

Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Behar

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This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Moishe & Nicole Posner and Paul & Annie Samuel to commemorate the second yahrtzeit of Nicole and Annie's mother, Lisa Ouanounou, Iza bat David & Miriam z"l (21 Iyar)

This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Allan & Tova Gutenberg to commemorate the yahrtzeit of Allan's father, Menachem Mendel ben Natan Nota Gutenberg z"l

Helping G-d?

Rabbi Jonathan Ziring

"If your brother, being in straits, come under your authority... do not exact advance or accrued interest, but fear your G-d. Let your kin live by your side as such....I Hashem am your G-d, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, to be your G-d." (Vayikra 25:35-6,8, JPS)

The obligations to aid the poor, whether through charity, or in this unit, providing interest-free loans, are usually conceptualized as interpersonal commandments. More precisely, it may be a function of the brotherhood of all Jews. (Ramban, Shemot 23:20) However, these verses suggest that helping the poor is as much about one's obligations to G-d, as fear or recognition of G-d is mentioned twice in four verses, and an entire verse is devoted to remembering that G-d took us out of Egypt.

One midrash (Vayikra Rabbah 34) offers a radical understanding of how this is the case. The following argument is propounded:

- 1)The verse states that "He who is generous to the poor makes a loan to the Lord." (Mishlei 19:17, JPS). Why should giving to poor be considered a loan to G-d?
- 2)G-d is responsible for providing for the poor, as the verse states that G-d is the one "Who gives food to all flesh." (Tehillim 136:25, JPS)
- 3)Thus, one who helps the poor grabs His mitzvah, and G-d becomes beholden to repay the loan.

4)The extent of this Divine obligation becomes clear from the verse's description of the relationship of a borrower to his creditor: "And the borrower is a slave to the lender." (Mishlei 22:7) G-d thus becomes enslaved to the one who helps the poor.

5)G-d's obligation surpasses that which the person gave. This is because a poor person might have nine out the ten coins he needs to buy food. The one who gives him the tenth coin, though a small amount of money, is granting him life. Thus, G-d becomes obligated to give the giver his life.

Several fascinating points emerge from this midrash. First, helping the poor is recast primarily as aiding G-d **by taking the place of G-d**. Second, G-d does not need human help, G-d treats the giver of charity *as if* he helped Him, to the point that He becomes beholden to him. Third, the impact of helping the poor is judged not only by how much one spends, but by the impact it can have on the poor. Thus, G-d becomes "beholden" to repay more than was extended. Rabbi Zev Wolf Einhorn (Maharzu to Vayikra Rabbah 34) argues that this is the explanation for the idea that charity saves from death. (Mishlei 10:2)

Rabbi Shemuel Yafeh Ashkenazi (Yifei Toar to Vayikra Rabbah 34) notes another layer to this midrash. Normally, stealing someone's opportunity to perform a mitzvah is considered an action-

able offense, with the "thief" obligated to compensate for the lost opportunity. (Bava Kama 91b) This midrash uses the language of "grabs the mitzvah" to highlight that one is usurping G-d's role to the extent that He should by right be upset. Nevertheless, G-d, unlike man, wants to "lose His chance". He wants human beings to take His place, and thus He pays us, rather than charges us, for making Him "lose his chance." Another midrash (Kohelet Rabbah 7:2) broadens this. G-d was "obligated to bury Yaakov," but Yosef stole the mitzvah. Moshe then took the mitzvah of burying Yosef, making G-d close the circle by burying Moshe.

At one level, this shows G-d's benevolence as He does not mind "losing His mitzvah." Furthermore, it highlights that we can actually take His roles. However, as Sefer Iyov (35:7) insists, the mitzvot do not help G-d. "If you are righteous, What do you give Him; What does He receive from your hand?" (Iyov 35:7) Our midrash must mean, therefore, that though our mitzvot do not help G-d, He desires that we fulfill his will, help others, become godly, and so He overlooks this theological reality. He ensures that helping others truly becomes Divine.

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Summary

In last week's column we learned that Chapter 1 was likely not the prophet's first prophecy. Don Isaac Abarbanel (Yeshayah 6:1) seems to say Chapter 2 was the first. Rashi (Yeshayah 1:1) suggests that Chapter 6 was Yeshayahu's initiation as a prophet, but Rashi would likely agree that Chapter 2 is Yeshayahu's first message to the nation. This is why the chapter begins, "The message that Yeshayahu ben Amotz envisioned, upon Judea and Jerusalem." (2:1)

Chapters 2 through 4 address King Uziyahu, a powerful king who sought to build his name through conquest and construction. (Divrei haYamim II 26) Yeshayahu offers an alternative vision of elevation for Uziyahu: the world coming to a holy and spiritual Jerusalem to learn G-d's message. (2:2-4)

