

Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Noach

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This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Shoshanna Schapira
in memory of her beloved father Israel Schapira z"l for his second yahrtzeit
לעילוי נשמת ישראל בן יעקב צבי ז"ל

This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Archie and Tobey Crandell
to mark the yahrtzeit of Tobey's mother, Rochel bas Peretz Yehudah z"l

The Single Father of Humanity, Twice

Rabbi Jonathan Ziring

Much ink has been spilled in the attempt to understand the stories of Bereishit, especially the first two parshiyot, in light of modern knowledge of science and history. Some have opted in favor of literal understandings of the Torah and rejection of outside data; others, with varying levels of success, have read the Torah more metaphorically in ways that can align with what has been learned from these secular disciplines. Still others, however, have argued that both approaches are ill advised. In Shemuel David Luzzato ("Shadal")'s opening comments to Bereishit, for example, he argues that all of these readings understand the Torah as a historical or scientific work, when in fact it is a moral-theological one. The narrative style allows these ideas to speak to all audiences, whether or not they are philosophically inclined. They are not, however, meant to offer scientific information.

What lessons do these opening stories teach? Shadal contends that the creation stories teach that 1) The world is an integrated whole created by one G-d and 2) Humanity is unified by a common ancestor. Much of the barbarism in the ancient world emerged from misunderstandings of these principles. Belief in a pantheon of petty, warring gods led people to believe that it was morally justifiable or mandated to engage in horrendous acts to appease the gods in their endless contests with each other. The belief that humanity descended from

different ancestors allowed the dehumanization of the "other". In his comments he essentially elaborates on Chazal's claim that humanity all descended from Adam so that no one could tell another person that "my father is greater than your father." (Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5)

The detailed genealogies of Bereishit Chapter 10, listing the children born after the flood to the children of Noach, double down on these messages, even in the less than ideal post-flood world. "We know that many of the ancients said that their forefathers were born from their lands though a miraculous act of one god or another, or that they were born of the gods themselves. The intent of the Torah is to contradict these vanities, and to establish the straight belief that we are all the children of one man and we are all the work of one G-d." (Shadal, Bereishit 10:1) The theological and moral lessons merge - there is one G-d, who created all humanity through one person (Adam, and later Noach), so that people would understand that they are all equal.

Rabbi Dovid Tzvi Hoffman (Bereishit 10:1) develops this further:

Considering that the majority of the ancient nations were interested in their nation and birth alone, and to other nations and their countries they paid no attention, as they saw them as strangers or even as barbarians. The point of departure for the Torah of G-d is that all people are brothers, children

of one large family, and all of them are destined to be part of the blessing that was given to Avraham, our father, in the beginning: "And through you all families of the earth will be blessed," "And through your children all nations of the earth will be blessed," and afterwards to Yaakov, "And through you all families of the land will be blessed, and through your children." Therefore, before the crux of the genealogies of Israel, which start with Avraham, comes a chart of the nations, to give those families of the earth and nations of the land names, so that the day will come when the Jewish people will bring them to the understanding of the true G-d.

Even after humanity's failure, the Torah insists that all people remain part of the religious story of the world. This must be reiterated before Avraham is introduced, to teach that G-d chose Avraham not to reject others, but to inspire them. Each nation continues to be named; their individual identities still matter. Rather than write that in succinct statements, the Torah showed us this, by including them in the ultimate story of the Book of Books.

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Summary

As our chapter begins, King David finally has a chance to rest and return home, thanks to Hashem giving him peace from his enemies. David turns to the prophet Natan and asks, "How can I sit in a house of cedars while Hashem's Ark resides in a tent?" He seeks to build a Beit haMikdash. Natan responds that surely G-d is with David, and he should go ahead. (7:1-3)

That very night, Hashem gives Natan a vision for David, dashing those dreams. Hashem says that He has never resided in a house, only in the Mishkan. Further, throughout all of the years that Hashem shepherded Bnei Yisrael, He never asked for such a house. Rather, Hashem tells Natan to inform David that Hashem will continue to aid David in battles, but it is not David's job to build the Temple. The task for building the Beit haMikdash will fall to his son, Shlomo, and Hashem will ensure the success of his monarchy just as Hashem has done for David. (7:4-16)

Upon hearing Natan's vision from Hashem, David humbly praises Hashem, thanking Hashem for all of the kindness that Hashem has shown to him and to Bnei Yisrael. (7:17-24)

