

# Toronto Torah

## Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Chukat

10 Tammuz, 5782/July 9, 2022

Vol. 13 Num. 42 (#543)

This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Rabbi Dr. Moshe & Esty Yeres

on the yahrzeit of their daughter Batsheva a"h (9 Tammuz) לעילוי נשמת בתשבע בלימה בת הרב משה יוסף הלוי ואסתר  
and the yahrtzeit of Rabbi Yeres' mother Shaindel Yeres a"h (15 Tammuz) לעילוי נשמת חיה שיינדל בת אלכסנדר הלוי  
and in honour of the Bar Mitzvah of their grandson Pini Yeres פינחס אלימלך ירם נ"י

This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by David and Agnes Miller in memory of Agnes' parents  
Chaim Yochanan ben Yitzchak Shemuel z"l and Rachel bat Avraham Moshe z"l

### Our Song

The Song of the Well (Bamidbar 21:17-18) is the first time Bnei Yisrael sing to Hashem on their own. The verse prior (21:16) explains that this took place in *Be'er* (literally 'well'), where Hashem had told Moshe to gather the nation and give them water. The full song is not even two verses long. "Then Israel sang this song: Rise up O well, proclaim to it. The well dug by officers, excavated by the nobility of the nation, with sceptre and their staffs."

The initial Hebrew words of the Song of the Well are strikingly similar to the Song at the Sea (Shemot 15:1), "*Az yashir Moshe uinei Yisrael et hashirah hazot laShem.*" Here it begins, "*Az yashir Yisrael et hashirah hazot.*" But where the Song at the Sea is explicitly sung to Hashem, there is no obvious word in the Song of the Well referencing Hashem at all. In fact, [Chaim Nahman Bialik](#) utilized the words of the Song of the Well in a secular context, for a song apparently devoid of Hashem, about drinking of a well's golden waters from a filled bucket. Did the Jews not recognize Hashem at the Well? First, we need to answer a question: what well was this?

#### The Second Well

The simplest explanation is that this is the well at which Moshe was punished for striking the rock. (20:12) This well was mentioned in the verse right before the song. (21:16) Indeed, Rabbi

Yosef Bechor Shor points out that Moshe also isn't mentioned as singing in the song despite his being present, because that well was also the source of his inability to enter Israel. (Commentary to Bamidbar 21:17)

#### The First Well

Commenting on this passage, Rabbeinu Behaye follows the midrash-based approach of Rashi (21:16-17), that the officers and nobility referenced are Moshe and Aharon. The song harkens back to **the beginning** of the forty years in the desert, when Hashem told Moshe to hit the rock to produce water. That water came in the merit of Miriam. The drying up of the well, and Moshe's inappropriate second striking of the rock occurred because of Miriam's passing. The impetus for the new song was a river of blood and bones that began to flow after Hashem miraculously destroyed an Emorite ambush.

But within this approach, why isn't Hashem directly mentioned in the song? Why the ambiguous officers and princes? Why not mention Miriam, Moshe, or Aharon directly?

Perhaps it is because the post-Miriam well didn't turn out as planned. [Rabbi Menachem Leibtag](#) explains that the second drawing of water from the rock was supposed to be an opportunity for Moshe to make a miraculous and lasting impression on the new generation,

akin to the miracles that began in Egypt and continued through the presentation of the Torah at Sinai. The process was meant to inspire, but when Moshe squandered the chance, choosing to hit instead of speaking to the rock, and calling the Jews "rebels", this opportunity was lost. (Bamidbar 20:10)

The golden tongue that Moshe gained and used to sing at the Sea and lead Bnei Yisrael for forty years appears to have worn out. Now, Bnei Yisrael were thrust into a new age, not quite ready or fully formed. They drew inspiration from the Song of the Sea and retold their impressions of the water coming from the rock, but their experience was incomplete.

This song initiated by Bnei Yisrael has its flaws, but "[The Song of the Well](#)" ([here sung by the PASH Project](#)) ushered in a new era, when all of Bnei Yisrael began to feel inspired and tried to recognize Hashem around them. While short on words, their energy and enthusiasm was contagious, and exactly what the nation needed before entering the land of Israel. May we all merit to sing this song and others, together in Israel.

