

Toronto Torah

Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Emor

13 Iyar, 5776/May 21, 2016

Vol. 7 Num. 34

This issue of Toronto Torah is sponsored by Esther and Craig Guttmann and Family
in memory of Beila Chana bat Chaim Baruch z"l

Only G-d is Unblemished

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Strangely, the Torah prohibits kohanim exhibiting certain physical defects from serving in the Beit haMikdash. (Vayikra 21:18-19) Excluding a physically marred priest was not unusual for the ancient Near East (This Aabled Body, pg. 26), but it seems inconsistent with the Torah's many messages regarding the relative unimportance of physical perfection.

Our greatest prophet, Moshe, the source of our Torah and the closest "confidante" of G-d, identified himself as having a speech defect, and G-d did not choose to heal him. (Shemot 4; although note that Sanhedrin 36b indicates that Moshe was not a *baal mum*, strictly speaking) When the prophet Shemuel was sent to select a king, and he was impressed by a candidate's physical form, G-d rebuked him, "Human beings see with their eyes, but G-d sees the heart." (Shemuel I 16:7) The Talmud records a story of a man who was insulted as ugly, and it approves of his response, "Go tell the Craftsman who made me." (Taanit 20b) Torah and tradition render absurd the idea that there is any inferiority in, or any Divine rejection of, a human being whose form is damaged or incomplete.

Further: the demand for physical perfection hardly guaranteed a proper priesthood. The ranks of "unblemished" priests included Chofni and Pinchas, who abused their power in control of the Mishkan; the high priest Evyatar supported Adoniyahu's coup; the descendants of the priestly Chashmonaim abused their power and fell in with the Greeks; and the heretical Sadducees claimed lineage from the high priest Tzaddok. We must also realize that exclusion of people

with physical challenges runs counter to the respectful and protective approach to the vulnerable trumpeted throughout the Torah. How could the Torah, which inveighs incessantly against abuse of the weak, perpetuate a stigma regarding people who are blind, lame, or suffer broken limbs?

One explanation is that the Torah is concerned about popular perception of the Beit haMikdash and its service. As Sefer haChinuch (275) suggests, "if [the priest] is of deficient form and unusual limbs, then even if he is righteous in his ways, his deeds will still not be found as positive in the eyes of his beholders." This rationale is difficult, though; in other areas of religious practice the Torah harshly condemns weaknesses of the human psyche, including hedonism and miserliness. Imagine the lesson had the Torah explicitly required the inclusion of priests who exhibited physical defects!

We might understand the exclusion of the challenged kohen by recognizing that physical defects **are** acceptable for kings, sages, prophets and judges. [A judge on the Sanhedrin must have no physical defect, per Hilchot Sanhedrin 2:6, but Lechem Mishneh says this is only for the highest court. Regarding a king, I should note Shevet haLevi 8:251:3.] In every arena of Jewish life, public and private, we promote respect for every individual, regardless of physical challenges; only regarding the kohen is the law different. Perhaps this is because the kohen who serves in the Beit haMikdash is not viewed as a human being at all; rather, the kohen is a representative of G-d. [See Yoma 19a and Kiddushin 23b.] Indeed, the prophet Malachi identifies the kohen as

an angel of G-d. (Malachi 2:7) In G-d, there is no defect.

Life offers two categories of success: the easy victory, and the triumph over adversity. For human beings, the latter may be the greater achievement; as Pirkei Avot 5:23 says, "The reward is commensurate with the pain endured." Therefore, our role models – king, sage, prophet and judge – include human beings who struggle with, and overcome, physical obstacles. The kohen, though, represents G-d, for whom there is neither obstacle nor struggle, and in whom no defect can be perceived. The Divine agent, like his Master, must represent success without challenge.

The unblemished kohen, inhabiting the Beit haMikdash of G-d, is not a role model for us. We are all incomplete and challenged in some way, and therefore our ideal role models are other challenged human beings. We would be criminally foolish if we failed to value the role model in every human being, recognizing the unique personalities, talents and contributions of people who triumph over all manner of adversity.

When we gaze upon the representatives of G-d, let us see a world in which success comes easily. But when we ask ourselves whom we wish to become, let us look upon the "blind or lame", the one with the broken leg or broken arm, the Moshe. These are our heroes, and from them we will learn success.

