

# Toronto Torah

## Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Bereishit

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in memory of Joyce's father, מתיהו בן אברהם הכהן ז"ל

### Adam's True Directive

Rabbi Jonathan Ziring

"And G-d commanded Adam saying, 'From all the trees in the Garden – eat. However, from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil you shall not eat, and on the day that you eat from it, you shall die.'" (Bereishit 2:16-17)

What exactly was Adam's charge at these formative moments? Which parts of these verses were included under G-d's command? Perhaps the most common perspective is that His only command was to refrain from eating the fruits of the Tree of Knowledge. Man was not obligated to eat the Garden's other produce— he was permitted to, so long as he did not violate the one limitation placed on him. (See, for example, Ibn Ezra and Radak's first interpretation.) G-d was happy for Adam to enjoy, provided Adam did something to show that he did not forget by whose largesse he lived in Paradise. While intuitive, this approach is textually difficult – if the command was only to avoid the Tree of Knowledge, why was this law separated from the word "commanded" by an entire verse?

Perhaps in response to this problem, our Sages (Sanhedrin 56b, and midrashim to the above verses) see in the words of the first verse a coded list of the six Adamite Laws (which eventually became seven during the time of Noah). While this exegesis successfully juxtaposes a number of regulations to the word "commanded", it still begs the question. The only law **explicitly** mentioned and not hidden by a hermeneutic veil remains the command to not eat – a law still separated from the opening word,

"commanded," by G-d's allowance to enjoy the fruit of the Garden.

Several commenters, therefore, see in the simple meaning of these verses two distinct duties: to actively enjoy the majority of the Garden's fruit, and to avoid the forbidden ones. (See for example Radak's second approach, and Riva.) G-d did not begrudgingly allow man to eat, provided he kept the rules. The world was not meant to be merely a place to desist from sin, where engaging the physical, mundane elements was a necessary dispensation or even evil. Rather, when people live "normal" lives, striving to keep the word of G-d, eating and drinking too become spiritual, a form of Divine service.

Rabbi Meir Simchah of Dvinsk, in his commentary *Meshech Chochmah*, pushes this analysis farther. First, he argues that it was the misunderstanding of this message that led to mankind's original sin. Adam, he claims, recognized the importance of the prohibition to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, and conveyed that to Chavah. However, he did not tell her that it was a commandment to enjoy the rest of the Garden. Had she known that appreciating the fruit was also spiritually significant, her constant engagement with G-d through the everyday would have protected her from sin. Without the knowledge that relishing all that G-d had given her was also meaningful, she was left to live a basically non-spiritual life, where G-d's voice only penetrated in the form of a "no". (Per *Meshech Chochmah*, the problem was that mitzvot protect one from sin, but mitzot need *kavanah* –

proper intent. Thus, Chavah, who did not know it was a mitzvah to eat from the other trees, did not fulfil the mitzvah. However, one could suggest what was lacking was not the metaphysical protection of mitzvot, but rather a proper outlook on life – an outlook that intrinsically makes religiosity more appealing and fulfilling, making sin naturally less attractive.)

Second, *Meshech Chochmah* claims that this dual obligation was not only for Adam and Chavah, but for humanity more generally as well. This charge is the basis for our Sages' statement (Yerushalmi Kiddushin 4:12) that "A person will be held accountable for all his eyes have not seen and all that he has not tasted." Similarly, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch wrote, "I almost believe that all you homebodies would one day have to atone for your staying indoors, and when you would desire entrance to see the marvels of heaven, they would ask you, 'Did you see the marvels of G-d on earth?' Then, ashamed, you would mumble, 'We missed that opportunity.'" (Collected Writings 8:259)

Thus, this perspective is important not just to understand the opening moments of Bereishit, but to understand how we must approach the world. We, too, remain bidden to see the Torah as a guide for how we are supposed to engage all that G-d has given us in this world, rather than a list of do's and don'ts. We are commanded to see G-d's presence even, or perhaps especially, when we eat of the trees in the garden.

