

# Toronto Torah

## Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Miketz/Chanukah

2 Tevet, 5777/December 31, 2016

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לעילוי נשמת הרב ד"ר ישראל אריה בן הרב אשר ישעיהו פרנקל זצ"ל נפטר ה' טבת תשל"ח

### Chanukah: It's All About the Hallel

**Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner**

On a hypothetical list of "Top eight practices most commonly associated with Chanukah", Hallel would likely feature ninth, behind lighting, latkes, dreidel, sufganiyot, gelt, Maoz Tzur, Al HaNisim and sfenj. Rambam apparently disagreed, though; in his Mishneh Torah code of law, Rambam chose to locate the rules for Hallel in the Laws of Chanukah, rather than in the Laws of Tefillah (prayer). Further, he described Hallel first, before addressing lighting the Chanukiah. Why did Rambam emphasize the connection between Chanukah and Hallel?

#### Hallel or Chanukiah?

First, it is worth noting that the Chanukiah may not have originally been part of the Chanukah celebration. As noted by Rabbi Yitzchak Yehudah Trunk (Chasdei Avot 17:17) and Rabbi Betzalel Zolty (Mishnat Yaavetz 73:1), among others, the Talmud's description of the history of Chanukah omits the Chanukiah entirely: "When the Greeks entered the Sanctuary, they contaminated all of the oil in the Sanctuary, and when the monarchy of the house of the Chashmonaim mustered strength and defeated them, they searched and could find only one jug of oil marked with the seal of the kohen gadol. There was only enough to kindle for one day, but a miracle occurred and they kindled from it for eight days. The next year, they established them and made them Yamim Tovim, with Hallel and thanks." (Shabbat 21b)

This passage, among other sources,

led some sages to suggest that our lighting of the Chanukiah was instituted only with the destruction of the second Beit haMikdash, to continue the light of the Menorah and thereby commemorate the victory of the Chashmonaim. Even without this contemporary re-write of popular understanding, though, the point behind it is indisputable: the explicit emphasis of our sages' description of Chanukah, in the Talmud, Al haNisim and beyond, has been upon Hallel. This emphasis is one reason to include Hallel in the Laws of Chanukah. Looking deeper into the nature of Hallel, though, we may find a stronger connection.

#### Hallel: Processing the Miracle

The Talmud asks why we only recite a partial Hallel on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of Pesach, and it explains that Hallel is triggered by a festival involving a unique korban, but the korban of the 7<sup>th</sup> day of Pesach is the same as the korban of the rest of the week of Pesach. (Arachin 10a-b) However, Rabbi Yosef Karo (Beit Yosef Orach Chaim 490) suggested a different explanation for this partial Hallel, noting the Talmud's observation that G-d did not wish for songs of praise as the Egyptians drowned on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of Pesach. (Megilah 10b) Why do we need a second explanation?

Rabbi Aharon Kotler (Mishnat Rebbe Aharon, Pesach pg. 3) explained that there are two types of Hallel: The ritual of a festival, and the reaction to a miracle. The 7<sup>th</sup> day of Pesach should require Hallel under both of these banners, but it loses the ritual because of its korban, and it loses the reaction

to the miracle because the Egyptians drowned.

Chanukah does not warrant the ritual of a festival; as a post-biblical celebration, it has no korban. Instead, as noted in the Talmud (Arachin 10b), the Hallel of Chanukah is our response to a miracle. We may suggest that this sort of Hallel is not actually a prayer; rather, this breed of Hallel is a reaction to a wondrous event, processing the moment as an act of G-d lest its religious import be lost. As Rabbi Kotler wrote, "Even regarding that which a person sees with his own eyes – he needs to interpret for himself that which he sees, and to establish it in his mind."

The Jews of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE knew no prophet; no message from G-d interpreted the military victory and the miracle of the oil. Our Chanukah celebration acknowledging G-d was a true fulfillment of the mission of Hallel, the Jewish nation spontaneously recognizing what Hashem had done for us. This is the logical home for Hallel in Rambam's Mishneh Torah, and so he placed its laws at the front and centre of our Chanukah celebration – and this act of Hallel should remain the essence of our Chanukah celebration today.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we merited to witness still more miracles, and our ancestors established Hallel as a means of understanding the Divine hand in those events, too. May we soon witness the completion of our redemption, and sing Hallel as a nation once again.