David then specifically lauds Hashem for promising that the House of David will continue and will construct the Beit haMikdash after David's passing. David dedicates his prayer in honour of Hashem's promise and blessings and their future fulfillment. (7:25-29)

Insight

David's reaction to rejection is praiseworthy; it is a prayer, wholly positive and without complaint. But why wasn't David permitted to build the Beit HaMikdash? At least seven reasons are suggested:

- Rabbi Ziring noted last week that Divrei HaYamim can help explain puzzling passages in Shemuel and Melachim; this is true here. In Divrei haYamim (I 22:5-11), David charges his young son Shlomo with building the Beit HaMikdash. He also explains to his officers why he did not build the Beit HaMikdash himself, and he offers a reason: it is because of the blood he has spilled and the wars he has waged. (ibid. 28:1-3)
- Rambam interprets the "blood" as David being involved with the profession of war. (Shemonah Perakim 7)
- Radak points out that the blood can also refer to the blood of Uriyah, and

of the Kohanim of Nov, and of other innocent people. (Commentary to Shemuel II 7:4)

- Ralbag suggests that David has done enough for Hashem, and the construction should be left for his son, Shlomo. This is unrelated to David's statement about bloodshed in Divrei haYamim. (Commentary to Divrei haYamim I 22:8)
- Abarbanel posits that the Beit HaMikdash must be built by a stable monarchy of a king who is the son of a king. David doesn't fit this, but Shlomo does. (Commentary to Shemuel II 7:4-5)
- [Rabbi Amnon Bazak](#) similarly points out, based on 7:8-11, that the time is not yet right because the condition of stable tranquility amongst all of Israel is lacking.
- A midrash mentions that had the righteous David built the Beit HaMikdash, no one could have destroyed it. Then, when we sinned, Bnei Yisrael would be destroyed instead. (Pesikta Rabti 2)

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The Israeli Farmer: Leket, Shich'chah, and Peah Today

Based on [an article on this topic by Rabbi Yehudah Amichai](#).

Vayikra 19:9 and Devarim 24:19 instruct field owners to leave over a number of gifts for the poor, including *leket* (dropped stalks should not be collected by the field owner), *shich'chah* (forgotten sheaves should not be collected by the field owner) and *peah* (the corner of the field must be left unharvested). Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzvot 216-220) states that these are all related mitzvot, incumbent on field owners. However, in general, contemporary Israeli farmers do not perform these mitzvot. What is the rationale for this?

First, there is more room for leniency regarding a rabbinic commandment than a biblical one. While Rambam (Sefer HaMitzvot, Mitzvah 120 and Hilchot Matnot Aniyim 1:14) seems to be of the opinion that these mitzvot are biblical in Israel at all times, Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzvah 216) writes that today the mitzvah to leave over this produce is rabbinic, alongside other mitzvot which only apply biblically when the majority or entirety of the Jewish People reside in Israel.

Second: Even if we accept the stringent approach that the mitzvah to leave over these gifts is biblical today, many places in Israel may be exempt, since there is a significant population of non-Jews living there. The Talmud (Chullin 134b) explains that if the leftover produce would be consumed by birds, there is no mitzvah to leave these gifts for the poor. Tur (Yoreh Deah 332), as understood by Bach and Rama, applies this ruling to cases in which the food would be taken by non-Jews as well, and exempts farmers

from leaving produce over in fields where this would occur. [Note that according to Beit Yosef and Shach, this leniency applies only outside of Israel.] However, there are certainly many fields in Israel that have a majority of Jews around them, and to which this leniency would not apply.

Third: Based on a mishnah (Peah 8:1), Rabbi Avraham Yeshayah Karelitz argues that all fields in contemporary Israel (and the Diaspora) would be exempt from these mitzvot. (Chazon Ish, Ma'asrot 7:10-11) This is because today, poor people don't generally lack food, since it is available at a relatively cheap price. Therefore, they would not bother collecting grain and other produce and then go through the entire process of making bread themselves; they would much rather collect a few coins and purchase it at the store. Therefore, he concludes that since even the poorest Jewish people would not be interested in collecting it, farmers need not leave these gifts.

Based on the third point, it would seem that an individual farmer who did leave out these gifts for collection today would not actually fulfill this mitzvah. Nevertheless, Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky (Derech Emunah Hilchot Matnot Aniyim 1, Tziyun Halachah 95) writes that it seems that if the field owner were to contact poor Jews in advance, and they would agree to collect it, the farmer would fulfill this mitzvah.

