torczyner	The Book of Yehoshua: Clean-Up Time	49 Michael Ct. Thornhill	<b>For Women Only</b>
<b>Fri. Feb. 6</b>				
<b>10:30 AM</b>	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Advanced Shemitah	Yeshivat Or Chaim	

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