



This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by

Rabbi Dr. Moshe & Esty Yeres on the first yahrzeit of their daughter Batsheva a"h
l'ilui nishmat Batsheva Blima bat Harav Moshe Yosef Halevi v'Esther

Purifying the Past and Proceeding to the Promised Land

Rabbi David Ely Grundland

Following the sin of the spies and the rebellion by Korach and his entourage, something unusual happens at the beginning of Parshat Chukat: 38 years vanish into the past. On the cusp of this transition from the generation that emerged from Egypt to the generation that will enter Israel, is the mitzvah of the Parah Adumah (red heifer). Aside from the particulars of the mitzvah itself, one may ask why the mitzvah of Parah Adumah serves as the transition from one generation to the next.

To get some insight, it is necessary to briefly examine the mitzvah of Parah Adumah, the generation before the time lapse, and the generation following.

The Parah Adumah

The mitzvah of the Parah Adumah is one of purification. One who comes into contact with a corpse becomes ritually impure; it is the ashes of the Parah Adumah which enable the person to return to a state of ritual purity.

Rashi (19:22) cites Rabbi Moshe haDarshan to extend this concept of purification via the Parah Adumah further, to the national level, contending that the Parah Adumah atones for the sin of the Golden Calf. As at the time of the Golden Calf the nation threw off the yoke of Heaven, so the Parah Adumah is a cow which has never been yoked. The sin of the Golden Calf reflected a breach in the people's commitment to G-d. The Golden Calf brought death in its wake, and the Parah Adumah serves to bring purity from death, enabling one to serve Hashem in a state of purity and holiness.

Before: Longing for the past

The events leading up to Parshat Chukat include some of the greatest mistakes made by Am Yisrael. The complaints about food in Parshat Behaalotcha, about Eretz Yisrael in Parshat Shlach, and about Moshe and Aharon in Parshat Korach all share a common denominator: the yearning for, and romanticizing of, returning to a life of slavery in Egypt. The people describe the fish they ate in Egypt and their security from warfare there, and they call it a land flowing with milk and honey. (See Bamidbar 11:5, 14:2-4, 16:13.) The nation was looking to return to their past.

After: Fearing for the Future

Following the description of the mitzvah of Parah Adumah, the narrative of the Torah returns to tell of Miriam's death and burial. Immediately following, and thirsting for water, the nation complains again. They again question leaving Egypt, but now, a generation later, have nothing to say about Egypt itself and only describe the non-viability of a life in the desert.

Soon after, Aharon dies as well and is buried on a mountain, facing the land of Edom. Having previously decided not to fight the Edomites (see 20:14-21), Israel is forced to turn back from that land. Am Yisrael complains again about leaving Egypt (21:4-5), and this time they declare that they would also die in the desert, as had the previous generation. According to Rashi (21:4), they feared that just as their parents had been turned away from entering the land in Parshat Shlach, they were also not going to enter the land.

Parah Adumah: Two Purifications

Revisiting our original question: why is the Parah Adumah used as the transition between the first and second generation? Perhaps the earlier generation made itself impure by always looking to the past. They brought death upon themselves and their generation, from the average Israelite (Behaalotcha), to the tribal leaders (Shlach), to the spiritual leadership (Korach). The spirit of death that befell the nation at each of these occurrences would need to be purified before the nation would be ready to enter the land. The Parah Adumah purifies the nation from their rejection of Hashem and their desire for a romanticized death awaiting them in Egypt.

Conversely, the new generation has watched a whole generation die in the desert. They have been told that they will ultimately enter the land, but they have only experienced death. They also desire Egypt, but not for Egypt itself; they desire to live somewhere, and they struggle to see possibilities beyond their present situation. The Parah Adumah is necessary to purify them from their desert experience, so that they can enter the land.

Transitions are hard, scary and often take time. There is often much to complain about before, during and after. Ultimately, though, the past must die in the desert of life. Through internalizing the purity of the Parah Adumah, and constantly reaccepting the yoke of Heaven, all the pain, impurity and struggle will be removed and we will then be ready for our ultimate destiny of life in Eretz Yisrael.

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We are grateful to
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Moses: Envoy of G-d, Envoy of His People**Rabbi Mosheh Lichtenstein****KTAV Publishing House (2008, Eng.)***Note: The reviewer considers himself a student of the author.***Who is the author of the book?**

It is said that when the S'fat Emet wanted to publish his insights on the Torah, his grandmother advised him to publish his insights into Talmud first, lest he be seen as a *darshan* (preacher) instead of being acknowledged for the scholar he certainly was. The author of our book, Rabbi Mosheh Lichtenstein (b. 1961), was not troubled by this possibility. Perhaps as a son of Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein and a grandson of Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, and a teacher in Yeshivat Har Etzion (Gush), he felt his credentials as a Talmud scholar are self-evident. Be that as it may, in this book he displays his tendency towards midrashic literature and method, standing in contrast to the developing trend towards *p'shat* study.

