

# Toronto Torah

**Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov**

Parshat Vaera

26 Tevet, 5778/January 13, 2018

Vol. 9 Num. 19

**This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Brenda and Moshe Bessin, Hyim, Avi, Miriam, Aura and Eli in honour of the yahrtzeits of Brenda's parents, Ralph and Claire Fromer z"l,**

ראובן בן יהודה לייב וזיה גיטל בת שרגא פייבעל ז"ל

## Whose Nile Is It?

**Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner**

Originally, G-d promised Avraham that his descendants would receive land in Egypt. (Bereishit 15:18, Kuzari 2:22) But later, G-d prohibited living in Egypt. As recorded by Rambam: "One may live anywhere in the world, other than the land of Egypt... In three places the Torah warned against returning to Egypt: 'You shall not return along this path again.' 'You shall not see her again.' 'You shall not see them again, ever.'" (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Melachim 5:7)

This shift cannot be due to our national suffering in Egypt, for that was predicted immediately *before* the promise of Egyptian real estate. Why did the Divine plan change?

### It's Not You, It's Me

Perhaps Egypt is fine, but G-d prohibited settling there to combat a mistake of our own – the about-face we executed after leaving our house of bondage. Barely were we beyond the boundaries before we cried out, "Were there no graves in Egypt?" (Shemot 14:11) and "Why did you take us up from Egypt" (ibid. 17:3) We repeated this complaint for the next forty years. (Bamidbar 11:20, 14:4, 16:13) And so G-d declared, "You shall not return along this path again."

Our weakness for Egypt appeared again throughout the era of the first Beit haMikdash, as we tried to thwart Divine punishment with the aid of our southern neighbour. The list of those who sought aid from Egypt includes enemies of King Solomon (Melachim I 11); Hosheia ben Elah, the last king of the Northern Kingdom of Yisrael (Melachim II 17); and righteous King

Chizkiyahu (ibid. 18). Finally, when Babylon invaded, Jews again attempted to shelter in Egypt. (Yirmiyahu 42) In response, the Torah proclaimed, "You shall not see her again!"

### No, It's You

Alternatively, living in Egypt is outlawed because of sexual immorality. Egypt is biblically connected with "The tents of Ham (Tehillim 78:51)," a place associated with sexual impropriety. (Bereishit 9, and Sanhedrin 109b) Avraham and Sarah descend to Egypt expecting that the residents would execute Avraham and kidnap Sarah. (Bereishit 12) Introducing restrictions upon sexual behaviour, G-d warns the Jews of the wilderness not to act in the manner of the land of Egypt, as well as in the manner of their Ham-ite brother, Canaan. (Vayikra 18:3) To shield us against this influence, G-d ordered, "You shall not see them again, ever."

### It's G-d

We might also offer a third possibility: Egypt represents self-reliance, a trait which is positive until it leads us to deny G-d's benevolence.

Despite the many Egyptian gods, the Torah highlights their national self-reliance. The land of Egypt does not look to the heavens for rain; they profit from the predictable flooding of the Nile. (Rashi to Devarim 11:10-11) Egypt's signature weapon, the horse-drawn chariot, is taken as a sign of military arrogance. (Shemot 15; Yehoshua 11:6 and Ralbag there) When G-d sends plagues, Pharaoh summons sorcerers to demonstrate that there is nothing the Egyptians cannot produce, themselves.

And as noted by Yechezkel (29:3) in our haftarah, Pharaoh declares of himself, "My river is mine, and I created myself." Yechezkel warns that this self-reliance, which leads to denial of G-d, triggers Divine punishment.

The positives and negatives of self-reliance played out in the life of King Solomon, and his relations with Egypt. He built the Beit haMikdash through his own wealth and international alliances, but in dedicating the building he stated repeatedly that G-d removed us from Egypt. (Melachim I 8) However, just two chapters later we learn that King Solomon imported horses from Egypt. (ibid. 10:28) He extended his pragmatic alliances by marrying the idolatrous daughters of foreign kings, including the Egyptian Pharaoh. (Rambam, Hilchot Issurei Biah 13) Midrashim depict this union as the beginning of the end for that first Beit haMikdash. (Bamidbar Rabbah 10:4) And so G-d warns, "You shall not return along this path again," lest Egyptian self-reliance inspire arrogance.

These explanations for the ban on living in Egypt carry practical lessons, and perhaps this last one is most relevant today. Lacking visible miracles, we make our own way; we even enter alliances with foreign powers of dubious character, because they offer us recognition and protection. Nonetheless, we must remember the prohibition against lying down with those who declare, "My river is mine, and I created myself." Even if we need to join them, we must remember Yechezkel's promise (29:21) that it is G-d who will "cause the strength of Israel to flourish."