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**Thank you, Rav Chaim,  
for two years of  
Toronto Torah articles!**  
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### OUR BEIT MIDRASH

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**Summary**

A central message of Yeshayahu is that political reliance on various nations, rather than on G-d, is one of the fundamental sins of the Jews during the period leading up to the destruction of the Temple. Yeshayahu predicts a future date, presumably after the fall of Assyria, when the Jews will rely on G-d, though only a small group of them. The rest will be destroyed. (10:20-23)

G-d promises to punish the Assyrians for the way they treated the Jews, as G-d did to the Egyptians and Midianites. The Jews will no longer suffer under the yoke of the invading Assyrians. (24-27) The cities attacked by Assyria on their way to Jerusalem are then summarized. (28-32)

The destruction of the Assyrians is described using a parable of a forest that will be hacked away with iron instruments. (33-34)

The next verses describe the saviour of the Davidic kingdom who will emerge, using the language of a “shoot growing out of the stump of Jesse.” He will have

the spirit of G-d, wisdom, insight, counsel, valour, and fear of G-d. He will be able to judge using a sense of the truth, not merely using his eyes and ears. He will ensure that the poor are judged fairly. He will be identified by his justice and faithfulness. (11:1-5)

There will also be peace, even in the animal kingdom, such as between the wolf with the lamb, and among cows and bears. (6-8) The world will be covered with knowledge of G-d, as the sea covers the earth. (9) Then the Davidic king will be a standard for all peoples, who will come to seek his counsel and honour him. (10).

**Insight**

The language of these verses inspires the blessing for the return of the Davidic king in the Amidah, *et tzemach David*, about the shoot of David. Rabbi Ezra Bick [notes](#) that the key to this image is growth. While the celestial realm is characterized by the standard of constant perfection, people are judged by how much they grow. Thus, the Zohar contrasts angels and people, the former being described as *omdim*,

those standing, and the latter as *me-halchim*, those walking.

According to Rabbi Bick, the imagery here focuses on the importance of growth:

“*Tzemach*” refers to this value of process. When we ask for salvation, we are not asking for a particular state... when we ask for salvation, we are not asking for a particular quantity of something. We are asking for the “*tzemicha*,” the growth of salvation. “G-d,” we say, “cause the plant of salvation to grow,” to reach upward, as the horns on the head of the deer. We are, in other words, asking to become part of the process, rather than to achieve a defined, quantified goal. Let salvation grow, get the process started. That is the goal, that is the desired good, the object of our prayers.

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**It Happened in Israel: Dama and the Parah**

In multiple places, the Talmud tells the story of Dama ben Netinah, a non-Jew who lived in Ashkelon during the second Beit haMikdash. [See Bavli Kiddushin 31a and Avodah Zarah 23b-24a, as well as Yerushalmi Peah 1:1 and Kiddushin 1:7. And see Tosafot Avodah Zarah 23b *bikshu* and Meiri Kiddushin 31a regarding when Dama lived.] Our Sages celebrate Dama for the way he honoured his parents.

On one occasion, Dama was sitting with Roman aristocrats when his mother barged in, tore his tunic, slapped him and spit upon him, but Dama retained self-control and did not respond harshly. On another occasion, the Sages needed a particular gem for the kohen gadol’s uniform. [See Tosafot Avodah Zarah 24a and Maharsha ad loc. regarding which gem was involved.] Dama owned such a gem, but when the Sages came to him to purchase it, Dama turned them away; the key for his safe was under the head of his sleeping father. The following year, Hashem rewarded Dama with a *parah adumah* [red heifer], and the Sages came to purchase it. Dama told them, “I know you would pay any price for this *parah adumah*, but all I want is the money I lost when I honoured my father.”

Why did Hashem send Dama a *parah adumah*, specifically? Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Alter, the first Gerrer Rebbe, explained that Dama demonstrated great care for the mitzvah of honouring parents. Lest Jews look bad in contrast, Hashem gave us the opportunity to demonstrate even greater commitment by observing *parah adumah* - which is harder than honouring parents because it lacks a rational explanation. (*Daf al haDaf*, Kiddushin 31a)

**Was Dama wrong?**

We might argue that Dama was actually **required** to wake his father because his father would appreciate being woken for

such a financial gain. Indeed, Sefer Chasidim (337) notes that one should wake a parent who would be upset if he was not woken. For example, a child should wake a parent who would want to be woken for a mitzvah.