On the other hand, G-d will bring down those who have opted for wealth and arrogance, and the idols they have embraced. Therefore, Uziyahu should cease putting his faith in human might, and put his faith in G-d. (2:5-22)

One of Yeshayahu's book-long themes is the corruption of Jerusalem's political

leadership, and this is his target in Chapters 3-4. He predicts that in the future, G-d will remove the leaders of Jerusalem and Judea. But lest one think this will result in an improved society, the replacement leaders will be young, arrogant and corrupt. Yeshayahu concludes this section by predicting that G-d will judge and punish corrupt leaders. (3:1-15)

Yeshayahu then turns to the "daughters of Zion", matrons he describes as arrogant, self-indulgent and licentious. This is a polemic against immorality among Jerusalem's leaders. [See Yoma 9b and Shabbat 62b.] He foretells their downfall, with their beautiful clothing, ornaments and indulgence replaced by sackcloth, decay and hunger. (3:16-4:1)

Finally, Yeshayahu predicts that G-d will cleanse Jerusalem of her sins, and restore the city to her glory. There will be a "tzemach of G-d" in the city; Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra says this refers to the surviving righteous people of Jerusalem, but Radak contends it refers to Mashiach. Those who remain in the city will be holy, and G-d will provide them with shelter. (4:2-6)

Insight

Yeshayahu's prediction of religious elevation includes the classic prophecy that the nations will come to the mountain of G-d seeking guidance, "for Torah comes forth from Zion, and the word of G-d from Jerusalem." (2:2-3, and see Michah 4.) The vision of the nations embracing elements of Judaism is common in Yeshayahu; see 11:10, 19:16-25, 56:6-7 and 66:23, for example. Does this mean that Yeshayahu believes the nations of the world will ultimately convert to Judaism?

Yeshayahu does predict the nations performing actions that look like conversion. Here, they seek to study Torah. In Yeshayahu 19:18-21 they bring korbanot. In Yeshayahu 66:23 they come to bow before G-d at the Beit haMikdash. In Yeshayahu 56:6-7 they observe Shabbat and "the covenant". Nonetheless, in most of Yeshayahu's visions, as in 2:2-3, the nations retain their own identity; they do not join with the Jewish nation. Perhaps there will be a multi-stage process, in which the nations first recognize the value of Torah and come to study it, and eventually they embrace Judaism as a whole.

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It Happened in Israel: Is "Torah Only" Safe?

This week we celebrated Lag Baomer, which, according to a Jewish tradition, commemorates the death of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.

Several weeks ago, in [Toronto Torah Shemini/Parah 5782](#), we read of the death sentence the Romans decreed against Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. Upon hearing the news that he is to be executed, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and his son flee and hide in a cave. After hiding for twelve years, they emerge from the cave. The Talmud describes their experience outside the cave:

They saw people plowing and sowing. Rabbi Shimon bar Yoḥai said: **"These people abandon eternal life of Torah study and engage in temporal life for their own sustenance!"** Every place that Rabbi Shimon and his son Rabbi Elazar directed their eyes was immediately burned. A Divine Voice called to them: "Did you emerge from the cave to destroy My world? Return to your cave!" They returned for twelve months... A Divine Voice emerged and said to them: Emerge from your cave. They emerged... As the sun was setting on Shabbat eve, they saw an elderly man holding two bundles of myrtle branches and running at twilight. They said to him: "Why do you have these?" He said to them: "In honor of Shabbat." They said to him: "And let one suffice." He answered them: "One is corresponding to: 'Remember the Shabbat day, to keep it holy' (Exodus 20:8), and one is corresponding to: 'Observe the Shabbat day, to keep it holy' (Deuteronomy 5:12). Rabbi Shimon said to his son: **"See how beloved the mitzvot are to Israel?" Their minds were put at ease and they were no longer as upset** that people were not engaged in Torah study (adapted from The William Davidson Talmud, Shabbat 33b; bold added).

Insight

Here, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai demonstrates two drastically different approaches to worldly matters. When he initially leaves the cave, Torah is an all-or-nothing proposition: either you learn Torah all day, every day, or you deserve death. This, the Divine Voice tells him, is unacceptable. And so, he returns to the cave, only to emerge a second time with a more understanding approach.

Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm explains Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's change of heart. He writes, "His pre-cave view was that *any* activity, including working for the basic necessities of life, involves the rabbinic transgression of *bittul Torah*... [his post-cave view] considers both working to support oneself and the intellectual pursuit of [worldly affairs] as acceptable, provided there is some form of ongoing daily study of Torah." (*Torah uMadda*, pg. 60).