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## OUR BEIT MIDRASH

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RABBI MORDECHAI TORCZYNER

**SGAN ROSH BEIT MIDRASH**

RABBI JONATHAN ZIRING

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הורשתם את הארץ וישבתם בה (במדבר לו)

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## Israeli Landmarks: Akko

Adam Friedmann

Akko is a coastal city located at the northwest tip of modern Israel, close to the border with Lebanon. The city sits at the mouth of a natural port, and is adjacent to two important ancient trading routes. These factors combined to make Akko an important hub city in ancient times. Archaeological findings indicate that the city has been settled since the Early Bronze Age (approx. 3500 BCE).

Akko appears in Tanach as one of the cities within the boundaries of the tribe of Zevulun which they failed to conquer (Shoftim 1:31). In talmudic times, Akko became an important boundary marker, indicating the end of Eretz Yisrael proper. In fact, the city was so close to the border that its inclusion within Israel was disputed. (Mishnah Gittin 1:2) It is possible that Akko actually straddled the borders of Eretz Yisrael at that time. (Tosafot Ketubot 112a s.v. *menashek*). Either way, the Talmud records that travelling Sages would kiss the stones of Akko when they arrived there from further north, as a sign of love for their first encounter with the

Holy Land.

Because of its utility as a port city, Akko was hotly contested territory throughout much of its history. It changed hands many times from the Seleucid and Ptolemaic Greeks, to the Islamic Kings, to the Crusaders and Ottoman Empire. The city itself experienced alternating periods of thriving and downturn, depending on several factors, including local and regional government. The Jewish community of the city grew and shrank likewise, though an impressive number of important scholars lived there, at least for a while. These include: Rambam, Ramban, Rabbi Chaim ibn Attar (author of the *Or HaChaim*), and Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato (Ramchal).

After World War I, Akko came under the rule of the British Mandate Government. The British favoured nearby Haifa as a major regional port, and during this time Akko lost much of its prominence as a trading center. The British also turned a Crusader fort

in the city into a large prison. This jail was used to incarcerate many anti-British activists and fighters, including Revisionist Zionist leader Ze'ev Jabotinsky. In May 1947, the Irgun raided the prison, freeing many captive Jewish underground activists.

Akko was captured by the IDF in May 1948, during the War of Independence. Over the following decades several neighborhoods were added to the town, serving to absorb new olim. Though it had long been a largely Arab city, the population of modern Akko is largely Jewish. However, as Israeli cities go, it has an unusually significant mix of different populations, with up to twenty-five percent of residents observing non-Jewish faiths.

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## The Zionist Idea: Religious Revisionist Zionism

Yaron Perez

In 1937, a group of religious youths from Jerusalem yeshivot, primarily Yeshivat Mercaz haRav, felt a need to add activism to their yeshiva studies. In particular, they were frustrated by the long-suffering patience of the leadership of the Jewish community in Israel before Arab attacks. They decided to establish a religious youth movement, attached to Ze'ev Jabotinsky's Revisionists and in parallel with the Betar youth movement.

The goal of the new movement was not only to train for battle, but also to take practical steps, participating in operations alongside Etzel (the Irgun) and Lechi. Their model was military; the youths wore uniforms, the leaders were called "officers", and full obedience was required. They termed their movement *Brit haChashmonaim*, the Covenant of the Hasmoneans.

As described in their charter, the founders of the movement saw the Torah's values in Revisionism: "The Hasmonean is faithful to the G-d of Israel, and ready to give his life for the sanctity of his G-d's Name, of Torah, of his nation and his land. He anticipates the arrival of Mashiach and yearns for the establishment of the kingdom of Israel. He loves every Jew to the point of self-sacrifice. He guides his actions in Heaven's name, and he is an example for all in his conduct and character. He continues the dynasty of the Hasmoneans and zealots, and is prepared to be drafted into the war for national liberation. He scorns fear and subjugation before the powerful, and he restores the crown of might and Jewish pride."

The movement operated under the guidance of great Zionist rabbis: Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook, Rabbi Yaakov Moshe Charlop, and Rabbi Moshe Avigdor Amiel. The leader was Rabbi Zvi Segal, who had studied in Yeshivat Mercaz HaRav as a youth before joining Etzel. Members of the group included Rabbi She'ar Yashuv Cohen and Meir Medan, father of Rabbi Yaakov Medan.

As Revisionists, the movement did not see the *kibbutz* model and the socialist worldview as appropriate for building the State. Per Yitzchak Greenwich, one of the movement's founders, "We do not accept Torah with any additions, not 'Torah va'Avodah'... We find everything in Torah, and everything can be addressed by [Torah]." Regarding members of the movement who helped establish *kibbutzim*, a 1946 publication of the movement explained, "They did not go to the kibbutz solely to address social issues or build a socialist society, for example. They went for the sake of training; they wish to become better suited and better prepared, through this environment, for the work of G-d's society and kingdom... Farming is valuable not only as settlement, but as a fulfillment of the mitzvah of conquering the land."

