

# Toronto (Purim) Torah

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Yeshiva University Torah Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Tetzaveh/Zachor

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*This issue of Purim Torah is not sponsored. Given pages 2 through 4, it's probably better that way.*

## Purim — Down the Rabbit Hole

Adam Friedmann

**Note: This article is real Torah, not Purim Torah. The same cannot be said for the rest of this issue...**

Some of our holidays remember past events, and on others we actually relive an experience. Chanukah is commemorative. We light candles to recall the miracle which occurred “in those days at this time”. Tishah b’Av, however, is about experience. We work ourselves into a state of real mourning and attempt to connect with the calamities which occurred on the day.

Where does Purim sit in this dichotomy? We recite the same blessing of “al hanisim” on the megillah as we do on the Chanukah candles. This indicates a commemorative bent. However, certain elements of our Purim observances move beyond the commemorative, into the realm of lived experience.

### Taanit Esther

What is the historical basis for the fast which we observe on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of Adar? The megillah itself recounts that the Jews of the era accepted upon themselves “the obligation of the fasts with their lamentations.” (9:31) Rambam (Hilchot Taanit 5:5) assumes that this is the basis for our fasting, which commemorates “the fasts that [the people] took upon themselves in the time of Haman”, a reference to the three days of communal fasting mentioned in the text. Rav Achai Gaon in his Sheiltot (Vayakhel 67) has a different position. He notes that the 13<sup>th</sup> day of Adar was a day when all the Jews of Persia fought against their enemies (Esther 9:30-31), and he presumes that these Jews fasted as they fought. Therefore, we too fast on

this day. This second position indicates a desire to not just commemorate but relive the experience of the Jews in Persia and to trace their emotional and religious path from the uncertainty and exertion of the 13<sup>th</sup> of Adar to the joy and thanksgiving of the 14<sup>th</sup>.

### Reading the Megillah

In the Talmud, Rav Nachman explains that the reason we do not recite Hallel on Purim is because “the reading [of the megillah] is an act of Hallel.” (Megillah 17a) However, G-d’s name is not mentioned in the megillah. If so, how can its recitation count as Hallel, which most fundamentally, entails praising G-d for the good things He has done for us? One answer is that the megillah was not designed to be read passively. It calls upon the reader to engage the story actively, consider the events described carefully, and independently arrive at G-d’s total involvement. Arriving at this conclusion, and the emotional response to it, is what constitutes the Hallel. In other words, reading the megillah entails an experience, a specific attempt to imagine vividly the events of the story and their emotional and theological import.

### Intoxication?

[Disclaimer: The following is a presentation about how certain views about drinking on Purim fit in conceptually with the theme of this article. It is not a suggestion for practical observance. There is a full range of views on the latter, and a halachic authority should be consulted.]

The medieval rabbis debate the scope and even the permissibility of the Talmud’s recommendation to “become

intoxicated on Purim until one cannot distinguish between ‘accursed is Haman’ and ‘blessed is Mordechai.’” (Megillah 7b) Rabbi David Halevi Segal explains the instructions as framing the thanksgiving we give to G-d on Purim. He explains that ‘accursed is Haman’ refers to Haman’s downfall and the salvation of the Jews. ‘Blessed is Mordechai’ refers to G-d’s other kindness which saw Mordechai raised to prominence and power. That we should thank G-d for these acts of kindness is self-evident. The goal on Purim, argues Rabbi Segal, is to become intoxicated and joyous to the point where one cannot distinguish one kindness from the other. (Turei Zahav, Orach Chaim 695:1)

Why would we aim for a state where we cannot distinguish between the good things G-d has done for us? Perhaps here, too, the goal is experiential. On Purim, it is not enough to commemorate G-d’s historical kindnesses. We need to access a level of consciousness in which we recognize, just as the Jews of Persia did, that G-d’s presence is ongoing and pervasive even in situations where He seems absent.

Reliving the past is complicated, but it can become the germ for a new worldview.

A safe, happy, and meaningful Purim to all!

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## בבלה יונאו ושמה יהיו (ירמיהו כז)

## Opposing the State of Israel's 70<sup>th</sup> Year!

### Anti-Israel Landmark: The Lake Shore Blvd Median

In the 1950's, Toronto's Lake Shore Boulevard was expanded and extended as part of construction of the Gardiner Expressway. This paved the way for creation of a pivotal traffic median in the area of Bathurst Street, along Lake Shore Boulevard. For the past several years, that median has hosted some of the most important symposiums ever held by the Neturei Karta in Ontario to promote education about the evils of Israel and Zionism.