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### OUR BEIT MIDRASH

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We are grateful to  
Continental Press 905-660-0311

**Guide to Traditional Jewish Observance in a Hospital**  
Rabbi Jason Weiner  
Kodesh Press, 2012  
First edition: <http://goo.gl/7hh5ch>

**About the Author**

Rabbi Jason Weiner, is a National Association of Jewish Chaplains board-certified chaplain. He currently serves as the senior rabbi and manager of the Spiritual Care Department at Cedars-Sinai Hospital in Los Angeles.

**Goal and method of the book**

Fundamentally, Rabbi Weiner's work is meant to help enable others to fulfill the principle that the Torah's "[W]ays are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace" (Proverbs 3:17) while in the complex environment of the modern hospital. He hopes to achieve this goal by setting out a clear and in-depth guide through some of the key issues that one often faces in a hospital.

Creating a guidebook for such complex areas of halachah while maintaining its clarity and readability is a difficult task. In order to maintain a consistent approach to the various topics covered, Rabbi Weiner chose to follow the works of Rabbi Dr. Abraham S. Abraham, author of *Nishmat Avraham* and *Lev*

*Avraham*. In addition to these seminal works of medical halachah, Rabbi Weiner cites other significant works, such as *Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchatah*, *Responsa Tzitz Eliezer*, and *Responsa Igrot Moshe*, throughout the guide.

While preparing the material for the guide, Rabbi Weiner taught the included topics as a year-long class at the Young Israel of Century City. This provided an opportunity to not only research the material in depth, but also to glean from the questions and perspectives provided by others in these classes.

**What is covered in the book?**

The book is divided into eight sections, each including a number of chapters. The headings, with examples of material covered in each, are:

- **Categories of Illness** – Minor Ailments, Life-Threatening Illnesses
- **Shabbat** – Use of a Telephone; Discharge on Shabbat/Holidays
- **Festivals** – Pregnancy and Childbirth on Yom Kippur
- **Laws Related to Food & Meals** – Medication; Meat and Milk
- **Prayer** – Tefillin
- **Interactions with Individuals of the Opposite Gender** – Seclusion ("Yichud")

- **Kohanim** – Navigating ritual impurity in a hospital
- **Post-Mortem Care** – Treatment of the body on Shabbat and Festivals

Each topic covered has ample citations provided, allowing for further learning. In addition to these citations, there are special notes that describe application of specific topics to Cedars-Sinai Hospital. For example, electric doors are ubiquitous in hospitals around the world; Rabbi Weiner notes where a manually operated Shabbat entrance is located and even provides a map at the end of the guide.

**Worth having**

Overall, *Guide to Traditional Jewish Observance in a Hospital* is a comprehensive work that can serve as both an introduction and review resource for the many issues involving Torah observance in the complex world of the modern hospital. Since everything is well-cited, there is ample opportunity to further one's learning beyond the contents of the guide. As the guide was written with Cedars-Sinai Hospital in mind, certain notes will only apply there, but they can provide a perspective of what to look for and request in any hospital.

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**613 Mitzvot: #456-462: Jewish Missionaries**

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

As the Jews prepare to enter Canaan, Moshe spends much of his final address warning about the spiritual dangers of association with the Canaanites. However, Moshe also recognizes the possibility that individual Jews might stray from Judaism and attempt to undermine the rest of the nation's spiritual identity. The Jewish missionary who attempts to draw other Jews into idolatry is called a *meisit*, and Moshe dedicates Devarim 13:2-12 to laws governing the way that Jews should oppose a *meisit*. [Devarim 13:13-19 is also related, but beyond the scope of this article.]

Our concern for the impact of a homegrown *meisit* is particularly strong because Judaism relies on national testimony to the events of Sinai and the tradition taught there. This theme is particularly strong in medieval Jewish philosophy. Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi rejected faiths founded upon an individual's prophetic experience, and instead argued for Judaism's national experience of Divine revelation. (Kuzari 1:5-9 and 1:80-87, for example) Rambam emphasized the national experience of witnessing a Divine conversation with Moshe as the basis for all Jewish belief. (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Yesodei haTorah 8) Ramban contended that the direct conversation with G-d at Sinai, reported across generations, is the bedrock of Judaism. (Commentary to Devarim 4:9) The *meisit* undermines this, as a Jew who professes a belief not in Sinai but in a foreign faith.

