



# Toronto Torah

Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Naso

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## Living Life to its Fullest

Rabbi Josh Guttenberg

The laws of the *nazir* are detailed in *Parshat Naso*. Someone who decides to become a *nazir* is restricted from performing certain actions: They are not allowed to have their hair cut, they cannot drink wine or eat any grape derivatives, and they must not become impure through contact with a deceased human being.

The Torah does not pass explicit judgment on one's decision to become a *nazir*. Is it a noble endeavour towards which everyone should strive or is a life of asceticism, depriving oneself from basic human pleasures, deemed improper? The verses in the Torah indicate conflicting evidence on the issue. On the one hand, the Torah states that "all the days that he is a *nazir*, he is holy to G-d." (Bamidbar 6:8) Yet, when his term as a *nazir* is completed he is required to bring a sin offering to the *Beit haMikdash*.

This ambiguity leads to arguments both among the talmudic sages and among the biblical commentaries of the Middle Ages:

- Rabbi Elazar haKappar believes that a *nazir* sins by preventing himself from drinking wine. However, another sage, also named Rabbi Elazar, argues that it is praiseworthy to distance oneself from worldly pleasures. (Taanit 11a)
- Rashi (Bamidbar 6:11) follows Rabbi Elazar haKappar that a *nazir* sins by distancing himself from wine, and therefore needs to bring a sin offering to atone for living as a *nazir*. On the other hand, Ramban (Bamidbar 6:14) states that a *nazir* brings a sin offering when his term is completed due to his failure to

continue the *nazir* lifestyle, which had brought him closer to G-d.

These opinions offer two extreme views of *nezirut*. Either it is something that should be embraced, and therefore ending the term is a sin, or it is something that should be shunned and accepting it is a sin.

However, there is a third potential view of the *nazir's* sin. Nechama Lebowitz (Studies in Bamidbar) suggests that the sin of the *nazir* actually relates to the *nazir's* actions from the past. A person takes the extreme approach of denying himself the pleasures of wine and other items because they are harmful and detrimental to his life; as a last resort, he decides to completely distance himself from these areas in order to prevent future sin. The sin offering is brought as atonement for the actions he performed before accepting *nezirut* upon himself.

According to this approach, becoming a *nazir* can be the perfect remedy for people struggling with the pitfalls of physical pleasure. As the Talmud (Sotah 2a) notes, the laws of the *nazir* immediately follow the laws of the *sotah* because anyone who witnesses the disgrace of the *sotah* will abstain from drinking wine. However, *nezirut* should be avoided for a person with healthy habits. The ideal is to use everything that is permitted to us in an appropriate manner, exercising self-control and proper discretion in using items that have positive and negative possibilities.

A prime stage for displaying this concept is wine. In the Torah, wine is the cause for Noach's downfall after surviving the Flood; it is the cause for

Lot's inappropriate actions with his daughters; and according to some opinions, it was drinking wine before performing service in the Mishkan which led to Nadav and Avihu's death. Yet, wine also imbues greater significance to many of our important rituals. We use wine to make *Kiddush*, marking Shabbat's onset, and to make *havdalah*, marking Shabbat's conclusion. We also drink wine during the marriage ceremony, at a *brit milah* and after *birkat hamazon*. Wine's potential for both good and bad puts the onus on man to make a decision. He can avoid drinking it altogether, which may save him from potential sin, but which will also prevent him from elevating many important rituals and actions. Alternatively, he can drink it and challenge himself to use it in a constructive manner.

Though the *nazir* is deemed *kadosh* [holy], the term is not reserved strictly for those who refrain from engaging all of the world's physical pleasures. Ramban (Vayikra 19:2) believes that the Torah's imperative of "*Kedoshim tihiyu* [You shall be holy]" describes the individual who embraces and benefits from the physical pleasures in this world, albeit in a healthy manner. In this way, one elevates himself while enjoying life's pleasures, and this is the route which we should all strive to travel.

