

Toronto Torah

Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Beshalach

11 Shevat, 5778/January 27, 2018

Vol. 9 Num. 21

To sponsor Toronto Torah for \$180, please email info@torontotorah.com or call 647-234-7299

A Land of Oil-Producing Olives and Honey

Yaron Perez

On Wednesday, G-d-willing, we will celebrate Tu b'Shevat. A widespread custom, among many Jewish communities, involves celebrating by eating produce from the seven species for which Israel is praised.

We learn of these seven species from Moshe's words to Bnei Yisrael before they enter the land, "A land of wheat and barley, of grapes and figs and pomegranates; a land of oil-producing olives and honey." (Devarim 8:8) The text identifies three kinds of growth and products, which may be divided into three categories:

- Grain – Wheat and barley;
- Edible fruit – Grapes, figs and pomegranates;
- Products – Olive oil and date honey.

However, the Talmud (Berachot 41a) records another division of the text, in a different format. Rav Hemnuna notes the verse's double mention of "the land", and he learns that the order of priority for reciting a blessing before eating these species depends upon their proximity to the word "land" in the sentence. Therefore, the majority of halachic authorities rule that the order of blessings for the latter five of the seven species is: Olives, dates, grapes, figs, and pomegranates.

These divisions trigger two questions:

- Why are olives and dates different from the other kinds of produce, such that they receive a blessing first?
- Why are olives identified with their oil, and why are dates identified with their honey?

It is also worth noting that the Spies who are sent into Eretz Yisrael in Bamidbar 13 return to the nation with

some of the species, but not others. Among the five types of fruit, they bring back are grapes, pomegranates and figs – but not olives and dates. Again, we see that olives and dates are set apart from the other fruit of the Land of Israel, without apparent explanation. However, we may find an explanation in our parshah of Beshalach.

After Bnei Yisrael leave Egypt, they pass by two sources of water:

- First, they reach Marah (Shemot 15:25). The water there is bitter, and Bnei Yisrael complain that there is nothing to drink. G-d instructs Moshe to throw a tree into the water, which sweetens it. In a midrash, Rabbi Elazar HaModai says, "This was an olive tree, because there is no tree more bitter than the olive tree." (Mechilta Beshalach 1)
- After this Bnei Yisrael arrive at Eilim. (Shemot 15:27) There, close to springs of water they find seventy date palms.

From these stories we can learn that olives and dates are fruits that Bnei Yisrael found in the desert. Nearly forty years later, the Jews' complaints about desert life indicate that olives and dates were the only members of the seven species which they encountered in the desert. After Miriam's death, they described the desert as "this wretched place, not a place of grain, figs, grapevines, or pomegranates, and there is no water to drink!" (Bamidbar 20:5)

On this basis we can answer our initial questions: In Devarim 8, Moshe stands before Bnei Yisrael before they enter the land, and he tells them about the greatness of the fruits of the land. He knows that they have already seen

olives and dates in the desert. He therefore repeatedly mentions "the land", to emphasize that the olives and dates of that land, Israel, are no less special than the other fruits, whose uniqueness is evident by their mere presence.

However, Moshe needs to do more than declare that the olives and dates of Israel will be special; he must identify the special quality they will have. To this end, Moshe explains that the Israeli fruits stand out in the oil and honey that they produce. As a midrash (Sifri, Ki Tavo 297) explains, "These olives are *aguri* olives, and this honey is date honey." The olives of the *aguri* type were known to produce oil of exceptional quality, and the dates were as sweet as honey themselves.

By using the word "land" to distinguish between the olive/date class of Israeli produce and the rest of the list, Moshe also taught us another lesson, regarding our appreciation of the land G-d has given us. One facet of the Land of Israel is that it holds phenomena one cannot find elsewhere – the history of our people, and the places where Hashem hovers most closely. These are the grapes, figs and pomegranates we first saw there. But a second facet is that this land holds and supports a better quality of those phenomena we *can* find elsewhere – the national life we lead, the Torah we study, the prayer we experience. These are the olives and dates we found when we entered the Land of Israel. May we merit to experience and enjoy both kinds of Israeli produce, this Tu b'Shevat and all year round, in the land that is our home.