In 1949, after the State was established, the members of the movement determined that their group was no longer necessary. Most of the members joined Etzel.

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**Biography**  
**Rabbi Asher Weiss**  
**Rabbi Jonathan Ziring**

Rabbi Asher Weiss is a leading *posek* (halachic authority) living in Jerusalem. He was born in the United States and grew up in Borough Park, Brooklyn. His family moved to Israel when he was a young teenager, specifically relocating to Kiryat Sanz in Netanya. His family were Sanzer Chassidim, and he studied with and was close to the Sanz-Klausenberg Rebbe, Rabbi Yekutiel Yehuda Halberstam.

He has founded and held the position of Rosh Yeshiva for several yeshivot, including Keter Yisrael of the Sadigura Chassidim and Machane Avraham in Bnei Brak. He is currently Rabbi of a synagogue in Ramot Gimel, Rosh Yeshiva of *Kollel Dayanut Darkei Hora'ah* (for training rabbinical judges), *posek* for Shaarei Tzedek Hospital, and the author of tens of books on Talmud, Halachah, holidays, and philosophy, all entitled *Minchat Asher*.

The brothers of Rabbi Weiss are also well respected rabbis, including Rabbi Yehonatan Binyamin Weiss who is an Av Beit Din in Montreal.

Although Rabbi Weiss is Chassidic, he studies Talmud using many of the methods of the non-Chassidic yeshiva world. He draws on his various backgrounds, both cultural and intellectual, in his writing, speaking, lectures, and halachic decisions. He is known for the clarity of his presentation, as well as his encyclopedic grasp of Torah sources. He is widely accepted by and teaches throughout many communities, both Charedi and Dati Leumi, both Israeli and American/English-speaking, and often travels to the United States to teach there.

Many of his shiurim can be found at <http://www.torahbase.org/>. His responsa were reviewed in Toronto Torah, here: <http://bit.ly/2qlXhDu>.

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**Torah and Translation**  
**The Free Market in Halachah**  
**Rabbi Asher Weiss, Shu"t Minchat Asher 1:101:2**  
**Translated by Rabbi Jonathan Ziring**

נראה דכל שזה דרך המסחר והתפתחות טבעית של הכלכלה אינו יכול לעכב. ויש בזה הרבה דוגמאות בחיי המעשה, דאטו נימא דאם היינו נשאלים אם מותר לפתוח צרכניות וסופרמרקטים מחשש שבעלי מכולות וחנויות קטנות יפסידו פרנסתם היינו אוסרים? ואטו היינו אוסרים לייצר מכונות משום שהעגלונים רוכבי הסוסים יפסידו פרנסתם? ואטו היינו אוסרים את פיתוחו של המחשב משום שעל ידו המוני כתבנים יפסידו פרנסתם ושוב לא יהיה בהם צורך? וכך גם בכל המצאה חדשה אטו נאסור על פיתוחו שמא יתקיים על ידו ישן מפני חדש תוצאו ויפגע פרנסתם של רבים? אלא ברור דאין הלכה זו אמורה אלא בעניינים מקריים ולא בשינויים יסודיים בדפוסי הכלכלה התעשייה והפיתוח.

ואפשר עוד דעד כאן לא אסרו אלא לקפח פרנסת חבירו ע"י שהוא מתעסק בדבר הדומה לעיסוקו, אך כאשר הוא ממציא המצאה שונה ומתעסק בה, ובכך מקפח פרנסת חבירו וככל הנ"ל אין איסור כלל, ודו"ק בזה.

ועוד נראה לגבי מה שכתבו האחרונים הנ"ל דאין רשות לקפח פרנסת אדם אף אם יש בכך רווח ללקוחות ולצרכנים, לא כל אנפין שווין בזה ולא בחדא מחתא מחתינן להו, ואם אכן יתברר שיש אכן מקום באמת להוזיל מחירים בהגיונות ועדיין ישאר מקום להתפרנס, בודאי אין הסוחר יכול להכביד עולו על הציבור ולקפח את הרבים בתואנה של איבוד פרנסתו ויש זכות לאחרים להתחרות בו ולהוזיל מחירים, אלא שאם אחד מוריד מחירים כי הוא מסוגל לספוג הפסד או מניעת הרווח כדי למשוך לקוחות מזולתו ולהפסיד חיותו, בזה אינו רשאי אף כשיש בכך הנאה לציבור, ודו"ק בכל זה...

סוף דבר, יש להתבונן בעניינים אלה בהתבוננות מרובה ולשקול את כל הצדדים בתשומת לב גדולה.