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### OUR BEIT MIDRASH

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We are grateful to  
Continental Press 905-660-0311

**Jeremiah: The Fate of a Prophet****Rabbi Dr. Binyamin Lau****Hebrew 2010****English 2013 Maggid Books,  
Translation by Sara Daniel****The Literary-Theological Approach***"Where are the books of Tanach?!?"*

These words are recorded in a letter by the 18<sup>th</sup> century sage, Rabbi Yosef Teomim (a.k.a. *Pri Megadim*) to a teacher. (Igeret 5) Rabbi Teomim's pained cry is an all too familiar one: Tanach is being ignored! In our day, however, this situation is being addressed in an increasingly methodical manner. Worldwide, there are classes studying the books of Tanach and enriching our approach to its words. A wonderful example is Rabbi Dr. Shalom Carmy's "literary-theological approach," which, as Rabbi Dr. Carmy explains, promotes the ideal that Tanach should be "encountered as the word of G-d" and, at the same time, these words should be heard in "their literary and historical context." This approach is now pursued by many more students, most notably members of Yeshivat Har Etzion and its associated Yaakov Herzog College.

This is the approach of Rabbi Dr.

Binyamin Lau, in his work, *Jeremiah*. Rabbi Lau is an alumnus of Yeshivat Har Etzion, and a variant of the above-mentioned "literary-theological approach" is an important ingredient in his works. His refined ability to tie modern Israeli socio-political issues into his explanation of Torah is a hallmark of his writing style. His hope is that the words of the prophets will be present at the "[H]eart of our political, social, and cultural discourse."

Rabbi Lau chose to analyze the book of Yirmiyahu in order to bring greater knowledge of his life story and work to the general population. The common perception of the prophet Yirmiyahu is that his life was one of deep tragedy. While this may be true, it ignores the intense love that Yirmiyahu felt for the Jewish people, and the lengths to which he went in trying to guide them back to G-d. Such dedication and faith in the Jewish people presents an unfortunate contrast to the leaders of other eras. There can be no doubt, we have much to learn from Yirmiyahu.

**Another Benefit**

Another unique feature of this book is that it re-organizes the Book of Yirmiyahu into chronological order. To

learn Sefer Yirmiyahu in its normal order could prove to be a confusing endeavour. On the surface, it doesn't seem to follow any clear order, coming across only as a confusing selection of Yirmiyahu's prophecies. Rabbi Lau helpfully re-organizes the book into a cohesive storyline that follows the chronology of Yirmiyahu's life. As such, *Jeremiah* can serve as a powerful introduction to the prophecies of Yirmiyahu.

**Caveat**

It is critical to note, as does Rabbi Dr. Lau, that *Jeremiah* is not meant to replace any of the running commentaries that commonly accompany the book of Yirmiyahu. *Jeremiah* can serve as both an entry into the book of Yirmiyahu, as well as a tool to aid the in-depth study of this important prophet.

For one of Rabbi Dr. Shalom Carmy's essays on his "literary-theological approach", please see <http://goo.gl/zDVnPU>.

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**613 Mitzvot: #438, 574:  
Bring Your Korban ASAP****Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner**

We are instructed to observe the commandments of the Torah as well as the decrees of the rabbis, but there is a third category of mitzvah: the mitzvah we create through a verbal commitment. A verbal commitment to engage in a certain act or refrain from it is called a *shevuah*; a declaration prohibiting use of an item is called a *neder*. [For more regarding the laws of vows, see Toronto Torah 6:7.]

One who vows to bring a korban or to give to the needy is bound by a biblical prohibition, "Do not delay fulfillment." This is the 574<sup>th</sup> mitzvah on *Sefer haChinuch's* list, and it applies to fulfillment of a range of vows, including those of *zedakah*. This is complemented by a commandment, based on Devarim 12:5, to bring a pledged korban or property we have consecrated to the Beit haMikdash as soon as possible. (Mitzvah 438) Specifically, we are obligated to bring these to the Beit haMikdash on the next Yom Tov – Pesach, Shavuot or Succot. According to *Sefer haChinuch*, Mitzvah 438 applies only when we have a Beit haMikdash; see *Minchat Chinuch* 438 and 575 for further discussion.

*Sefer haChinuch* notes that the imperative for immediate fulfillment is logical, but he adds that the Torah recognizes the need for flexibility: "It is not appropriate for one to be lazy regarding his vow to perform a mitzvah. People are known to be very careful about fulfilling the commands of earthly kings, all the more so the command of the King of kings of kings, *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. Still, the Torah does not strain us to ascend immediately, lest that prevent people from

dedicating offerings. On Yom Tov, though, when people are required to ascend there, the Torah instructs them to complete their vows."

