

# Toronto Torah

## YU Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Acharei Mot (*Diaspora*)

29 Nisan, 5779/May 4, 2019

Vol. 10 Num. 32 (#410)

This issue of Toronto Torah is sponsored by Esther and Craig Guttman and Family

in honour of the yahrtzeit of Max Guttman ז"ל בן שמואל ז"ל

### Realizing Our Potential, One Step at a Time

Rabbi Elihu Abbe

One of the most important components of the Yom Kippur service in the Beit HaMikdash was that of the "scapegoat". It was sent into the desert with a designated individual (*ish iti*) whose task it was to push it off a steep cliff. The trek through the desert was over three and a half hours long, (Mishnah, Yoma 6:4) and the presumably challenging terrain and baking hot sun contributed further to the difficulty of the ordeal. In addition to the physical difficulties, there was also a great sense of emotional pressure on the *ish iti*; the atonement of the entire nation depended on his successfully completing this task! The weight of such a sense of responsibility could have the potential to be crushing.

There were ten stations set up in advance along the route of the *ish iti*. Despite the fact that it was Yom Kippur, the strictest fast day of the year, he was offered food and drink at each of the stations. The Talmud (Yoma 67a) teaches that there was never a time when the *ish iti* had to break his fast. The knowledge that he would have food available should he need it was sufficient for him to push through his task.

This is fascinating. If the *ish iti* would not know that food was available for him, there would be no way that he would be capable of this task! He would tell himself from the very beginning that it is an impossible effort and that it would be inconceivable to finish the journey without food or

water. While he would be wrong, for in fact he could accomplish it, he would never make that discovery.

We are capable of accomplishing so much more than we realize. Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook writes, "Ascend higher, for you have amazing strengths. You have wings like the wind, like a noble eagle. Do not forsake them for they will forsake you. Seek them out. You will find them instantly." (Orot Hakodesh 1:64, tr. Rabbi Elan Mazer)

Chazal tell us that when Yosef was tempted by Potiphar's wife, he contemplated committing the sin. He then saw an image of his father Yaakov, and regained the strength to resist the temptation. (Sotah 36b) Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky makes the following observation: At the beginning of Parshat Vayeshev the Torah tells us, "And these were the sons of Yaakov, Yosef was 17 years old..." (Bereishit 37:2) Rashi notes the juxtaposition between the names of Yaakov and Yosef, and says that Yaakov and Yosef were similar in several ways, including in their appearance. Therefore, when Yosef saw the image of his father Yaakov he was, in effect, seeing what he himself would look like if he were to continue his spiritual growth and avoid anything that would be harmful. It was this recognition of the greatness of **his own potential** that enabled him to overcome his temptations.

Sometimes the knowledge that we can accomplish great things is an excellent motivator. At other times, the feeling of

great responsibility to live up to potential and high expectations can be overwhelming. (This may be the meaning of Tosafot's explanation of why one who is commanded in a mitzvah and fulfills it is greater than one who goes beyond his requirements to fulfill a mitzvah. (Kiddushin 31a) It is much more difficult, and perhaps overwhelming, to perform mitzvot when one feels this sense of responsibility, and that is why the reward is greater.) In those situations, it is necessary to just focus on the small things we can accomplish in the present moment. We tell the *ish iti* that he will be offered food and drink, so that he will not be overwhelmed by feeling a need to accomplish more than he realizes that he is capable of.

It is important to always ask ourselves what thoughts we have that may be standing in the way of doing all that we can do. Are we shortchanging ourselves and not appreciating our own abilities and skills, or are we telling ourselves that we have to do everything, and if that is too difficult we lose the strength necessary to do the small things? Once we have discovered our impediment, we can remind ourselves that every step is valuable in its own and that we do truly have great potential.

[eabbe@torontotorah.com](mailto:eabbe@torontotorah.com)

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**Overview**

Our chapter is long and eventful. It begins with a story of sin and punishment – the children of Israel are committing evil deeds, and are sentenced by G-d to be persecuted by the Midianites for seven years. As the suffering becomes worse, they cry out to G-d, who sends them a prophet pointing out the people's ingratitude toward G-d, who redeemed them from Egypt.