It seems that [despite the limitations on competition in halachah], anything which is normal business and natural development of the economy cannot be prevented. There are many examples of this in practical life. Would anyone say that if we were asked if it is permitted to open convenience stores and supermarkets because of the concern that the owners of groceries and small stores would lose their livelihood – we should forbid it?! Would we forbid creating cars because horse and buggy riders would lose their livelihood?! Would we forbid the development of computers that would cause many typists to lose their livelihood as they would no longer be needed?! And the same is true for every invention – should we forbid its development because through it we will fulfill, “And you shall clear out the old to make room for the new” and damage the livelihood of many?! Rather, this law clearly only applies to incidental cases, not regarding fundamental changes in the economic patterns of industry and development.

It is also possible that it is only prohibited to deprive someone of his livelihood by getting involved in something similar to his business. However, if he invents something new and has a business with it, and thereby deprives the other of his livelihood as in the above cases, there is no prohibition in this. Pay careful attention to all of this.

Furthermore, it seems to me that regarding what the later authorities wrote, that one is not permitted to undermine a person's livelihood even if there would be benefit for customers and consumers, not all cases are the same and we don't treat them equally. If it would turn out that there would indeed be room to lower prices in good faith, and there will still be room to earn a living, the seller certainly may not burden the public and deprive the public by claiming that he would lose his livelihood. Others would have the right to compete with him and make their prices cheaper. However, if one lowers prices because he is capable of absorbing loss or loss of profit to attract customers from others and make them lose their livelihood, this may not be done even if the public would benefit. Pay careful attention to all this...

In conclusion, one must contemplate all these issues with much contemplation and weigh all the sides with much attention.

## Weekly Highlights: Jan. 13 — Jan. 19 / 26 Tevet — 3 Shevat

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
שבת Jan. 12-13				
After Hashkamah	Adam Friedmann	Parshah Analysis	Clanton Park	
8:50 AM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Pre-Shacharit Parshah	BAYT	Turk Bais Medrash
Before minchah	R' Jonathan Ziring	Daf Yomi	BAYT	Rabbi's Classroom
After minchah	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Gemara Avodah Zarah	BAYT	Freedman Library
Motzaei, 6:30 PM	Yaron Perez	Parent-Child Learning	Shaarei Shomayim	
Sun. Jan. 14				
8:45 AM	R' Josh Gutenberg	Contemporary Halachah	BAYT	Third Floor
8:45 AM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Responsa	BAYT	Hebrew
Mon. Jan. 15				
8:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Hair and Halachah 2: Dyes, Plugs & Mirrors	Shomrai Shabbos, Upstairs	For men
Tue. Jan. 16				
10:00 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Melachot: Losh, Part 2	Yeshivat Or Chaim	Advanced
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Nechemiah	Shaarei Shomayim	
7:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Yehoshua: Failure	129 Theodore Pl.	For men
Wed. Jan. 17 Rosh Chodesh Shevat				
10:00 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Game of Thrones: Persia Week 2: Cyrus	Beth Emeth	Fee. Register at: torontotorah.com/persia
2:30 PM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Exploring Bamidbar	32 Timberlane Ave.	For women
8:00 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Medical Assistance in Dying	Kehilat Shaarei Torah	2640 Bayview
8:00 PM	Adam Friedmann	Why do we do that?	Shaarei Tefillah	
8:00 PM	Yaron Perez	הפרשה ואני	Shaarei Shomayim	Hebrew
Thu. Jan. 18				
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Shoftim: The Concubine	49 Michael Ct.	For women
8:00 PM	Torah MiTzion North American Conference Panel Discussion: North American Jewry: Report from the Field 8:00 PM at BAYT  Featuring: Rabbi Refael Azugi, Memphis Rabbi Yedidya Noiman, Montreal Mrs. Ginat Midler, St. Louis Rabbi Itiel Oron, Washington DC Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, Toronto  Moderated by : Rabbi Daniel Korobkin			
Fri. Dec. 19				
10:30 AM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Melachot of Shabbat	Yeshivat Or Chaim	Advanced
For University Men, at Yeshivat Or Chaim 11:00 AM Sunday, Adam Friedmann, Contemporary Halachah: Techelet 8:30 AM Monday, Rabbi Jonathan Ziring, Nefesh haChaim 8:30 AM Friday, Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, The Book of Yeshayah  For University Women, at Ulpanat Orot 9:30-11:30 AM Monday, Mrs. Elliezra Perez, From Rachel Imeinu to Racheli Frenkel 9:30-11:30 AM Tuesday, Mrs. Ora Ziring, Shabbat 9:30-11:30 AM Wednesday, Mrs. Ora Ziring, Contemporary Halachah 9:30-11:30 AM Thursday, Mrs. Elliezra Perez, Parshah in the Eyes of Chassidut				