A small group which pledges allegiance to the ideals of the previous Satmar Rebbe, Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum zt"l, the Neturei Karta claim to be the spiritual heirs of Talmudic sages who labelled the teachers of Torah, and their students, the true *neturei karta*, an Aramaic term meaning "guardians of the [Jewish] city". (Talmud Yerushalmi, Chagigah 1:7) Despite not visibly engaging in the aforementioned study or teaching of Torah, the Neturei Karta are confident that their anti-Israel rallies alongside Muslim organizations in North America, Europe and the Middle East, their television interviews denouncing the

vast majority of Jews, and their [press conferences with Iranian leaders](#), all serve the cause of defending Jewish cities, and particularly in the historic Land of Israel.

In 2008, Neturei Karta Canada issued a press release in advance of the annual "Walk with Israel" celebration created by the United Jewish Appeal. They said, "While the Zionists celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the so-called state of 'Israel,' the worldwide Jewish community faithful to the teachings of G-d and the Torah gather to commemorate this anniversary as a day of sorrow and tragedy." They convened a refined, multicultural, open debate regarding the State of Israel in front of a parking garage on Fleet Street. This venue was found to be less than ideal, though, and so they applied for a permit to move their annual confab to the median at Lake Shore Boulevard, where they could better appeal to the many thousands of Jews participating in UJA's springtime Walk with Israel.

Every May, adorned in hybrid kefiyah-tallitot and hoisting aloft the green, white, red and black of the Palestinian flag, Neturei Karta intellectuals stand out as they engage in reasoned debate from their perch in the middle of traffic. Marching children are heard to ask their parents, "Why do those rabbis hate Israel?" and "Are those really religious Jews?" And even though their chants of "Down with Israel" are drowned out by the laughter of the passing crowd and the roar of passing cars, the Neturei Karta, holding forth bravely from behind their police protection, are confident that they are winning over hearts and minds with their brightly coloured banners and nuanced message of "Down with Israel".

Lake Shore Boulevard is not the only site where the Neturei Karta of Canada hold court; they also participate in colloquia at the annual Al Quds Rally and "Reviving the Islamic Spirit" convention in Toronto. However, Lake Shore Boulevard remains the place of their greatest visibility and intellectual influence.

### The Anti-Zionist Idea: "Torah-True Judaism"

As is well known, we Neturei Karta have spent much time over the last seventy years rallying against the State of Israel. Rain or shine, we will be at the Israel Day Parade, the Walk for Israel, and every major pro-Israel event we can find. By our presence we make it known that not all Jews are Zionists. One might wonder, however, what justifies this? Doesn't this take time away from Torah study, which we are commanded to engage in day and night?

The answer, however, is simple. With most mitzvot, we have a principle of *osek b'mitzvah patur min hamitzvah*, that one who is involved in a commandment is exempt (or forbidden) from engaging in another one. However, when it comes to Torah study, the Talmud (Moed Katan 9a-b) notes that one who is studying Torah is exempt from other mitzvot only if there is someone else who can perform the second mitzvah. If there is no one else to take responsibility for the second mitzvah, one must leave his books and do what must be done. If we don't go and rally, who will?

Furthermore, the Talmud (Bava Kama 17a) propounds that while performing mitzvot may be greater than learning Torah, **teaching Torah** is greater still. Who else will educate the world about "Torah True Judaism"? Holding up our picket signs is like *hagbah*, holding up the Torah in shul!

And we will go to the ends of the earth, even to Holocaust denial rallies in Iran on Shabbat. The Talmud (Yoma 85a) writes that we may violate one Shabbat to protect others, thus allowing violating Shabbat to save a life. Rambam (Hilchot Mamrim 2:4) uses this argument to explain why the

rabbis can waive prohibitions to protect the integrity of Torah, such as in executing someone for violating a rabbinic prohibition of Shabbat to ensure that others will keep Shabbat. Rambam compares this to amputating a limb to save a body. Radbaz (ibid) notes that this comparison only works if we assume that all Jews are one body, and all mitzvot of the Torah are one unit, so that we are violating the prohibition against murdering one Jew to save the Shabbat of other Jews. Thus, we may amputate our own commitment to Shabbat if it will save others from Zionism. Also, many authorities (Shulchan Aruch 306:14, Nachalat Shivah 83) allow violating Shabbat to save others from being kidnapped for a life of idolatry, and saving people from the indoctrination of Zionism is no less critical!