This softening of the Torah's demands for the sake of human need is seen in many other laws. For example:

- The Talmud notes that the Torah's demands for expenditure for certain mitzvot are not as extreme as they could have been (Yoma 39a and Menachot 76b, for example), and that there are cases in which the Torah structures laws in ways that preserve human property (Mishnah Negaim 12:5). As the Talmud explains, "G-d has mercy upon the property of Israel." This leads to leniency regarding certain areas of Jewish law in order to prevent significant financial loss. [See, for example, Rama Choshen Mishpat 25:2, Tur Orach Chaim 536 and Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 336:9, regarding different areas of halachah.]
- Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein discusses the need to ensure that the boxes of one's tefillin are perfectly square. He notes that some writers are concerned about a mild softening of the edges of the boxes, which would make them less perfectly square – but then he rejects this concern, citing the Talmudic principle, "G-d does not seek claims against His creatures." G-d is not motivated to find us guilty, and so there are limits to that which G-d will demand of us. (Aruch haShulchan Orach Chaim 32:77)

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## Biography

### Rabbi Eliezer Fleckeles

Rabbi David Ely Grundland

Rabbi Eliezer Fleckeles, a descendant of Rabbi Yehudah Loew, the famed Maharal of Prague, was born in Prague in 1754. In his youth, he spent ten years learning from Rabbi Yechezkel Landau (a.k.a. *Noda B'Yehudah*), and he considered himself a lifelong disciple of Rabbi Landau.

At the age of seventeen, Rabbi Fleckeles married his wife, Esther, who came from a wealthy family. He credited his wife and her family, as well as his parents' support, for his success in Torah study and his ability to enter into meaningful community service.

Rabbi Fleckeles was known for erudition in all aspects and applications of Torah concepts, and he was sought out as a preacher and as a defender of Torah against its critics. In 1778 he was appointed as the head of a rabbinical court in Moravia, where he became a valued leader of the community. While there, he established a yeshiva. Soon after, his own mentor, Rabbi Landau, invited him to sit in the rabbinical court in Prague. He accepted the position; in 1783, Rabbi Fleckeles returned to Prague as a rabbinical judge. After the death of Rabbi Landau, he was placed as the head of the court, serving alongside Rabbi Landau's son, the accomplished Rabbi Shemuel Landau.

Acclaim for Rabbi Fleckeles soon grew beyond the borders of his city. This was partly due to his harsh sentiments against the Sabbatean and Frankist communities, which were prevalent in his time. In a well-known responsum (*Teshuvah mei'Ahavah* 1:8), he termed all members of that community as "perfectly evil", and forbade marrying a person from a Sabbatean family, even as he said that it pained him to discuss such matters. He also said not to respond "Amen" to their blessings (ibid. 1:69), and that a Torah scroll written by a Sabbatean should be burned (ibid. 1:110).

Rabbi Fleckeles' main work is his *Teshuvah Mei'Ahavah* collection of responsa. He also wrote a commentary on the Passover Haggadah, and *Ahavat David*, an entire volume dedicated to his fight against Sabbateans, among other books.

According to one source, Rabbi Fleckeles' yahrtzeit is this coming Thursday, the 17<sup>th</sup> of Sivan.

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## Torah and Translation

### Do Bad Things Come in Threes?

Rabbi Eliezer Fleckeles

*Teshuvah mei'Ahavah* 1:11

Translated by Rabbi David Ely Grundland

מה דאז"ל במסכת שבת פח. "דרש ההוא גלילאי עלי' דר"ח בריך רחמנא דיהב לן אוריאן תליתאי [לעם תליתאי, על ידי תליתאי, ביום תליתאי, בירחא תליתאי] פירש רש"י "תורה נביאים כתובים" עכ"ל. משמע דמעליותא היא אשר אז מסיני הי' בידו תנ"ך, הא אמרו במס' נדרים דף כב: "א"ר אדא בר חנינא, אילמלא לא חטאו ישראל לא ניתן להם אלא חמשה חומשי תורה וס' יהושע בלבד שערכה של א"י... תורה הי' שהחטא גרם להם שנתוספו להם נביאי וכתובים, ואיך השתבח והתפאר דיהב אוריאן תליתאי? ולואי שלא חטאו ולא הי' להם כ"א תור' וס' יהושע! לענ"ד נראה לא די שאין אגדות חלוקות הן אלא שתי אגדות אלו בדבור אחד נאמרו...