[For other ideas regarding the exclusion of priests with physical blemishes, see Toronto Torah 4:29 and 6:31.]

torczyner@torontotorah.com

OUR BEIT MIDRASH

ROSH BEIT MIDRASH

RABBI MORDECHAI TORCZYNER

SGAN ROSH BEIT MIDRASH

RABBI JONATHAN ZIRING

AVREICHIM RABBI DAVID ELY GRUNDLAND, RABBI YISROEL MEIR ROSENZWEIG

CHAVERIM DAR BARUCHIM, YEHUDA EKLOVE, URI FRISCHMAN, DANIEL GEMARA, MICHAEL IHILCHIK, RYAN JENAH, SHIMMY JESIN, CHEZKY MECKLER, ZACK MINCER, JOSH PHILLIP, JACOB POSLUNS, ARYEH ROSEN, SHLOMO SABOVICH, EZRA SCHWARTZ, ARIEL SHIELDS, DAVID SUTTNER, DAVID TOBIS



YESHIVA UNIVERSITY
TORAH MITZION
BEIT MIDRASH

We are grateful to
Continental Press 905-660-0311

Book Review: *Machzor for Yom ha'Atzmaut / Yom Yerushalayim* Rabbi Jonathan Ziring

Koren Machzor for Yom Ha'Atzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim

Koren, 2014

Note: This author was a research assistant for the Machzor.

The Controversy

Producing a machzor for Yom Ha'Atzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim is inherently controversial, even among Religious Zionists. As Matthew Miller notes in the publisher's preface, while the Chief Rabbinate of Israel instituted special prayers for these days, and it is on the basis of those suggestions that Koren Publishers arranged the machzor, many Religious Zionists opposed such liturgical changes. Most prominently, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, though famously a Religious Zionist and President of World Mizrahi - the organization which sponsored the machzor - was generally very "conservative regarding the structure of the service...[and] was averse to changes in the traditional order and composition of the prayers." (xiv). It is to the publisher's credit that they note, rather than shy away from this in the introduction.

Miller notes that the goal of the machzor was to organize various prayers for those who would like to say them, as it can give "spiritual

expression and meaning to our celebration and thanksgiving." (xiii) By so doing, they hope to "further strengthen the bonds between the Jewish communities in Israel" and English-speaking countries. (xiii-iv) As they note, however, one can and should celebrate, whether or not one accepts the liturgical changes.

The Structure

The book is divided into two parts. The first half is the machzor itself, which includes liturgy for Yom HaZikaron, Yom Ha'Atzmaut, and Yom Yerushalayim. It includes commentaries by Rabbi Dr. Binyamin Lau (translated from the Hebrew Koren Machzor), Rabbi Moshe Taragin, and Dr. Yoel Rappel. The comments include historical insights, inspiring stories of Zionist leaders, and commentary on chapters in Tanach that are included in our prayers but can shed light on what it means to be a Religious Zionist.

The second half includes essays, some of which are translations of essays found in the Hebrew machzor, but most of which were chosen for this project. They include some newly written articles, re-published English articles, and newly-translated articles. The authors come from a wide variety

of Religious Zionist thinkers across the globe from the past hundred years. They range from Israeli rabbis of the last generation, such as Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook and Rabbi Shaul Yisraeli, American rabbis of the last generation, such as Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, and current scholars from across the world, Roshei Yeshiva and public intellectuals such as Rabbi Hershel Schachter, Rabbi Chaim Druckman, Rabbi Dr. Lord Jonathan Sacks, Dr. Erica Brown, and Dr. Yael Zeigler. The goal of these essays is to provide perspective, "historic, halakhic, and theological" (xv in essay section), about the importance of these days and the State of Israel in general.

The Benefit

For the English speaker who would like to add prayers on these days, the Machzor provides him with the material and commentary, allowing him to pray as so many Israelis do.