Ultimately, Rabbi Lamm explains, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai comes to understand that a world of only Torah, while beautiful, is unsustainable for most people. Accordingly, we are permitted, if not encouraged, to go out and engage with the world. Still, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai urges, we must always maintain our connection to G-d, Torah, and Judaism.

Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin explained a change in the *keruim* similarly. The *keruim* in the Mishkan faced each other, because the Jews faced Hashem exclusively in the wilderness; all of their needs were supplied. But in Israel it was appropriate for the Jews to tend to their own needs as well as learn Torah, and so the *keruim* angled away from each other - not as criticism, but as reality. (*Nefesh haChaim* 1:8-9)

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Biography

Rabbi Klonymus Shapira

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Rabbi Klonymus Kalman Shapira was born in Grodzisk, Poland in 1889. Part of a rabbinic family, he could trace his lineage back to Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk (Noam Elimelech), the Chozeh of Lublin, and the Maggid of Kozhnitz.

Orphaned at the age of three, Rabbi Shapira nonetheless grew in Torah scholarship from childhood, and was appointed Rabbi of Piaseczno, in central Poland, at the age of twenty. Rabbi Shapira's wife, Rochel Chaya Miryam, helped him write his books.

In addition to his rabbinate, Rabbi Shapira led a yeshiva, *Daat Moshe*. He wrote a book on education, *Chovat haTalmidim* (The Duty of the Students), in which he emphasized the importance of self-respect and self-confidence for scholastic success.

Rabbi Shapira lost his only son, his daughter-in-law and his sister-in-law, in the Nazi bombing of Warsaw; his only daughter also died during the war. After the Nazi invasion he was interned in the Warsaw Ghetto. A collection of the stirring speeches he delivered in the ghetto, acknowledging and addressing the suffering and the religious doubts of Jews around him, has been published under the name *Eish Kodesh* (Sacred Fire).

While in the ghetto, Rabbi Shapira was approached by young men who wished to grow in their spirituality; in response, he authored a book called *Bnei Machshavah Tovah* (literally: People of Good Thought). In this book, Rabbi Shapiro prescribed ways to develop sensitivity to G-d in our lives and daily activities. Rabbi Shapira felt that *Bnei Machshavah Tovah* was a special work; he sent the manuscript to his brother in Jerusalem, so that the first copies would be printed in that holy city. Further, he prohibited all copying of the book without his permission, a decree which was only broken after his death at the insistence of several Chassidic Rebbes. (For more on this book, see Toronto Torah 6:22.)

When the Ghetto was liquidated, Rabbi Shapira was transferred to the Trawniki work camp; offered the opportunity to escape, he refused to abandon his community. He was shot to death, along with the rest of the Jews there, on November 3 (5 Cheshvan), 1943.

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Torah and Translation

G-d Becomes Our Beloved

Rabbi Klonymus K. Shapiro, Eish Kodesh, Behar 1940

Translated by Rabbi Steven Gotlib

“וידבר ד’ אל משה בהר סיני לאמר. ופרשׁי, “מה ענין שמיטה אצל הר סיני? והלא כל המצות נאמרו מסיני! אלא מה שמיטה נאמרו כללותיה פרטותיה ודקדוקיה מסיני, אף כולן נאמרו כללותיה ודקדוקיה מסיני. כי בשיר השירים אומרים מקודם ב’ פעמים “אני לדודי” ודודי לי (ו: ג), ואח”כ “אני לדודי ועלי תשוקתו (ו: יא), שעל פי פשוטו היה צריך מקודם לאמר “ועלי תשוקתו”, תשוקתו לבדה של הקב”ה עלי, ואח”כ “ודודי לי”, שלא בלבד תשוקתו עלי רק גם “ודודי”, הוא יתברך לי.

אבל כשאיש ישראלי נותן את עצמו להקב”ה, אז אף שאינו ראוי עוד שד’ כביכול יתן את עצמו אליו, ואין הוא יתברך משתוקק אליו, מכל מקום נותן את עצמו אליו, ואין הוא יתברך משתוקק אליו, מכל מקום נותן את עצמו אליו בשביל הכריתת ברית עם האבות ועמנו בקבלת התורה.

ואם נותן האיש את עצמו אחת ושתיים אליו יתברך ואומר “אני לדודי”, אז הוא יתברך לא לבד שכביכול מתקרב אליו בשביל הכריתת ברית שהיא יתברך קשור בו, בחינת “ודודי לי”, רק גם “ועלי תשוקתו”, שגם רוצה ומשתוקק אל איש הישראלי הפרטי הזה.

