

Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Bamidbar/Shavuot

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This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated to commemorate the yahrtzeit of Dr. Yehudi Shields z"l
by his children Zeldie & Wayne Kurtz and Zahava & Mordie Shields

Seeing the Mishkan

Tucked into the last verse of our parshah is a prohibition that may not be well-known. In Bamidbar 4:20, the Torah tells us that the Leviyim may not watch as the Kohanim package up the Mishkan and its vessels for transportation. More precisely, the Torah states, "They [the onlookers] should not come to see *k'vala* the sacred item, lest they die." Commentators debate the proper understanding of this word, "*K'vala*."

Approach 1: Swallowing

Rashi here offers that "*k'vala*," literally meaning "swallow," in this context means covering. That is to say that the Leviyim are forbidden from witnessing individual vessels being placed into their containers. Once they are in their containers, the Leviyim certainly may approach, as they are the ones to carry these vessels. However, before they are concealed, the Leviyim are prohibited from looking at them.

Rabbi Naftali Berlin (Netziv) offers a similar explanation, also understanding the word "*k'vala*" to mean "swallow." Netziv suggests, however, that the term "*k'vala*" means, "in the time it takes to swallow." In other words, an instant. In the Netziv's words, "The text warns that they must not see the sacred vessels, even for an instant." According to both understandings, this law has to do with the Leviyim's exposure to the high level of sanctity of even the vessels of the Mishkan.

Approach 2: Dismantling

Rashbam and Rabbi Chizkiyah ben

Manoach (Chizkuni) present a slightly different understanding. Basing themselves on other biblical verses, they argue that "*k'vala*" in this context is better translated as "dismantled." According to them the Torah is concerned that the Leviyim should not observe the various portions of the Mishkan as they are taken apart and packed up. This approach also reflects a concern about gazing at the usually unseen parts of the Mishkan.

But, what's wrong with seeing?

Both of these explanations are understandable, especially in light of a story in I Shemuel 6, which describes the death of the people of Beit Shemesh because they looked at the Ark (see [Journey through Tanach in Toronto Torah Vayetze 5780](#) for more details). It appears that gazing upon the Aron, and maybe all the vessels of the Mishkan, is inappropriate and punishable by death. But why is that the case? What is so wrong with the Leviyim seeing the inner portions of the Mishkan and its vessels?

To strengthen the question, the Talmud (Yoma 54a) tells us that on the festivals, when the masses of Israel ascended to Jerusalem and to the Temple, the Kohanim would roll back the curtains and show the Aron to everyone. Evidently, merely looking at the Aron and the Mishkan's vessels is not *always* prohibited. Accordingly, what is the reason for the prohibition for the Leviyim in our parshah?

Rabbi Shraga Fish Pollack, in *Tishbi*, explains that the issue is not merely

staring at the Aron and the vessels. He explains that when the Mishkan is fully set up, the Mishkan is inspirational and the paragon of beauty. However, when it is dismantled, much of the glory is lost, especially when one sees all the small and seemingly valueless parts of the Mishkan. For this reason, the Torah chose to limit exposure of the Mishkan's innards and forbade even the Leviyim from observing them.

From the Mishkan to the People

This idea of not zooming too far into the Mishkan is applicable in other areas as well. For instance, when we dissect the Jewish people, we find flaws. After all, none of us, as individuals, is perfect. However, when we zoom out, we see that we are much greater than the sum of our parts. Perhaps for this reason the Sages stress that when we received the Torah, we did so collectively, as one person with one heart (see Mechilta De-Rabbi Yishmael 19:2). As individuals, we are severely limited. But, when we take a step back and come together as a community, we are able to truly receive the Torah.

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Summary

This chapter begins with Yeshayahu recounting a prophecy of his from the year that King Uziyahu died. Yeshayahu witnessed Hashem sitting on a high and lofty throne with “the lower part” filling the sanctuary. Rashi (6:1) explains that this means Yeshayahu saw Hashem in the Heavens with His feet in the Sanctuary, in order to pass Judgment on Uziyahu for usurping the priesthood.