Even for those who are hesitant to embrace sweeping liturgical change, the latter half of the book can enhance one's appreciation for the various perspectives that exist within the Religious Zionist world about the State of Israel and its implications for our religious lives.

jziring@torontotorah.com

613 Mitzvot: 509: Division of Labour

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

In describing the role of the kohanim, Moshe states, "When a Levite comes from his city of residence, from anywhere in Israel, at his own desire, to the place that G-d will choose, he shall serve in the name of Hashem his G-d, like his brethren Levites who stand before G-d there. They shall eat portion for portion, aside from that which was transacted by the fathers." (Devarim 18:6-8) This teaches two complementary lessons: (1) There were fixed shares and shifts arranged by the earliest heads of the Levite families, and (2) Despite these shifts, there were occasions when Levites chose to come serve, spontaneously. [As explained by the Sages (Succah 55b), only those who came on their own to serve during the three *regel* festivals received special portions.]

Sefer haChinuch counts the division of the Levites into shifts as the Torah's 509th mitzvah, explaining that this is a pragmatic strategy to ensure that responsible parties will be in charge of the work of the Beit haMikdash each day. Each shift is called a *mishmar*.

The Torah presents this mitzvah to "Levites", but Rambam (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Klei haMikdash 4:6) explains that the mitzvah is actually targeted only to the sub-set of Levites who are kohanim. This is stated in a midrash (Sifri Shoftim 168) and implied in the Talmud (Ta'anit 27a), but it is also evident in the Torah's own command regarding eating "portion for portion": Kohanim receive portions from the offerings of the Beit haMikdash, and general Levites do not.

According to the Talmud (Ta'anit 27a), Moshe began the division, the prophet Shemuel expanded it, and King David

added still more shifts. The later divisions are linked to the distribution of tasks found in Divrei haYamim I 24-26.

General Levites also divided themselves into shifts (Divrei haYamim I 24-26), but most authorities contend that this was voluntary. Sefer haChinuch (#509) is nearly alone in claiming that the biblical mitzvah includes the division of general Levites.

In a related practice, the general Jewish population also sent shifts, called *ma'amadot*, in the time of the Beit haMikdash. A mishnah (Ta'anit 4:2) credits this to "the early prophets", which Rashi explains as Shemuel and King David. The role of a *ma'amad* was to represent the broader nation, as the kohanim and Levites conducted the daily service in their name. They would fast, and hold special public prayers and Torah readings. (Ta'anit 26-28; Megilah 29-30) According to the Talmud, half of the shift lived in Jerusalem; the other half lived in Jericho, and supplied food for their brethren in Jerusalem. (Ta'anit 27a)

Over time, certain shifts of kohanim lost their right to serve, due to impropriety. One example is the shift of Bilgah; the Talmud (Succah 56b) explains that they lost their right to serve when a member of the family left Judaism, married a Greek aristocrat, and blasphemed publicly in the Beit haMikdash during the Greek invasion.

One of the only records of the names and cities of the shifts of kohanim appears in the *kinah* of "Eichah yashvah".

torczyner@torontotorah.com

“Biography”

Megilat Ta’anit

Rabbi Yisroel Meir Rosenzweig

Megilat Ta’anit (“The Scroll of Fasts”) is a short text with a stated goal of delineating “the days during which fasting is forbidden, during several of which eulogies are also forbidden.” Compiled at the end of the Second Temple period, Megilat Ta’anit cites 35 days, organized according to the calendar year, commemorating events that took place over 500 years of Jewish history - from the times of Ezra and Nechemiah (5th century BCE) to the rescinding of the Roman edict placing idols in the Temple in 41 CE.

The Talmud (Shabbat 13b) attributes authorship of Megilat Ta’anit to Rabbi Chananiah ben Chizkiah and his peers. Noting this attribution, Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Chajes (*Divrei Nevi'im Divrei Kabbalah ch.6*) writes that Megilat Ta’anit dates to approximately 80-100 years before the destruction of the Second Temple. He states that one shouldn't be bothered by the fact that Tannaim who lived after the destruction are quoted; their presence demonstrates that the Megilat Ta’anit we presently have is a layered text. The original format of Megilat Ta’anit was very brief, merely stating the calendar date, event that took place, and what is forbidden as a result of the festive nature of the day. [These segments are bolded in our accompanying translation]. Later generations appended a commentary expanding the details of these events.

