

# Toronto Torah

## Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Toldot

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in memory of their beloved aunt, Mindel bat Freida Perl z"l

### Think After You Act

Rabbi Jonathan Ziring

“וַיֹּאכַל וַיִּשְׂתַּי וַיִּקַּח וַיֵּלֶךְ וַיִּבֶן עִשָׂו אֶת הַבְּכֹרָה”  
“And he ate, and he drank, and he got up, and he went, and Esav besmirched the [rights of the] first born. (Bereishit 25:34)”

Rarely in the Torah do we find a string of five verbs with no words in between. Yet here, after Esav has sold his birthright for a bowl of soup, the Torah describes the aftermath of the sale with this unwieldy sentence of constant movement. What is the Torah trying to convey?

There seem to be two opposite approaches to explaining this phenomenon, each of which imparts a profound lesson. First, one could argue that the Torah is emphasizing that what led to Esav's sin was lack of thought. He acted without thinking – he ate, he drank, he got up, he went – without taking a moment to reflect. If he had, perhaps he would not have besmirched the firstborn rights. He would have realized what he was giving up – the privilege to be the descendant of Avraham and Yitzchak in fulfilling their destiny – and would not have traded it in for lunch.

C.S. Lewis captures this idea powerfully in his *Screwtape Letters*. The book discusses a junior, demonic “tempter” who receives advice from his uncle, Screwtape, on how to lead people astray. Screwtape warns his nephew that if he sees his “patient” inspired to do something good, it is not worth trying to convince him to change his mind. People know what is right, and if you would engage them in argument, they might simply redouble their conviction. Instead, he should

persuade his subject to wait until after lunch to act on his aspirations, even telling him that lunch will give the strength to pursue his newfound commitments. By getting him out the door for lunch without him taking the time to internalize his inspiration, you will erase the motivation. Describing a case in which he had used just this method, Screwtape says about the patient: “Once he was in the street the battle was won. I showed him a newsboy shouting the midday paper, and a No. 73 bus going past, and before he reached the bottom of the steps I had got into him an unalterable conviction that, whatever odd ideas might come into a man's head when he was shut up alone with his books, a healthy dose of ‘real life’ (by which he meant the bus and the newsboy) was enough to show him that all ‘that sort of thing’ just couldn't be true.” Often we know what is right, but we are too caught up with the everyday to think about it, and thus we never act on it.

The second approach, however, emerges from a careful reading of the *trop* (cantillation notes). The verse actually breaks up the five verbs – the first four are in the first half of the sentence, and the last one, that Esav besmirched the birthright, follows an *etnachta* pause in the sentence. Chizkuni explains the syntax. While it may be that the sale was caused by lack of thought, as evidenced by the first four verbs which describe the sale, the real sin was the fifth, which came later.

Chizkuni argues that Esav did take time to think, but only after the deed was done. At that point, Esav had a choice: admit he had made a mistake and have

others mock him for having been so thoughtless, or justify his actions to himself and to others. He chose the latter. When he realized what he had done, instead of repenting, regretting his mistake, he mocked the birthright, to make himself feel better and to convince others he had made the right decision. That made his sin so much worse.

Sometimes we do something wrong, but we realize that we have erred. That cognitive dissonance, the knowledge that we acted in a way that does not reflect what we believe, can act to spur us to change our ways and improve. However, we need to be willing to embrace the discomfort that comes from acknowledging that we have not acted as we know we should have, and that is hard. When there is a gap between where we are and where we know we should be, we can bridge the gap by improving ourselves, or by lowering our expectations. The latter is always easier, but the former is infinitely more rewarding.

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### OUR BEIT MIDRASH

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**YESHIVA UNIVERSITY  
TORAH MITZION  
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We are grateful to  
Continental Press 905-660-0311

***Lessons in Leadership: A Weekly Reading of the Jewish Bible***  
**Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks**  
**Koren Pub. Jerusalem Ltd., 2015**

**About the author**

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks is best known as the former Chief Rabbi of Great Britain and the Commonwealth. To date he has written over 25 books, and he publishes a well-read weekly column, "Covenant and Conversation," available through his website. Currently, Rabbi Sacks is engaged in teaching positions at Yeshiva University, New York University, and King's College of London.

**What is the goal of this book?**

It is clear from Rabbi Sacks' introduction to his new work that this is the product of years of experience as a leader, and the trials those years brought. He and the team that worked with him during his term as Chief Rabbi came to the realization that there are three key forms of Torah, "[T]he Torah you learn from books, the Torah you learn from teachers... and the Torah you learn from life," the last of which R. Sacks writes that he gained from his leadership challenges. Through

the whole of his introduction, Rabbi Sacks tells of the various watershed moments that allowed him to attain the perspective on leadership that he shares with us in this book.