However, G-d also sends an angel who reveals himself to Gideon, son of Yoash, and encourages him to go and save Israel from the hands of the Midianites. In answer to Gideon's request for proof to the angel's Divine mission, the angel summons fire, which consumes the food given to him by Gideon. Shocked and moved, Gideon then builds an altar to Hashem, and receives instructions for his first mission.

Gideon follows G-d's command and destroys a local altar erected for the Baal, thus proving to his neighbors that the idol is useless; from now on Gideon is also named 'Yerubaal', which some commentators explain to mean "he who fights with Baal."

At Divine command, Gideon attacks the Midianites. He sends emissaries to the other Israeli tribes, inviting them to join. As they gather, Gideon asks that G-d send another sign – to place dew only on a certain piece of fleece, while its surroundings will stay dry. Although he is given this sign, he then asks for yet another one – this time for the dew to fall everywhere but the fleece. Again, his request is fulfilled.

**A matter of faith**

It seems that the recurring theme in our chapter is the question of good faith. G-d and Israel share a covenant going back to the days of Avraham, but it seems the two sides reached a low point in their mutual trust. This is evident in Gideon's cynical response to the angel's greeting. The angel says, "Hashem is with you," and Gideon responds, "Please, my lord, is Hashem with us? Why, then, has all of this happened to us? And where are all of His wonders which our forefathers related to us, saying, 'Did not Hashem bring us up from Egypt?'"

Gideon seems to blame G-d for forsaking His people and backing away from His covenant with them. Of course, the reader of the book of

Shoftim was already told, just a few verses earlier, that G-d was justly reciprocating Israel's own disobedience and betrayal.

However, G-d is willing to make the first move. The angel does not rebuke Gideon for his harsh words; instead, he empowers and sends him on a mission to save the people. But Gideon is still in need for a sign that G-d is indeed back, and Hashem agrees to supply it – again and again, until Gideon is convinced, and as we will see in the next chapter, he will develop enough faith to lead his attack with an extremely small force.

Our capacity to give and to have faith – in our relationship with G-d, and, *l'havdil*, with man – is crucial for our ability to be redeemed.

*bweintraub@torontotorah.com*

**Law of the Land: Selling Homes to Non-Jews in Israel**

In December 2010, approximately 50 Israeli rabbis signed a letter declaring that it is forbidden to sell or rent apartments to non-Jews in Israel. (<http://bit.ly/2DD1Npy>) Despite the existence of a halachic basis for this ruling, many leading Torah scholars publicly and forcefully opposed it on both halachic and pragmatic grounds.

The Torah warns Bnei Yisrael that when they take possession of the Land of Israel from the seven Canaanite nations, "... you shall not seal a covenant with them nor shall you show them favour." (Devarim 7:2) To whom "them" is referring is the subject of significant debate among halachic authorities, ranging from including only the seven Canaanite nations, to idolaters, to all non-Jews. This article will discuss the prohibition in relation to non-Jews in general, unless noted otherwise, as this was the definition employed in the letter under discussion.

The Talmud notes that multiple prohibitions are derived from this verse, including enabling "them" to acquire land in Israel. (Avodah Zarah 20a) This prohibition seems to include only **selling** property. The permissibility of **renting** homes to them is a matter of mishnaic dispute. (Avodah Zarah 1:8) Many authorities, including the Shulchan Aruch, rule according to the opinion that renting homes to them is permitted, whereas selling is not. (Yoreh Deah 151:8)

Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv and Rabbi Aharon Leib Shteinman objected to the letter on the basis that "a public letter of this type could spark anti-Semitism elsewhere in the world and harm Jews." (<http://bit.ly/2DGUD3m>)

Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein objected to the letter's omission of significant halachic sources permitting the sale of Israeli homes to non-Jews under certain conditions: "There is no mention of Raavad's position that limits the prohibition to the seven aboriginal nations of Canaan. For some reason, the opinion of the Tosafists—that if the gentile is willing to pay a higher price than a Jew for the property, there is no prohibition against selling it him—has been ignored...several Tosafists maintained that the prohibition to lease a home to a gentile was limited to an instance in which the gentile is expected to bring foreign gods inside." (<http://bit.ly/2VBkK5Z>)

Furthermore, Rambam, as understood by the Kesef Mishnah, maintains that a non-Jew who accepts the seven Noachide Laws attains the status of a *ger toshav*, to whom it is permitted to sell land in Israel. (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Avodat Kochavim 10:6) A significant portion of Israel's non-Jewish population may be included in this category, although many authorities contend that the *ger toshav* category is inapplicable until the laws of *yovel* return.