The case of *meisit* is also challenging because the Torah is filled with mitzvot commanding love and care for our fellow Jew. Beyond the merciful benevolence we are taught to employ in looking after all human beings, the Torah requires that we take practical steps to look after our family's welfare.

The *meisit*, though, wears the mask of a fellow citizen while acting as a base invader. His biological right to our protection is undermined by his antipathy toward our spiritual identity and mission. Our morality is therefore forcibly inverted when we confront the *meisit*; we are required to ignore our instinctive fraternity, and defend the spiritual unity of the nation against the incursion of this wayward individual.

*Sefer haChinuch* identifies seven mitzvot in these verses:

- Do not listen to the person who claims to prophesy for idolatry (Mitzvah #456);
- Do not love the *meisit* (#457), do not let your enmity fade (#458), and do not intervene to rescue him (#459);
- Do not look for reasons to argue in favour of the *meisit* (#460), and do not conceal his guilt (#461);
- Do not act as a *meisit* (#462).

Normally, Jewish law requires that we make every effort to exonerate a defendant, regardless of the crime of which he is accused. Here, though, the Torah mandates the opposite. Rambam sums up this unusual approach of Jewish law to the *meisit* by saying, "Cruelty toward these people, who trick the nation into following emptiness, is mercy to the rest of the world, as it is written, 'So that G-d may retreat from His anger and give you mercy.'" (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Sanhedrin 11:5)

It is worth noting that the term *meisit* may also be applied to Jews who attempt to convince other Jews to engage in sins other than idolatry; see *Igrot Moshe Orach Chaim* 1:99.

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## Biography

### Rabbi Eliyahu de Vidas

Rabbi David Ely Grundland

Rabbi Eliyahu de Vidas was a 16<sup>th</sup> century kabbalist; he lived in the land of Israel. Like the esoteric and hidden secrets of the Torah he studied, much of his life is unknown today. The little we do know is primarily from his own writings and those of his teachers and disciples.

Rabbi de Vidas was one of the primary students of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero (RaMaK) in Tzefat, and of Rabbi Isaac Luria, the famed Ari z"l. Rabbi Chaim Vital, another well-known Tzefat kabbalist, stated that Rabbi de Vidas and RaMaK were of the same "soul root". A contemporary of Rabbi de Vidas in Tzefat was Rabbi Shlomo Alkabetz, author of the poem *Lecha Dodi*.

Rabbi de Vidas was a student of the more esoteric and meditative practices of Kabbalah, in line with the teachings of RaMaK. He would spend time in solitude in the hills of Northern Israel in mystical communion with Hashem. He eventually moved to Chevron, where he passed away in 1587.

While in Chevron, Rabbi de Vidas authored his magnum opus, *Reishit Chochmah* (The Beginning of Wisdom). The book is largely based on Zoharic references, although it also cites many passages from traditional sources. It serves as a moral and ethical code established on kabbalistic wisdom, meant to inspire the reader toward the attainment of purity and holiness. The text is written as a meditative guidebook, using various visualization techniques to teach the reader how to attain an awareness of Hashem's unity and a sense of the love that Hashem has for His nation. *Reishit Chochmah* is a book written to take the reader on a journey into the spiritual life available in Torah.

*Reishit Chochmah* has been reprinted many times, including in abridged editions. It uses clear language to explain very lofty, esoteric subjects. One can infer about Rabbi Eliyahu de Vidas that he was a scholar with a deep passion for holiness and spirituality who was connected to the Divine, but also a down-to-earth teacher, able to guide others along their pursuit of connection with Hashem and the deeper messages of Torah.