The Talmud (Rosh HaShanah 19b, 18b) records a dispute as to whether or not the halachic significance of Megilat Ta’anit has been voided, with the celebrations included no longer observed as a consequence of the destruction of the Temple. The Talmud concludes that it has been voided, with the exception of Chanukah and Purim. The implications of this conclusion are debated amongst later authorities; the Pri Chadash (OC 496 *Kuntres HaMinhagim* 14) concludes that it is subsequently forbidden under all circumstances to add holidays to the calendar year, while the Chatam Sofer (OC 1:191) argues against the Pri Chadash's proofs, noting that only celebrations directly related to the Temple are prohibited. One practical implication of this question is Yom Ha'Atzmaut, as the approach of the Chatam Sofer may provide precedent for establishing a Yom Tov to commemorate a miracle in post-Talmudic times.

yrosenzweig@torontotorah.com

Torah and Translation Celebrations of Iyar

Rabbi Chananiah ben Chizkiyah, Megilat Ta’anit

Translated by Rabbi Yisroel Meir Rosenzweig

בשבעה לאייר חנכת שור ירושלם ודילא למספד. מפני שבאו גוים ונלחמו על ירושלם ולא יכלו לה וסתרו מחומתה, יום שהתחילו לבנותו עשאוהו יום טוב. בשני מקומות כתוב במגלה הזאת “חנכת שור ירושלם דילא למספד,” אחד כשעלו ישראל מן הגולה ואחד כשפרצוהו מלכי יון וגדרוהו בית חשמונאי, שנאמר “ותשלם כל מלאכת החומה בעשרים וחמשה באלול וגו'.” ואף על פי שנבנתה החומה, עדין השערים לא עמדו, שכן הוא אומר “גם עד העת ההיא דלתות לא העמדתי בשערים,” ואומר “הוא יבננו ויטלנו ויעמיד דלתותיו מנעלי ובריחיו.” ואומר “ויפקדו השוערים והמשוררים ועושי המלאכה.” וכשגמרו למנותם, אותו היום עשאוהו יום טוב.

בארבעת עשר ביה פסחא זעירא דילא למספד ודילא להתענאה...

בעשרין ותלתא ביה נפקו בני הקרא מירושלם. הוא דכתיב “וילכו דוד את מצודת ציון, היא עיר דוד.” זה הוא מקום הקראין עכשיו, מפני שהיו מצרים לבני ירושלם ולא יכלו לצאת ולבוא מפניהם ביום אלא בלילה, יום שיצאו משם עשאוהו יום טוב.

בעשרין ושבעה ביה אתנטילו כלילאי מן ירושלם דילא למספד. שבימי מלכות יון היו עושין עטרות של ורד ותולין אותן על פתחי בתי עבודה זרה שלהם ועל פתחי החניות ועל פתחי החצרות ושרין בשיר לעבודה זרה וכותבין על קרניו של שור ועל מצחי חמורים אין לבעלי חלק בעליון כשם שהיו הפלשתים עושים שנאמר “וחרש לא ימצא וגו'” והיתה הפצירה פים למחרשות ולאתים.” וכשגברה יד בני חשמונאי בטלום ויום שבטלום עשאוהו יום טוב.

On the 7th of Iyar, the dedication of the walls of Jerusalem, eulogies should not be given. Since the nations came and fought unsuccessfully against Jerusalem, destroying its walls in the process, the start of rebuilding was declared a holiday. “The dedication of the walls of Jerusalem, eulogies should not be given” is mentioned twice in this text. Once was when the Jewish people came up out of exile, and again when the Greeks breached the walls and the Hasmoneans repaired them, as the text states, “And the wall was completed on the 25th of Elul” (Nechemiah 6:15). Even though the wall was erected, the gates had yet to be put in place, for it states, “Also at this time, I had not put doors in the gates” (ibid. 6:1). It says further, “[he] roofed it, erected its doors, its locks” (ibid. 3:15). As well as, “and the gatekeepers, singers, and Levi'im were appointed” (ibid. 7:1). When their appointment was completed, they made the day into a holiday.

On the 14th is Minor Pesach [Pesach Shen], eulogies should not be given and there should not be a fast...

On the 23rd, the siege forces left Jerusalem. As is written, “And David conquered the stronghold of Zion, which is the city of David.” (Samuel II 5:7) This is the place of the Karaites now. For they were oppressing the inhabitants of Jerusalem; Jews weren't able to come and go during the day, only at night. On the day they left, they made it a holiday.

