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Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

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This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Rochel and Jeffrey Silver

in honour of the birth of their granddaughter Faigy Rivka ״״

Three Steps to Father's House

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Over a two-week period our ancestors were told how to prepare for our national Exodus. Those commands, recorded in our parshah, described three activities:

- Designation and sacrifice of the korban pesach (Shemot 12:1-6);
- Placement of blood from the korban pesach on the entrances of their homes (12:7, 21-23);
- Circumcision of all males (12:43-50).

We could view these three activities as elements of the korban pesach. However, we might also see in them a broader theme, crucial for the Exodus.

Agnon's Exodus

In the late 1920's, S. Y. Agnon wrote a short story called *L'Veit Abba*, "To Father's House". The protagonist begins the story working at home, but he is frustrated by labour which "has neither beginning nor end, which you start without benefit and from which one can never walk away." He also suffers from an uncomfortable sense that he does not belong there. Abruptly, he decides to go to his father, whom he has not seen for many years, for Pesach. He departs in haste, but he then encounters delays which may be a product of his own ambivalence about visiting his father. Once in his father's town, he encounters a heretical individual who wants to discuss the end of the book of Yehoshua. A little further along he finds himself in a tavern with "a set table" holding bottles of liquor, even as Pesach is about to begin. Finally, he arrives at his father's home – but he remains outside, unable to enter, as the story ends.

To Father's House works on several levels, one of which is a parable for our departure from Egypt. As the Talmud (Sotah 11a) describes, our labour in Egypt was perpetual and unrewarding, and we shared the protagonist's sense of not belonging. Suffering made us long for the house of our Father, and we left in haste. (Shemot 12:11) We displayed great ambivalence, though, en route to our land; we even claimed that we had been better off in Egypt. The end of the book of Yehoshua (24:2-4) is part of the Haggadah, and the tavern's "set table" parallels the *Shulchan Orech* phase of the Seder – but the heretic as well as the liquor, presumably grain-based, don't fit at a reunion with our Father on Pesach. These events represent our own troubled journey to Israel. And in the end, like the generation of Jews who left Egypt, the hero does not actually enter the land.

Leaving Egypt or Going Home?

With this story, Agnon does more than summarize forty years of troubled travel; he puts the Exodus itself in proper perspective, as a central stage in a greater arc. The arc starts with the life of the family of Avraham and Sarah in Canaan, continues with our descent to Egypt, and sees our subjugation in Egypt. Then we leave Egypt, receive the Torah at Sinai, build a Mishkan and journey home. As Agnon hints with his title, the Exodus is not merely *yetziat Mitzrayim*, a group of slaves departing from Egypt. Rather, it is *l'Veit Abba*, a journey of Hebrews back to the home in which we were raised in Bereishit, from which we had departed, and to which we had always been meant to return.

Seen in this light, the **Exodus requires that we be identified as the rightful heirs of Avraham and Sarah, to merit that return home.** This is the role of the three preparatory activities outlined in our parshah:

- Circumcision was Avraham's mitzvah, and it became the mark of the Jew.
- Korbanot were a hallmark of Avraham and Sarah, who built altars each time they settled a new part of Canaan.
- Placement of blood from the korban pesach marks the structure as a home dedicated to G-d, like the landmark tent of Avraham and Sarah. Having performed these deeds, we were visibly ready to return home.

Arrival

The conclusion of this arc comes in Yehoshua, Chapter 5, when G-d "removes the shame of Egypt" from our nation. (Yehoshua 5:9) The males are circumcised. (5:2-8) They bring a korban pesach. (5:10) And they camp in Gilgal (5:10), their first step in building a home in the land.

One odyssey met its completion long ago, but our religious and physical wanderings continue to describe a still longer arc. While we work toward the final Exodus, let us remember the need to identify ourselves as part of that original family. Whether through circumcision, korban and the Jewish home, or through other actions, we must identify ourselves as descendants of Avraham and Sarah, as part of meriting the long-awaited return To Father's House.

torczyner@torontotorah.com

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Shu"t Puah (Fertility, Lineage and Genetics)

**Ed. Rabbi Aryeh Katz
Machon Puah 2015**

About Machon Puah

Machon Puah (puahonline.org) is an Israel-based, international organization that works with Jewish couples with fertility problems. It was founded in 1990 by Rabbi Menachem Burstein at the request of Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu, to address fertility treatment from the perspective of Jewish law. The institute offers counseling services and technical support.

