

Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Noach

4 Cheshvan, 5782/October 9, 2021

Vol. 13 Num. 6 (#507)

Best wishes to our community for a healthy and happy New Year
Sincerely, Susan & Fred Birnbaum & family

Dedicated by Jeffrey C. Silver in celebration of Rabbi Elie Karfunkel's special Bar Mitzvah anniversary

Torah: Luminescent or Transparent?

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

A forty-year old man named Akiva meets a woman and commits to study Torah in order to earn her hand. After more than twenty years of study he becomes **Rabbi Akiva**, the leading sage of his time, with a legacy of Torah that lasts down to today. (Ketuvot 62b-63a)

Shimon ben Lakish, a bandit, the head of a gang of bandits, sees a rabbi swimming in a river and admires his beauty. He learns that the rabbi has a sister, and pledges to abandon his lifestyle and go study Torah in order to win her hand. **Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish** goes on to become one of the leading lights and overarching halachic authorities of his generation. (Bava Metzria 84a)

These vignettes testify to what Torah (and attraction!) can do for a Jew - but we also have the other side of the coin. Achitofel was the greatest advisor to King David, so great that his word was accepted as the word of G-d. Achitofel possessed a brilliant mind and a supreme knowledge of Torah. (Chagigah 15b) And yet - when King David's son Avshalom rebelled against him, Achitofel joined the mutiny and gave Avshalom repugnant advice: to forcefully co-opt his father's wives to demonstrate that he was serious about taking the throne, and to start a nationwide sweep to kill his own father immediately. (Shemuel II 15-17) If Torah is such a positively transformative force, how could Achitofel, the great Torah genius, become so degraded?

One answer lies in understanding what Torah can and cannot do for us.

Rabbeinu Bechaye (commentary to Shemot 28:15) noted that the Torah may be compared to the *tzohar* which Noach made for his ark.

G-d told Noach to make a *tzohar* for the boat, but the Torah does not explain what this *tzohar* is, or does. (Bereishit 6:6) A midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 31:12) provides two explanations: It was either a window, allowing sunlight into the Teivah, or a gem providing its own illumination. Either way, it provided light. [Gems may be viewed as providing light naturally via dispersion, fluorescence or adventurescence, but this midrash may view the *tzohar* gem as supernatural.]

The Torah can be like either version of the *tzohar*:

- The Torah can be a gem producing light for those who study it. A midrash says, "G-d looked in the Torah and created the world." (Bereishit Rabbah 1:1) As Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin explained, the Torah is G-d's declaration of creation, studying and practicing the Torah can mold us and create us anew. [See Nefesh haChaim 4:10-15.]
- On the other hand, if we do not allow the Torah to shape us then it is simply a window, not transforming a person but instead revealing that which is already inside. The Talmud notes that if a person studies Torah but doesn't develop reverence for G-d and a strong character, then that Torah will be corrupted. Thus the Talmud states that Doeg, a chief justice of the Sanhedrin who became a murderer, studied a great deal of Torah - but his Torah was "from the lips and out-

ward." He never allowed himself to be transformed. (Sanhedrin 106b)

We can make sure that the Torah will be a transformative gem for us, rather than a mere revelatory window, if we find those mitzvot that demand change, that demand we grow beyond ourselves. Certain mitzvot may suit us, and this is beautiful. [See *Ha'amek Davar* to Bamidbar 24:6.] But limiting ourselves to those mitzvot means that Torah is only a window to the daylight already present. For Torah to be transformative it must challenge us with a distant target, a goal that's higher than I've reached before. [Indeed, Bava Metzria 32b teaches that one who has the opportunity to help an enemy or a friend should help the enemy; the Torah pushes us to override our animosity.]

We are not doomed to be like Achitofel; we can be like Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish. Torah can be a transformative, illuminating *tzohar* gem for us. It will happen if we aren't afraid of the challenge, if we instead rise to meet the Torah's challenges and use them as tools for our growth.

[For an audio recording of a class on the biblical basis for identifying the *tzohar* as a gem or a window, please go to <https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/811787/>.]