והנה כל הני תליתאי אשר ההוא גלילאי מונה והולך נשתלשו בבחירת האדם, ומקרה הזמן הקרה את כלם. כמו "עם תליתאי" כהנים לויים וישראלים, כדאמרו במכילתא ומביאה השמעוני בפסוק "ואתם תהיו לי ממלכת כהנים", ראויים היו ישראל לאכול קדשים, אלא משעשו את העגל ניטלו מהם ונתנו לכהנים. כמו כן עד שלא עשו את העגל היתה העבודה בכורי ישראל, וכשחטאו ועשו את העגל נפסלו ונבחרו הלויים תחתיהם...

וכן נמי "על יד תליתאי" משה אהרן ומרים, ראוי היה משה לעשות כל הנסים על ידו לבדו אלא בעבור שאמר "[ו]הם לא יאמינו לי" "לא איש דברים אנכי" "שלח נא ביד תשלח" "הן בני ישראל לא שמעו אלי" נתייחד הדבור גם עם אהרן כמבואר...

אם כן יגענו ומצאנו כל השלישים במועצת ודעת שמעשיהם גרמו, אבל יגענו ולא הונח לנו איך נוכל לומר שחטאם גרמו אוריאן תליתאי, עד שבא ר"א בר חנינא ודרש "אילמלא לא חטאו ישראל לא ניתן להם אלא חמשה חומשי תורה כו." "א"כ מה טוב ומה נעים כל הני תליתאי כשבת אחים גם יחד, כלם על רגל אחד ויסוד אחד, כל אחד דומה לחבירו כצלמו וכדמות תבניתו.

Regarding the saying of our sages (Shabbat 88a), "A Galilean expressed to Rav Chisda: Blessed is the Merciful One who gave us a threefold Torah [to a threefold nation, via three parties, on the third day, in the third month]." Rashi explains [that this is regarding] Torah, Prophets and Writings, which implies that at Sinai Hashem possessed the entire Tanach. However, Nedarim 22b states, "Rabbi Ada bar Chanina says: Had Israel not sinned, they would only have been given the five books of Torah and the book of Joshua, which includes the value of the land of Israel." Given that sin caused the addition of the Prophets and Writings, how is it that we praise and glorify [G-d] for giving us a threefold Torah? Ideally we should have not sinned, and only received Torah and the book of Joshua! In my humble opinion, not only are these not contradictory *aggadic* texts, but both *aggadic* texts speak to the same point...

Behold, all of the threes enumerated by that Galilean became three through human choice, caused by a particular event. For example, a threefold people, Priests, Levites and Israelites, as was taught in the Mekhilta and brought in Yalkut Shimoni regarding the verse, "And you shall be for Me a Kingdom of priests" "Israel could have appropriately eaten from sacred offerings, but once they made the [golden] calf, that ability was taken from them and given to the priests alone. Similarly, before the making of the calf, the service was [to be performed] by the firstborn of Israel and after they sinned and made the calf, they were disqualified and the Levites were chosen instead. "...

So too, "via three parties", Moshe, Aharon and Miriam. It would have been appropriate for Moshe alone to perform all the miracles, but since he said, "They won't believe me", "I am not a man of words", "Send another in my place", "The children of Israel won't listen to me", G-d's private speech was also with Aharon...

If so, we have now worked and found, with counsel and knowledge, that all of the threes were caused by their actions. However, we did not yet know how it was that their sin caused the threefold Torah, until Rabbi Ada ben Chanina came and explained that they would have only received the five books of Torah, etc. If so, how good and pleasant are all these threes, like brothers dwelling together on a single leg and a single foundation, each one similar to the other, in its image and likeness.

## This Week in Israeli History: 18 Sivan, 1972 The Massacre at Lod International Airport

Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

18 Sivan is Friday

Security in Lod Airport – the main gateway to and from Israel – was as high in the summer of 1972 as it had ever been. Just a few months earlier, a Lufthansa flight had been hijacked, and then ransomed for 5 million dollars by the West German government. On May 8<sup>th</sup>, a Sabena flight from Vienna to Lod was hijacked and released in an IDF operation. However, on 18 Sivan (May 30) 1972, while the guards were looking for any Arab-appearing suspects, no one paid attention to three young Japanese men carrying slim violin cases. In fact, they belonged to the “Japanese Red Army”, and had been recruited by the Palestinian group called “The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine”.