What is unique about this book?

Most books of responsa include many queries sent to a single halachic authority, who then publishes his legal opinion on the issues. This volume is structured in the opposite way. After providing a general, but well-researched introduction to the halachic and medical issues of infertility, the book provides discussions of various halachic questions that arise when dealing with these issues. One of Machon Puah's goals is to forge relationships with many leading halachic authorities from both the Religious Zionist and Chareidi worlds to ensure the highest of halachic

standards for their work and gain community-wide acceptance. These relationships allow them to understand the range of existing positions, and finetune their guidance for each couple, based on the community they come from.

This volume collects many of the central questions Machon Puah has dealt with over the years. For each question, it provides a basic introduction to the halachic and medical issues that relate to the specific case, as well as all the questions they directed to the authorities they contacted. Then, each of the responses are included as they received them (only typographical errors and the like have been corrected). Sometimes the responses are long and detailed; sometimes they are as short as one line. The answers are offered by authorities from the Religious Zionist world, such as Rabbis Yaakov Ariel and Dov Lior, and from the Chareidi world, such as Rabbis Zalman Nechemiah Goldberg, Avigdor Neventzal, and Asher Weiss. In addition, there are poskim from the Sephardi world, such as Rabbis Mordechai Eliyahu and Meir Mazuz.

The topics covered

The most important feature of the book is that it deals with the newest questions and provides the medical and halachic basis for understanding them. The book is divided into several sections: Checking for Male Fertility Issues; Infertility Procedures; Sperm Donation; Egg Donation and Surrogacy; Lineage; Issues of Matchmaking; and Genetics. Within these sections, the book considers how to deal with the halachic issues that arise when testing for fertility, questions of fatherhood and motherhood, the process of infertility treatment, the permissibility of choosing the sex of children, *brit milah* and *pidyon haben* for children conceived through IVF, and many other issues.

The book is accessible to the educated layperson, but is also a critical resource for the halachic scholar who wants to understand the modern issues that arise in these sensitive areas.

jziring@torontotorah.com

Israel's Chief Rabbis: *Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu*

Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

Rabbi Mordechai Tzemach Eliyahu

**1929 (Jerusalem) – 2010 (Jerusalem)
Chief Rabbi (Sephardic) of Israel 1983-1993**

Life

Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu was born in 1929 in the Jewish quarter of Jerusalem. His father, Rabbi Salman Eliyahu, was a prominent Iraqi rabbi and kabbalist. The Eliyahu family left Iraq for Israel on the instructions of Rav Salman's great teacher, the Ben Ish Chai. The family was poor, and young Mordechai sometimes had to learn on the floor for the lack of a table. Nonetheless, the love of Torah – both in its revealed and esoteric dimensions – was passed from father to son.

At age eleven, Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu lost his father and began studying from the great scholars in Jerusalem: Rabbis Ezra Attiya and Sadqa Hussein. Later, he was admitted to the Beit Midrash for Dayanim (religious judges) headed by Rabbi Yitzchak Nissim. After passing the tests, he became the youngest dayan in Israel, sitting on the Beit Din of Be'er Sheva at the age of 31. Four years later he was appointed to the Beit Din in Jerusalem.

In 1983, Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu was appointed as the Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel, serving alongside Rabbi Avraham Shapira ("Reb Avrum"). Once his term ended in 1993, he became the head of the Beit Midrash for Rabbanim in Jerusalem, and a recognized leader in the Religious-Zionist community.

Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu had four children; one of them, Rabbi Shemuel Eliyahu, serves as Chief Rabbi of Tz'fat and is

considered by many to be continuing his father's path. Rabbi Mordechai passed away in 2010, and was buried in Har HaMenuhot, near the grave of the Chid"ra, whose bones he had brought from Livorno, Italy, 50 years earlier.

