

# Toronto Torah

## Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Terumah

4 Adar, 5780/February 29, 2020

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This issue is dedicated in honour of the first yahrtzeit (10 Adar) of  
Mrs. Marsha Zoltak, Masha bat Avraham z"l,  
by her loving family

This issue is dedicated by Alan and Resa Litwack  
for the yahrtzeit of Rose Litwack, Rachel bat Meir haLevi z"l

### Legalized Idolatry?

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Perhaps the least likely aspect of the Mishkan is the sculpture in the Holy of Holies: on top of the case containing the *luchot* (tablets) were statues of *keruvim* (cherubs). (Shemot 25:18-22) The same images adorned the giant curtains hanging in the Mishkan. (ibid. 26:1) The Talmud (Chagigah 13b) contends that they were winged human youths, and so we must ask: Why would G-d want statues of human beings in holiest part of the world's holiest location?

A midrash asks this question, pointing out that Hashem specifically forbids us from creating such statues! This midrash answers that this must be accepted as Hashem's will, much as G-d orders us not to light fires on Shabbat, but also orders us to bring korbanot on Shabbat. (Pesikta Zutrita Terumah 25:18, and see Avodah Zarah 43b) But this only explains our acceptance of the mitzvah; what benefit does G-d see in their presence in the Mishkan?

#### 1: Divine Presence

Ramban writes that G-d orders us to create the *keruvim* as "a Throne of Honour for Me, for I will meet with you there, and I will place My Shechinah upon you." (Commentary to Shemot 25:21) This fits Yechezkel's description of *keruvim* as part of the Divine throne, as well as the presence of *keruvim* at the entrance of the Garden of Eden. (Yechezkel 1:10, Bereishit 3:24) Indeed, Tehillim 99:1 describes G-d as "dwelling with the *keruvim*."

#### 2: Education

Rambam contends that the *keruvim* are educational, teaching belief in a celestial realm, as well as the existence of G-d, communication from G-d via prophecy, and the presentation of Torah to humanity. (Moreh Nevuchim 3:45) This is challenging, though, since the *keruvim* in the Holy of Holies were hidden from sight! The Talmud (Yoma 54a) does state that they were revealed to those who came to the Beit haMikdash for holidays, but why wouldn't the *keruvim* on the giant curtains have sufficed?

#### 3: Inspiration

Don Isaac Abarbanel offers a third idea: the *keruvim* provide inspiration. Specifically, "they were in the form of youths to hint to youth's natural powers of insight and purity from all sin." (Commentary to Yechezkel 10:13) By symbolizing our abilities and righteousness, the *keruvim* inspire us. However, as with Rambam's approach, we must ask: why not suffice with the very visible *keruvim* on the curtains?

#### 4: Barometer

The Talmud describes the *keruvim* as a barometer of our relationship with G-d: "When the Jews would ascend for the holiday, they would open the curtain and show the Jews the *keruvim* embracing, and say, 'See how beloved you are before G-d, like the love of a man and woman!'" (Yoma 54a) Rabbi Meir Simchah haKohen explained, "The Creator made signs and markers to inform whether Israel is performing

Hashem's will." (Commentary to Shemot 32:19) But why hide this barometer?

#### 5: Our Representatives

We might suggest one more idea, highlighting the human features of the *keruvim*. Perhaps, rather than represent G-d to us, the *keruvim* represent us, to G-d. Specifically, the pair represent two human beings: Adam and Chavah. [Indeed, Rabbi Yaakov Mecklenburg wrote, "The name *keruv* is a description of Adam the First." (*HaKtav v'haKabbalah* to Bereishit 3:24)]

In general, we may observe that the Mishkan recreates the Garden of Eden at the moment we were exiled. In Eden, Adam and Chavah were told "to work it and protect it," jobs which then fell to the tribe of Levi. [Compare Bereishit 2:15 and Bamidbar 3:7-8, for example.] Adam and Chavah are exiled wearing clothing designed for them by G-d; the kohanim wore special clothing designed for them by G-d. Adam and Chavah are barred from the "Tree of Life" when they are exiled; our *luchot*, representing G-d's Torah, are also off-limits.