The question of the role and legal status of non-Jews in the Jewish state must be approached by Torah-observant Jews with absolute loyalty to technical halachah, and with great sensitivity and awareness of the ramifications that actions and public statements can have on the honour of Torah and on the safety of the Jewish people.

*ahecht@torontotorah.com*

**Biography**  
**Rabbi Shlomo Zalman**  
**Auerbach**  
Rabbi Josh Gutenberg

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach was one of the great halachic authorities of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was born into a rabbinic family in Jerusalem in 1910. As a teenager, he studied in Yeshivat Eitz Chaim, headed by Rabbi Isser Zalman Melzer. After he married, he studied in Midrash Bnei Tzion, a kollel dedicated to studying the laws relevant to the land of Israel, headed by Rabbi Zvi Pesach Frank.

In 1949, Rabbi Auerbach became Rosh Yeshiva at Yeshivat Kol Torah, where he remained for 46 years until his death. Despite receiving prestigious offers to serve as Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem and as a judge in the top rabbinical court, Rabbi Auerbach refused to accept any position beyond his role at Yeshivat Kol Torah.

Rabbi Auerbach published his first major work, titled *Me'orei Eish*, when he was 25. The book discusses, at length, the use of electricity as it pertains to Jewish law. He received approbations from many leading authorities, including Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook and Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzenski. Other books that he authored include *Minchat Shlomo*, a collection of responsa, and *Ma'adanei Eretz*, which deals with the laws of *shemita* and tithes. His oral rulings regarding the laws of Shabbat and medicine also form the core of several important books written by his students. These books include *Shemirat Shabbat keHilchatah*, written by Rabbi Yehoshua Neuwirth, and *Nishmat Avraham*, written by Rabbi Dr. Avraham Sofer Abraham.

Rabbi Auerbach was meticulous in studying modern technology and science before offering rulings on these matters. For example, he had doctors and scientists perform experiments to help him determine the exact moment a person is considered dead, and the minimum temperature at which cooking on Shabbat is prohibited.

Rabbi Auerbach passed away in 1995. Over 250,000 people attended his funeral, demonstrating the tremendous impact he had upon the wide spectrum of Jews living in Israel and abroad.

[jbgutenberg@gmail.com](mailto:jbgutenberg@gmail.com)

**Torah and Translation**  
**When Israeli/Diaspora Torah Portions Differ**  
Rabbi S. Z. Auerbach, Halichot Shlomo Tefilah 12:6-7  
Translated by Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

**יב:ו:** בני חוץ לארץ הבאים לארץ ישראל בשנים שאין קריאת הפרשיות שוה, ומפסידים שמיעת פרשה, אין צריכים להשלים ולשמוע הפרשה שחיסרו, דקריאת התורה הוי חובת ציבור.

**הערה ט:** אמנם אם רוצים, רשאים בשבת הבאה לקרוא לכהן את כל הפרשה שחיסרו, עם העליה הראשונה של הפרשה הנקראת בא"י.

**הערת הערה:** אבל לשואלים פרטיים הורה שלמעשה לא יעשו כן, וכאשר שאל אותן השואל הרי כתבו על רבנו הגר"א ז"ל (תוס' מעשה רב ס"ק ל"ד) שכאשר יצא מבית האסורין קראו לפניו ארבע פרשיות שחיסר בהיותו בבית האסורין, נוף בו רבנו ואמר: האם מעלה אתה בדעתך שהנך בדרגתו של רבנו הגר"א ז"ל לנהוג בכל הנהגותיו.

**הערה י:** ושפיר יכולים לעלות לתורה ולברך על קריאת הפרשה כמנהג המקום.

**יב:ז:** בן ארץ ישראל הנמצא בחוץ לארץ בשבת שאין קריאת הפרשיות שוה, וכן בן חוץ לארץ בארץ ישראל, יכולים לקרוא לרבים ולהוציאם ידי חובתם.