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Summary

Navot the Israelite owned a vineyard close to King Achav's home in the northern kingdom of Yisrael; the men were cousins. Because of that, Achav tried to persuade Navot to give it to him. He offered to pay for it or to give him a better vineyard in exchange. Navot refused, because the vineyard was his inheritance from his ancestors. (21:1-3) Achav came home upset, and was not willing to eat. His wife Izevel asked why he was so upset, and he related Navot's rejection. Izevel told him not worry; she would handle this situation. (21:4-7)

Izevel sent letters to the elders and sages of Navot's town, asking them to call for a fast day for religious introspection. She asked to place Navot in the front of the assembly, and arranged for two people to falsely testify that Navot had blasphemed against Hashem and the king. Navot was tried, sentenced to death, and executed. (21:8-13)

With the death of Navot, Izevel told her husband Achav that he could now inherit Navot's vineyard. (21:14-16)

After this incident, Hashem spoke to

Eliyahu, and told him to rebuke Achav, "You both killed and inherited" Navot! Hashem decreed that Achav would die as well, and the dogs would lick his blood from his corpse as they had done to Navot's corpse after his execution. (21:17-19)

Eliyahu upbraided Achav for his addiction to sin. He said that Hashem would eradicate the house of Achav, no one would survive, the corpses of those who died in the city would be eaten by dogs, and the corpses of those who died in the field would be eaten by birds. Eliyahu emphasizes that Achav was more committed to evil than any of his predecessors. (21:20-26)

Achav heard these words, and they made an impression on him. He regretted his actions, tore his clothes, wore sackcloth, fasted, and walked slowly. (21:27)

Hashem told Eliyahu that He had seen Achav's repentance. Because of that, He would delay the elimination of the family until after Achav's lifetime. (21:28-29)

Insight

We see that when Achav humbled himself and started to express remorse for his bad deeds, one of his acts of repentance was to walk slowly. What is the virtue of walking slowly as an act of repentance?

Radak (commentary to 21:27) suggests that this gait reflects stress; one might also suggest it portrays a sense of defeat. But perhaps the virtue of going slowly is also itself an act of transformative repentance. People often because they go quickly through life, without paying attention to how their actions affect their lives and the lives of others. The first step of repentance is to stop rushing through life, pay attention to what we are doing, think and evaluate whether we are doing the right thing. We can evaluate the outcomes of our actions, and through that, we can find the right and careful path to walk, both physically and spiritually.

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It Happened in Israel: Should Jews Rebel Against Their Foes?**Idan Rakovsky**

One of the most horrifying stories recorded in the Talmud is the one of the Ten Martyrs - *asarah harugei malchut* - the heartrending narrative describing in graphic detail the murder of ten leading rabbis in the period of the Mishnah. They were slaughtered on the altar of senseless hatred after ignoring the Roman ban on teaching Torah, following the destruction of the Second Temple.

The fourth victim was Rabbi Chanina ben Tradyon, a leader in Rome during the period of the Bar Kochba Revolt and afterwards during the Hadrianic Decrees against Judaism. The Talmud (Avodah Zarah 18a) presents an interesting discussion between Rabbi Chanina and Rabbi Yosei Ben Kismah regarding the fundamental question they faced at that time: should Jews act against the decrees or stay passive?

"The Sages taught: When Rabbi Yosi ben Kisma fell ill, Rabbi Chanina ben Tradyon went to visit him. Rabbi Yosi ben Kisma said to him: Chanina my brother, do you not know that this nation has been given reign by a decree from Heaven? The proof is that Rome has destroyed Hashem's Temple, and burned His Sanctuary, and killed His pious ones, and destroyed His best ones, and it still exists. Evidently, all of this is by Divine decree. And yet I heard that you sit and engage in Torah study, convene assemblies in public, and have a Torah scroll placed in your lap, thereby demonstrating complete disregard for the decrees issued by the Romans." (tr. Steinsaltz edition, transliterations adapted)

We know that Rabbi Chanina continued both the spiritual and political way of his master Rabbi Akiva (see Semachot 8:9), who supported the Bar Kochba Revolt and claimed that the Jews must act against the Romans. On the other side of the barricade we can find Rabbi Yosi, who presented a much

more moderate approach towards the Roman decrees. He believed that everything is from Hashem, and therefore there is not so much that can be done in order to fix the situation. According to his philosophy, the Jews should only sit and wait for the Messiah to come in order to save themselves.

We find this very question on many other occasions throughout Jewish history- from the Maccabean Revolt, through the Holocaust, and even toward aliyah to Israel. Jews have always struggled with the question of how to manage situations that demand taking risks, and particularly regarding actions against other nations.

In this case, eventually, Rabbi Chanina's approach did not end up well. After Rabbi Yosi died, the Romans who had attended his funeral found on their way back to Rabbi Chanina sitting and teaching Torah, with a Torah scroll in his lap. His death was terrible. Wrapped in the scroll, he was placed on a pyre of green brush; fire was set to it, and wet wool was placed on his chest to prolong the agonies of death. His heartbroken disciples then asked: "Master, what do you see?" He answered: "I see the parchment burning, while the letters soar upward...."