Nonetheless, the fact that the Talmud praises Dama indicates that he was correct. Sefer Chasidim (ibid.) suggests that the gem belonged to Dama, not his father, and so his father would not have appreciated being woken. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein offers a different reason: Dama’s father was ill and not rational, and he would not have appreciated the benefit. (Dibrot Moshe, Kiddushin, He’arah 17)

**If Dama were Jewish**

The Talmud stresses that Dama was not Jewish, introducing our story with, “Go out and see the actions of an idolater in Ashkelon, named Dama ben Netinah.” His conduct is so impressive because the Noachide laws do not require honouring one’s parents. A Jew, on the other hand, would be required to sacrifice wealth to avoid waking a parent.

But would a Jew be required to make this sacrifice? The mitzvah of honouring parents does not require us to spend money! (Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 240:5) Rabbeinu Nisim answers that waking a parent is worse than failure to honour them; it is an act of causing pain. Saving money would not justify this. (Ran Kiddushin 13a) Rabbi Yom Tov el-Asvili offers a different explanation: Sacrificing potential gain is not the same as avoiding a loss, and does not justify failure to honour one’s parents. (Ritva to Kiddushin 31a)

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**Biography**  
**Rabbi Yitzchak**  
**Zilberstein**  
**Rabbi Elihu Abbe**

*"I want to praise the IDF, I really want to commend it for providing the opportunity for 40 soldiers to come and take part in the shiur," Kikar Shabbos News quotes Rabbi [Yitzchak] Zilberstein saying. When one of the participants said, "It is like this every year," the rav responded, "And they aren't entitled to praise every year?"*

*Rabbi Zilberstein explains the army gives 100 soldiers each year but this year only 40, citing it was most likely not possible to send more. The rav added that not only are the refreshments sent for the soldiers edible, they are 'mehudar' and sent specially for the shiur participants. He is quoted adding the military receives meat with the best hechsher in the world. (Yeshiva World News, April 2016)*

Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein, one of the rabbinic leaders of the Chareidi community of Bnei Brak, has captivated a wide spectrum of Jews with his pleasant, positive, and loving demeanor, and his enjoyable shiurim and divrei Torah. He has written numerous books containing stories and ideas on the weekly Torah portion, as well as discussions of practical, interesting questions of Jewish law.

Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein was born in 1934 in Poland. He learned from Rabbi Yechezkel Abramsky and Rabbi Aryeh Levin, and ultimately married Rabbi Aryeh Levin's granddaughter, Aliza Shoshana Elyashiv, daughter of Rabbi Yosef Sholom Elyashiv. After his wife's passing in 1999, he remarried to Toby Tiberger.

Rabbi Zilberstein served as a Rosh Yeshiva in Switzerland, then as a Rabbi in Holon, and is currently the head of the rabbinical court of the Ramat Elchanan neighborhood in Bnei Brak. As Rabbi in Holon he presented shiurim on medical halachah, attended by both religious and secular doctors. He is currently the Rabbi of Mayanei Hayeshua Hospital, and his writings in this area include the four-volume *Shiurei Torah l'Rofim* and *Torat haYoledet* on the laws of childbirth.

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**Torah and Translation**  
**A Red Heifer Riddle**

**R' Y Zilberstein, Vavei ha'Amudim vaChashukeihem Vol. 7**  
**Translated by Rabbi Jared Anstandig**

חידה: כל הפרות אדומות ששחטו הכהנים היו תמיד שוחטים אותה באותו יום בשבוע, חוץ מפרה אחת ששחטו אותה ביום אחר. איזה יום היו שוחטים את כל הפרות? ולמה פרה אחת שחטו ביום אחר?

תשובה: כל השמונה פרות אדומות שעשו מזמן משה ואילך עשו אותה ביום רביעי חוץ מפרה שעשה משה שעשו אותה ביום שני...

הטעם מבואר בגמרא (יומא ח:): כי הפרישו את הכהן העושה את הפרה אדומה שבעה ימים קודם עשייתה, והזו עליו בכל יום מאפר פרה אדומה, חוץ מיום רביעי שלא הזו עליו...

וכן הזאה הוא שבות, ואינה דוחה שבת, ולכן הפרישו את הכהן גדול ביום רביעי, שיום רביעי של ההפרשה שאין צריך להזות עליו יצא בשבת קודש שאז גם אסור להזות...