The book's experience-based origins provide a deeply organic feel to the contents. It is solidly balanced between intellect and emotion, giving life to its messages. Rabbi Sacks is grounded in reality, but, in his own terminology, he insists upon "daring greatly." The book is built upon the central idea that, "[J]udaism is G-d's call to human responsibility." Throughout the book, Rabbi Sacks builds upon this core message, the expression of it in the Torah, and its implications upon our lives.

**The structure of the book**

As the subtitle suggests, *Lessons in Leadership* is structured around the weekly *parshah*. Each chapter discusses a different *parshah* and runs around two pages in length. The brief format allows one to process the message in a meaningful way, without it becoming burdensome by length. The articles are *m'at b'kamut v'rav b'eichut* – small in quantity, great in

impact. This book is perhaps best used as a springboard for contemplation. It invites the reader to take the author's idea, explore it, expand upon it, and make it his own.

**Classic Rabbi Sacks**

As is a trademark of Rabbi Sacks, themes drawn from the Torah are further illustrated by historical anecdotes and literary references. Avraham is presented as the subject of John Donne's statement that, "No man is an island." Avraham, embodying this thought, prays on behalf S'dom. The consequences of Rivkah and Yitzchak's lack of open communication are nearly re-lived through John F. Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev during the tense standoff of the Cuban missile crisis. While demanding a certain level of cultural literacy on the part of the reader, this method of linking the Torah to significant moments and concepts of Western society helps remind the reader that the figures in the Torah were real people as well, and it provides a way of linking the idea to our own lives.

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**613 Mitzvot: #469: Do not eat *toevah***

**Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner**

The Torah lists kosher and non-kosher creatures, and presents their identifying characteristics, in two places: Vayikra 11:1-47 and Devarim 14:3-21. There are differences between these two passages; in particular, the passage in Devarim begins with a global instruction, "You shall not eat anything that is *toevah*."

The word *toevah* is hard to explain in this verse. Literally, *toevah* refers to something that is considered repulsive (Ramban to Devarim 14:3), but not to any specific entity or act. In general, within Tanach, *toevah* refers to idolatry, sexual immorality or financial corruption. What food could be meant by *toevah* here?

This challenge leads commentators to take *toevah* in Devarim 14:3 in various directions:

- "That which I have declared to be repulsive for you," such as mixtures of meat and milk, or non-kosher species (Chullin 114b; Ramban to Devarim 14:3)
- "That which is naturally repulsive", such as reptiles (Ibn Ezra to Devarim 14:3, and note Yerushalmi Shabbat 9:1)
- "That which will make you repulsive", such as creatures which will contaminate those who consume them (Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch to Devarim 14:3)

A midrash (Sifri Devarim 99) takes a different approach, linking this *toevah* with the word *toevah* in Devarim 17:1, "You shall not slaughter before G-d an ox or sheep which is blemished, any negative thing, for it is a *toevah* of Hashem your G-d." The midrash says, "Rabbi Eliezer says: How do we know that one who damages the ear of a firstborn animal [rendering it defective, so that it is not eligible as an offering]

and then eats of it has violated a prohibition? The verse teaches, 'You shall not eat anything that is *toevah*. Others say: The verse is discussing disqualified sanctified offerings, as in Devarim 17:1..."

Rambam follows the view of the "Others" in this midrash, ruling that one is liable for eating "any korban which is declared invalid, whether due to intent or due to deed or due to an event which disqualified it." (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot P'sulei haMukdashin 18:3, and see Tosafot Bechorot 34a-b *umi*) This is Mitzvah #469 in the count of Sefer haChinuch, who explains that this prohibition benefits us by intensifying the care with which we approach sanctified items.

This prohibition does not apply to all disqualified offerings. As we have seen (Mitzvah #441, Toronto Torah 6:36), one may redeem offerings which become blemished before they are brought in the Beit haMikdash, and then one may eat them. The prohibition applies specifically to eating of offerings which a person blemished directly, or which are ineligible for redemption because they became damaged after they were slaughtered in the Beit haMikdash. (Sefer haChinuch 469)

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**Biography**  
**Rabbi Menachem Nachum**  
**Twersky**  
Rabbi David Ely Grundland

Rabbi Menachem Nachum Twersky was born circa 1730, in Ukraine. Orphaned as a child, he was raised by his uncle Rabbi Nachum. He was sent to learn Torah in Lithuanian yeshivot. Following his marriage, Rabbi Twersky continued to learn, while earning a living as a teacher.