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## Torah and Translation

### The Goal of Torah Study

Rabbi Eliyahu de Vidas, *Reishit Chochmah*, Introduction

Translated by Rabbi David Ely Grundland

נודע היות אמת בעיקר עסק התורה הוא להביאה לקיום המעשה, כדפי' במס' ברכות יז. "מרגלא בפומיה דרבא: תכלית חכמה תשובה ומעשים טובים, שלא יהא אדם קורא ושונה ובוטט באביו ובאמו וברבו ובמי שגדול ממנו בחכמה ובמנין שנאמר (תהלים קיא) 'ראשית חכמה יראת ד' שכל טוב לכל עושיהם' - ללומדיהם לא נאמר אלא לעושיהם, לעושים לשמה ולא לעושים שלא לשמה, וכל העושה שלא לשמה נוח לו שלא נברא." עכ"ל

וחזר לומר "לעושים לשמה וכו'" שלכאורה הוא מיותר, אלא ללמדנו שעיקר תורה לשמה היא התורה שאדם לומד כדי לקיימה, וכך הוא הבנת הפסוק: בזמן שיקדים האדם לחכמה יראת ד' תתן החכמה שכל טוב לכל עושיהם מפני שאין כוונת החכמה אלא ליראת ד' שהחכמה תלמד לאדם דרכי היראה, ומוכרח הוא שתהיה החכמה שכל טוב לכל עושיהם ושתתקיים בו החכמה, כיון שלא למד החכמה אלא לעשותה כלי ליראה, והיראה הוא המעשה.

ובזוהר בראשית (דף ח) אמר ז"ל ר' יוסי אומר שכל טוב דא אילנא דחיי, דאיהו שכל טוב בלא רע כלל, ועל דלא שריא ביה רע איהו שכל טוב בלא רע. עכ"ל. ועל דרך זה מורכב עם הפי' הקודם הוא כי בהקדים היראה לחכמה אז זוכה האדם להשיג עץ החיים שהוא שכל טוב בלא רע, אבל אם לא הקדים היראה אז אינו שכל טוב בלא רע כי נמצא בוטט באביו ובאמו והוא עושה שלא לשמה והוא מורכב מטוב ורע, ולכן נוח לו שלא נברא.

It is known to be true that the main purpose of engaging in Torah study is to bring about action, as explained in Berachot (17a), "Rava was accustomed to say: The purpose of wisdom is repentance and good deeds, such that a person should not learn and repeat and then reject his father and mother and his teacher and all who are greater than him in wisdom and stature, as it says (Tehillim 111:10) 'The beginning of wisdom is awe of Hashem, a good mind for all who perform them.' It does not say 'those who learn them', but rather 'those who perform them'. Those who perform them for their own sake and not for other reasons. Anyone who does them for other reasons - better for him to have not been created."

He added "one who does them for their own sake", which appears to be superfluous. However, [his point] is to teach us that the essence of "Torah for its own sake" is the Torah one learns in order to uphold it [through performance]. This, then, is the way to understand the verse: when one precedes [the attainment of] wisdom with awe of Hashem, that wisdom will grant a good mind to all who perform them, for the purpose of wisdom is only to bring about awe of Hashem, such that wisdom will teach a person the ways of awe. It is necessary that wisdom should itself provide a good mind for all who perform them and that wisdom should remain in this person, since this person learned wisdom only for it to become a vessel for awe. Awe is the action.

The Zohar in Bereishit (8) teaches, "Rabbi Yosi says 'a good mind' is the tree of life, which is a good mind without any evil at all. Since there is no evil in it, it is called 'a good mind' without evil." Along these lines, together with the previous explanation, [we can learn that] in establishing awe before wisdom a person merits to attain the tree of life, which is a good mind without evil. If one does not begin with awe, then his is not a good mind without evil, and [one will] reject his father and mother and perform mitzvot for other reasons, and will be a combination of good and evil, and therefore it is better for him to have not been created.

## This Week in Israeli History: 28 Tishrei 1930 The Passfield White Paper

Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

28 Tishrei is Sunday

After the Arab riots of 1929 (5689) in Eretz Yisrael, which left in their wake more than 100 Jewish dead and twice that number injured, the British government founded a committee to assess the English policy in Palestine. Following the committee's conclusions, Lord Passfield, the British colonial secretary, issued a "white paper" – a formal statement of British policy in Palestine.

