

Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Vayechi

14 Tevet, 5782/December 18, 2021

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This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Yocheved and Joe Zeifman in memory of their beloved son Moshe Boaz z"l, whose yahrtzeit is 15 Tevet.

The Antithesis

Idan Rakovsky

Here we are, at the end of a book filled with stories that describe the very fragile bonds that exist within a family.

This moment is a worthy opportunity to stop and revisit a book that I believe, without a doubt, is the most profound and comprehensive book written about one of the most intricate areas of the human experience - love, hate, compassion, contempt, longing, hostility and the relationships in a family.

We started this chumash with Adam blaming Chavah for making him sin, and with the murder of Hevel by his brother, Kayin. We continued with the triangle of Avraham-Sarah-Hagar. We read about the difficulties Avraham faced in maintaining his family during harsh conflicts involving jealousy and harassment. Then, the Torah discussed the problematic relationship between Yitzchak and Yishmael.

This tension seems to come to a climax at the Akeidah (binding of Yitzchak). The Torah describes, poetically, how Avraham and Yitzchak went up to Mount Moriah together, and how they went down separately.

Yitzchak did not manage to raise his children in a more peaceful climate. Yaakov and Esav fought already in their mother's womb. Yitzchak's wife fooled him in order to take the blessing from Esav. And finally, lest one think that Yaakov had managed to resolve the friction, we discover that his children continued this path of trouble, throwing their young brother into a pit, and then selling him to Ishmaelites.

Going through this journey that the Torah sets out, we should ask: what exactly is the message, and the purpose, of describing in such detail all of these complicated family relations, some of which are even catalyzed by Divine command? And, given the fact that our ancestors are our role models, how should we approach and understand these stories? I would like to suggest that the answer for these questions may appear in our parshah.

In our parshah we encounter the blessings of Yaakov for his children. First he blesses his grandsons, Ephraim and Menasheh. Surprisingly, Yaakov puts his right hand over the head of Ephraim, the younger boy, while he puts his left hand over the head of Menasheh, the first-born. Yosef notices this and tries to switch his father's hands so that the blessing would be appropriate:

When Joseph saw that his father was placing his right hand on Ephraim's head, he thought it wrong; so he took hold of his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's. "Not so, Father," Joseph said to his father, "for the other is the first-born; place your right hand on his head." (Bereishit 48:17-18, JPS tr.)

Yaakov, in response, refused to change the arrangement:

But his father objected, saying, "I know, my son, I know. He too shall become a people, and he too shall be great. Yet his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his offspring shall be plentiful enough for nations." (ibid. 48:19)

Rabbi David Menachem, Rabbi of Kehilat Heichal Uriel in Mevaseret Zion, reads this attempt of Yosef to switch his father's hands as an attempt to rectify not only the blessing itself, but also all of the times when his forefathers had preferred one son over the other, causing jealousy and hate. Yosef was actually the first of the descendants of Avraham who tried to correct this and to prevent his sons from fighting and envying each other. And indeed, he succeeded. Even though Yaakov refused to change the order of the blessings, and he eventually blessed Ephraim before Menasheh, Menasheh did not envy his younger brother, or fight with him, because of that. [Of course, Yosef also engaged in actions which may have increased animosity among his brothers, and particularly regarding Binyamin; a full treatment of this subject is beyond the scope of this article.]

This may explain why Yosef is described in the Zohar as the expression of *Sefirat HaYesod* (the Foundation Emanation), which is the embodiment of Holiness and repair. Our parshah is the antithesis of the choices that earlier generations made within their households. Yosef should be remembered in Jewish history as the one who managed to reunite his family, and therefore continued, but in a positive way, the path of our holy ancestors.

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Tanach Tour of
the Land of Israel
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OUR BEIT MIDRASH

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Summary

The chapter opens with Elisha instructing one of his disciples to take a flask of oil and anoint Yehu the son of Nimshi, one of King Yehoram's generals, as king of the Israelite kingdom. The student prophet is to take Yehu to a private place, anoint him, announce that G-d has made him king, and then promptly run away. (1-4)

The student prophet carries out his mission, though he adds significantly to the short announcement that Elisha instructed him to recite. He tells Yehu that the latter will become G-d's instrument for destroying the house of Achav and avenging Izevel's brutal suppression of G-d's prophets. (5-10)

When Yehu emerges from his private encounter with the prophet the other generals ask him what the "*meshuga*" told him. Yehu eventually reveals the prophet's message to the others, at which point they promptly declare him the king. (11-13)