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Biography

Rabbi Aharon Kotler

Rabbi Alex Hecht

Aharon Pinnes was born in 1891, in Svislach, Belarus, to Rabbi Schneur Zalman and Sarah Pesha. Aharon's mother died when he was an infant, and his father, who was the rabbi of the town, died when he was ten years old. Aharon was then adopted by his uncle, Rabbi Yitzchak Pinnes, a rabbinical judge in Minsk. Aharon was recognized as a prodigious child, and became known as the *Svislovitcher Ilui* (prodigy). He was accepted by Rabbi Nosson Zvi Finkel into the Slabodka Yeshiva as a young teen. In order to avoid conscription into the Russian army, Aharon adopted the surname "Kotler," the family name of an elderly couple in Svislach who passed away without any children. He married Chana Perl, daughter of Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer, and assumed leadership of the Slutsk Yeshiva with his father-in-law.

In 1941, following the outbreak of World War II, Rabbi Kotler emigrated to the United States. He was a leading figure in the Vaad Hatzalah, which advocated for - and provided assistance to - Jews trapped in Nazi-occupied Europe.

In 1943, Rabbi Kotler founded Beth Medrash Govoha, a yeshiva for adult men in Lakewood, New Jersey. Rabbi Kotler believed that, ideally, men should devote themselves exclusively to Torah study. Rabbi Kotler was adamant that Torah study is a goal in-and-of-itself; he reportedly refused to describe his yeshiva as a "rabbinical school," insisting that *Torah lishmah* (Torah for its own sake) was its *raison d'être*.

Rabbi Kotler was involved in other initiatives, including helping to establish Chinuch Atzmai, an independent religious school system in Israel.

Since its founding with around a dozen students, Beth Medrash Govoha has grown exponentially. When Rabbi Kotler died in 1962, there were around 250 students, and currently, approximately 7,000 students learn in its various divisions. Following Rabbi Kotler's passing, his son, Rabbi Schneur Kotler succeeded him, and today four of Rabbi Aharon's grandsons and grandsons-in-law head the yeshiva. Rabbi Aharon Kotler was one of the primary figures responsible for the increase of Torah study in North America, and many yeshivot and community organizations emerged from - and are influenced by - the Lakewood Yeshiva.

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Torah and Translation

Mixed-seating in the Synagogue

R' Aharon Kotler, Mishnat R' Aharon 1:12

Translated by Rabbi Alex Hecht

עוררוני לבאר עפ"י דין תורתנו הקדושה, בדבר קהלה חרדית שרוצים לשנות לעשות תערובות אנשים ונשים בבית הכנסת. מאד נשתוממתי לראות כי ימצאו מפקפקים בדבר פשוט ומוסכם לאיסור מכל חכמי הדורות, ולא היה ת"ח עד היום הזה שיצדד בנדנדוד כל שהוא להתיר, וכן נהגו כל ישראל מימות עולם ובכל תפוצות הגולה...

א) במשנה סוכה נ"א ע"א ומתקנין שם תקון גדול, ומפרש בגמ' שם ע"ב, "הקיפוח גזוטר", והתקינו שיהו נשים יושבות מלמעלה ואנשים מלמטה. "וגם מקודם התקון לא ישבו בערבוביא, כמפורש בברייתא, אך נשים מבחוץ ואנשים מבפנים, אך מ"מ היה חשש של קלות ראש והתקינו כנ"ל..."

ב) מגילה כ"ט ע"א: "ואהי להם למקדש מעט' אלו בתי כנסיות ובתי מדרשות שבבבל..." הרי מכל זה דלהכה ילפינן ביה"כ"נ ממקדש...

י) יש בזה משום עוון גזל, כי הרבה מהמנדבים - ואולי רובם ככולם - לבנין ביה"כ"נ, הרי נתנו על בית הכנסת כשר עפ"י דין התורה ולפי דעת חכמים, וכוונתם לשם שמים להיות להם זכות במקום קדוש, ורצו לרומם ולפאר את בית השם, אבל אין ברצונם בשום אופן לשנות למקום שאסור להתפלל בו, ולא די שאין להם זכות, אלא שיש להם חלק במכשולים ולמזכרת עוון ח"ו, ובלי ספק שזהו לגמרי נגד דעתם ורצונם, וזהו גזל גמור על פי דין תורתנו הקדושה בין החיים בין המתים...

הכותב וחותם לכבוד התורה ולכבוד קדושת בית הכנסת.