yperez@torontotorah.com

OUR BEIT MIDRASH

ROSH BEIT MIDRASH

RABBI MORDECHAI TORCZYNER

SGAN ROSH BEIT MIDRASH

RABBI JONATHAN ZIRING

AVREICHIM

ADAM FRIEDMANN, YARON PEREZ

CHAVERIM NADAV GASNER, COREY KAMEN, JAY KARON, BJ KOROBKIN, YEHUDA LEVI, COBY LYONS, ZACK MINCER, RONI PEREZ, JOSH PHILLIP, AARON ROSENFELD, MORDECHAI ROTH, DANIEL SAFRAN, EYTAN WEISZ, URIEL WEISZ, BARUCH WISE

WOMEN'S BEIT MIDRASH

MRS. ORA ZIRING, MRS. ELLIEZRA PEREZ



**YESHIVA UNIVERSITY
TORAH MITZION
BEIT MIDRASH**

Find our upcoming shiurim on-line at
www.torontotorah.com

**We are grateful to
Continental Press 905-660-0311**



הורשתם את הארץ וישבתם בה (במדבר לו)

Marking the State of Israel's 70th Year!

Israeli Landmarks: Jebel Musa

Rabbi Jonathan Ziring

Jebel (or Jabal) Musa (Arabic for “the mountain of Moses”) is a mountain in the Sinai Desert, believed by many to be Har Sinai (Mount Sinai), where the Torah was given. This tradition has been transmitted primarily by Bedouins. The Torah, however, does not provide enough information to conclusively determine which mountain is Mount Sinai. Thus, many scholars have challenged this identification. Some have argued that we cannot determine the exact location of Sinai. Other have suggested other mountains, such as Mount Karkom (in the Negev), Jebel Sarbit al-Haddam (western Sinai), Jebel al-Lawz (Saudi Arabia), Jebel sin-Bashar (west-central Sinai), Jebel al-Halal (northern Sinai), or Jebel Hashem al-Tarif (north-eastern Sinai).

Nevertheless, Rabbi Shlomo Goren, former chief Rabbi of the IDF, later of Tel Aviv, and then the State of Israel, took this identification seriously. This led to two fascinating incidents which he records in his autobiography, translated into English as *With Might and Strength: An Autobiography*, edited by Avi Rath.

In 1956, a Jew visited Rabbi Goren and told him that he had had a dream. He was instructed to travel to Turkey to buy the horn of a specific type of ram and use it to make a large shofar. This shofar was to be given to Rabbi Goren to blow on the top of Mount Sinai.

Rabbi Goren insisted, against the man's wishes, on paying him handsomely for the shofar, considering the expense of traveling to Turkey to acquire the horn. At the time, this was a fantastic dream, as Israel had no control over the Sinai Desert. However, soon after this, Israel conquered the Sinai Desert during the Kadesh campaign. When Rabbi Goren heard this, despite the fact that he had no authorization, he traveled with his jeep to Jebel Musa and climbed the mountain. He records that he had to climb about 3,300 steps to reach the top of the mountain, a height of 2,285 meters in elevation. It was difficult, and he was crawling by the time he reached the top. However, he reached the top to blow the shofar and fulfill the dream.

Rabbi Goren also decided that he wanted to write a Sefer Torah on Mount Sinai. In 1967, he again ascended without authorization and wrote the first letters of a Sefer Torah. He returned there again to complete the scroll. Pictures of Rabbi Goren writing the Torah can be seen here: <http://idfarchives.blogger.co.il/211919/>.

Both of these incidents are part of a pattern in Rabbi Goren's life of taking symbolism seriously, and performing acts that captured the biblical proportions of the events occurring in the young State of Israel. Writing a Torah where the Torah may have been given, and blowing a shofar, the sound of which was also heard during the giving of the Torah on that same mountain, were representative of this approach.

jjziring@torontotorah.com

The Zionist Idea: The Irreversibility of Redemption

Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

Standing before Yam Suf, with the Egyptians closing in on them, our forefathers were in great despair. Isn't enslavement better than a terrible death in the desert? Moshe Rabbeinu answered swiftly, “You shall see Divine salvation; and as you see the Egyptians today, you will never see them again.” (Shemot 14:13) This last sentence, cementing and finalizing the redemption, generated a dispute between the commentators. Some read this as a promise, a statement by G-d attesting to the irreversibility of the Exodus. Others thought it was a warning and commandment: Do not return, nor bring yourselves to a situation which will force you to return to the land of your bondage. [See Ramban and Haameik Davar for a brief discussion.]