**הערה יא:** שאין קריאת התורה דומה לקריאת המגילה, שיש בה חלוקי דינים בין בני כרך לבני עיר כמו שאמרו במגילה ב. זמנו של זה לא כזמנו של זה, ואין האחד בר חיובא ביום של חברו. דלענין קריאת התורה אין זמן קבוע בעצם הקריאה למקום מסוים, וכל המקומות הם בחיוב אחד לסיים את התורה... ובני ארץ ישראל וחוץ לארץ חיוב אחד רמיא עליהו בזה.

ועוד דבקריאת המגילה החובה היא חובת קריאה, ועל השומעים לצאת ידי חובה מדין 'שומע כעונה' בקריאת הקורא, משא"כ קריאת התורה בב' וה' ושבת שעיקר חובתה היא חובת לימוד (עי' ב"ק פב. ורמב"ם רפ"ב מהל' תפילה ב)... ובזה אין הקורא מוציא את הצבור מדין 'שומע כעונה' – חוץ מפרשת זכור וכדו' – ולכן אין הקורא צ"ל בר חיובא לאותה קריאה דוקא, אלא די לנו שהוא בר חיובא בעיקר סדר הקריאה ללמוד כל התורה כסדרה

**12:6:** Non-Israelis who come to Israel in years when the portions read are not the same, missing hearing a portion, need not complete and hear the portion they missed, for Torah reading is a communal obligation [and so they read what the community is reading].

**Footnote 9:** But if they wish, they may, on the following Shabbat, read the entire missing portion for the kohen, along with the first reading of the portion which was already read in Israel.

**Footnote to Footnote 9:** But [Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach] ruled for those who asked that, in practice, they should not do this. A questioner once asked him that it is written of the Vilna Gaon that when he left prison, they read before him the four portions he had missed in prison. (Tosefet Maaseh Rav 34) Our master scolded him, saying, "Do you consider yourself on the level of the Vilna Gaon, to emulate his practices?"

**Footnote 10:** Such people may ascend to the Torah and bless upon the portion which is read according to local practice, [even though it is not the reading of their own community].

**12:7:** An Israeli who is found outside Israel on Shabbat when the portions read are not the same, and a non-Israeli who is in Israel, may read for the community and fulfill their obligation for them.

**Footnote 11:** Because Torah reading is not like Megilah reading, which has different rules for city-dwellers and town-dwellers, as enumerated on Megilah 2a that one's times [for reading] are not those of the other, and one is not obligated on the day of the other. Regarding Torah reading, there is no fixed date for reading in a particular place. All places have the same obligation to complete the Torah... and Israelis and non-Israelis are under the same obligation in this.

Further, regarding Megilah reading, the obligation is to read it, and the listeners must fulfill their obligation [of reading]

via the principle of "hearing is like declaring" with the reader's reading. As opposed to Torah reading on Monday, Thursday and Shabbat, where the essential obligation is an obligation to learn (see Bava Kama 82a and the start of Rambam's Laws of Prayer 2)... In this the reader does not fulfill the community's obligation via the principle of "hearing is like declaring" – other than for *Zachor* and the like – and therefore the reader need not be obligated in that reading, specifically. It is sufficient for us that he is obligated in the essential order of reading, to learn the entire Torah in its order and to complete it...

The Torah's 33<sup>rd</sup> mitzvah, honouring one's parents, is frequently described (such as Yerushalmi Peah 1:1) as the most difficult mitzvah in the Torah, because there is no limit on the efforts required to repay our debt to those who partnered with Hashem to give us life, and who devoted years of their lives to raising us.

This mitzvah is divided into two categories: *Mora* (Awe) and *Kavod* (Honour). *Mora* refers to displays of respect, such as not using our parents' seats and not contradicting them. *Kavod* refers to actions which actively provide honour, such

as providing meals or dressing them.