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## **Aggadah l'Maaseh**

**Rabbi Dr. Yehuda Brandes**

**Beit Morasha and the Eliezer Library,  
Hebrew, 2005 (Vol. 1), 2011 (Vol. 2)**

### **Who is the author?**

Rabbi Yehuda Brandes currently heads the Herzog College in Alon Shvut. He previously headed Beit Morasha, the Center for Advanced Judaic Studies and Leadership, in Jerusalem. He was among the founders of the Ma'aleh School of Television, Film, and the Arts, was the principal of Himmelfarb High School in Jerusalem, and serves on the AMIT network's spiritual-pedagogical committee as well as the national plenum of the Bnei Akiva youth movement. His books and articles discuss a broad range of topics, from Talmud and halachah to Jewish thought and education. Rabbi Dr. Brandes is a graduate of Yeshivat HaKotel and received rabbinic ordination from the Chief Rabbinate of Israel. He holds a Ph.D. in Talmud, received from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 2003.

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

In an interview (<http://bit.ly/2hgWEdv>), Rabbi Brandes describes the goal of the work: "The book illustrates that aggadah has a

substantive role in the shaping of halakhah. Aggadah is not merely a lull in halakhic discourse, nor is it merely a supplement of ideological and moral aspects." Instead, it accomplishes two central things: "First, it helps our understanding of the ideas underlying the halakhah, thus framing the course of the halakhic discussion. Second, it creates the tiny details of Talmudic thinking and halakhah, which the language of halakha is not refined enough to address. In English, you call this fine-tuning."

Throughout the two volumes, Rabbi Brandes shows how the aggadic material is also normative, in the sense that it lays out principles for action. Hence, the title of a book is a play on the phrase "*halachah l'maaseh*" – practical halachah. This book is about practical aggadah.

### **What topics are covered?**

Each volume has a methodological introduction, explaining the role of aggadah in shaping halachah, and in generating norms through its own language. Rabbi Brandes explores the language and tools of the aggadah, and how they are similar to and different from those used in legal discourse. In the body of the book, he

returns to these methodological points, showing, for instance, how aggadah celebrates dialectic and complexity and does not need to reach conclusions. He also shows how it communicates using contradictory stories which illustrate different poles of the spectrum in each issue.

The first volume covers topics that relate to family, society, and service of G-d. It addresses Talmudic passages relating to prayer, honouring parents, parental obligations towards their children, and marital life and intimacy. The second focuses on the individual's interactions with the general populace, not just his relatives. It covers issues of *ona'at devarim* (hurting others with words), *halbanat panim* (embarrassing others), *tzedakah* (philanthropy), and the relationships between teachers and students, Jews in the Land of Israel and Jews in the Diaspora, and Jews and non-Jews.

Overall, the book opens up new ways of understanding familiar and unfamiliar texts.

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# Israel's Chief Rabbis: *Rabbi Yitzchak Nissim*

Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

## **Rabbi Yitzchak Nissim**

**1896 Baghdad, Iraq – 1972 Jerusalem, Israel**

**Chief Rabbi of the State of Israel, Sephardic, 1955-1972**

### **Life**

Rabbi Yitzchak Nissim was born in Baghdad, on the first day of Chanukah; he was named 'Nissim' (miracles), a name he used later as a family name. Even as a young man he was known for combining deep and vast Torah knowledge with a strong sense of practical wisdom. He was in contact with the great sages of the generation in Eretz Yisrael, Germany and Poland, sending and receiving letters from them.

In 1925, he and his wife, Victoria, made Aliyah to Jerusalem, with a months-long journey. In Jerusalem he learned from Rabbi Kook, Rabbi Alfandari and more, making his living in business. Rabbi Nissim ran for a Knesset seat in 1951 in a religious party headed by Rabbi Eliyahu Ki Tov, but they were not able to pass the electoral threshold.