More than three thousand years later, we sometimes ponder the same questions. We see the unparalleled kindness bestowed upon us by G-d in the last 70 years, and we witness an ever-increasing number of Jews being gathered in from the exile, fulfilling the ancient words of the prophets. This fills our hearts with joy and confidence. Nonetheless, as we look at the challenges we face, from without and within, and as we consider the growing distance between the different camps in our nation, it is hard to ignore the feelings of anxiety and fear. Could we fall again?

In 1942, Rommel, the Nazi general, was nearing the Suez Canal and Eretz Yisrael. At that time, the second Chief Rabbi of then-Palestine, Rabbi Yitzhak HaLevi Herzog, was fundraising in the United States. As he prepared to return to Eretz Yisrael, his hosts tried to convince him to stay, as the

fate of the Jewish settlement was at risk. Rabbi Herzog did not flinch; instead he declared, “We have a tradition, that a third destruction is not to be!” The same sentiment was echoed later by Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook, as well as by people less affiliated with Zionism, such as Rabbi Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman.

Yet, on the other hand, we remember the Rambam's description of Rabbi Akiva's attitude towards Bar Kochba: “He and all the Sages of his generation considered him to be the Messianic king until he was killed because of sins. Once he was killed, they realized that he was not the Mashiach.” (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Melachim 12:3)

Maybe that is why the verse we opened with is written in such an ambiguous way, promising and commanding at the same time, giving confidence and comfort, but also demanding responsibility and accountability. G-d may have promised the irreversibility of the historical process we live in – but we must make ourselves worthy of this promise.

bweintraub@torontotorah.com

Biography

Rabbi Isser Yehuda Unterman

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Rabbi Isser Yehuda Unterman was born in Brest-Litovsk (Brisk) in 1886. A child prodigy, he studied under Rabbi Shimon Shkop and Rabbi Raphael Shapiro. Rabbi Unterman held rabbinic roles in Lithuania from 1910 until 1924. At first, he founded a yeshiva and taught advanced students, but throat difficulties forced him to shift to the pulpit.

In 1924, Rabbi Unterman became Chief Rabbi of Liverpool, where he unified the local congregations. Even as many Liverpoolians fled during the air raids of World War II, Rabbi Unterman remained, tending to the local population and to Jewish refugees. He was also a major figure in England's Zionist movement, and in 1946 he made aliyah and became Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv. Rabbi Unterman was awarded the Rav Kook Prize for Torah Literature in 1954, and soon after he joined the Chief Rabbinate Council. In 1964, he was appointed to fill the seat of the late Rabbi Yitzchak HaLevi Herzog as Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of the State of Israel; he served in that role until the conclusion of his term, in 1972. Rabbi Unterman was a moderate voice, speaking with expertise and sensitivity to the many components of Israeli society.

Like his predecessor, Rabbi Unterman addressed major issues in medical halachah, taking positions which remain influential today on issues including abortion (Shevet miYehudah 1:9), organ transplants (ibid. 1:Miluim) and stem cell research (Sh'v'lin 16-17). He ruled that Hallel should be recited without a berachah on Yom ha'Atzmaut, but with a berachah on Yom Yerushalayim, and he contended that the *Nachem* blessing of Tishah b'Av should not be changed post-1967, despite its description of Jerusalem as a desolate city.

Rabbi Unterman was involved internationally; in 1964, he toured the United States, and met with former US President Harry S. Truman in Kansas City. In 1967, Rabbi Unterman authored a prayer to be recited on behalf of Soviet Jewry before blowing shofar on Rosh HaShanah, and before maariv on Yom Kippur. One of Rabbi Unterman's most controversial leniencies was to accept the conversions of non-Jewish Russians who married Jews, and made aliyah, without fully practicing Judaism.

Rabbi Unterman passed away in 1976; his students continue to shape the path of halachah in Israel.

torczyner@torontotorah.com

Torah and Translation

How Important is Clean Laundry?