וכן איש הישראלי אף שעוד אין תשוקתו כל כך ליתן את עצמו להקב”ה מכל מקום יתן ויחזור ויתן עד שגם תשוקתו תתעורר ליתן את עצמו אליו יתברך... וזה שרמז התורה על פרטיות ודקדוקי התורה מסיני... “שש שנים תזרע שדך ושש שנים תזמר כרמך ואספת את תבואתה”, שתהיה לך שדה כרם ותעבוד ותשבע לחם וכל טוב כי על זה גם בהאי עלמא נותנים שכר.

“And Hashem spoke to Moshe on Mount Sinai saying...” Rashi comments, “What does shemita have to do with Mount Sinai? Were not all commandments given at Sinai? Rather, shemita’s general rules, details and fine points were said at Mount Sinai. So, too, were all commandments given at Mount Sinai, with their general rules and fine points.” In Song of Songs it is twice said, “I am my Beloved’s” “and my Beloved is mine. (6:3)” And afterwards, “I am my Beloved’s and His desire is for me. (7:11)” On a simple level, it should first say “His desire is for me,” that the desire of the Holy One, Blessed be He is for me, and only afterwards say “My Beloved is mine,” not just that His desire is for me, but that “He is my beloved,” He is for me.

But when a Jew gives himself to the Holy One, Blessed be He, then even if he is not worthy for Hashem to give Himself to him, and Hashem does not desire him, even so Hashem gives Himself to him on account of the covenant that He made with our ancestors and with us at the acceptance of the Torah [at Mount Sinai].

When a person gives himself to Hashem once and twice, saying, “I am my Beloved’s...” then Hashem draws close to him, not only because of the binding covenant that ties Him at the level of “My Beloved is mine,” but also at the level of “His desire is for me.” For as the person’s desire grows, so does Hashem’s desire for this individual Jew.

So too for an individual Jew who does not yet desire powerfully to give himself to the Holy One, Blessed be He. Nonetheless, when he gives and then gives again, then his longing for Hashem is awakened to give himself to Hashem... And this is what Torah hinted at with the details and fine points of the Torah [being given] at Mount Sinai... “For six years you will plant your fields, for six years you shall prune your vineyards, and harvest your crops.” You will have a field and vineyard and you will work and be sated with bread and all good, because for all of this there is reward even in this world.

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

Shabbat May 20-21

After hashkamah R' Yehuda Mann, Halachah from the Parshah, Clanton Park

After minchah R' Aaron Greenberg, Topic TBD, BAYT (Gruda Beis Medrash) (men)

Sunday May 22

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

9:15 AM Idan Rakovsky, The Torah of Rav Shagar, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university)

Monday May 23

A New Parshah Podcast: Parshat Bechukotai

Apple <http://tiny.cc/apodcast>, Google <http://tiny.cc/gpodcast>, Spotify <http://tiny.cc/spodcast>

8:45 AM Idan Rakovsky, Likutei Moharan of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university)

9:30 AM—11:30 AM YARCHEI KALLAH: COMPETITION FOR SCARCE RESOURCES

9:30 AM Preparation of sources, 10:30 AM Shiur by Rabbi Jared Anstandig
OUTSIDE (weather-permitting) at Yeshivat Or Chaim, 159 Almore Ave
Light breakfast served / Free of Charge

Please register at <https://torontotorah.com/yk>

2:15 PM Idan Rakovsky, Ethical Issues & Pirkei Avot, Beth Tikvah & ZOOM <http://tiny.cc/idanrak> *not this week*

8:50 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Contemporary Halachah, Clanton Park

Tuesday May 24

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

7:00 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 15), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (men)

Wednesday May 25

6:15 AM R' Jared Anstandig, Talmud: Avodah Zarah, ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/idolsarebad>

12:30 PM The Ethical Challenge (with CPD credit for accountants), Week 3
R' J Anstandig On ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/bmlunch>, Register (free) at <http://torontotorah.com/business>

8:15 PM Idan Rakovsky, The Laws of Shabbat, Shaarei Tefillah

8:45 PM R' Chaim Metzger, Introduction to Midrash, BAYT (Library) & ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/chaimmetzger>

Thursday May 26

9:00 AM Idan Rakovsky, Mei haShiloach, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university)

1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 25), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (women)

7:00 PM R' Jared Anstandig, Women and Sefirat ha'Omer, Shaarei Shomayim (university women)

8:00 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Gemara Beitzah, email ymanntorontotorah.com for rotating location

Friday May 27

9:00 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!

Shavuot Shiurim All Over Toronto!

“When Will Mashiach Come?”

10 AM Wednesdays June 15 and 22 at Yeshivat Or Chaim

Use of Artificial Intelligence in Medical Decision Making

7:00 PM Monday June 20 at Shaarei Shomayim and <http://tiny.cc/mtethics>