In 1953, Rabbi Ben Tzion Uziel asked Rabbi Nissim to replace him as Sephardic Chief Rabbi when the time would come; Rabbi Nissim agreed, and in 1955 he was appointed as Chief Rabbi. Rabbi Nissim served in this role until 1972, when, as a consequence of political events, a time limit was established for the Chief Rabbi position.

Rabbi Nissim passed away on Tishah B'Av, 1981.

### **Legacy**

Rabbi Yitzchak Nissim set a primary goal of reintroducing

Torah and mitzvot to those Jews who had drifted away from them. He was not shy about reaching out to the most radical socialist kibbutzim, which were explicitly anti-religious. He approached them not as a "saviour", but as a fellow Jew, and therefore he was accepted and respected. In one of these visits, Rabbi Nissim said, "There are no real Apikorsim [heretics] here... The term secular we are using is also not good. The builders of the land and its defenders are engaged in holy work." In some of the kibbutzim he had much success, even to the point of sending mashgichim from the Rabbanut to kasher their communal kitchen. He did the same with factory workers in the city and university students, building bridges above the widening chasm that was opening between religious and non-religious groups in Israel.

However, as much as Rabbi Nissim sought peace and the joining of hearts, he nonetheless stood his ground where he deemed it necessary. A famous case in point is the 1964 visit of Pope Paul VI to Israel. Paul refused to meet Israeli officials in Jerusalem, meeting them instead in Megiddo, a step that was seen by many as intended to disgrace the Jewish state. Rabbi Nissim refused to give in, insisting that if Paul wanted to meet him, he should come to Jerusalem. At the time, this position was strongly criticized, and portrayed as fanatical and dangerous. Later, however, it was widely accepted that Rabbi Nissim was the only official who had stood up to the pope and upheld national honour.

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## Biography

### Rabbi Avraham Y. Kook

Rabbi Netanel Javasky

[The following is excerpted from a longer biography by Rabbi Netanel Javasky.]

Rav Avraham Yitzchak haKohen Kook was born in Latvia in 1865. Recognized as a prodigy at a young age, he joined the famed Volozhin Yeshiva, and developed a fond relationship with the Rosh haYeshiva, Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin (Netziv). His stay in Volozhin was under two years, but the Netziv is quoted as saying that had the entire Volozhin Yeshiva been founded just to teach Rav Kook, it would have been a worthwhile endeavour. His brilliance and inquisitive nature combined to lead him to the study of subjects not commonly explored in the traditional Yeshiva settings of the time, including Tanach, philosophy, Hebrew language and mysticism. Becoming a Rabbi at the age of 23, Rav Kook, in his early years, served the communities of Zaumel and then Bausk.

In the early years of the 20th century, immediately before emigrating to Israel, Rav Kook published three articles on the topic of Israel; the ideas in these articles would form a basis for his philosophy on this subject. In 1904 Rav Kook became Rabbi of Jaffa, and his broad impact was instantly felt. He had great respect and love for all Jews, and considered them all as pioneers in the spiritual redemption. Rav Kook explained that the Jew was made up of two components: the inner *pintele yid* and the route which he has set out upon with his actions. Even if one was weak in the latter, there was still the heart and soul of a Jew that could be loved and encouraged. Rav Kook's love and affection towards the secularists was often seen by his opponents as compromising Halachah, supporting those who were anti-religion.

Rav Kook was in Europe during the outbreak of World War I, and he used the opportunity to spread his desire that religious Jews settle the Land and influence its development. Soon after his return home, he was appointed as the first Chief Rabbi.

Rav Kook wrote prolifically on Jewish thought and the development of the Jewish land; new works of his writings continue to be published today. In 1924 he founded Yeshivat Merkaz haRav - named posthumously in his honour - known today as the bastion of Religious Zionism and as a place which has become synonymous with the teachings of Rav Kook. Rav Kook passed away in 1935, but his influence continues to be felt to this very day.