Seraphim, fiery angels, stood beside Him. Each had six wings, two of which covered their faces, two of which covered their legs, and two of which were used to fly. One *seraph* would call out to another, saying (as we say daily in the *kedushah* prayer) “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts - His presence fills the whole world!” (1-3) Upon this exclamation, the doorposts shook and the Temple filled with smoke. Yeshayahu cried, “Woe is me for I am lost! I am a man of impure lips (Rashi: defiled by sin) amongst a people with impure lips, yet I have seen Hashem!” (4-5)

One of the angels flew over to Yeshayahu with a hot coal, taken from the altar, and a pair of tongs. The angel placed

the coal on Yeshayahu’s lips and told him that his sins would now depart from him. Hashem then asked who He could send (Rashi: to admonish Israel) and Yeshayahu answered, “Here I am, send me.” (6-8)

Hashem told Yeshayahu to go to the people and tell them that although they can hear, they do not understand, and that although they can see, they do not know. Rashi (6:9) explains this as meaning that although the Jewish people saw the miracles that Hashem had performed for them, they did not strive to know Him. Yeshayahu asked how long this would be the case, and Hashem answered that it would be until towns would without inhabitants, houses without people, and the ground desolate because He would banish the population. (9-12).

The chapter ends, however, on what may be read as a hopeful note. Hashem says that while even one-tenth of the people remain, the nation will repent. The Jewish people are a holy seed that will grow back in time. (13, as read by Rabbi Mordechai Breuer in *Nevuato harishonah shel Yeshayahu*)

Insight

Rabbi Mosheh Lichtenstein [notes](#) that there are two primary ways that the angels’ declaration of “Holy, holy, holy...” is understood within the Jewish tradition. The first is to understand the verse as emphasizing Hashem’s elevation and exaltedness over the physical, impure world in which humans live. The second is understanding the verse as showing that Divine holiness permeates, and is therefore accessible in, this world as well as the Heavens. Rabbi Lichtenstein explains that both perspectives are deeply needed. Hashem is transcendent, but He is also ready and willing to engage with our world. This chapter emphasizes the great distance between Hashem and humanity, but then immediately makes His presence in our world known and felt.

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It Happened in Israel: Judging Others Favorably

Rabbi Yehuda Mann

The Talmud (Shabbat 127b) tells us the following story. Once there was a person who was hired to work for a homeowner. When he finished working, the worker asked the homeowner for his wages so that he could support his family. The homeowner said that he had no money. The worker offered to be paid in the land’s produce. The homeowner said that he had no produce. The worker offered to be paid in the form of land. The homeowner said that he had no land. The worker offered to be paid in the form of animals, cushions, blankets, anything at all! For each one, the homeowner said that he had nothing. In the end, the worker returned home in anguish.

Some time later the homeowner came to this worker and paid his wages in full, in addition to food and drink. After eating together, the homeowner asked him, “When you asked for your wages and I said that I had no money, why did you not suspect me of trying to avoid paying you?” The worker answered, “I thought maybe you had the opportunity to buy cheap merchandise.”

The homeowner continued, “And when you asked for animals and I said that I had none, what did you think?” The worker answered, “Perhaps your animals were hired to others.”

The homeowner asked again, “When you asked for land and I said that I had none, what did you suspect?” The worker answered, “Perhaps the land was leased to others.”

Again, the homeowner asked, “When you asked for produce and I said that I had none, what did you suspect? The worker answered, “Perhaps they were not tithed.”

He continued to ask, “When I said that I had no cushions or blankets, what did you suspect?” He answered, “I said that

perhaps you consecrated all your property to Heaven and therefore you have nothing available.”

The homeowner said to him, “I swear to you, I had no money available at the time because I vowed and consecrated all my property to G-d. So, I went to the Sages, and they repealed my vows. At that point, I took my money and immediately went to you, to pay you. And **just as you judged me favorably, so may G-d judge you favorably.**”

Insight

Who is this amazing labourer? Someone who worked for his employer, used his animals, made produce, saw his employer make money, and yet when he asked for his wages believed that the employer truly had nothing?