On the 27th, the crowns were removed from Jerusalem, eulogies should not be given. In the days of the Greek monarchy, they made crowns of roses and hung them on the entrances of their idolatrous temples, stores and courtyards. They serenaded their idols with songs and wrote on the horns of oxen and foreheads of mules that its owner had no portion with the Supreme G-d, as the Philistines before them did, “An ironsmith was not found...and the filing of the blades of the plows and plowshares.” (Samuel I 13:19-21) When the Hasmoneans came to power, they removed them, and the day that they removed them was declared a holiday.

The Sykes-Picot Agreement

13 Iyar is Shabbat

The Sykes-Picot Agreement, officially called the “1916 Asia Minor Agreement”, was a secretly negotiated arrangement between the British and French governments regarding the partition of the Ottoman Empire, should they succeed in defeating the Ottoman Empire during World War I.

“Sykes-Picot” refers to the primary representatives of each government in the final agreement: François-Georges Picot, a professional diplomat with the French government and Sir Mark Sykes, a British expert on the East. The Russian Empire also played a small part in the discussion.

According to the agreement, France would control most of Syria, Lebanon and the Galilee, with an Arab state in Syria. Britain would control from Haifa into Mesopotamia (modern Iraq) and create an Arab state between Gaza and the Dead Sea, in the Negev. Finally, Jerusalem and surrounding areas would be under international administration.

Meanwhile, British Foreign Secretary Edward Grey was a supporter of Zionist aspirations to re-establish a Jewish state, in part because of its important geopolitical positioning for the British Empire. Furthermore, David Lloyd George, Chancellor of the Exchequer and Local Government Board President Herbert Samuels both spoke of the desirability of a Jewish state in Palestine, and discussed their thoughts with Grey.

On May 16th, 1916, the Sykes-Picot agreement was signed by the French Ambassador in London, Paul Cambon, and by Sir Edward Grey. The Agreement was criticized for not properly addressing Zionist aspirations, and for not taking into account other discussions with Arab leaders.

The Agreement was repealed in 1920, at the San Remo conference, which assigned the League of Nations Mandate for Palestine to Britain.

dgrundland@torontotorah.com

Weekly Highlights: May 21 – May 27 / 13 Iyar - 19 Iyar

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
שבת May 20-21				
8:50 AM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Parshah	BAYT	No-Frills Minyan
After hashkamah	R' Yisroel M. Rosenzweig	Midrash Rabbah	Clanton Park	
6:00 PM	R' David Ely Grundland	Parent-Child Learning: Avot	Shaarei Shomayim	
Before Pirkei Avot	R' Jonathan Ziring	Daf Yomi	BAYT	Rabbi's Classroom
After minchah	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Gemara Avodah Zarah	BAYT	Simcha Suite
Sun. May 22 Pesach Sheni				
8:45 AM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Responsa	BAYT	Hebrew
8:45 AM	R' Josh Gutenberg	Contemporary Halachah	BAYT	
9:15 AM	R' Shalom Krell	The Book of Shemuel	Associated (North)	Hebrew
Mon. May 23				
9:30 AM	Mrs. Ora Ziring	Women's Beit Midrash	Ulpanat Orot	Not this week
7:30 PM	R' David Ely Grundland R' Mordechai Torczyner	Daf Yomi Highlights Medical Halachah	Shaarei Shomayim	Beit Midrash Night
Tue. May 24				
9:30 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Chabura: Two Ovens?	Yeshivat Or Chaim	University Chaverim
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Iyov: Behemoth / Leviathan	Shaarei Shomayim	
Wed. May 25				
12:30 PM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Ethics from the Bookshelf: The Merchant of Venice	Zeifmans LLP 201 Bridgeland Ave	Lunch served; RSVP to rk@zeifmans.ca
12:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Tax Avoidance and The Panama Papers	SLF 2300 Yonge St. #1500	Lunch served; RSVP to Jonathan.hames@sif.ca
2:30 PM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Narratives of the Exodus	Location: Contact carolleser@rogers.com	For women
8:00 PM	R' Yisroel M. Rosenzweig	Archaeology in Halachah	Shaarei Tefillah	
Thu. May 26 Lag ba'Omer				
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Shoftim: The Lefty	49 Michael Ct.	For women
Fri. May 27				
10:30 AM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Eruvin	Yeshivat Or Chaim	Advanced