If so, then we understand why the *keruvim* are not for us to see; we craft them for G-d to "see". They represent that hope which has been humanity's greatest dream since the week of Creation – to walk the path to the Tree of Life, and return to the Garden of Eden. May G-d see our longing to return – even in a time when we lack *keruvim* – and restore that original bond.

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

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**Summary**

Our chapter describes the momentous face-off between David and Goliath:

The Philistines gathered to wage war against Israel. In response, Shaul assembled Israel to prepare for war. Each army was camped on a mountain, separated by a valley. Goliath, an incredibly large and strong man, crossed over into the Israelite camp. He was approximately 4 metres in height, and wore approximately 127 kilograms of armour and weaponry. [See Shemuel I 17:4-7 for measurement in biblical units.] Goliath challenged the Israelites to send a man to fight him, proposing the following wager: if the Israelite kills him, the Philistines will become slaves to the Israelites; if Goliath is victorious, the Israelites will become slaves to the Philistines. When Shaul and the Israelites heard Goliath's wager, they became very frightened.

To everyone's surprise, David, a musician and shepherd, and the youngest of Yishai's sons, stepped up to the challenge. David's elder brother, Eliav, accused him of neglecting his shepherding duties to spectate the showdown. Shaul also attempted to

dissuade David from taking on the warrior Goliath. David pushed back to Shaul: "Your servant was a shepherd for his father among the flocks; the lion and the bear would come and carry off a sheep from the flock, and I would go after it, strike it down, and rescue [the sheep] from its mouth...Your servant has slain even lion and bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them..." (ibid. 17:34-36, Artscroll tr.)

David convinced Shaul to allow him to fight, and even refused armour, since it weighed too much. Miraculously, David killed Goliath with a slingshot and stone, decapitated him, and brought his severed head to Jerusalem.

**Insight**

In our chapter, David declines armour and weaponry for his battle with Goliath: "David said to the Philistine, You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin - but I come to you with the name of Hashem..." (ibid. 17:45, Artscroll tr.) Later in life, David expressed that the Jews' reliance on Hashem as the only source of military victory separates them from other

nations, who place their confidence in brute strength: "These trust in chariots and these in horses, but we mention the name of Hashem our G-d." (Tehillim 20:8) Radak (ad loc.) notes Yeshayah's lament: "Ha! Those who go down to Egypt for help and rely upon horses! They have put their trust in abundance of chariots, in vast numbers of riders, and they have not turned to the Holy One of Israel..." (Yeshayah 31:1, JPS tr.) David taught us that turning to Hashem in times of need must not be merely supplemental to pursuing "natural" means. Rather, we must realize that Hashem is our true source of success. Consequently, we should not be frightened by our foes - in whatever form they present themselves. With Hashem's help, "they kneel and fall, but we rise and gain strength." (Tehillim 20:9)

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

**Holy Land Halachah: Liability for Bad Political Decisions?****Rabbi Jonathan Ziring**

As Israel heads back into its third elections in a year, it is worth exploring the extent to which a politician can be personally responsible for decisions they make that may be mistaken. This topic was explored by halachic authorities in response to the Rabin assassination, when Yigal Amir was motivated, in part at least, by his conviction that Rabin's policies endangered Jews, and thus defined him as a *rodef* ("pursuer"). Most writers focused on this narrow question. Rabbi Yehuda Herzl Henkin (*Shu"t Bnei Banim* 3:33), however, dealt with the more expansive issue as well. Much of our analysis is drawn from his presentation, though some of the sentiments are found in Professor Eliav Shochetman's article, *A Jewish Government Cannot be a 'Pursuer'* (Techumin 19).

