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Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Ki Tisa

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Why is the Torah Out of Order?

Yaron Perez

There is a classic debate regarding when the command to build the Mishkan was issued – was it before the sin of the Golden Calf, as recorded in the Torah in the portions of Terumah and Tetzaveh, or was it afterward?

Per Ramban (Shemot 35:1), it occurred as recorded in the Torah, before the Golden Calf. But according to Rashi (Shemot 32:18), the sin of the Golden Calf was first. Relying on a midrash (Tanchuma Terumah 8), Rashi says the Torah does not necessarily follow a chronological sequence, because, as this midrash says, “the paths of Torah and its portions are flexible.”

However, Rashi does not believe that the Torah’s passages are randomly placed; Rashi consistently identifies educational reasons for the Torah’s order. [See Shemot 21:1 and Bamidbar 6:2, for example.] Why, then, does the Torah place the command to construct the Mishkan before the Golden Calf?

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn, the seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe (commentary to Rashi on Shemot 32:18), explained that the command to create the Mishkan completes the covenant between G-d and Israel from the end of Parshat Mishpatim. (Shemot 24:3-8) As a consequence of that covenant, G-d declares, “They shall make a Mishkan for me, and I will dwell among them.” (ibid. 25:8)

However, many commentaries, among them Rabbi Ovadia Seforno (Shemot 31:8), take Rashi’s position further, and explain the Mishkan as a direct result of the sin of the Golden Calf; had there been no sin, there would have been no Mishkan. The command to build the Mishkan can therefore not

be viewed as an extension of the covenant at Sinai. Given this view, why did the Torah change the order of events and place the Mishkan prior to the Golden Calf?

Yirmiyahu’s Rebuke

The prophet Yirmiyahu stood at the entrance of the Beit haMikdash and conveyed the word of G-d to the nation: “Do not trust the false message which proclaims, ‘It is the sanctuary of G-d, it is the sanctuary of G-d, it is the sanctuary of G-d.’” (Yirmiyahu 7:4) The nation thought there would be no connection between their immoral conduct of theft, murder, etc. and the presence of the *Shechinah* in the house of G-d. Yirmiyahu warned that just the opposite, a society of higher morality is the first step to a bond with G-d. As he continued to say, “If you shall practice justice, between one man and another, etc.” (ibid. 7:5)

One of the points Yirmiyahu made in this regard played off of the order of presentation of the Mishkan and the Golden Calf. Contending that G-d does not desire our korbanot when we act unethically, he said, “I did not tell your ancestors, and I did not command them, on the day I took them out of Egypt, regarding burnt offerings and sacrifices.” (ibid. 7:22) Of course, G-d did command us to bring offerings, but as Rabbi Shemuel David Luzzatto explained, G-d was saying through Yirmiyahu, “I ask of people that they fulfill My will for their own benefit, and guard My mitzvot which one shall do and live thereby. Therefore, My initial commands to your ancestors were not about burnt offerings and sacrifices, but rather I first instructed them the Ten Commandments, and then the laws between parties for the good of society,

and after that I told them to make a sanctuary for Me and bring *korbanot* before Me. And so, when you fail to observe My laws, your sacrifices are also not desired.”

Linking Mishpatim and the Mishkan

Returning to Seforno’s position, had the command to build the Mishkan been placed in chronological order, after the Golden Calf, it would have appeared that once G-d forgave the terrible sin of the Calf, the *Shechinah* would be forever manifest in the Mishkan, independent of our national morality. We would only need to continue bringing *korbanot*.

By juxtaposing the command to build the Mishkan with Parshat Mishpatim, which includes ethical and social law, the Torah teaches us that G-d commands us to build an ethical society first, and only afterward, at a second level, does G-d command us regarding a Mishkan and *korbanot*. Without the former, the latter is undesirable. Or as Rabbi Yissachar Ber Eilenberg wrote in the 16th century, “It did not say [‘They shall make a Mishkan for me] and I will dwell in it,’ but ‘and I will dwell among them,’ to teach that the *Shechinah* is not manifest in the Sanctuary because of the Sanctuary, but because of Israel.” (Tzeidah laDerech to Shemot 28:5)

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Our Beit Midrash is planning a Continuing Medical Education and Continuing Legal Education trip to Panama for February 2019. Hotel, kosher meals, shiurim, tours! If you are interested, please email Dr. Mickey Ostro michaelostro@hotmail.com for more details.