Rabbi Isser Yehuda Unterman, HaTorah v'haMedinah

Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

הגהמ"ח מביא שם (העמק שאלה קמו) פלוגתא דר' יוסי ורבנן בנדרים פ: גבי מעיין שבני העיר מספקין הימנו, דתנא קמא סבר חיי אחרים קודמין לכבישתן ור' יוסי סבר כבישתן קודמת לחיי אחרים, משום דערבוביתא דמאני מביא לידי שעמום. ובהעמק שאלה מפרש כי פלוגתתם תלויה בפלוגתת בן פטורה ור' עקיבא...

ונפלאים בעיני הדברים מאד, כי אי אפשר לומר דכאן מיירי בסכנת נפש ממש שהאחרים ימותו בצמאון, דהאידך יתכן הדבר שר' יוסי יאמר כי כבישתן קודמת לחיי אחרים? ואע"פ דערבוביתא דמאני מביאה לידי שעמום מ"מ אין זה כלל וכלל בגדר סכנה קרובה, ולא נחשבה אפילו לספק סכנה אלא לדבר שיכול להסתעף ולבוא לסכנה, ובכה"ג אין להתיר שהאחרים ימותו בצמא ואלה הקרובים אל המים ישתמשו בהם לכביסה על סמך ההלכה כי "חייך קודמים"...

נראה לי שאפילו אם העדר הכביסה יביא לידי שעמום (רש"י מפרש: שגעון) עדיין אין זה סכנת נפש, כי משוגע הוא כחי לכל דבר ואין זה יותר מסכנת אבר שאין מחללין עליו את השבת, כמפורש באו"ח שכן. ואמנם יש לדון בדבר, אבל מפורש כן בשו"ת חת"ס או"ח פ"ג בנער שנשתטה ורוצים לשלחו לבית חולים של גויים לרפאותו ושאלו אם מותר לעשות כן מפני כי שם יאכלוהו מאכלות אסורות...

ומכל הנ"ל צריכים לפרש סוגיא דנדרים שאין שם באמת סכנה קרובה למות בצמא אלא סבל רב ועינוי גדול מזה שיצטרכו לשאת מים בכתף ממקום רחוק, ויגיעה כזו יכולה להביא לפעמים גם לידי סכנת נפש. ולכן סברי רבנן כי מכיון שגם בכביסה יש חיי נפש, היינו שאינה מסוג מותרות שאפשר לוותר עליהן, וגם יכול לגרום שעמום לאדם, שמהו ג"כ יכולים להסתעף ענינים של סכנה (אעפ"י שכאמור אין זה נכנס בכלל של סכנת נפשות, וברור כי בשביל כביסה לא יתירו בשום אופן לחלל שבת, גם כשלא תהי' לו אפשרות לכבס במשך איזה זמן אח"כ), לכן חייבים קודמים לעניי סבל וענוי של אחרים.

The great author [Netziv] brings (*Haamek She'eilah* 147) the debate of Rabbi Yosi and the Sages (Nedarim 80b-81a) regarding a spring used by a city. The initial view presented maintains that the lives of others precede the laundry of this city, and Rabbi Yosi maintains that their laundry precedes the lives of others, because filth on clothing leads to melancholy. In *Haamek She'eilah* [the Netziv] explains that this debate depends on the debate of Ben Petura and Rabbi Akiva [on whether one may save his own life at the expense of another person's survival (Bava Metzria 62a)]...

These words are shocking to me; one cannot say that this deals with an actual threat to life, that [the population of the other city] would die of thirst. How could Rabbi Yosi say that this city's laundry precedes the lives of others? Even though filth on clothing leads to melancholy, still, this is not at all in the category of "immediate danger", and a condition is not even considered "possible danger" unless it can evolve into danger, and so in such a case one may not permit others to die of thirst while those who are closer to the water use it for laundry on the basis of "Your life precedes"...

It appears to me that even if the lack of laundry causes melancholy (Rashi: irrationality), this still is not a threat to life, for the irrational are like the living for all matters. It is no greater than danger to a body part, for which we do not violate Shabbat, as in Orach Chaim 328. In truth, one could debate this, but it has been stated clearly thus in Chatam Sofer Orach Chaim 83 regarding a youth who had become irrational, and they wanted to send him to a non-Jewish hospital for treatment, and they asked if they could do this, as there he would be fed prohibited foods...