I have been solicited to explain according to the law of our holy Torah the matter of an Orthodox congregation that wants to institute mixed [seating] of men and women in the synagogue. I am amazed to see that some are challenging this simple matter, which has been unanimously forbidden by sages of all generations. There was not a Torah scholar to this very day who was inclined whatsoever to rule permissively. All Jews from days of old, in all sections of the Diaspora, had been accustomed to this...

1) Mishnah Succah 5:2 says, "they made a significant adjustment [to the Beit haMikdash during the Simchat Beit haShoevah]." The Talmud (Succah 51b) explains that they surrounded [the Temple courtyard] with a balcony, and enacted that women should sit above and men below. Even prior to this adjustment, [men and women] did not sit together, as is explicit in a *baraita*; rather, the women were outside and the men were inside. Despite this, there was a concern of levity; and therefore they made this adjustment...

2) Talmud, Megillah 29a: "And I have been for them a miniature Temple' (Yechezkel 11:16) - these are the synagogues and study halls of Babylonia." ... We learn all of these practical laws of the synagogue from the Temple...

10) [Instituting mixed seating] involves the sin of theft, as many of the donors - and perhaps the majority [which] is considered like all [of them] - who [contributed to] the building of the synagogue, gave to a synagogue that is proper according to the law of the Torah and the sages, and their intentions were for the sake of Heaven, to have merit in a holy place. They wanted to elevate and glorify a house of G-d. It was not their intention in any scenario to change it into a place in which it is forbidden to pray, [where] it is not enough that they do not merit, but they even [receive] a portion of the stumbling blocks and a reminder of sin, Heaven forbid! There is no doubt that it is completely contrary to their understanding and desire, and this is bona fide theft according to the law of our holy Torah, whether from the living or from the dead...

Written and signed in honour of the Torah and in honour of the sanctity of the synagogue.

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Clickable Zoom links also available at www.torontotorah.com/letslearn
All classes are free and open to all, unless otherwise noted

SPECIAL PROGRAMMING

9:30-11:00 AM Sun. Oct. 25: Medical Ethics (open to laypeople)
Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, COVID: How Should a Doctor Advise a Rabbi?

10:00 AM Wed. Oct. 28: Vaccination Ethics
Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, a 4-part series on Zoom
Week 2: Individual vs. Community: Compulsory Vaccination
Register at <https://torontotorah.com/vaccine>; there is a fee

7:30 PM Wed. Oct. 29: Emotional Judaism
Rabbi Alex Hecht, a 5-part series on Zoom, with Clanton Park and Shaarei Tefillah
Week 3: Excitement

DAILY

7:10 AM Sun, 6:40 AM Mon-Fri, Rabbi Chaim Metzger, Daf Yomi with BAYT (men), via ZOOM

ADULT SEDER BOKER

Mon-Thu 10 AM to Noon, with Rabbi Moshe Yeres, via ZOOM (men)
Mondays and Wednesdays: Gemara Taanit, Orot haTeshuvah
Tuesdays and Thursdays: Parshah, Tanach: Shoftim

WEEKLY

Shabbat Oct 24

After minchah, Pirkei Avot with Rabbi Sammy Bergman in person at Shaarei Shomayim (not this week)

Sunday Oct. 25

9:15 AM Contemporary Halachah: Supernatural Rainfall with Netanel Klein

10:00 AM Gemara Shabbat with Rabbi Aaron Greenberg (University)

7:30 PM Gemara Ketuvot with Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner (men)

Monday Oct. 26

8:30 PM Gemara Shabbat, Chap. 15, with Rabbi Moshe Yeres

Tuesday Oct. 27

1:30 PM Megilat Esther, with Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner (email mekorot18@gmail.com to join)

7:30 PM Shoftim, with Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner (men)

Wednesday, Oct. 28

7:30 PM Genesis Journeys: Mystery of the First 7 Days, with Rabbi Sammy Bergman

Thursday Oct. 29

8:30 AM Daniel, Rabbi Chaim Metzger (University)

1:30 PM Shemuel, with Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner (women)

8:15 PM Gemara Bava Metzia, with Rabbi Sammy Bergman (University women)

8:30 PM Gemara Beitzah, with Ezer Dena (men, advanced)

Friday Oct. 30

8:30 AM Parshah, Rabbi Sammy Bergman (University)

11:30 AM Shemitah! with Rabbi Sammy Bergman and Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner (advanced)