Legacy

Of Rabbi Eliyahu's many achievements, we will focus on three key elements which were dominant in his activity:

- **Promotion of Halachah:** Rabbi Eliyahu dedicated his life to encouraging halachic observance in as much of the Jewish community as possible. As part of this mission he traveled to many Jewish communities, in Eretz Yisrael and abroad, preaching about the importance of Shabbat, Jewish education and family purity, founded a Beit Midrash aimed at training halachic authorities, and published dozens of books, some of which became classics in their areas.
- **Inclusiveness:** Rabbi Eliyahu was known as a spiritual leader not only for the Orthodox community, but also for many non-Orthodox Jews. Attracted to his charisma and fascinated by the miraculous stories that surrounded him, numerous otherwise-unengaged Jews accepted him as a guide.
- **Political activism:** From a very young age, Rabbi Eliyahu affiliated himself with Israeli right-wing political groups. His opinions neither changed nor were hidden even when he served in official roles, as he felt his positions were rooted in Halachah. In his words and deeds, Rabbi Eliyahu contributed to, as well as reflected, the strong connection of religion and politics in Israel.

bweintraub@torontotorah.com

Biography

Rabbi Yechiel Y. Weinberg

Adam Friedmann

Yechiel Yaakov Weinberg was born in Ciechanowicz, Poland in 1884. Recognized in his youth as an exceptional genius, he was sent to yeshiva in Mir. He later studied in Slabodka yeshiva under the tutelage of the Alter of Slabodka, Rabbi Nosson Tzvi Finkel. His time in yeshiva, and particularly the period in Slabodka, left him strongly impacted by the teachings of mussar. During this period an impressionable Yaakov Yechiel was also exposed to the writings of the Haskalah, which had been making headway throughout Eastern Europe. The struggle between the "enlightenment" approach of Haskalah and traditional Judaism, both at the communal level and within his own worldview, coloured much of Yaakov Yechiel's writing throughout his life.

After leaving yeshiva, now-Rabbi Weinberg took up the post of community Rabbi in the town of Pilwisky, Poland. He married Esther Levine, daughter of the town's previous rabbi, though this marriage did not ultimately last. During his time in Pilwisky, Rabbi Weinberg was very involved in strengthening the nascent Orthodox literary movement, articulating an Orthodox worldview for the public. He wrote articles in both Orthodox and Haskalah outlets defending the traditional yeshiva system and arguing that even small changes to the curriculum would be catastrophic.

In 1914, illness led Rabbi Weinberg to Berlin for treatment. World War I broke out shortly after. Rabbi Weinberg was forced to stay, and was thereby exposed to the German Orthodox community which he had known little about growing up. Ultimately, Rabbi Weinberg stayed on in Germany. He studied Bible and Philosophy at the University of Giessen, eventually joining the faculty there. Afterward, he became the Rosh Yeshiva of the Hildesheimer Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin. During this time, Rabbi Weinberg's thinking about the interaction between yeshiva and secular learning also shifted, reflecting his new positions.

The rise of the Nazis caused Rabbi Weinberg to flee Germany in 1939. He ended up in the Warsaw Ghetto, and ultimately survived the war. He lived the rest of his life in Montreux, Switzerland until his death in 1966. He was and is renowned as a halachic authority, most famous for his responsa, *Seridei Eish*.

afriedmann@torontotorah.com

Torah and Translation

Future Redemption, Founded on the Past

Rabbi Yechiel Weinberg, LiFrakim, Dibburim 4 (1936)

Translated by Adam Friedmann

אמר ר' יוחנן: איזהו בן עולם הבא? זה הסומך גאולה לתפילה. (ברכות ד:)

ה"גאולה" היא זכרון העבר, הזכרת יציאת מצרים והנסים שעשה אז הקב"ה עמנו, ואילו ה"תפילה" כוללת ומבטאת את תקוותינו ושאיפותינו לגאולה לעתיד.

עתידינו משולל כל יסוד קיום אם אינו נעוץ בקרקע העבר. אלה מבני עמנו שותרו על גאולה בעתיד, וחיים רק בזכרונות העבר בלבד - תפלתם תפלה יתומה.