What is the book's goal?

While the stated goal of the book, as mentioned in its subtitle, is the description of Moshe's leadership

throughout the Torah, another goal presents itself as the reader advances in the book. Rabbi Mosheh is well aware of the aversion some modern readers feel towards midrashim; after all, they feel 'unscientific' – not proven in the text, demonstrating a great measure of imagination and dealing many times with feelings and emotions rather than with the 'hard facts' of the story. Thus, in the book's closing chapters he provides a lengthy discussion of *derash*, its sources (the mind and experiences of the *darshan* no less than the text), its means (an expansion of what is not written) and its ends (exploring the drama within man rather than the tale of history). The reader of the book, therefore, enjoys not only a vivid description of the greatest Jewish prophet and leader, but also gains valuable insights into the method of Midrash.

The portrayal of Moshe's leadership

Rabbi Mosheh describes two parallel, complementary, and simultaneous processes, that take place during the people's wandering through the desert: The first is the growing and maturing of the Jewish nation. They transform

from a people who are unable to take initiative and totally reliant on Moshe's leadership during the Exodus (pg. 64), to committed and active learners of Torah after the giving of the Second Tablets (pg. 75), and finally, as a new generation of independent and free-spirited people, led by the new leadership – Yehoshua and Kalev, Eldad and Meidad (pg. 116).

The second is the ever-widening gap between Moshe Rabbeinu and Am Yisrael. The same Moshe Rabbeinu who was so attuned to the sometimes glorious, sometimes disappointing states of the generation leaving Egypt, who acted quickly and decisively when swift action was needed (pg. 66), was paralyzed and ineffective when similar sins recurred, forty years later (pg. 170), causing him to pay the ultimate price of not entering Eretz Yisrael.

Our understanding of the Torah's greatest human hero, playing such a tragic role in our parshah, can be greatly enhanced by the fine insights of this knowledgeable, thoughtful and forceful book.

*bweintraub@torontotorah.com***613 Mitzvot: #526: Colonel Kohen****Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner**

Devarim 20:2-9 states that as the Jewish army nears battle, "the kohen" shall come forth and address the nation. He shall encourage the soldiers not to fear, and to recognize that G-d is protecting them. Following this, as explained in the Talmud (Sotah 43a), the same kohen announces that soldiers who have built new homes, planted new vineyards or recently married should return home. Appointed officers publicize the kohen's instructions among the troops. The officers then continue with their own words, instructing that soldiers who fear battle should return home. Rambam (Aseh 191) and Sefer haChinuch (Mitzvah 526) include all of this as a single biblical mitzvah, and apply it to all non-obligatory wars.

The Torah describes the kohen involved in these proclamations as "the kohen" rather than "a kohen". The sages explain that this is a formal position: "*kohen mashuach milchamah*", the kohen anointed for battle. The *mashuach milchamah*'s involvement in battle is considered vital for the welfare of the nation; the Talmud (Horiyot 13a) declares that if the deputy kohen gadol and the *mashuach milchamah* were to be taken captive, the higher national priority would be to redeem the *mashuach milchamah*. As Rashi explains, "The community needs the *mashuach milchamah* for war, more than they need the deputy." It is also worth noting that the *mashuach milchamah* and the king are the only two figures who may ask questions of the kohen gadol's *urim v'tumim* breastplate. (Yoma 73b)

One might be surprised at the presence of a kohen at the battlefield; we are taught that killing, even in a sanctioned context, is antithetical to the values of the Beit haMikdash, the kohen's normal field of operation. Thus Shemot 20:22 warns us not to use hewn stones for the altar, "for you have

raised your sword upon it, and desecrated it." Indeed, some suggest that King David was prevented from building the Beit haMikdash because of his battlefield experience, even though he was acting on the orders of prophets. (See Divrei haYamim I 22:8; Rambam, Shemoneh Perakim 7; Ramban to Bamidbar 16:21) Nonetheless, the kohen's role as representative of G-d is broad enough to include battle. Indeed, the Talmud Yerushalmi (Megilah 1:10) notes that a *mashuach milchamah* can even become kohen gadol, as seen in the case of Pinchas. [And see Rabbi Shlomo Zevin, l'Or haHalachah, Milchamah 1.]