Yehu organizes a rebellion against Yehoram. He takes a battalion of soldiers to Yizre'el where Yehoram is recovering from injuries sustained in the fight

against Chazael the king of Aram. Achaziah, the king of Yehudah, is also visiting Yehoram in Yezre'el at the time. Yehoram sends two messengers to ask Yehu if he comes in peace, all of whom decide to join Yehu's battalion. The lookout in Yizre'el identifies Yehu from his "*meshuga*" way of riding. (14-20)

Eventually the two kings ride out on their chariots to face Yehu and meet him in the plot of land that had belonged to Navot the Yizre'eli. When it becomes clear that Yehu has come to avenge the evils of Yehoram's parents Izevel and Achav, Yehoram and Achaziah flee. (21-23) Yehu kills Yehoram with an arrow. Achaziah manages to get further away but is eventually tracked down by Yehu's men and mortally wounded. It turns out that Yehu had accompanied Achav when the latter had taken the field of Navot, and had personally heard Eliyahu's pronouncement that Achav would be punished on that spot. Yehoram's body is therefore left in the field as a fulfillment of Eliyahu's prophecy. (24-29)

Yehu continues to Yizre'el, where he finds Izevel waiting for him in a win-

dow. He shouts to the guards who are with her and asks if they are loyal to him. When he receives some positive replies, he commands the guards to shove her out of the window, which they do. (30-33)

When Yehu later sends men to bury Izevel, they can only find her skull, feet and hands. She has been eaten by wild animals, in fulfillment of Eliyahu's prophecy. (34-37)

Insight

One of the striking things in this chapter is the willingness of the Israelites to instantly join Yehu's revolt. We see this with the generals, the messengers, and Izevel's guards. Malbim (9:13) suggests that this came from Divine inspiration; G-d ensured that Yehu wouldn't encounter any opposition. Alternatively, or perhaps additionally, these reactions reveal instability and a tendency towards impulsivity in Israelite society. Everyone involved, from Yehu down, was ready to use any pretense to bring down the current regime.

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It Happened in Israel: The Wild, Wild West

Unfortunately, daily life in Israel wasn't always peaceful in talmudic times. Occasionally enemy armies would invade and make demands on Israeli towns. The Talmud (Eruvin 45a) quotes a Tosefta that details the laws pertaining to such an incident. This Tosefta rules that when an enemy army lays siege to an Israeli city on Shabbat and demands goods such as grain and bread, the city must surrender to the request in order to avoid a war on Shabbat. But, if the enemy comes seeking blood, then the Jews must defend themselves militarily, even though it is Shabbat.

This distinction is only the case for cities in Israel's heartland. Border towns have a different set of rules. The Tosefta explains that for a town on the border, even if the enemy comes on Shabbat requesting only grain or bread, Jews must fight to protect not only themselves, but their brethren living further inland.

The Talmud continues by quoting Rabbi Dostai who tells a story about Ke'ilah, an Israeli border town during the time of King David. Tanach (Shemuel I 23:1-2) reports that Philistines were raiding and stealing from Ke'ilah's threshing floors. Seeing this, King David turned to G-d via the kohen gadol's breastplate, asking whether he should attack these Philistines. G-d's responded in the affirmative.

The Talmud proceeds to question King David's actions. Why did King David need an answer directly from G-d? Assuming this took place on Shabbat, and all he wanted to know was whether he was permitted to go to war against the Philistines, he could have gone to the beit din of Shemuel HaNavi in Ramah. Shemuel could have simply explained to King David that since Ke'ilah was a border town, it was permissible

for them to fight the Philistines, even though it was Shabbat. Rather, the Talmud explains, King David knew it was permitted for him to attack. He was only asking G-d for assurance of victory.

Insight

Rabbi Dostai's story doesn't appear to add any new information to the law that had already been stated. Why is it mentioned? In order to show that the tension between Shabbat observance and preservation of life has been an ongoing debate for millennia.

People often consider observing mitzvot, particularly Shabbat, as something requiring extreme stringency, often at the expense of other considerations. True, Shabbat is a supremely important day and its sanctity must be upheld. But, we are also commanded to protect people's lives, so much so that it overrides Shabbat.

From this passage we see that from the time of King David, to the Tosefta, to the modern day, Jews ranging from soldiers to healthcare professionals have balanced these two important values. And, just as G-d told King David, when we are properly equipped and have G-d's support, we have nothing to fear.