## Torah and Translation

### The Contamination and the Antidote

Rabbi Kook, Ein Ayah to Shabbat 21b

Translated by Adam Friedmann

”שכשנכנסו יונים להיכל טמאו כל השמנים שבהיכל וכשגברו בית חשמנאי ונצחום, בדקו ולא מצאו אלא פך אחד של שמן שהיה מונח בחותמו של כה”ג”

יחש ישראל אל אומות העולם, חכמתם מנהיגיהם ונימוסיהם, כבר פרשו חז”ל... אמנם העשיה כמתוקנים שבהם גם היא צריכה שמירה יתירה שלא ימשכו אחריהם לעשות ג”כ כנימוסים המקולקלים. והיסוד הנאמן להנהגה בזה הוא, שישראל צריך שישמור את רוחו ולבבו מכל משמר... יראה שלא רוח העמים בכללו יכנס לתוכן חייו הפנימיים, כי בהכנס רוח העמים לתוך חייהם של ישראל אז אין מעצור ואין מעמד...

למדנו שכיון שרק נכנסו יונים להיכל, כיון שרוח הזר חדר עד לפנים, עד לחיי התורה והקדושה לפגוע בהם, לשנות כמעט על פי צביונם הם, כבר טמאו כל השמנים שבהיכל. שוב לא יניחו זוית אחת, וכאשר של חכינא יתפשט זרם הזר והמשחית בכל גופה של האומה...

זאת היא ממפלאות תמים דעים, שאם הדיעות המסתעפות מן עומק יסוד התורה, אחדות ד’ יתברך ואמונתו, נפגמו מתגרת עול יונית, הנה כשם שהכהן הכללי שבעם ד’ הוכן להורות חוקי ד’ ומשפטיו, להראות בפועל תוכן של חיים קדושים וטהורים למען היות למופת לעם כולו, כן יש בכל אדם מישראל צד כהונה, מפני שבכללם המה ממלכת כהנים וגוי קדוש. התשוקה הפנימית, לקדושת החיים ולדעת התורה וללכת בדרכיה, היא גנוזה בעומק הלב הישראלי... זהו העולם הפנימי הישראלי, שדוגמתו בתוך הכלל הוא הכהן הגדול הנכנס לפני ולפנים לשרת בקודש ביום הקדוש המובדל מכל עסקי החיים הגשמיים. אותו הפך הקטן שמונח בחותמו של כהן גדול, לא יוכלו היונים לטמאות, לעקור מכלל ישראל קישורם הפנימי העמוק עם ד’ אלקי ישראל.

“Because when the Greeks entered the sanctuary they defiled all the oils in the sanctuary. And when the Hasmoneans became strong and defeated them, they searched but found only a small jug of oil, marked with the seal of the Kohen Gadol.” (Talmud, Shabbat 21b)

The relations between Israel and the nations of the world, their wisdom, customs, and ideas, has already been outlined by our Sages. (i.e. We are free to adapt their proper customs and must avoid their improper ones)... However, following their proper customs requires extra care lest one be tempted to follow their improper ideas as well. The foundation to rely on in these activities is that Israel must guard its spirit with utmost care... It must see that the general spirit of the nations does not enter its inner life. Because once the spirit of the nations enters into the inner life of Israel, there is nothing that can stop it...

We have learned that once the Greeks even just entered the sanctuary, once the foreign spirit penetrated inward to the very life of Torah and sanctity to attack it and change it ever so slightly after their own style, already then, all the oils in the sanctuary were rendered impure. After this they (i.e. the Greeks) would leave no corner untouched, and like snake's venom the foreign and destructive flow would proliferate throughout the body of the nation...

This is among the wonders of the Perfect Intellect, that even if the beliefs which branch from the foundational depths of the Torah, such as the unity of G-d and belief in Him, were damaged by the struggle with the Greek yoke, nevertheless, just as the Kohen in the nation of G-d is established to teach the laws of G-d, to be a role model of a life of sanctity and purity in order to be a sign for whole nation, so too does each individual in Israel possess an element of priesthood. This is because they are, in general, a nation of priests and a holy people. This is the inner world of the Israelite, whose parallel at a national level is the Kohen Gadol who enters the most inner parts (of the Temple), to serve in sanctity, on the sanctified day, separated from the physicalities of life. The Greeks were incapable of defiling that small jug, bearing the seal of the Kohen Gadol. They could not uproot from Israel its deep internal bond with G-d, the Lord of Israel.