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Israeli Landmarks: Beit Shemesh

Adam Friedmann

The history of the city of Beit Shemesh captures the story of the Land of Israel, from biblical conquest and settlement through the intense, and sometimes heated, reality of contemporary Israeli society.

Beit Shemesh (literally meaning “house of the sun”) is likely named after the sun-goddess, Shemesh, whom the Canaanites worshipped in antiquity. Its first biblical mention is in the book of Yehoshua (21:16), where it is identified as part of the territory apportioned to the tribe of Judah. This city later becomes one of the cities given to the Kohanim to settle. The city is mentioned in the book of Samuel (chap. 6) as the place where the Ark, which had been captured by the Philistines, was returned to Jewish hands.

Beit Shemesh was likely sacked by the Assyrian army of Sennacherib, and ultimately destroyed by the Babylonians. Aside from a monastery and light agricultural use, the area remained desolate until its role as a battleground between the IDF and the

Egyptian army during the War of Independence in 1948. The ruins of the ancient city can still be seen today at the Tel Beit Shemesh archaeological site.

The modern city of Beit Shemesh began in earnest in 1952 with the construction of the first permanent housing. It was set up as an immigrant city, housing new olim from Iraq, Romania, Iran, and Morocco. The population in 1955 stood at just 3000. In the 1990’s the city experienced a growth spurt, with new olim arriving from Russia, Ethiopia, and many English-speaking countries. Around this time, the city also attracted an influx of Hareidi citizens, who would build up several large neighborhoods. Hareidi communities represented in Beit Shemesh include Ger, Belz, Toldos Avrohom Yitzchok, Satmar and Neturei Karta. There are also strong Dati Leumi and Falash Mura groups.

The 1990’s also saw the expansion of the city in the building of the Ramat Beit Shemesh neighborhoods. Prior to

1948, the site of Ramat Beit Shemesh had been the Arab village Beit Natif. This village was itself built on remnants of an ancient Judean town dating to the period of the Hasmonean kings and earlier.

The city reached a population of 109,000 in 2016 and is expanding steadily with the neighborhoods of Ramat Beit Shemesh Gimel and Dalet under construction. The collection of diverse demographic groups in the city has made Beit Shemesh a microcosm for Israeli society. The various denominations in the city literally intersect, and one can find secular, Dati Leumi, and Hareidi communities living a stone’s throw away from one another. This closeness has been the source of considerable tension, which has even erupted into violence. Hopefully, these tensions will be resolved, and Beit Shemesh will become an exemplar for harmonious coexistence.

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The Zionist Idea: The “Zionist Shekel”

Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

Parshat Ki Tisa opens with the command to donate the “Machatzit HaShekel” (half-shekel) to the Mishkan’s treasury. The contribution is described as having two separate purposes – the coins were used to count the number of Jewish people for the census, and the money was used to finance the Mishkan, and later the Mikdash. (Shemot 30:11-16)

Thousands of years later, during the preparations for the Second World Zionist Congress held in Basel, Switzerland in 1898, Machatzit HaShekel was used as a model for what came to be known as “The Zionist Shekel.” Proposed by David Wolfson, Theodor Herzl’s close friend and successor, the Zionist Shekel too served two ends. It was used to count the number of adherents the Zionist movement had in each country, and it served to finance the ongoing administrative expenses of the movement.

Any Jew eighteen or older was able to give this donation, valued at approximately the price of a “decent meal for two in a Jewish Warsaw restaurant.” In return for his donation, he was given a receipt acknowledging his payment, and carrying the motto of the Zionist movement – “Zionism aspires to establish a safe shelter for Am Yisrael in Eretz Yisrael.” With this receipt, the donor was eligible to vote for his country’s representative to that year’s Zionist Congress. From the age of twenty-four, he could run himself to be sent as a delegate to the Congress. Moreover, the number of representatives allocated for each country corresponded to the number of people who donated. All of this served to increase the willingness to donate.

Just as with the original Machatzit HaShekel, the value of the donation to the giver was, in some respects, higher than its value to the recipient. The fact that everyone, regardless of status and wealth, paid exactly the same amount, encouraged a sense of ownership and belonging. For many, giving the Shekel became the ultimate test of one’s Zionism.

The Shekel was endorsed by Rabbis who supported the Zionist movement, such as Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook, who, in a speech given in the Meah Shearim Yeshiva in 1921 declared, “If my people listen to me, there won’t be even one Jew left who will not donate the Zionist Shekel.” In some communities the donation of the shekel became a day of celebration, with youth movement marches and festive clothing; sometimes the date was Lag Ba’Omer or one of the days of Chanukah, to increase the joy.