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Biography

Rabbi Dr. Yoel bin Nun

Rabbi Jonathan Ziring

Rabbi Dr. Yoel bin Nun is a leading scholar of Tanach and one of the fathers of the modern rejuvenation of Tanach study in Israel. He was born in Haifa in 1946. Both of his parents, Dr. Yechezkel and Dr. Shoshana bin Nun, were educators and scholars of Judaism and Hebrew.

He studied in Yeshivat Kfar HaRoeh and then Yeshivat Mercaz HaRav as a student of Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook. In 1968, along with Rabbi Chanan Porat, he turned to Rabbi Yehuda Amital to help found Yeshivat Har Etzion ("Gush") in Kfar Etzion. He later (1986) helped found the Herzog Teachers College, affiliated with Yeshivat Har Etzion, to help train teachers in Tanach and other disciplines. He has helped pioneer many of the modern methods of Tanach study, including literary approaches and incorporation or archaeology and knowledge of the Ancient Near East.

Rabbi Dr. bin Nun established the Ulpiana in Ofra (1985), which he headed for ten years. In 1996 he helped establish Midreshet Yiud to train national-religious teachers to teach in secular schools. He was Rosh Yeshiva of the yeshiva in Kibbutz HaDati Ein Tzurim from 2000-6.

In 2008, his doctorate on the dual approach to authority in the thought of Rabbi Kook was approved by the Hebrew University. In 2018, he was awarded the Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda Kook prize for Torah Publications. In 2019, he was awarded a lifetime achievement award for Jewish culture by the Education Minister.

Rabbi Dr. bin Nun has published widely over the years, including many books and articles on Tanach, many of which have been translated into English, as well as a series of halachic articles, many of which were published in a book titled *MeChevyon Oz*.

Beyond teaching and writing, Rabbi Dr. bin Nun is well known as one of the paratroopers who helped free the Western Wall and the Old City of Jerusalem. He is one of the personalities documented in Yossi Klein HaLevi's *Like Dreamers: The Story of the Israeli Paratroopers Who Reunited Jerusalem and Divided a Nation*.

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Torah and Translation

A Fund for *Shemitat Kesafim* and Debt Relief

Rabbi Dr. Yoel bin Nun, [online here](#)

Translated by Rabbi Jonathan Ziring

תהליך השיבה של עם ישראל לארצו וקיבוץ גלויות, מאתגר את מבקשי ד' למצוא דרכים חדשות, משמעותיות ורלוונטיות, לקיום המצוות בארץ-ישראל, ודווקא בזמננו זה, בו אנו מצפים כל-כך לישועת ד'...

למימוש מטרות אלה מוקמת בזה "קרן שמיטת כספים והסדר חובות" שמטרותיה הן: לקרוא לציבור להחיות את מצוות שמיטת כספים במידת האפשר, מבלי לפגוע בשטרי הפרוזבול הנחוצים, על-ידי מתן צדקה בשנת השמיטה בצורת הלוואות שעתידות להישמט בסופה.

לקרוא לציבור ולגורמים בעלי יכולת כלכלית, לתרום לקרן בהיקף מרבי, כדי לאפשר מו"מ רציני על הסדרי חובות עם נושים כבדים כמו חברת החשמל, חברת המים, עיריות, בנקים ובנקים למשכנתאות, ורשויות המדינה.

לחוץ על הנושים הציבוריים ולהקדיש חלק גדול מתקציבי גביית החובות שלהם – הון עתק שמשולם לעורכי דין ופקידי גבייה – לטובת הסדרי חובות. במקום לנתק חשמל ומים, ולנהל משפטים להוצאת חייבים מבתיים, יוקדש התקציב הזה להשתתפות הנושים בהסדרי החובות. כך אפשר יהיה לנכות מן החובות את מחיר הגבייה באמצעות צעדים אלימים.

לנהל מו"מ עם הגורמים הנ"ל ודומים להם, תוך הסתייעות בגורמי הרווחה המופקדים על הנושא, (ובלי להוסיף מנגנון בירוקרטי נוסף), במטרה להגיע להסדרי חובות, בהם הקרן תשלם חלק מהחובות, החייבים יקבלו על עצמם מרצונם הסדרי פיקוח והתנהלות, ופרעון קטן-פרוס לזמן ארוך, והנושים ישמטו את יתרת החובות, לפחות בהיקף התקציבים המושקעים בגבייה.

הקרן תפעיל לחץ ציבורי על הממשלה כדי שתשתתף מצידה במאמץ, לפחות באותו ההיקף שהציבור יצליח לגייס.