Rabbi Twersky was influenced by the teachings of Rabbi Yitzchak Luria, the Ari z"l. As the newly founded Chassidic movement began to spread, he travelled to Medzhibuzh to learn under Rabbi Yisrael ben Eliezer, the Baal Shem Tov.

Following the death of the Ba'al Shem Tov, Rabbi Menachem Nachum became a disciple of Rabbi Dov Ber, the Maggid of Mezritch. It was under the Maggid's guidance that he was accepted as a Maggid in Chernobyl, where he founded the Chernobyler Chassidic dynasty. As a Maggid, Rabbi Menachem Nachum lived in poverty and travelled from place to place, preaching and spreading chassidic teachings.

As he wandered, Rabbi Twersky engaged in various pious activities, including ransoming captives. One story describes how he ransomed Jewish tax farmers who were imprisoned for failing to pay rent to their landowners in a timely manner. It is also related that he faced public scorn from *mitnagdim* – those who opposed the emerging Chassidic community.

Rabbi Twersky is considered one of the earliest expositors of Chassidic thought, through his primary work *Me'or Einayim*, a collection of teachings on the weekly Torah portion, and another work, *Yismach*, which includes various expositions based on the Talmud. Throughout his works, Rabbi Twersky stresses the importance of developing a proper moral character, constantly working on purifying ourselves in service of Hashem. Both of these texts, printed posthumously in 1798, are replete with quotations from his teachers. These texts are said to be compilations of what he had learned, without including any innovations himself. As such, Rabbi Menachem Nachum's works are considered to be among the most authentic and authoritative in conveying the original teachings of Chassidut.

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**Torah and Translation**  
**The Secret of the Wells**  
Rabbi M. N. Twersky, Me'or Einayim Vayetze  
Translated by Rabbi David Ely Grundland

זה סוד כל הבארות שחפרו האבות למצוא מים, שהיא התורה, בבחינת עפר במדרגות הפחיתות. וכמו שאמר הבעל שם טוב זלה"ה נשמתו בגנזי מרומים על פסוק (בראשית כו, טו) "וכל הבארות אשר חפרו עבדי אביו בימי אברהם אביו שתמום פלשתים וימלאום עפר," שהוא כמ"ש שכל אחד מן האבות עשה התגלות התורה מיסוד עפר ומדריגות תחתונים, על ידי תיקון מדתו של כל אחד ואחד למצוא שם מים בחינת באר מים חיים, שלא יכסה מכסה יסוד העפר על המים.

ואחר הסתלקות אברהם נסתמו התגלות ההם על ידי יסוד העפר ששב לכסות על בחינת המים, והסתימה היתה על ידי פלשתים שהם הקליפות שחזרו וגברו.

ויצחק שב וחפרן כמ"ש (שם, יח) "וישב יצחק ויחפור את בארות המים אשר חפרו וגו'" כי זה הוא גם כן התגלות התורה שבמעשים דאברהם ויצחק, ששם גניזת התורה גם היום מה שתקנו ועשו התורה ההיא שבפרטות הללו. וכ"ז היה לדורות הבאים לתקן, שאלולי האבות לא היה אפשר להשיג שום השגה ולהתקרב להשי"ת.

ונמצא כי גם עכשיו כל מה שאנחנו עושים בקירוב העבודה להשי"ת הכל הוא עם האבות הקדושים וזהו "ואברהם עודנו עומד לפני ד'" (שם כב, יח) פירוש בהווה תמיד הוא כך, שהוא עומד לימין צדיקים לעורינו על ידי התיקונים שתיקן וגלה לנו לחפור בבחינת עפר, בארות מים חיים.

This is the secret of all the wells that were dug by the fathers to find water, which [represents] Torah, within the dust, [representing] the lowest levels. As the Ba'al Shem Tov taught regarding the verse (Bereishit 26:15), "And all of the wells which the servants of his father had dug, in the days of Avraham his father, were sealed by the Philistines, and filled with dust," which implies what I have previously written, that each one of the forefathers [further] revealed the Torah, [digging wells in] the dust and the lowest levels, and by establishing the character of each one, to find there water, as in "a well of living water," which shall not be covered, a cover representing the dust upon the water. [This implies that the Torah would be established for perpetuity].

Following the passing of Avraham, all that he had revealed became covered over by the aspect of dust, which returned to cover the aspect of water, and the covering was done by the Philistines, which are the shells that returned and overcame [the previous revelation of Torah].