Now that we have explained our mission, "we welcome the assistance of all men of good will and stand ready to assist all whose agenda coincides with ours." (<http://www.nkusa.org/aboutus/mission.cfm>)



## Biography

### Rabbi Bibi Netanyahu

Rabbi Binyamin ("Bibi") Netanyahu was born in Tel Aviv in 1949. He joined the IDF just after the Six-Day War in 1967, and served in the Sayeret Matkal special forces unit. In 1972, Rabbi Bibi came to Boston to study at MIT; it is thought that he became close with Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik during this time. There is no documentary evidence for this, but then again, there is no documentary evidence that Rabbi Soloveitchik met the Lubavitcher Rebbe when they studied in Berlin, and yet people say that, too.

Rabbi Bibi served in the Yom Kippur War in 1973, returning to Boston thereafter. He changed his name to Benjamin Ben Nitai at this point, perhaps as a subterfuge to conceal his newfound religious observance and entry into rabbinical studies. He was also a co-worker and close friend of Mitt Romney during this period, but there is no truth to the rumours that he sampled Mormonism or engaged in polygamy.

After returning to Israel and functioning in political circles and the private sector for several years, Rabbi Bibi came to New York in 1984, as Israel's ambassador to the United Nations. During this period he became a Lubavitcher chasid, referring to Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn as "the most influential man of our time." He also became close with Fred Trump; go figure.

Using the oratorical skills he developed as a diplomat, Rabbi Bibi has gained a reputation as a *maggid*, lecturing far and wide, including in the yeshivot of India, Russia and China in the past year. He is known for employing pictures and props in public lectures, and for rallying international support against the contemporary Haman in Iran. With publication of his collected responsa [*Teshuvot Ya Habibi*], he is emerging as an authority in halachah. Lately, Rabbi Bibi has also been building his credentials for leadership of the Shas party, announcing his newly discovered Mizrahi ancestry and undergoing multiple police investigations.

While Rabbi Bibi is known by some for serving four terms as Israel's prime minister, and as the only person to be elected to that position for three consecutive terms, the Torah world will likely remember him best as the prime minister [who opened a cabinet meeting by reading from the beginning of Parshat Chayei Sarah to rebuke UNESCO regarding Hebron](#).

## Torah and Translation

### Accepting Gifts of Champagne and Cigars

#### Rabbi Bibi Netanyahu, *Teshuvot Ya Habibi*, Case 1000

שאלה: האם מותר לפוליטיקאי לקבל מתנות של שמפנייה ורודה וסיגרים מאנשים המצפים לטובות בחזרה?

תשובה: שאלתך נוסד בהררי קודש. כידוע, ר' דון הענלי ור' גלען פריי כתבו שכשיש שמפנייה ורודה על קרח, האדם נעשה אסיר מעצמו. הוא יכול לסדר צ'ק אוטו מתי שהוא רוצה, אבל הוא לא יכול לעזוב. (מלון קליפורניה) אעפ"כ, יש לטעון שמתנות אלו מותרות, ואפי' אם אסורות, אין עונש על קבלתם.

ראשון: האיסור נגד קבלת שוחד לא שייך כאן. הרי יש סוברים דדרשני טעמא דקרא, כאשר התורה נותנת סיבות להלכה. [נעי' משנה תורה הל' איסורי ביאה יב: א וכ"מ שם, ול"מ הל' מלוה ולווה ג: א]. אם כן, האיסור נגד שוחד לא שייך לפוליטיקאים, שהרי התורה מסרה לנו סיבת האיסור, "השוחד יעור עיני חכמים ויסלף דברי צדיקים." (דברים טז: ט) לפי טבע הפוליטיקאים, ובטח אלו שאפשר לקנות ע"י סיגרים ושמפנייה, ההלכה לא שייכת להם.

שני: עוד איסור בקבלת שוחד הוא עבירה על "לפני עור לא תתן מכשול," שמסייע לנתינת השוחד. אבל נראה שגם זה לא שייך. כידוע, הגמרא (ע"ז ו: -): "מגבילה את איסור מכשול למצב שאר בו לא יאופשר הכשלה בלי העזרה של העוזר, וכן נפסק ע"י הרמ"א (יו"ד קנא א:). אם כן, אפילו אם פוליטיקאי זו היה נמנע מלקבל, פוליטיקאים אחרים היו מקבלים. [על אף שהמשנה למלך (הל' מלוה ולווה ד: ב) מגביל את ההיתר למצב אשר המכשול האחר יבוא ע"י עכו"ם, נראה לי שלא כל הפוליטיקאים המשוחדים הם יהודים.]