In Halachah, politicians are not above criminal law. They are liable for personal crimes that they commit. Even a king can be brought to court. While the rabbis decreed not to try the kings of the northern kingdom, *Malchut Yisrael*, that was because they were perceived to be dangerous. Davidic kings, however, could indeed be tried. (Rambam, Hilchot Sanhedrin 2:5, Hilchot Melachim 3:7)

However, when it comes to political decisions, the government seems to have far-reaching rights that make it hard to hold a politician liable, unless they do something illegal. [Most authorities assume that for these purposes, a democracy functions as an extension of the laws of the monarch; see *Shu"t Mishpat Kohen* 144.] The Talmud (Shevuot 35b) states that a king who kills up to one-sixth of the world cannot be punished. Tosafot interpret this to mean that a king can initiate a discretionary war, although it can be quite deadly. Rashi suggests that it means a king can have people work for him, even if the work is dangerous.

While we may not encourage these practices, it highlights that in theory, a government can make painful decisions. Admittedly, many authorities assume a king needs some reason to go to war, but if there is a reason, then the means he may use to achieve that goal are, in theory, quite expansive.

Rabbi Henkin contends, based on the fact that the sinful kings of the northern kingdom were recognized by Tanach - even in cases when they were not appointed by a prophet, and even when they personally violated the Torah - that being a sinner does not automatically vitiate the status of a king or government. In the case of modern Israel, he notes that the alternative to accepting this claim would be to simply have a non-Jewish government, which is not bound by Torah, until the Messianic age.

Professor Shochetman further notes that in any case where there is a legitimate dispute about the wisdom (or halachic permissibility) of an action, a government can claim they were acting in what they thought were the best interests.

Thus, the best way to protest a government one sees as flawed is not the courts, but the ballot box.

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

## Biography

### Rabbi Moshe Alshich

Rabbi Sammy Bergman

Rabbi Moshe Alshich was born in 1508 in Edirne, Turkey. His father, Rabbi Chaim Alshich, was a great Torah scholar, but his mother and siblings are unknown to us. While in Turkey, he began studying in a yeshiva headed by Rabbi Yosef Caro, who would later author the Shulchan Aruch. Later in his youth, he moved to Salonika to study with Rabbi Yosef Taitazak, a preeminent Talmudist and Kabbalist of that generation. In 1535, Rabbi Alshich emigrated to Safed, Israel; one year later, when he was joined by his teacher Rabbi Yosef Caro, Rabbi Alshich was already a judge on the rabbinical court and a leader of the community. Rabbi Alshich was the head of two yeshivot in Safed, where he taught Talmud and Halachah. He taught many prominent students, including Rabbi Chaim Vital, who became a prominent Kabbalist.

Although he was an expert in talmudic law, Rabbi Alshich was known primarily for his inspiring sermons. Rabbi Yitzchak Luria, the greatest Kabbalist of his generation, was among the many members of the large crowds that gathered to hear Rabbi Alshich's weekly Shabbat sermons. Those sermons served as the basis for his *Torat Moshe*, a commentary on the Torah and the five megillot. In his commentary, Rabbi Alshich utilizes a homiletical approach, skillfully gleaning lessons from the text and transmitting them to the reader with inspiring rhetoric, laced with references to phrases from Tanach and Jewish liturgy.

In 1587, Rabbi Alshich moved to Damascus, because of an epidemic which struck the land of Israel. In 1590, he began traveling throughout Turkey, Persia, and Syria as a rabbinic emissary to collect funds for the yeshivot of Safed. Rabbi Moshe Alshich died in 1600 in Damascus, and was buried in the old cemetery in Safed. Due to his immense scholarship and piety, he is often referred to as the "Alshich HaKadosh", "the holy Alshich".

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

## Torah and Translation

### The Remarkable Reversal of Achashverosh

Rabbi Moshe Alshich, Commentary to Esther 1:1

Translated by Rabbi Sammy Bergman

...וזה...ל במדרש (אסתר רבה א א): "ויהי בימי אחשורוש' שהרג אשתו מפני אוהבו, 'הוא אחשורוש' שהרג אוהבו מפני אשתו." ע"כ.

והנה יראו דברים אשר אין בהם חפץ, כי מה להם הרוג את אשתו מפני אוהבו והרוג אוהבו בשביל אשתו? אך הוא שדעתם כי בא הכתוב בפתח דברי המגילה ביתור אומרו "הוא אחשורוש" להודיע את אשר הפליא לעשות הוא יתברך עם ישראל עמו בימים ההם, כי אחרי נמכרו להשמיד וכו' גאולה היתה לנו מאתו יתברך.