Based on all of this, we must explain in Nedarim 80b-81a that in truth there is no immediate danger of death from thirst, just great suffering from the need to bring water on their shoulders from a distant place, and this strain could occasionally lead to mortal danger. Therefore, the Sages maintain that since laundry is also a life necessity, meaning that it is not a

luxury one can forgo, and [its absence] could cause a person melancholy, which could also lead to elements of danger (even though, as noted, this is not in the class of mortal danger, and it is clear that we would never permit violation of Shabbat for laundry, even if he would not be able to do laundry for some time afterward), therefore their lives precede the great suffering of others.

(continued from Part 2)

The Rosh (ibid.) wrote that in our day, when Torah scrolls are generally placed in the synagogue for the public Torah reading, the mitzvah is to write *chumashim*, sets of the Talmud, and commentaries, and to learn from them. This is in line with the aforementioned biblical imperative, “Teach it to the Children of Israel.” There is some debate regarding whether the Rosh meant to replace the mitzvah of writing a Torah scroll, or just to add the element of writing texts for study. (See Shaagat Aryeh 36) The Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 270:2) does record this as a contemporary mitzvah.

There is special value in writing a Torah personally, as a transformative experience. Moshe’s final instruction to the Jews was designed to create generation upon generation of Jews who would not only learn the Torah, but who would *write down* the Torah. They would grow to know each letter

of Torah with the same intense intimacy as the man who had stood on Sinai for forty days. They would sweat over parchment sheets for years, and concentrate on spelling out the Name of G-d with the utmost intensity and mental focus. This mitzvah is more than a safeguard for our tradition – it turns the individual who fulfills it into someone who has undergone a personal Sinai experience.

Perhaps, too, this mitzvah is a response to the warning G-d gave to Moshe, that “after your death, this nation will stray.” (Devarim 31:16) This could have ended Moshe’s influence, but G-d presented the antidote immediately thereafter. With this mitzvah, Moshe lives forever, as his words are re-recorded in every Jewish home. With the writing of a Sefer Torah, Moshe is created anew, in every generation.

torczyner@torontotorah.com

Weekly Highlights: Jan. 27 – Feb. 2 / 11 Shevat – 17 Shevat

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
שבת Jan. 26-27				
After Hashkama	Adam Friedmann	Parshah Analysis	Clanton Park	
Before minchah	R’ Jonathan Ziring	Daf Yomi	BAYT	Rabbi’s Classroom
After minchah	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Gemara Avodah Zarah	BAYT	Simcha Suite
Motzaei, 6:30 PM	Yaron Perez	Parent-Child Learning	Shaarei Shomayim	Last Week!
Sun. Jan. 28				
8:45 AM	R’ Josh Gutenberg	Contemporary Halachah	BAYT	Third floor
8:45 AM	R’ Jonathan Ziring	Responsa	BAYT	Hebrew
9:00 AM	Adam Friedmann	Pre-Tu b’Shevat Breakfast: A Land of Hills and Valleys	Clanton Park	Breakfast served; Members only
Tue. Jan. 30				
1:30 PM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Nechemiah: Assassination!	Shaarei Shomayim	
7:30 PM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Yehoshua: Givon	129 Theodore Pl.	For men
Wed. Jan. 31 Tu b’Shevat				
10:00 AM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Game of Thrones: Persia Week 4: Artachshasta	Beth Emeth	Fee. Register at: torontotorah.com/persia
2:30 PM	R’ Jonathan Ziring	Exploring Bamidbar	32 Timberlane Ave.	For women
8:00 PM	Adam Friedmann	Why do we do that?	Shaarei Tefillah	
8:00 PM	Yaron Perez	הפרשה ואני	Shaarei Shomayim	Hebrew
Thu. Feb 1				
1:30 PM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Shoftim: Like S’dom?	49 Michael Ct.	For women
Fri. Feb. 2				
10:30 AM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Melachot of Shabbat	Yeshivat Or Chaim	Advanced

For University Men, at Yeshivat Or Chaim

10:00 AM Sunday, Rabbi Aaron Greenberg, Gemara Beitza

11:00 AM Sunday, Yaron Perez, Contemporary Halachah: Yom Tov Shenit

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