Rav Achai Gaon (Sheiltot Shemot 40) says that this person was none other than Rabbi Akiva. Rama of Fano adds that this was Rabbi Akiva *before* he turned forty and dedicated his life to learning Torah. This highlights for us what great character traits Rabbi Akiva had before he began learning Torah. We learn that when one has such amazing attributes, one can start learning later in life, just like Rabbi Akiva did, and still reach unprecedented heights.

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Biography

Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner

Rabbi Adam Friedmann

Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner was born in 1906 in Warsaw, Poland, to a family with roots in both Chassidic and Lithuanian Jewry. He studied in the yeshiva in Slabodka and was part of a delegation of 150 students who traveled in 1924 to what was then the Mandate of Palestine to establish a branch of the yeshiva in Chevron. He studied there until 1929, when the yeshiva was forced to relocate to Jerusalem following the Chevron massacre. During his time in Israel, Rabbi Hutner forged a relationship with Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook, who was then the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi. The latter had a significant impact on Rabbi Hutner, and would write an approbation for his first book, though a significant philosophical distance would eventually develop between them. After leaving Chevron, Rabbi Hutner returned to Europe. He studied philosophy at the University of Berlin, and was married.

In 1935, Rabbi Hutner moved to Brooklyn, New York, and took up a teaching post at the Rabbi Jacob Joseph School. Eventually, he was offered a position at the high school of Yeshiva Rabbi Chaim Berlin. Rabbi Hutner would stay associated with the yeshiva for the rest of his life, eventually becoming head of the entire yeshiva. Initially, he worked on building up a post-high school beit midrash program for students, which eventually served hundreds of students.

Rabbi Hutner's best known books are the volumes of *Pachad Yitzchak*, in which he rewrote the contents of the *ma'amarim* [discourses] that he delivered on special occasions. Borrowing from Chassidic influences, these *ma'amarim* were spiritually charged discourses blending halachic and philosophical topics. They were accompanied by group singing, celebration, and, occasionally, instrumental music. The goal of these presentations was to arouse the students in a way that would enable them to properly absorb the profound messages. Though the speeches were delivered in Yiddish, *Pachad Yitzchak* is mostly written in modern Hebrew. The work draws extensively on the writings of the Maharal of Prague, as well as various halachic and kabbalistic sources.

Rabbi Hutner reared many illustrious and highly successful students, until his death in 1980.

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Torah and Translation

Abolishing the Torah to Fulfill It

Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner, *Pachad Yitzchak Shvuot 5*

Translated by Idan Rakovsky

וברור דכוונת הש"ס היא דהרי הך דאמרינן דביטולה זהו קיומה, הכוונה היא לומר דדינא דמבטלין תלמוד תורה מפני הכנסת כלה, אין פירושו דמצוות תלמוד תורה נדחית היא מפני קיומם הללו, אלא דכך היא קיומה של תורה,

כמו שפירש רש"י, "היישר כח" היה על מעשה השבירה, ואם היה הענין דמשה התיר לעצמו השבירה, כי אם על אותם הענינים אשר נתקיימו על ידי שבירה זו. וכדרך שלא יתכן יישר כח בעד לבישת כלאים אף בזמן שהאיסור נדחה מפני מצות ציצית, אלא הישר כח 'צריך להיות בעד הציצית.

ומדאמר ריש לקיש שנאמר לו למשה היישר כח על גוף מעשה השבירה, הרי מוכרח הוא גדר זה שהביטול הוא הקיום בעצמו. ומזה מוכיח הש"ס דכשמבטל תלמוד תורה מפני הכנסת כלה הרי זה מקבל שכר על הביטול כמי שיושב ועוסק בתורה.

ונראה דמידה זו אינה נוהגת אלא בתלמוד תורה, מה שאין כן בשאר מצות, דבשאר מצות אי אפשר שביטולם יחשב להם לקיום, ורק בתלמוד תורה מצינו גדר זה. ובמקום אחר מבואר עומק חילוק זה בין תורה למצות.