ואלה שרוצים להוציא את העבר מלבם ורק העתיד מענין אותם, ליצור אותו לפי צלם דמות רצונם הם - אלה מאבדים את שני עולמותיהם. חסר להם העוז הנובע מהנעיצה בקרקע העבר, והנחוץ כל כך בשביל מפעל כה קשה ומלא אחריות כבנין הארץ. וגם התבנית למופת חסרה להם, חסרה להם דמות דיוקנה של חיים עבריים עצמאיים בעבר שלפיה אפשר לסדר חיינו המחודשים. בנין כזה שאינו לוקח לעצמו תבנית חיי ישראל מאז ומקדם למופת, אין לו גם הרשות לכנות את עצמו בשם "גאולת ישראל". כי "גאולה" אין פירושה יצירת אפשרות של חיים חמריים בשביל אנשים מישראל בלבד. גאולה משמעותה נתינת חירות לכח היצירה העברי כפי שהתגלם בעבר העברי. מלבד זה עצם הרעיון של שיבת בנין נחלת אבות אוצר בקרבו כח איתנים נפלא, והוא שנותן דחיפה עצומה לחולל נפלאות...

הרעיון וההכרה שיעקב אבינו שכב על מקום זה, ושזו היא ארץ אבותינו, מקילים על בנינו שבים את עמל הכבוש הישן ועבודת ההכשרה. ההכרה הזאת נותנת לבנינו שבים די עוז ואומץ רוח להתגבר על כל מיני כשלונות הכרוכים בהכרח בנסיון כביר זה בנבוא העברי להפוך אדמות חול וסלעים ונחלי בצות לארץ פוריה ומטעי חמד. ההכרה שעל נחלת אבות רגליו דורכות ממתיקה את מרירות ההתחבטות הקשה הקשורה במפעל כזה, ועושה אותה לנוחה לבן אומה זו, נעימה היא בעינינו וחביבה עליו.

enormous task. When the Jew comes to turn lands of sand and stones and tracts of swamp into a land of fertility and beautiful orchards, the recognition that he treads upon the inheritance of his forefathers sweetens the difficult bitterness of misgivings which are bound to this kind of enterprise and makes it easier for the member of this nation; it becomes pleasant in his eyes and desirable to him.

"Rabbi Yochanan said, "who is a member of the next world? The one who juxtaposes Redemption and Prayer." (Berachot 4b)

"Redemption" means remembering the past, recalling the Exodus from Egypt and the miracles that G-d did for us then, whereas Prayer includes and expresses our hopes and longings for the future redemption.

Our future lacks any stable foundation if it is not planted in the ground of the past. Those of our nation who have given up on the future redemption and live in memories of the past alone - their prayer is orphaned.

And those who wish to remove the past from their hearts, and are only interested in the future, in forming it according to the image of their own will - they destroy both of their worlds. They lack the strength which flows from being planted in the earth of the past, and which is so crucial for a task as difficult and demanding of responsibility as building the land. They are also missing a model template. They are missing the image of an independent Jewish life from the past, with which it is possible to organize our new life. A building like this, which does not take the form of past Jewish life as a template, does not have permission to refer to itself as "the redemption of Israel". Because "redemption" does not mean creating the possibility for the physical lives of Jewish people alone. "Redemption" means giving freedom to the entire Jewish creativity as it manifested in the Jewish past. Aside from this, the very notion of sons returning to the inheritance of their fathers holds within it wondrous mighty strength, and it is this which gives a powerful push to birth miracles...

The idea and recognition that Yaakov Avinu rested in this place and that this is the land of our forefathers eases, for the returning sons, the toil of conquering and settling, and the work of preparation. This recognition gives the returning sons enough strength and spiritual might to overcome all manner of obstacles which are inexorably intertwined with this

Devarim 23:19 disqualifies korbanot which have been used for particular transactions: 1) payment for *zenut*, or 2) payment for a dog. Rambam (Lo Taaseh 100) classifies use of both entities as a single prohibition, which Sefer haChinuch counts as the Torah's 571st mitzvah.