According to Rambam (Hilchot Mamrim 6:3) and Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 240:5), support of a parent comes from the parent's funds, not from the child's funds. [This is supported by the Talmud Bavli (Kiddushin 31b), but the Talmud Yerushalmi (Kiddushin 1:7) is less clear.] However, parents who are indigent have priority as tzedakah recipients, even before one's own independent children. (Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 240:5, 251:3; Shoel v'Nishal 2:110)

*To be continued..*

**Weekly Highlights: May 4 – May 10 / 29 Nisan – 5 Iyar**

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
<b>שבת May 3-4</b>				
<b>8:50 AM</b>	Ezer Diena	What is Molech?	BAYT	<b>Pre-Shacharit Parshah</b>
<b>10:30 AM</b>	R' Alex Hecht	Parshah Analysis	Clanton Park	<b>After Hashkamah</b>
<b>Pre-Pirkei Avot</b>	Ezer Diena	Daf Yomi	BAYT	<b>Rabbi's Classroom</b>
<b>After minchah</b>	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Gemara Avodah Zarah	BAYT	<b>Simcha Suite</b>
<b>Sun. May 5</b>	<b>Rosh Chodesh Iyar</b>			
<b>10:00 AM to Noon</b>	<b><u>YOM HAZIKARON/YOM HA'ATZMAUT LEARNATHON AT BAYT</u></b> <b>Rabbi Alex Hecht: Domestic Policy: Yeshiva Students and the Draft</b> <b>Ezer Diena: Agriculture: Connecting Holidays, Impurity and Food</b> <b>Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner: Foreign Policy: Dwelling Alone, or International Partner?</b> <b>Rabbi Elihu Abbe: Philosophy: This Desirable Land</b> <b>Free of Charge; Light Refreshments; Open to All!</b>			
<b>Tue. May 7</b>				
<b>1:30 PM</b>	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Yeshayah: Chapters 16-17	Shaarei Shomayim	
<b>7:30 PM</b>	R' Mordechai Torczyner	The Book of Yehoshua	129 Theodore Pl.	<b>Men</b>
<b>Wed. May 8</b>				
<b>Yom haZikaron</b>				
<b>10:00 AM</b>	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Leading Anti-Semites, 1 of 4: Caliph Abd Al-Mu'min	Beth Emeth	<b>Fee; register at <a href="http://torontotorah.com/anti">torontotorah.com/anti</a></b>
<b>6:15 PM</b>	<b><u>At the Schwartz Reisman Centre, on the Lebovic Campus, 9600 Bathurst St.</u></b> <b>6:15 PM Minchah, Community Yom haZikaron Remembrance Ceremony</b> <b>Featuring Golani Commander Barak Harim</b>  <b>Followed by Celebratory Maariv in honour of Yom ha'Atzmaut, and...</b> <b>7:30 PM Mizrahi's ISRAFEST! Activities, Exhibition, Shuk, Fireworks and more!</b>			
<b>Thu. May 9</b>				
<b>Yom ha'Atzmaut</b>				
<b>1:30 PM</b>	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Shemuel: Chapters 9-10	49 Michael Ct.	<b>Women</b>
<b>8:30 PM</b>	Ezer Diena	Gemara Beitzah	<a href="mailto:ediena@torontotorah.com">ediena@torontotorah.com</a>	<b>Men, Advanced</b>
<b>Fri. May 10</b>				
<b>10:30 AM</b>	R' Elihu Abbe	Kiddushin	Yeshivat Or Chaim	<b>Advanced</b>
<b><u>For University Men, at Yeshivat Or Chaim</u></b> <b>10:00 AM Sunday, R' Aaron Greenberg, Gemara Shabbat: Not this week</b> <b>11:00 AM Sunday, Beit Midrash Rotation: Contemporary Halachah: Not this week</b> <b>8:30 AM Wednesday, Ezer Diena, Stories and She'eilot</b> <b>8:30 AM Friday, R' Mordechai Torczyner, Parshah</b>				
<b><u>WOMEN'S BEIT MIDRASH for University and Adult Women, at Ulpanat Orot, with Mrs. Eliana Abbe</u></b> <b>9:30 AM Tuesdays: Sefer Devarim</b> <b>9:30 AM Thursdays: Tefillah</b>				
<b><u>Seder Boker for Adult Men</u></b> <b>10:00 AM to Noon, Monday/Wednesday - R' Moshe Yeres: Masechet Megilah and Eim haBanim Semeichah</b> <b>10:00 AM to Noon, Tuesday/Thursday - R' Moshe Yeres: Parshanut on Parshah and Pninei Halachah</b>				