The Passfield White Paper, as it came to be called, was a sharp departure from the promises made by the English government toward the Jewish people in 1917 in the Balfour Declaration. This paper blamed the Zionist movement for the poor state of the Arab population, and practically named the Jews as responsible for the uprising. The conclusions, therefore, were far-reaching: Jewish immigration to the land must be strongly limited, Jews should be banned from buying additional land, and a legislative council should be formed which would represent the Arab majority. This last step threatened the entire Zionist project, as it intended to give the Arab population a way to block it completely.

Zionist organizations all over the world cried out against this retreat from the commitment to establish "a national home for the Jewish people." Prominent Jewish members of the British Parliament, such as Herbert Samuel, joined the effort. Eventually, they were successful, and English Prime minister Ramsay MacDonald wrote a clarification letter, stating, "In order to remove certain misconceptions and misunderstandings... his Majesty's Government are responsible for promoting the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people."

But this victory did not last; the British understood that in order to keep good relations with Arab populations they need to be seen as at least neutral, if not opposed, to the Zionist endeavour. Their interests were leading to a clash with the Jewish settlement; this fully erupted with the next White Paper, in 1939, under British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain.

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### Weekly Highlights: Oct. 10 – Oct. 16 / 27 Tishrei – 3 Cheshvan

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
<b>שבת Oct. 10</b>				
<b>After hashkamah</b>	Yisroel Meir Rosenzweig	Seforno	Clanton Park	
<b>Before minchah</b>	R' Jonathan Ziring	Daf Yomi	BAYT	
<b>After minchah</b>	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Gemara Avodah Zarah: Sharing Land with Idolatry	BAYT	
<b>8:45 PM</b>	R' Mordechai Torczyner	The Careers of Bereishit	JEP	<b>University-aged women</b>
<b>Sun. Oct. 11</b>				
<b>8:45 AM</b>	R' Josh Gutenberg	Contemporary Halachah	BAYT	<b>Not this week</b>
<b>9:15 AM</b>	<b>R' Shalom Krell</b>	<b>NEW TOPIC The Book of Shemuel</b>	<b>Zichron Yisroel</b>	<b>Hebrew</b>
<b>10:00 AM</b>	R' Aaron Greenberg	Gemara Chullin: Introductory Shiur	Yeshivat Or Chaim	<b>For Chaverim</b>
<b>Mon. Oct. 12</b> <b>Beginning at 7:30 PM on Monday October 19 - Weekly Beit Midrash Nights At Yeshivat Or Chaim and Shaarei Shomayim</b>				
<b>Tue. Oct. 13</b> <b>Rosh Chodesh</b>				
<b>10:00 AM</b>	<b>Mrs. Ora Ziring</b>	<b>Women's Beit Midrash</b>	<b>Ulpana</b>	<b>University-aged women</b>
<b>1:30 PM</b>	R' Mordechai Torczyner	The Book of Job A Review of Chapters 1-19	Shaarei Shomayim	
<b>Wed. Oct. 14</b> <b>Rosh Chodesh</b>				
<b>10:00 AM</b>	<b>R' Mordechai Torczyner</b>	<b>The Ethical Customer Week 1: Bargaining</b>	<b>Beth Emeth</b>	<b>Register with savaloretta@gmail.com</b>
<b>8:00 PM</b>	<b>Learning Program in memory of Rabbi Eitan and Rebbetzin Naama Henkin HY"D At Yeshivat Or Chaim, 159 Almore Ave</b>			
<b>Thu. Oct. 15</b>				
<b>1:30 PM</b>	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Yehoshua Chap. 17: Land of Menasheh	49 Michael Ct. Thornhill	<b>For women only</b>
<b>Fri. Oct. 16</b>				
<b>10:30 AM</b>	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Eruvin: The Karpef	Yeshivat Or Chaim	<b>Advanced</b>