והנה היה מקום לאיש שוגה ופתי לדבר ולומר, הלא רב טוב לבית ישראל להציל את נפשתינו בימי אחשורוש והיא שעמדה לנו כי אחות היה לנו בבית המלך, באופן ימעטו וישוחו חין ערך נסו יתברך אשר הגדיל לעשות. על כן החל ואמר הכר נא גדולת הנס והפורקן, כי הנה וי היה לך בימי אחשורוש שהרג אשתו בשביל אוהבו, ולא שב אפו ממנה עד כלה הרעה ולא שת לב אל אשתו והרגה מפני אוהבו. והוא אחשורוש, בהוייתו ההיא היפך והרג אוהבו בשביל אשתו.

כלומר ואיך תחזקנה ידיך ויפתה לבך לאמר כי אחות היה לך בבית המלך: כי הלא זה דרכו להרוג אשתו בשביל אוהבו, ואם כן גם עתה יהרוג את אסתר בשביל המן אוהבו והיה נכשל עוזר ונופל עוזר חס ושלום. לולי ד' היה לנו ויהפך לבו מן הקצה אל הקצה, שעם היותו הורג אשתו בשביל אוהבו הוא אחשורוש בהוייתו, היפכו הוא יתברך יהרוג אוהבו בשביל אשתו. ועל כן סיפר כל המאורע, למען יראו וידעו גודל רוגזו כי כאשר כעס על אשתו הרגה בדבר ממוכן, למען יפלא בעינינו מה שאחר כך הרג אוהבו בשביל אשתו:

A midrash (Esther Rabbah 1:1) says: "And it was in the days of Ahasuerus' who killed his wife for the sake of his friend, 'he is Ahasuerus' who killed his friend for the sake of his wife."

Behold, these seem like words that have no purpose, for what is it to them that he killed his wife for the sake of his friend, and he killed his friend for the sake of his wife? However, their idea is that the megillah opens with the extra phrase "he is Ahasuerus" to declare how the Blessed One wondrously acted for Israel His nation in those days, for after we were sold to be annihilated etc., we had a redemption from Him, the Blessed One.

Behold, there is room for a foolish and mistaken man to speak and say, "There was an abundance of good for the house of Israel to save our lives in the days of Ahasuerus, and it stood up for us, for we had a sister in the king's house," in a manner that would diminish and weaken the value of His miracle, may He be blessed, which He marvellously performed. Therefore, it began and said: recognize the great miracle and redemption, for behold, a calamity happened to you in the days of Ahasuerus who killed his wife for the sake of his friend, and his anger didn't subside from her until the evil had finished, and he paid no heed to his wife, and killed her for the sake of his friend. And he is Ahasuerus, of that same persona, who reversed himself and killed his friend for the sake of his wife.

Meaning: how could your hand become mighty and seduce your heart into saying that you [survived because you] had a sister in the house of the king? For this [man's] nature was to kill his wife for the sake of his friend, and if so, now also he should have killed Esther for the sake of Haman, and the helper would have stumbled and the helped would have fallen, Heaven forbid! If not for the Lord who was there for us, and reversed his heart from one extreme to the other, for although he killed his wife for the sake of his friend, he Ahasuerus with his persona, the Blessed One reversed him to kill his friend for the sake of his wife. Therefore it told the whole event, so that they would see and know the great wrath [of Ahasuerus], for when he was angry at his wife he killed her at Memuchan's word – so that it would be wondrous in our eyes that he later killed his friend for the sake of his wife.