The shekel was cancelled fifty years after its initiation, when the State of Israel was established. For Israeli citizens, the elective contributions have been replaced by mandatory taxes. With G-d’s kindness, the Shekel donations achieved their goal of building a safe shelter for the Jews in Eretz Yisrael.

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Biography

Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Born in Tudela or Toledo circa 1085, Rabbi Yehudah haLevi spent his early years in communities in both Christian and Muslim Spain. In those years of the First Crusade, he studied in yeshiva in Granada under Moshe ibn Ezra, and he was also trained in Arab and Greek thought. As well, he learned medicine and developed himself as a poet.

Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi stood out as a great thinker even during a period that witnessed the flourishing of Rashi, Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra and Rambam. He corresponded with great figures; Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra quotes him in his biblical commentaries (see Shemot 9:1 for example). Letters found in the Cairo Genizah reveal that Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi also took a leading role in communal matters.

In his youth, Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi wrote poems on friendship, love, and life; in later years he turned more toward religious subjects. Much of his later poetry centred on his longing for the land of Israel; among his most famous works are *Tzion Halo Tishali* and *Libi baMizrach*. He also composed the popular *Yom Shabbaton*. Throughout, Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi incorporated the then-popular Arab meter and rhyming patterns. Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi's poetry remains a vital part of synagogue liturgy, and particularly in the *Selichot* and *Kinot*.

Toward the end of his life, Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi authored a philosophical work bolstering the intellectual and emotional defenses of Jews against the ideas of Karaism, Christianity, Islam and Greek philosophy. Building on the eighth century account of a Khazar king who converted to Judaism, Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi recorded a version of a dialogue between a Jew and the king, discussing major topics within Jewish thought in a way that lay readers could grasp. This work, the *Kuzari*, was written in Arabic, and has since been translated into many languages. Rabbi Daniel Korobkin's English edition is available at <http://amzn.to/1Gi2Od7>.

In late 1140, Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi made good on his lifelong desire to go to the Land of Israel. It is unclear whether he ever arrived.

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Torah and Translation

Why did the Jews Make a Statue at Sinai?

Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi, *Kuzari* 1:97

Translated by R' Mordechai Torczyner from the Tzafroni Hebrew ed.

האומות כלם בזמן ההוא היו עובדים צורות, ואלו היו הפילוסופים מביאים מופת על היחוד ועל האלקות לא היו עומדים מבלי צורה שמכוונים אליה ואומרים להמונם כי הצורה הזאת ידבק בה ענין אלקי וכי היא מיוחדת בדבר מופלא נכרי. ומהם מי שמיחס זה אל האלקים, כאשר אנחנו עושים היום במקומות המכובדים אצלנו, עד שאנו מתברכים בהם ובעפרם ואבניהם, ומהם מי שמיחס אותם אל רוחניות כוכב מן הכוכבים...

והיו בני ישראל מצפים למה שייעד אותם משה שיוריד להם ענין מאת ד' שיראו אותו ויקבילוהו כאשר היו מקבילים עמוד הענין ועמוד האש בצאתם ממצרים... וכאשר שמעו העם דברי עשרת הדברים ועלה משה אל ההר להוריד להם הלוחות כתובים ולעשות להם ארון להיות להם דבר נראה שיכוננו נגדו, שבו הברית לאלקים והבריאה הרבנית, ר"ל הלוחות...

ונשאר העם מצפים לרדת משה והם על עינים לא שנו תארם ועדים ובגדיהם אשר עמדו בהם יום מעמד הר סיני, אך נשאר בתכונתם ממתנינים למשה לעתים, ובושש מהם ארבעים יום והוא לא לקח צידה ולא נפרד מהם אלא על מנת שישבו ליומו.

אז גברה המחשבה הרעה על קצת ההמון ההוא הגדול והתחילו המון העם להחלק מחלקות ומרבים העצות והמחשבות עד שנצטרכו מהם אנשים לבקש נעבד מורגש יכוננו נגדו כשאר האומות, מבלי שיכחשו באלקות מוציאם ממצרים, אבל שיהיה מונח להם להקביל אליו כשיספרו נפלאות אלקיהם... וחטאתם היה בציור אשר נאסר עליהם ושיחשו ענין אלקי אל מה שעשו בידם ורצונם מבלי מצות האלקים.

The nations of that time served forms. Even had philosophers brought evidence for Unity and Divinity, they would not have remained without a form toward which they could orient themselves, telling the masses that the Divine element inheres in that form, and that the form is unique in some unknown, marvelous way. Some of them would associate this [power] with G-d, as we do today in the places we honour, to the point that we view ourselves as blessed by them, their dust and their stones. And some of them would associate this with the spirit of some star...