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Biography

Rabbi Yechiel Michel Tukachinsky

Rabbi Yisroel Meir Rosenzweig

Rabbi Yechiel Michel Tukachinsky was born on December 27th, 1871 in Lachovitch, Lithuania. While he was still a child, his father died, leaving his mother to care for the family. At the age of eight, his mother moved the family to Eretz Yisrael in order to be closer to relatives. Much of Rabbi Tukachinsky's education took place in Yeshivat Eitz Chaim, which was founded in 1841 by Rabbi Shmuel Salant. The yeshiva was initially located in the Old City, but it eventually relocated to Jaffa Road while under the leadership of Rabbi Tukachinsky himself. In 1952, Rabbi Tukachinsky was awarded the Rav Kook Prize for Torah Literature. He passed away in 1955 and was buried in the Sanhedria Cemetery.

In his introduction to Gesher HaChaim, Rabbi Tukachinsky wrote that he wrote his major work detailing all of the laws and customs surrounding treatment of the ill, caring for the deceased, and mourning after seeing the new waves of immigration arriving in Eretz Yisrael and the confusion that was arising regarding these important laws. While hospitalized in Shaarei Tzedek Hospital for an ulcer, Rabbi Tukachinsky set to work on what would eventually become Gesher HaChaim.

A sign of his love for Eretz Yisrael, many of Rabbi Tukachinsky's other notable works focus on topics specific to Eretz Yisrael. These works include:

- **Luach Eretz Yisrael (1905)** - A daily calendar detailing the halachic issues pertaining to prayer and its set times.
- **HaYomam B'Kadur HaAretz (1943)** - A discourse presenting Rabbi Tukachinsky's position regarding the International Dateline.
- **Sefer Eretz Yisrael (1955)** - A collection of laws and customs pertaining to Eretz Yisrael, including those unique to Eretz Yisrael.
- **Ir HaKodesh V'HaMikdash (1970)** - Published posthumously. A five-part work that covers key halachic issues that pertain and are unique to Jerusalem and the Beit HaMikdash.

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Torah and Translation

The Obligations of the Seventh Year

Rabbi Yechiel M. Tukachinsky, *Sefer haShemita* 2

Translated by Rabbi Adam Friedmann

השביעית כוללת ארבעה ציוויים כלליים :

א) שביית הארץ, שתנוח מעבודת שדה וצמיחותי, כנאמר, "ושבתה הארץ שבת לד', "בחריש ובקציר תשבות" (ודרשו חז"ל שקאי על עבודת הארץ בשביעית), "שדך לא תזרע וכרמך לא תזמור, ספיח קצירך לא תקצור, ענבי נזירך לא תבצור"...

אינו עובר על הלאו ועל העשה ד' בחריש ובקציר תשבות" אלא אם כן עובד בעצמו בשדה ישראל, בין בשדה שלו בין בשדה ישראל אחר. אבל על העשה של "ושבתה הארץ" עובר בעל השדה אפי' אם נעבדה שדהו ע"י אחר ואפי' ע"י נכרי...

ב) ומצוה להשמיט הפירות, לנטוש ולהפקיר כל תנובת שדה הגדלה בשנה זו, כנאמר "והשביעית תשמטנה ונטשתה".

וכל הספיחים הנצמחים והגדלים מאליהם, בין פירות אילן בין גידולי שדה - נהוג בהם דין הפקר ומביא לתוך ביתו כדרך שמביא מן ההפקר. ואסור לנעול גנותיו, והנועל גנותיו או שאוסף כל פירותיו לאוצרו עבר על המ"ע הזאת.

אם עבר ושמרם -- לרוב הפוסקים לא נאסרו, וכשיפקירם מותר לבצרם מעט...

ג) מצוה לנהוג קדושה בפירות שביעית באכילתם, ואיסור סחורה והפסד וכו' כדרשת חז"ל מקרא "והיתה שבת הארץ לכם לאכלה", בכלל זה מצות הבעור בזמנם, מקרא דולבהמתך ולחיה וגו'.

ד) וצווי רביעי - אינו תלוי בארץ: להשמיט החובות בסוף שנת השביעית. כנאמר "שמוט כל בעל משה ידו".

The seventh year includes four general commandments:

1) A sabbatical for the land, that it should rest from being worked and cultivated, as it says, "The land will rest, a sabbatical for G-d (Vayikra 25:2)," "You shall rest from plowing and harvesting (Shemot 34:21)" (our Sages understood this to refer to working the land in the seventh year), "You shall not plant in your field nor prune your vineyard, you shall not reap the aftergrowth of your harvest, you shall not pick the grapes of your untrimmed vines (Vayikra 25:5)."...