Commentators recognize that both disqualifications are meant to protect the sacred status of the korban. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (Commentary to Devarim 23:19) suggests that one may not offer a korban which has been used as payment for *zenut* because *zenut* bespeaks personal degradation. One also may not offer a korban which has

been used to pay for a dog because Tanach presents dogs as creatures of degraded company. [See Yeshayah 56:11, Tehillim 22:17 and Mishlei 26:11, for example.]

Despite this disqualification, purification is still possible; these items are invalid, but if they are physically altered or exchanged for something else, the new item may be used as a korban. (Temurah 30b; Hilchot Issurei Mizbeiach 4:14-15)

torczyner@torontotorah.com

Weekly Highlights: Feb. 4 — Feb. 10 / 8 Shevat — 14 Shevat

| Time | Speaker | Topic | Location | Special Notes |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|---|
| שבתה Feb. 3-4 | | | | |
| After hashkamah | Adam Friedmann | Parshah Analysis | Clanton Park | |
| Before minchah | R' Jonathan Ziring | Daf Yomi | BAYT | Rabbi's Classroom |
| After minchah | R' Mordechai Torczyner | Gemara: Eliminating Idols | BAYT | Simcha Suite |
| Sun. Feb. 5 | | | | |
| 8:45 AM | R' Jonathan Ziring | Responsa | BAYT | Hebrew |
| 8:45 AM | R' Josh Gutenberg | Contemporary Halachah | BAYT | Third floor |
| 9:15 AM | R' Shalom Krell | Book of Shemuel II | Associated North | Hebrew; Room 206 |
| Mon. Feb. 6 | | | | |
| 7:00 PM | Adam Friedmann | Jewish Philosophy 1: Belief in G-d | The Terraces of Baycrest | |
| 8:30 PM | R' Mordechai Torczyner | Halachah & Modernity 5: The Modern Sinner | Shomrai Shabbos | Men |
| 8:30 PM | Adam Friedmann | Gemara Arvei Pesachim | Clanton Park | Men |
| Tue. Feb. 7 | | | | |
| 1:30 PM | R' Mordechai Torczyner | Ezra: Artachshas-who? | Shaarei Shomayim | |
| Wed. Feb. 8 | | | | |
| 10:00 AM | R' Mordechai Torczyner | Science and Torah 5: The Talmud's Pharmacy | Beth Emeth | Register at torontotorah.com/science |
| 2:30 PM | R' Jonathan Ziring | Narratives of Vayikra | carolleser@rogers.com | |
| 8:00 PM | Adam Friedmann | Why do we do that? | Shaarei Tefillah | |
| 8:30 PM | Yaron Perez | Parshah: הפרשה ואני | Shaarei Shomayim | Hebrew |
| Thu. Feb. 9 | | | | |
| 1:30 PM | R' Mordechai Torczyner | Shoftim: Ga'al's Revolt | 49 Michael Ct. | Women |
| Fri. Feb. 10 | | | | |
| 10:30 AM | R' Jonathan Ziring | Introduction to Ribbit | Yeshivat Or Chaim | Advanced |

Our Men's Beit Midrash for University Students at Yeshivat Or Chaim offers:
 Sunday 10:00 AM, Gemara Chullin, Rabbi Aaron Greenberg
 Sunday 11:00 AM, Machshavah, Rabbi Elan Mazer
 Tuesday 8:30 AM, Nefesh haChaim, Rabbi Jonathan Ziring
 Friday 8:30 AM, Yeshayah, Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Our Women's Beit Midrash for University Students at Ulpanat Orot offers:
 Monday 9:30 AM to Noon, Middot haNefesh through Chassidut, Mrs. Elliezra Perez
 Tuesday 9:30 AM to Noon, Gemara Chullin / Hilchot Kashrut, Mrs. Ora Ziring
 Wednesday 9:30 AM to Noon, Hilchot Bein Adam laChaveiro, Mrs. Ora Ziring
 Thursday 9:30 AM to Noon, Netivot Shalom on the Parshah, Mrs. Elliezra Perez