As the men entered the luggage receiving area at Lod Airport, they opened their cases and took out their rifles. For the next few, horrifying minutes, they shot indiscriminately at everyone in sight, killing twenty-four people. One of the attackers was killed, apparently from by

fellow terrorist’s fire, and another one was killed by his own grenade. The third attacker - Kōzō Okamoto - ran outside, where he was shot and captured by security forces. He was sentenced to life in prison, but was released a mere thirteen years later in the “Jibril Agreement”. He lives in Lebanon, and is wanted to this day by the Japanese government.

Eight of the victims were Jews, among them Professor Aharon Katzir, a world-renowned chemist. The rest included Christian pilgrims from Puerto Rico, and a Canadian citizen who was Muslim.

There were obvious lessons learned from the attack, such as the tightening of security efforts in the airport. Further, though, the attack led to a deeper emphasis in Israel on explaining Israel’s position abroad, to overcome Palestinian propaganda.

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### Weekly Highlights: May 30 – June 5 / 12 Sivan – 18 Sivan

| Time                      | Speaker                       | Topic  | Location  | Special Notes   |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|--|---|---|
| <b>May 29-30</b>          |                               |  |   |   |
| <b>Fri 6:45 PM</b>        | R’ Josh Gutenberg             | Parshah and Kugel  | BAYT  |   |
| <b>After hashkamah</b>    | Yisroel Meir Rosenzweig       | Meshech Chochmah   | Clanton Park  |   |
| <b>Before Pirkei Avot</b> | R’ Mordechai Torczyner        | Daf Yomi   | BAYT  | <i>Rabbi’s Classroom</i>  |
| <b>After minchah</b>      | R’ Mordechai Torczyner        | Gemara Avodah Zarah:<br>Aphrodite’s Bath   | BAYT  |   |
| <b>Sun. May 31</b>        |                               |  |   |   |
| <b>8:45 AM</b>            | R’ Josh Gutenberg             | Contemporary Halachic Issues   | BAYT  | <i>Third Floor Classroom</i>  |
| <b>9:15 AM</b>            | R’ Shalom Krell               | Kuzari   | Zichron Yisroel   | <i>With light breakfast</i>   |
| <b>Tues. June 2</b>       |                               |  |   |   |
| <b>8 AM to 12 PM</b>      | <b>R’ Mordechai Torczyner</b> | <b>Bnai Brith Program:<br/>100 Questions<br/>About a Will Challenge</b>            | <b>Shaarei Shomayim</b>                                   | <b>Multi-panel program<br/>Education credit for<br/>lawyers, accountants<br/><a href="mailto:greenspan@bnairbrith.ca">greenspan@bnairbrith.ca</a></b> |
| <b>1:30 PM</b>            | R’ Mordechai Torczyner        | Book of Job:<br>Bildad Attacks   | Shaarei Shomayim  |   |
| <b>Wed. June 3</b>        |                               |  |   |   |
| <b>12:30 PM</b>           | <b>R’ Mordechai Torczyner</b> | <b>Lunch and Learn<br/>The Sandwich Generation:<br/>Making Difficult Decisions</b> | <b>Miller Bernstein<br/>5000 Yonge St.<br/>Suite 1801</b> | <b>Lunch served; RSVP<br/><a href="mailto:cchoi@millerbernstein.com">cchoi@millerbernstein.com</a></b>  |
| <b>Thu. June 4</b>        |                               |  |   |   |
| <b>1:30 PM</b>            | R’ Mordechai Torczyner        | The Book of Yehoshua:<br>Yehudah’s Land  | 49 Michael Ct.<br>Thornhill                               | <i>For women only</i>   |
| <b>Fri. June 5</b>        |                               |  |   |   |
| <b>10:30 AM</b>           | R’ Mordechai Torczyner        | Advanced Shemitah  | Yeshivat Or Chaim   |   |

#### Coming Soon!

**Shabbat June 6: Shabbaton: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Shabbat, at BAYT**

**Monday June 8: Medical Ethics: Lessons of the Rasouli Case, at Shaarei Shomayim**

**Wednesday June 10: Fire Safety and Halachah, at Yeshivat Or Chaim**

**Sunday June 14: Midreshet Yom Rishon for women at Bnai Torah**

**Wednesday June 17: Medical Ethics 101, at Yeshivat Or Chaim**