It is clear that when [Reish Lakish in] the Talmud (Menachot 99a-b) says, "[Sometimes], abolishing [the Torah] is fulfilling it," this means that the rule that we stop learning Torah in order to participate in a wedding does not mean that the mitzvah of Talmud Torah is nullified in order to participate in such an event, but rather that this [celebrating in the wedding] is indeed fulfilling the mitzvah of [studying] Torah itself.

[The Talmud teaches that G-d congratulated Moshe after he broke the tablets: "*Yishar kochacha* for breaking the tablets."] What we say here is as Rashi explained there, that G-d praised Moshe [not] for his decision to break the tablets, when Moshe decided by himself to break the tablets. [Rather, G-d praised] that which was achieved by that breaking. Just as it would not be possible to say "*Yishar kochacha*" for wearing shaatnez even when the prohibition is overridden to fulfill the mitzvah of *tzitzit* (see Yevamot 4a-b), the "*Yishar kochacha*" would be for wearing the *tzitzit*.

From the fact that Reish Lakish said that the "*Yishar kochacha*" was stated to Moshe for the act of breaking the tablets, it is clear that this act of breaking actually was the fulfillment itself. And from this the Talmud derives that when one overrides Torah study for a wedding, one receives reward for that abolition as though one had been sitting and studying Torah.

We should say that this attribute [of abolishing the Torah in order to fulfill it] applies only to the mitzvah of Torah study, and not to all other mitzvot. As for all other mitzvot, we cannot say that by abolishing them we actually fulfill them, rather this is valid only for the mitzvah of learning Torah. In other writings, I explain deeply the depth of this distinction between learning Torah and all other mitzvot.

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

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 of Rav Kook, Tuesday/Thursday: Parshah, Tanach: Sefer Melachim

Shabbat June 4

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

After minchah Idan Rakovsky, Weekly Class, Shaarei Tefillah

After minchah R' Jared Anstandig, Tanach Adventure, Shaarei Shomayim (elementary school students)

First night and day of Shavuot, Sunday June 5

12:00 AM R' Mordechai Torczyner, David, Yehonatan & a Test of Emunah, Aish Thornhill

1:00 AM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Doeg: When the Hero Becomes the Villain, BAYT

1:00 AM R' Jared Anstandig, The Torah vs. the Rabbis, The Marlee Shul

1:00 AM R' Yehuda Mann, Roe v. Wade in Halachah, Clanton Park

2:15 AM R' M. Torczyner, Why Couldn't David Build the Beit haMikdash?, Ayin l'Tzion/Zichron Yisroel

2:45 AM R' Jared Anstandig, What Was Given at Sinai?, Shaarei Shomayim

3:00-5:00 AM Idan Rakovsky, No Need for Coffee!, Shaarei Tefillah

3:00 AM R' Mordechai Torczyner, David, Goliath & You, Bnei Akiva

3:55 AM R' Steven Gotlib, Why Did We Just Stay Up?, The Village Shul

4:00 AM R' Yehuda Mann, Semichat Chaver Review: Sanctity of Our Synagogues, Clanton Park

5:00 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Cheesecake in Halachah, Clanton Park

5:55 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, One Nation, Under David, BAYT

8:55 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Do We Have to Learn All the Time?, Clanton Park

Second day of Shavuot, Monday June 6

7:55 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Avigayil: Redeemer of Men, Bnai Torah

Tuesday June 7

1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, King Solomon's Arc, ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt>—not this week

7:00 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 15), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (men)—not this week

7:30 PM Prielle & Idan Rakovsky, Song of the Week, ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklysng>— normally Mondays

Wednesday June 8

6:30 AM R' Jared Anstandig, Talmud: Avodah Zarah, ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/idolsarebad>

7:30 PM Idan Rakovsky, The Laws of Shabbat, Shaarei Tefillah

7:45 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Contemporary Halachah, Clanton Park

Thursday June 9

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)

7:30 PM R' Jared Anstandig, Time-Bound Mitzvot, Shaarei Shomayim (university women)

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

Friday June 10

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: "When Will Mashiach Come?" 10 AM Wed. June 15 & 22 at Yeshivat Or Chaim!