## Weekly Highlights: Feb. 29 – Mar. 6 / 4 Adar – 10 Adar

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
<b>Daily</b>				
<b>Mon-Thu 8:00 AM</b>	Netanel Klein	Gemara Moed Katan	Clanton Park	<b>Men</b>
<b>שבת Feb. 28-29</b>				
<b>9:30 AM</b>	<b>Ezer Diena</b>	<b>Minchat Chinuch: Women's Megilah Readings</b>	<b>BAYT</b>	<b>Rabbi's Classroom</b>
<b>10:30 AM</b>	R' Alex Hecht	Parshah Analysis	Clanton Park	<b>After Hashkamah</b>
<b>Pre-minchah</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>Motz. 7:30 PM</b>	R' Sammy Bergman	Parent-Child Learning	Shaarei Shomayim	
<b>Sun. Mar. 1</b>				
<b>8:15 AM</b>	Ezer Diena	Dressing Up On Purim	Yeshivat Or Chaim	
<b>9:15 AM</b>	Netanel Klein	Purim: Day of Joy?	Adas Israel	<b>Hamilton</b>
<p><b><u>Pre-Purim Learnathon at Congregation B'nai Torah!</u></b>  <b>Dedicated in memory of Paul Forman z"l</b>  <b>10:00 AM MIDRASH: R' Sammy Bergman: Megilat E-Satire</b>  <b>10:30 AM HISTORY: R' Alex Hecht: Who Was Achashverosh?</b>  <b>11:00 AM MEGILLAH: R' Mordechai Torczyner: The Book of Achashverosh?</b>  <b>11:30 AM HALACHAH: Ezer Diena: Night Reading: Main Reading, or Custom?</b></p>				
<b>Tue. Mar. 3</b>				
<b>10:00 AM</b>	<b>R' Mordechai Torczyner</b>	<b>Joseph, Daniel, Esther: Jews in Foreign Palaces</b>	<b>Adath Israel</b>	<b>Women; there is a fee info@adathisrael.com</b>
<b>1:30 PM</b>	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Yeshayah Chap. 36-37	Shaarei Shomayim	
<b>7:30 PM</b>	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Shoftim Chap. 11-12	129 Theodore Pl.	<b>Men</b>
<b>Wed. Mar. 4</b>				
<b>6:00 AM</b>	Ezer Diena	Gemara Succah	BAYT	<b>Rabbi's Classroom</b>
<b>7:00 PM</b>	R' Alex Hecht	Stories from the Talmud	Shaarei Tefillah	
<b>7:30 PM</b>	R' Sammy Bergman	Ancient Texts, Modern Dilemmas	Shaarei Shomayim	
<b>7:30 PM</b>	<b>Ezer Diena</b>	<b>Was Mordechai the Villain of the Purim Story?</b>	<b>Simcha Suite</b>	
<b>Thu. Mar. 5</b>				
<b>1:30 PM</b>	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Shemuel, Chap. 15	49 Michael Ct.	<b>Women</b>
<b>8:30 PM</b>	Ezer Diena	Gemara Beitzah	ediena@torontotorah.com	<b>Men, Advanced</b>
<b>Fri. Mar. 6</b>				
<b>10:30 AM</b>	Review Shiur	Bava Metzia: Perek 6	Yeshivat Or Chaim	<b>Advanced</b>
<p><b><u>For University Men, at Yeshivat Or Chaim</u></b>  <b>10:00 AM Sunday, R' Aaron Greenberg, Gemara Shabbat</b>  <b>11:00 AM Sunday, Beit Midrash Rotation - Not this week</b>  <b>8:30 AM Wednesday, Ezer Diena, Mishlei</b>  <b>8:30 AM Friday, R' Mordechai Torczyner, Parshah</b></p>				
<p><b><u>For University Women</u></b>  <b>5:40-7:40 PM Sunday at Yeshivat Or Chaim, R' Mordechai Torczyner, Purim in Ramot</b>  <b>7:00-9:00 PM Tuesdays at BAYT, Open Beit Midrash</b>  <b>8:30 PM Thursdays at Shaarei Shomayim, R' Sammy Bergman, In-Depth Gemara: Laws of Shabbat</b></p>				
<p><b><u>Seder Boker for Men with Our Beit Midrash, at Yeshivat Or Chaim</u></b>  <b>10:00 AM to Noon, Mon/Wed Masechet Taanit, Orot haTeshuvah of Rabbi Kook, Pninei Halachah</b>  <b>10:00 AM to Noon, Tue/Thu Parshanut on the Parshah, Sefer Shemuel, Pninei Halachah</b></p>				