הקרן תשתף פעולה עם גורמים אחרים הפועלים בתחום זה, אם יסכימו לפעול על פי המתווה האמור, לקראת שמיטת כספים והסדר חובות בערב ראש השנה התשס"ט.

The fund will exert public pressure on the government to participate from its side in the effort, at least to the same extent that the public will be able to raise.

The fund will cooperate with other entities operating in this field, if they agree to act in accordance with the said outline, prior to the waiver of funds and debt settlement on the eve of Rosh Hashanah 5769.

The process of the return of the people of Israel to their land and the gathering of exiles, challenges those who seek G-d to find new, meaningful, and relevant ways, for the observance of the commandments in the Land of Israel, and specifically in our time, in which we so long for G-d's salvation...

To achieve these goals, we are establishing a "Fund for *Shemitat Kesafim* (the waiving of monetary [debts]) and Debt Settlement", whose goals are: to call on the public to revive the mitzvah of waving debts as much as possible, without undermining the necessary existing *Prosbol* documents, by providing charity in the year of the *shemita* in the form of loans that will be waived at the end of the year.

[We] are calling on the public and financially capable parties to contribute to the fund to the maximum extent -

To enable serious negotiations on debt arrangements with serious creditors such as the Electric Company, the Water Company, municipalities, banks and mortgage banks, and state authorities.

To put pressure on public creditors and devote a large portion of their debt collection budgets - massive capital paid to lawyers and collection officials - to debt settlements. Instead of disconnecting electricity and water, and conducting lawsuits to evict debtors from their homes, this budget will be devoted to the participation of creditors in debt settlements. In this way it will be possible to deduct the collection price from the debts through aggressive measures.

To negotiate with the above and similar entities with the assistance of the welfare agencies in charge of the issue (without adding an additional bureaucratic mechanism), in order to reach debt settlements in which the fund will pay part of the debts, debtors will voluntarily accept supervision and conduct arrangements, and small repayment over long periods of time, and the creditors will reduce the balance of the debts, at least by the amount of the budget invested in collection.

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All times ET. Classes are free & open to all, unless otherwise noted.

All in-person indoor classes require vaccination and other protective measures

Monday-Thursday

10:00 AM - Noon: Adult Seder Boker with Rabbi Moshe Yeres on ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/sederboker> (men)

Monday/Wednesday: Talmud Succah, Orot haTeshuvah of Rav Kook

Tuesday/Thursday: Parshah, Tanach: Sefer Melachim

Shabbat December 17-18

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 Idan Rakovsky, Parshah, Shaarei Tefillah

Sunday December 19

9:00 AM R' Zev Spitz & R' Yehuda Mann, Semichat Chaver Program, Clanton Park (men)

9:15 AM Idan Rakovsky, Postmodernist Jewish Thought, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university)

10:00 AM-11:20 AM Midreshet Yom Rishon for Women!

In-person at BAYT (Simcha Suite) or on ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/myr82>

Mrs. Michal Horovitz: No Rain, No Gain Rabbi Yehuda Mann: Lighting Up December's Darkness
No charge, Light refreshments served

10 AM R' Aaron Greenberg, Talmud Eruvin, YOC or ZOOM - *on break until January 16*

Monday December 20

New Episode: Parshat Shemot!

Our Parshah Podcast! Apple Podcasts <http://tiny.cc/apodcast>, Spotify <http://tiny.cc/spodcast>

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

8:30 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Food Fight in the Beis Din, Week 3 of 3, Shomrai Shabbos (3rd Floor) (Men)

Tuesday December 21

1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, King Solomon's Arc (Melachim I 3), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt>

7:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 10), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (men)

Wednesday December 22

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

10:00 AM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Jewish Numerology, #3 of 3 ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt>

7:00 PM Idan Rakovsky, Basic Introduction to Halachah #1 of 5, at Shaarei Tefillah

8:30 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Contemporary Halachah Chabura, Clanton Park

Thursday December 23

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

1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 23), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (women) *not this week*

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

8:00 PM R' Jared Anstandig, Gemara Bava Batra, ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/torontowbm> (university women)

Friday December 24

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 Yeshivat Or Chaim, on Zoom at <http://tiny.cc/frishiur>

Coming Up!

9:30 AM to 4:00 PM Sunday December 26

A TANACH TOUR OF THE LAND OF ISRAEL!

In person at Yeshivat Or Chaim and ZOOM in the morning

ZOOM-only in the afternoon at <http://tiny.cc/tanachday>

For the full program and registration: <https://torontotorah.com/tour>

Registration required for in-person participation, capped at 50 per session