ועוד בה שלישיה: אפילו אם יש איסור בקבלת השוחד, אין בו עונש. כדלעיל, השוחד מעורר עיני חכמים, ולפי חז"ל הסומא נחשב כמת (נדרים סד:). הרי כלל בידן דקים לי' בדבריה מיניה. (מכות טז:). כמובן דכל עונש אחר היה יותר קל ממיתה, ואז המקבל שוחד כבר קבל עונשו.

אחרון אחרון חביבי, כדאי לזכור שהפעם הראשונה בתורה שאדם סירב לקבל מתנה היתה כאשר אברהם סירב לקבל מתנת מלך סדם. זה היה אחרי שאברהם לקח ש"ח אנשים למלחמה (בראשית יד:), אשר הוא גמטריא של "שוחד". אבל שם היתה שוחד אחרי הטובה – רואים שקבלתה לפני הטובה מותרת.

recipient of a bribe loses his sight, and the Talmud compares such a person with one who has passed away. (Nedarim 64b) Therefore, we apply the principle that one who is subject to multiple penalties may only be given the greatest of them. (Makkot 16a) Certainly, any other punishment would be less severe than death, and so the bribe recipient has already been punished enough.

Finally, remember that the first biblical case of rejecting a gift was when Avraham refused the gift of the King of Sdom. This came after Avraham took 318 people to war (Bereishit 14:14), and 318 is the numerical equivalent of the Hebrew word שוחד, meaning "bribe". However, that was a case of a bribe *after* performing the favour; accepting payment *in advance* of the desired action is permissible.

Question: May a politician accept gifts of pink champagne and cigars from people who expect favours in return?

Answer: Your question is well-founded; after all, as Rabbis Don Henley and Glen Frey wrote, when pink champagne is on ice, one becomes a prisoner of his own device; he may check out any time he likes, but he may never leave. (Hotel California) Still, it may be argued that such gifts are permitted, and even if prohibited, there should be no punishment for accepting them.

First, the prohibition against accepting bribes likely does not apply. It is ruled that where the Torah provides a reason for a law, the law only applies to cases where the reason applies. [See Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Issurei Biah 12:1 and Kesef Mishneh ibid., and Lechem Mishneh Malveh v'Loveh 3:1.] If so, then the prohibition against bribery may not apply to politicians, as the Torah's text presents a reason for the law, "bribes blind the eyes of the wise, and warp the words of the righteous." (Devarim 16:19) Given the nature of politicians, and especially those who can be bought by cigars and champagne, this law cannot apply to them.

Second, another prohibition against accepting a bribe is that acceptance "puts a stumbling block before the blind" by enabling the bribe-payer. However, this likely does not apply to our situation either. As is well known, the Talmud (Avodah Zarah 6a-b) limits this stumbling-block prohibition to cases in which the stumbling would not take place without one's assistance, and so is ruled by the Rama (Yoreh Deah 151:1). In our case, even if this politician were to decline, other politicians would accept. [It is true that the Mishneh l'Melech (Malveh v'Loveh 4:2) limits this exemption to cases where the alternative assistance in the sin would come from non-Jews, but presumably not all bribable politicians are Jewish.]

Third, even if accepting a bribe were prohibited, one could not be punished for having done so. Per Devarim 16:19, the