According to Rashbam (Bamidbar 25:13), a *mashuach milchamah* need not be a full kohen. The Talmud (Zevachim 101b-102a) teaches that Pinchas only became a kohen after killing Zimri in the fortieth year in the wilderness, but it also describes the joy of Elisheva bat Aminadav as her grandson, Pinchas, served as *mashuach milchamah* in the second year! The Torah Temimah (Shir haShirim 3:6) resolves the problem by saying that these are conflicting midrashim, but Rashbam explains that one can hold the role of "kohen" as military leader, even without being a "kohen" to work in the Beit haMikdash. [This may stem from Rashbam's use of "kohen" to refer to positions of authority in other places, like Bereishit 41:45.]

Rabbi Yisrael Lipschitz (Tiferet Yisrael, Klalei Bigdei Kodesh shel Kehunah) states that Josephus Flavius was a *mashuach milchamah*. However, this may have been an honourific rather than the full role, as there was no oil of anointing in the second Beit haMikdash. [And see Minchat Chinuch 107:1 and Chiddushei Griz to Sotah 42a.]

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Biography

Rav Hai Gaon

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

From the 7th century through the late 10th century, the Gaonim of Babylon were the religious leaders of global Jewry. They headed the major yeshivot of Sura and Pumbedita; "Gaon" was the title of the head of the yeshiva.

Rav Hai Gaon, son of Rav Sherira Gaon, was born in 939. His ancestors had been among the political aristocracy of Jewish Babylon, but they had abandoned political power in favour of the yeshiva, where they became teachers and leaders.

In his youth, Rav Hai began to help his father direct the yeshiva in Pumbedita, and he became head of the beit din there in 986. He married the daughter of Rav Shemuel bar Chofni, the Gaon of the yeshiva in Sura. In 997, enemies of Rav Sherira used the presence of foreign students in the yeshiva to charge Rav Sherira and Rav Hai with treasonous communication with enemies of the Caliph. Both were imprisoned, contributing to the decline of Rav Sherira's health. In 1006, at the age of 100, Rav Sherira passed away; Rav Hai became the new Gaon. [Shem haGedolim records some dispute regarding the date when Rav Hai became Gaon.]

The Jewish centre in Babylon was now in decline, but Rav Sherira, and then Rav Hai, personally extended its influence. Their students came from across Europe, Asia and North Africa. Thousands of people, including Shemuel haNagid and Rabbi Meshulam ben Klonimus, sent questions to Rav Hai, for his analysis of halachah was sharp and lucid. *Shem haGedolim* cites a view that when Rabbi Yitzchak Alfasi quotes "the Gaon", it always means Rav Hai. Rambam is cited as describing Rav Hai as, "The last of the Gaonim by era, and the first of the Gaonim by significance." [See Kovetz Hearot 16:5.] To this day, Rav Hai Gaon's positions are critical in halachic discussions.

Rav Hai expressed a rationalist approach, anticipating the philosophy which Rambam would later promote; he wrote against using talmudic medicines, denied the effectiveness of magic, and argued against any anthropomorphism of G-d.

Rav Hai served in Pumbedita until his death on the seventh day of Pesach in 1038. Shemuel haNagid and Rabbi Shlomo ibn Gabirol wrote elegies upon his passing. His students included Rabbeinu Chananel, Rabbeinu Gershom and Rabbeinu Nisim.

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Torah and Translation

Buying Merit from Others

Rav Hai Gaon, Otzar haGaonim (Teshuvot) Chagigah 15a

Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

מי שהוא נוהג להתענות שני וחמישי, ובסוף אותו הזמן אמר "קיבול שכר התענית הזה יהיה לפלוני מתנה," וכן אם יאמר "מכרתי תענית זו השנה בכך וכך לפלוני" וקנו קנין על זה, היש מזה כלל הנאה לאותו שניתן לו כלום?...

תשובה. כך ראינו כי דברים אלו דברי הבל שאין לסמוך עליהן. ואיך יעלה על לב כי שכרו של זה, של מעשים טובים שעשה זה, לזה? והלא הכתוב (יחזקאל יח: כ) אומר "צדקת הצדיק עליו תהיה," וכן אמר (שם לג: יב) "ורשעת הרשע עליו תהיה"?! כשם שאין אדם נתפס בעון זולתו, כך אין אדם זוכה בזכות זולתו. היחשוב כי מתן שכר של מצוה דבר שישארו אדם בחיקו וילך כדי שיתן זה מתן שכרו לזה? אלו ידעו מה הוא השכר, לא היה זה נותנו לזה ולא זה מקבלו מזה.