One only violates the prohibition and the commandment of resting from plowing and harvesting if one works personally in a Jewish-owned field, whether his own or someone else's. However, the commandment to let the land rest is violated by the owner of a field even if the field is worked by someone else, and even by non-Jews...

2) There is a commandment to release the fruit, to abandon and make ownerless all the produce that grows in one's field during this year, as it says, "in the seventh [year] you shall surely release it and abandon it." (Shemot 23:11)

And all growths which sprout and grow by themselves, both tree fruit and things that grow in the field - he should treat them as ownerless and bring them into his home like one would when claiming ownerless items. It is forbidden to lock one's gardens, and one who locks his gardens or who places all his produce in storage violates this commandment.

If one transgresses and guards them (the produce) - according to most authorities they are not forbidden, and when he does declare them ownerless, they may be brought in and stored in small amounts...

3) There is a commandment to treat the produce of the seventh as holy when eating it, and it is forbidden to do business with it or destroy it etc., as our Sages derived from the verse, "The sabbatical of the land will be for you to eat." (Vayikra 25:6) Included in this is the commandment to consume (the remaining fruits) in their season, [as derived from] the verse, "[it shall be for] your animals and the beasts [of your land] etc." (Vayikra 25:7)

"[it shall be for] your animals and the beasts [of your land] etc." (Vayikra 25:7)

4) The fourth commandment is not related to the land: To cancel all loans at the end of the seventh year as it says, "Every creditor shall release all dues owed to him." (Devarim 15:2)

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Click Underlined Lines to Open Zooms. Clickable links also at www.torontotorah.com/letslearn
All times ET. Classes are free & open to all, unless otherwise noted.

Monday-Thursday

10:00 AM - Noon: Adult Seder Boker with Rabbi Moshe Yeresn on ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/sederboker> (men)
Monday/Wednesday: Talmud Succah, Orot haTeshuvah of Rav Kook
Tuesday/Thursday: Parshah, Tanach: Sefer Melachim

Shabbat October 9

After 8:00 AM shacharit R' Yehuda Mann, Halachah from the Parshah, Clanton Park

After minchah R' Mordechai Torczyner, Gemara Ketuvot, BAYT: Simcha Suite (men)

After minchah R' Mordechai Torczyner, Weekly Class, Shaarei Tefillah

Sunday October 10

10 AM R' Aaron Greenberg, Talmud Eruvin, 533 Spring Gate or ZOOM: <http://bit.ly/jliczoom> 613613 (university)

Monday October 11 Canadian Thanksgiving

10:00 AM Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon, The Canadian in Israel During Shemitah
Register (free) at <https://torontotorah.com/shemitah>
ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/ravrimon>
In easy Hebrew

8:00 PM Idan Rakovsky, Postmodernist Jewish Thought, 3636 Bathurst Apt 1605

8:30 PM R' Moshe Yeres, Talmud Shabbat (Chap. 15), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/talmud>

Tuesday October 12

1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, King Solomon's Arc, ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt>

7:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 6), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (men)

Wednesday October 13

6:15 AM R' Jared Anstandig, Talmud: Eruvin, Shaarei Shomayim and ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/erugin>

10:00 AM R' M Torczyner, The Philosophers of Medieval Spain, #1 of 3 ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> **NEW!!**

7:00 PM Idan Rakovsky, Introduction to Talmud, Week 2 of 5, Shaarei Tefillah

Thursday October 14

8:30 AM R' Chaim Metzger, Trei Asar, ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/trei> (university)

1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 21), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (women)

8:00 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Beitzah, email ymannt@torontotorah.com for location (advanced, men)

9:00 PM Idan Rakovsky, Ramban on the Parshah, Shaarei Tefillah - not this week

Friday October 15

8:30 AM R' Jared Anstandig, Parshah, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university)

10:30 AM R' Jared Anstandig, R' Mordechai Torczyner, R' Yehuda Mann, Bava Batra Perek 2 *advanced*
In-person at 159 Almore Ave (*vaccinated-only*), on Zoom at <http://tiny.cc/frishiur>

COMING UP!

Nusbaum Family Medical Ethics and Halacha Program
9:30 AM to 11:00 AM Sunday October 17
Helping Patients and Families Deal with Mental Illness
Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/mtethics>
Laypeople welcome

Monday evening October 25
Tribute to Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks z"l on his first yahrtzeit