The term *mamzer* refers to the child of a prohibited union. There is some debate regarding which relationships produce *mamzerim*; in practice, *mamzer* refers to a child of adultery or incest, such that his parents could not have married each other halachically. Devarim 23:3 states that this *mamzer* may not marry among the Jewish nation; Sefer haChinuch lists this as the Torah's 560<sup>th</sup> mitzvah.

Our sages have long been perplexed by the Torah's harsh treatment of the *mamzer*, particularly when marriage is the only measure taken against him. As the Talmud (Horiyot 13a) notes, a *mamzer* who is a Torah scholar is treated with greater honour than an unlearned kohen gadol; we take the *mamzer* on his merits. The *mamzer* participates in all mitzvot, and even inherits from his parents. Why, then, is the *mamzer* excluded from most marriages?

- Sefer haChinuch takes a simple approach, writing, "There is no doubt that the parent's [sinful] nature is hidden in the child." This argument is troubling, though; the *mamzer* has not actually sinned, regardless of his potential!

- Rambam (Moreh Nevuchim 3:49) adds a second argument, framing the prohibition as a deterrent: "To inform the adulterers that their deed would cause their children irreparable harm."
- Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (Commentary to Devarim 23) positions the *mamzer* as a victim of society's spiritual needs. "With these laws [defining permitted marriages] G-d elevated His nation's marriages from the realm of the merely physical, and brought them into the spiritual-ethical sphere expressed via *kiddushin*. This is why the *mamzer* [who embodies a violation of that spiritual-ethical sphere] is excluded from the society of G-d."

The Talmud (Eduyot 8, Kiddushin 71a) indicates that in the future, certain *mamzerim* will be re-admitted to the community. This led Rama (Shulchan Aruch Even haEzer 2:5) to rule that where a family has become accepted despite having problematic lineage, one should not advertise their flaw to the general public.

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## Weekly Highlights: Dec 31 — Jan 6 / 2 Tevet — 8 Tevet

*Many of our regular classes are on hiatus, but opportunities remain!*

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
<b>Dec. 31</b>	<b>Chanukah Day 7</b>			
<b>After hashkama</b>	Adam Friedmann	Parshah Analysis	Clanton Park	
<b>Before minchah</b>	R' Jonathan Ziring	Daf Yomi	BAYT	<b>Rabbi's Classroom</b>
<b>After minchah</b>	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Refurbished Idols	BAYT	
<b>6:00 PM</b>	Yaron Perez	Parent-Child Learning	Shaarei Shomayim	<b>Not this week</b>
<b>Sun. Jan. 1</b>	<b>Chanukah Day 8</b>			
<b>8:45 AM</b>	R' Jonathan Ziring	Responsa	BAYT	<b>Not this week</b>
<b>8:45 AM</b>	R' Josh Gutenberg	Contemporary Halachah	BAYT	<b>Third floor</b>
<b>9:15 AM to 11:15 AM</b>	<b>R' Mordechai Torczyner</b>	<b>Wasted Prayer? The Tefilat Shav</b>	<b>Yarchei Kallah at Yeshivat Or Chaim</b>	<b>9:15 Breakfast Preparation 10:15 AM Shiur</b>
<b>Mon. Jan. 2</b>				
<b>8:30 PM</b>	Adam Friedmann	Gemara Arvei Pesachim	Clanton Park	<b>Men</b>
<b>Tue. Jan. 3</b>				
<b>1:30 PM</b>	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Ezra: Who is a Jew?	Shaarei Shomayim	
<b>Wed. Jan. 4</b>				
<b>2:30 PM</b>	R' Jonathan Ziring	Narratives of Vayikra	<a href="mailto:carollesser@rogers.com">carollesser@rogers.com</a>	<b>Not this week</b>
<b>8:00 PM</b>	Adam Friedmann	Why do we do...?	Shaarei Tefillah	
<b>Thu. Jan. 5</b>				
<b>1:30 PM</b>	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Shoftim: War with Midian	57 Heatherton Way	<b>Note new address for this week</b>
<b>Fri. Jan. 6</b>				
<b>10:30 AM</b>	R' Jonathan Ziring	Laws of Onaah	Yeshivat Or Chaim	<b>Advanced</b>

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