And the Children of Israel anticipated that which Moshe had predicted he would bring down for them from G-d, that they would see it and follow it, as they followed the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire when they left Egypt... And as the nation heard the ten declarations, and Moshe ascended the mountain to bring down the inscribed tablets and to make an Ark for them, to be for them a visible entity toward which they would be oriented, containing the covenant with G-d, a Divine creation, meaning the tablets...

And the nation remained, anticipating Moshe's descent, and they were in position, they did not change their appearance and crowns and clothes in which they had stood on the day of the Revelation at Mount Sinai, but they remained as they had been, waiting for Moshe at every moment. And he delayed, apart from them for forty days, and he had not taken food, and he had not left them other than on the condition that he would return that day.

Then the evil thought triumphed over a portion of those great masses, and the masses of the nation began to be divided into divisions, offering much counsel and many thoughts, to the point that some of them needed to seek a focus of worship that they could sense, to orient themselves toward it, like other nations, without denying the Divinity who had taken them out of Egypt. It would remain there for them to face it when telling of the wonders of their G-d... And their sin was in making a form, which had been prohibited to them, and ascribing the Divine element to that which they had made with their hands and desire, without a Divine command.

G-d commanded Avraham to circumcise the males in his household. (Bereishit 17) Rambam pointed out that this is reiterated in Vayikra 12:3 to demonstrate that it remains obligatory even after Sinai. (Peirush haMishnayot, Chullin 7:6) *Sefer haChinuch* counts this as the Torah's second mitzvah, and suggests that one purpose is to mark the Jewish people as physically unique, as our mitzvot mark us as spiritually unique. *Sefer haChinuch* also notes that this mitzvah shows that just as we complete our bodies with deeds (such as circumcision), so we can complete our souls with our deeds. [And see Midrash Tanchuma, Tazria 5, on the importance of human improvement of our world.]

Two blessings are recited at a *brit milah*: *al hamilah* and *l'hachniso b'vruto shel Avraham Avinu*. The former is recited by the *mohel* before the act of circumcision; the latter

blessing is recited after the incision begins. [See Rosh Shabbat 19:10, Yoreh Deah 265:1, Chatam Sofer II Yoreh Deah 249, Tzitz Eliezer 5:14.] The latter blessing thanks G-d for instructing us to bring the baby "into the covenant of our ancestor Avraham." The community then responds, "Just as he entered the covenant, so may he enter Torah, *chuppah* and good deeds." Rabbi Yosef Karo explained that Torah is listed before marriage because the Talmud (Kiddushin 29b) advises that one should learn Torah before marrying. Both of those are before "good deeds" because the talmudic age for marriage is 18, and we are taught that one is not liable for misdeeds before the age of 20. (Beit Yosef Yoreh Deah 265:2)

In some communities, *Shehechyanu* is recited as well; see Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 265:7.

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Weekly Highlights: Mar. 3 – Mar. 9 / 16 Adar – 22 Adar

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
Mar. 2-3				
Fri. 5:35 PM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Parshah and Kugel	BAYT	
After Hashkamah	Adam Friedmann	Parshah Analysis	Clanton Park	
After Hashkamah	R' Jonathan Ziring	Minchat Chinuch	BAYT	
After Kiddush	Adam Friedmann	Preparing for the Seder	Or Chaim Minyan	
Before minchah	R' Jonathan Ziring	Daf Yomi	BAYT	Rabbi's Classroom
After minchah	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Gemara Avodah Zarah	BAYT	Simcha Suite
Sun. Mar. 4				
8:45 AM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Responsa	BAYT	Hebrew
Tue. Mar. 6				
10:00 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Which is Better: Purim or Pesach?	Adath Israel	Women; there is a fee info@adathisrael.com
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Nechemiah: Census Errors?	Shaarei Shomayim	
7:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Yehoshua	129 Theodore Pl.	For Men
Wed. Mar. 7				
10:00 AM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Exodus and Hollywood 3: The Plagues	Beth Emeth	torontotorah.com/hollywood
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. Mar. 8				
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Shoftim: A Losing Battle	49 Michael Ct.	For women
Fri. Mar. 9				
10:30 AM	R' Jonathan Ziring	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: The Five Cups of the Seder**
- 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. Ellieza 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. Ellieza Perez, Parshah in the Eyes of Chassidut**