וכן הוא מתן שכר כבוד ויקר שנותנין לו לצדיק על מעשיו הטובים, וכתות כתות הן שהן מקבלות פני שכינה ומקלסין לפנייהם שבח... וזה השוטה שמכר תעניתו, אכלה כלבא לשירותיה! (תענית יא:) מה שכר יש לו לפני ד' ית', וכבר נטל דמים! זה לא לד' ישב בתענית, אלא סגף עצמו ונפשו באותן הדמים, והוא קרוב לקבל פורענות מלקבל שכר כי עשה שם שמים פלסתר וכקורדם לאכול בה לחם!

אבל ודאי, מי שנותן שכר למלמד ללמד [בניו] מה שהם צריכין, ומלמדן, יש לו שכר גדול בכך... וכן המסעד מקיימי מצות כדי שיוכלו לקיים יש לו שכר על כך ולהם. וביותר מי שעוזר עסוקין בתורה ובמצות להפנות לבותם לעסוק בה, יש לו שכר, והשכר שיש לו על פעולתו הוא.

ומי שמשא עצמו לקנות שכר חברו בדמים או במתנה לבזו הוא ולעג, וכל הון יקר וחמודות אין אדם קונה בו שכר חברו...

[Question:] One who customarily fasts on Monday and Thursday, and at the end of the period says, "May the reward for this fast be a gift for so-and-so," or if one would say, "I have sold my fast for this year, for X amount, to so-and so," and they made a formal transaction, would any of that benefit accrue to the one to whom it was given?...

Reply: In our eyes, this is futility, on which one should not rely. How could one think that this person's reward, of his good deeds, should go to that one? Did Yechezkel 18:20 not say, "The righteousness of the righteous will be upon him," and so Yechezkel 33:12 said, "And the wickedness of the wicked will be upon him"? Just as one is not held for another's guilt, so one cannot acquire the merits of another. Could one think that the reward of a mitzvah is an object, which one could carry and go, for one person to give to another? Had they known what the reward was, this one would not have given it, and this one would not have accepted it.

And such is the reward, honour and glory of a righteous person for his good deeds, and they are multiple groups who receive the Shechinah, they are praised... And this fool sold his fast, a dog has eaten his meal! (Ta'anit 11b) What reward does he have before G-d, having accepted payment? He did not fast for G-d; he tortured himself and his spirit for that payment, and he almost deserves to receive punishment rather than reward, for he has made the Name of Heaven falsehood and a shovel with which to eat bread!

But certainly, one who pays a teacher to teach [his children] that which they need, and [the teacher] teaches them, he receives great reward for this... And also one who supports people in performing mitzvot, so that they will be able to do this, they receive reward for this, as do those others. And especially one who helps people who are involved in Torah and mitzvot to free their hearts to be involved in it; the reward they receive is for their own actions.

But one who brings himself to acquire another's reward for payment or a gift is disgraceful, and a target for scorn. All of the wealth and honour and valuables cannot acquire another person's reward...

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Weekly Highlights: July 16 — July 22 / 10 Tammuz — 16 Tammuz
Most of our classes are on summer hiatus, but opportunities remain!

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
שבת July 16				
After hashkamah	R' Yisroel M. Rosenzweig	Avot d'Rabbi Natan	Clanton Park	
6:00 PM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Here We Go Again: The Second Generation	BAYT	Women's Shiur
7:00 PM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Taamei haMitzvot and Ratzon haTorah	BAYT	Hebrew Shiur
After minchah	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Gemara Avodah Zarah: Shattering Stones?	BAYT	Simcha Suite
Sun. July 17				
8:45 AM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Responsa	BAYT	
9:15 AM	R' Shalom Krell	Book of Shemuel	Associated North	Hebrew
Mon. July 18				
7:30 PM	R' David Ely Grundland	Thought of Rav Kook	Shaarei Shomayim	<i>Weinbaum Beit Midrash</i>
Tue. July 19				
11:00 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Eruvin	Yeshivat Or Chaim	Advanced
Wed. July 20				
8:00 PM	R' Yisroel M. Rosenzweig	Bullfighting, Zoos and Sports	Shaarei Tefillah	
Fri. July 21				
10:30 AM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Eruvin	Yeshivat Or Chaim	Advanced

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Biblical Criticism in Our Schools?

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner and Professor B. Barry Levy

In our Beit Midrash at Yeshivat Or Chaim, 159 Almore Ave.

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