However, Yitzchak came and re-dug [the wells of Torah] as it is written (ibid. 18) "And Yitzchak returned and dug the wells of water that had been dug, etc." This is the revelation of Torah as had been revealed through the actions of Avraham and [now, again, through] Yitzchak. That is when the Torah was [first] stored away, and even today, that which they established as Torah [then], with all its details. All of this was established for the benefit of all future generations, for without the forefathers, it would be impossible to obtain any understanding [of Torah] or [any ability] to draw close to Hashem.

Even now, all that we do regarding our service of Hashem, everything is together with the holy fathers, which is the meaning of "And Avraham was yet standing before Hashem" (ibid. 22:18), meaning that presently, it is always the case that [Avraham] is standing to the right of the righteous to help us through that which he established and revealed to us, to digging wells of "living water" in the "dust".

## This Week in Israeli History: 5 Kislev 1948 Opening the "Road of Heroism"

Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

5 Kislev is Tuesday

During the period surrounding the War of Independence, the main road from Israel's seashore and its central city of Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, which passed through several Arab cities, was blocked. For most of the way, Jews were able to use secondary roads in secure areas. The crucial problem was how to bypass the section ascending from Latrun up to Jerusalem; this section was exposed to Arab villagers, and under constant attack. In March 1948, after another convoy was blocked and seventeen of its passengers were killed, it was clear that Jerusalem was under siege.

The main effort to open the road focused on the conquest of Latrun, where the Jordanian Legion was positioned. Unfortunately, the IDF was not able to complete this

mission, and after many casualties, the need for a different solution was clear. In May 1948, a new road to Jerusalem – hidden from the Legion's eyes – was paved; this was nicknamed "Burma Road". (See Toronto Torah 4:25) This road was later improved upon, and after changing its path to suit passenger cars, it was formally opened in December 1948, on the fifth of Kislev. It was named *Derech HaGevurah* (Road of Heroism), in memory of those who had risked their lives in the war for Jerusalem. Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion participated in the dedication.

This road served as the main Jewish road to Jerusalem until the conquest of Latrun in the Six Day War.

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### Weekly Highlights: Nov. 14 – Nov. 20 / 2 Kislev – 8 Kislev

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
<b>שבת Nov. 13-14 Shaarei Shomayim Shabbaton</b>				
7:30 PM	Mrs. Ora Ziring	Deeds of Our Parents	152 Dalemout	<i>Young Professionals</i>
8:00 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Medical Halachah: Non-Jewish Patients	85 Glen Park	
After Hashkamah	Yisroel Meir Rosenzweig	Isaac the Citizen?	Shaarei Shomayim	
Derashah	R' David Ely Grundland	Wells of Yaakov and Esav	Shaarei Shomayim	<i>Downstairs minyan</i>
Derashah	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Wells for the World	Shaarei Shomayim	<i>Main minyan</i>
4:00 PM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Isaac: Religious Zionist?	Shaarei Shomayim	
6:30 PM	R' David Ely Grundland	Parent-Child Learning	Shaarei Shomayim	
<b>Sun. Nov. 15</b>				
8:45 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Legal Ethics: Wills	BAYT	<i>With CPD Credit Non-lawyers welcome</i>
8:45 AM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Hosheia	BAYT	<i>Hebrew</i>
9:15 AM	R' Shalom Krell	The Book of Shemuel	Associated (North)	<i>Hebrew</i>
10:00 AM	R' Aaron Greenberg	Gemara Chullin	Yeshivat Or Chaim	<i>For Chaverim</i>
<b>Mon. Nov. 16</b>				
9:30 AM	Mrs. Ora Ziring	Women's Beit Midrash	Ulpanat Orot	
7:30 PM	R' Jonathan Ziring	The Chief Rabbinate	Yeshivat Or Chaim	<b>Beit Midrash Night</b>
7:30 PM	R' David Ely Grundland R' Mordechai Torczyner	Daf Highlights Medical Halachah	Shaarei Shomayim	<b>Beit Midrash Night</b>
<b>Tue. Nov. 17</b>				
10:00 AM	Mrs. Ora Ziring	Women's Beit Midrash	Ulpanat Orot	
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Job: Chapter 22-23	Shaarei Shomayim	
<b>Wed. Nov. 18</b>				
12:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Business Ethics: Employee Injury	Zeifman's 201 Bridgeland Ave	<i>Lunch served; RSVP rk@zeifmans.ca</i>
8:00 PM	Yisroel Meir Rosenzweig	Vaccinations	Shaarei Tefillah	
<b>Thu. Nov. 19</b>				
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Yehoshua	49 Michael Ct.	