## Weekly Highlights: Feb. 24— Mar. 2 / 9 Adar — 15 Adar

| Time   | Speaker   | Topic  | Location                 | Special Notes                     |
|--|---|--|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>שבת Feb. 23-24</b>  |   |  |                          |                                   |
| <b>After Hashkamah</b>   | Adam Friedmann  | Parshah Analysis                                       | Clanton Park             | <i>Not this week</i>              |
| <b>8:50 AM</b>   | R' Jonathan Ziring  | Pre-Shacharit Parshah                                  | BAYT                     | <i>Turk Bais Medrash</i>          |
| <b>Derashah</b>  | Adam Friedmann  | Amalek and "Fear of G-d"                               | Clanton Park             |                                   |
| <b>Before minchah</b>  | R' Jonathan Ziring  | Daf Yomi   | BAYT                     | <i>Rabbi's Classroom</i>          |
| <b>After minchah</b>   | R' Mordechai Torczyner  | Gemara Avodah Zarah                                    | BAYT                     | <i>Simcha Suite</i>               |
| <b>Sun. Feb. 25</b>  |   |  |                          |                                   |
| <b>8:45 AM</b>   | R' Josh Gutenberg   | Contemporary Halachah                                  | BAYT                     | <i>Not this week</i>              |
| <b>8:45 AM</b>   | R' Jonathan Ziring  | Responsa   | BAYT                     | <i>Hebrew</i>                     |
| <b>Mon. Feb. 26</b>  |   |  |                          |                                   |
| <b>8:30 PM</b>   | <b>R' Mordechai Torczyner</b>   | <b>The Shabbat Gourmet 3: Tiramisu, Jello and More</b> | <b>Shomrai Shabbos</b>   | <i>For men; Third Floor</i>       |
| <b>Tue. Feb. 27</b>  |   |  |                          |                                   |
| <b>1:30 PM</b>   | R' Mordechai Torczyner  | Nechemiah: Census Again?                               | Shaarei Shomayim         |                                   |
| <b>7:30 PM</b>   | R' Mordechai Torczyner  | Yehoshua   | 129 Theodore Pl.         | <i>For Men</i>                    |
| <b>8:00 PM</b>   | <b>R' Jonathan Ziring</b>   | <b>Lord of the Rings: From Shemuel to Gandalf</b>      | <b>BAYT</b>              | <i>Simcha Suite</i>               |
| <b>Wed. Feb. 28</b>  |   |  |                          |                                   |
| <b>Taanit Esther</b>   |   |  |                          |                                   |
| <b>10:00 AM</b>  | <b>R' Jonathan Ziring</b>   | <b>Exodus and Hollywood 2: The Prince of Egypt</b>     | <b>Beth Emeth</b>        | <i>torontotorah.com/hollywood</i> |
| <b>2:30 PM</b>   | R' Jonathan Ziring  | Exploring Bamidbar                                     | 32 Timberlane Ave.       | <i>Not this week</i>              |
| <b>8:00 PM</b>   | Adam Friedmann  | Why do we do that?                                     | Shaarei Tefillah         | <i>Not this week</i>              |
| <b>8:00 PM</b>   | Yaron Perez   | הפרשה ואני   | Shaarei Shomayim         | <i>Not this week</i>              |
| <b>Thu. Mar. 1</b>   |   |  |                          |                                   |
| <b>Purim</b>   |   |  |                          |                                   |
| <b>8:30 AM</b>   | <b>Tanach in an Hour: Speed-Reading the Steinsaltz Abridged Edition</b>   |  | <b>Facebook Live</b>     | <i>No,</i>                        |
| <b>1:00 PM</b>   | <b>Celebrating 151! A Gourmet Canadian Food Truck Beer, Poutine, Mini-Donuts, Bannock and more! With divrei torah for each course</b> |  | <b>7026 Bathurst St.</b> | <i>these</i>                      |
| <b>6:00 PM</b>   | <b>Recreational Marijuana, Part II: A How-To</b>  |  | <b>858 Sheppard West</b> | <i>aren't</i>                     |
| <b>8:30 PM</b>   | <b>The Power of Alcohol: Whisky Blended with Non-Kosher Wine is Kosher, but Quinoa and Diet Coke for Pesach Are Not</b>               |  | <b>3200 Dufferin St.</b> | <i>real</i>                       |
| <b>Fri. Mar. 2</b>   |   |  |                          |                                   |
| <b>Shushan Purim</b>   |   |  |                          |                                   |
| <b>10:30 AM</b>  | R' Jonathan Ziring  | Melachot of Shabbat                                    | Yeshivat Or Chaim        | <i>Advanced</i>                   |
| <p><b><i>For University Men, at Yeshivat Or Chaim</i></b><br/> <b><i>10:00 AM Sunday, Rabbi Aaron Greenberg, Gemara Beitzah</i></b><br/> <b><i>11:00 AM Sunday, Rabbi Jonathan Ziring, Contemporary Halachah</i></b><br/> <b><i>8:30 AM Monday, Rabbi Jonathan Ziring, Nefesh haChaim</i></b><br/> <b><i>8:30 AM Friday, Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, The Book of Yeshayah</i></b></p> <p><b><i>For University Women, at Ulpanat Orot</i></b><br/> <b><i>9:30-11:30 AM Monday, Mrs. Ellieza Perez, From Rachel Imeinu to Racheli Frenkel</i></b><br/> <b><i>9:30-11:30 AM Tuesday, Mrs. Ora Ziring, Shabbat</i></b><br/> <b><i>9:30-11:30 AM Wednesday, Mrs. Ora Ziring, Contemporary Halachah</i></b><br/> <b><i>9:30-11:30 AM Thursday, Mrs. Ellieza Perez, Parshah in the Eyes of Chassidut</i></b></p> |   |  |                          |                                   |