אמנם פרה הראשונה שעשה משה במדבר נעשית ביום ב' ניסן שחל להיות ביום שני כמבואר בשבת (פז:): שראש חודש ניסן יום הקמת המשכן חל ביום ראשון, ומבואר במדרש הביאו רש"י (במדבר ז:א) בשני נשרפה הפרה... אולם התם אין טעם לעשותו ביום רביעי, כי עדיין לא היה אפר פרה, שיוכלו להזות עליו בכל יום, וממילא לא היה נפקא מינה באיזה יום יפריש אותו.

A Riddle: All the red heifers that were slaughtered by the Kohanim were always slaughtered on the same day of the week, except for one heifer that was slaughtered on another day of the week. On which day of the week were all the red heifers slaughtered? And why was one heifer slaughtered on another day?

Answer: All of the eight red heifers that were done from the time of Moses and on were done on a Wednesday, except for the one that Moses did, which was done on a Monday...

[Explanation:] The reason is explained in the Talmud (Yoma 8b) that they isolated the Kohen who would perform the service of the red heifer seven days before the service would take place, and they sprinkled the Kohen with the ashes of a previously slaughtered red heifer every day except the fourth day [of isolation] during which they did not sprinkle...

[As part of the purification process from contact with a corpse, a person must be sprinkled with the ashes of a red heifer no earlier than the third day following contracting impurity. Since it is plausible that this Kohen unknowingly touched a corpse before isolation, he is sprinkled with ashes on the first three days, thereby ensuring that he is sprinkled upon three days after contamination. It is unnecessary to sprinkle him on day four since he was sequestered from any potential impurity for the preceding three days.]

Additionally, sprinkling [the ashes of the red heifer] is rabbinically prohibited on Shabbat, and does not override Shabbat. Therefore, they isolated the Kohen Gadol on a Wednesday, so that his fourth day, on which he does not require sprinkling, would fall on Shabbat, during which it is prohibited to sprinkle...

However, the first red heifer, which was performed by Moses in the desert, was done on the second day of Nisan, which fell on a Monday, as is explained in Shabbat (87b), that Rosh Chodesh Nisan, on which the Mishkan was erected, fell on a Sunday. And it is explained in a midrash quoted by Rashi (Bamidbar 7:1), that on the second day they incinerated the red heifer... But in that case, there was no reason to do it specifically on a Wednesday, for there were not yet ashes of a red heifer that could have been sprinkled each day. So, it made no difference on which day he would be put in isolation.

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

*Many of our classes are now starting summer hiatus, but learning opportunities remain!*

### Monday-Thursday

10:00 AM - Noon: Adult Seder Boker with Rabbi Moshe Yeres at Yeshivat Or Chaim!

Monday/Wednesday: Talmud Succah, Orot of Rav Kook

Tuesday/Thursday: Parshah, Tanach: Sefer Melachim

### Shabbat July 8-9

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

6:30 PM R' Chaim Metzger, Miriam: Making of a Prophetess, BAYT (Gruda Beis Medrash) (women)

20 min before minchah R' Steven Gotlib, Pirkei Avot, Village Shul

After minchah Idan Rakovsky, Weekly Class, Shaarei Tefillah

After minchah R' Mordechai Torczyner, Gemara Ketuvot, BAYT (Gruda Beis Medrash) (men)

### Sunday July 10

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 July 11

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

2:00 PM Idan Rakovsky, Into the Song of Songs, ZOOM <http://tiny.cc/idanrak> #5 of 5

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

8:00 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, S. Y. Agnon's *v'lo Nikashel* ("That we not stumble")  
ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/agnon>

### Tuesday July 12

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

### Wednesday July 13

6:30 AM R' Jared Anstandig, Talmud: Avodah Zarah, Shaarei Shomayim

10:00 AM R' Mordechai Torczyner, When Will Mashiach Come? Part II, Week 2 of 2  
In Person Only at Yeshivat Or Chaim, register at <https://torontotorah.com/wednesdays> **NEW!**

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

8:15 PM R' Chaim Metzger, Barriers to Belief, Week 2 of 3, BAYT (Jarvis Freedman Library)  
And on ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/chaimmetzger>

### Thursday July 14

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

1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 26), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (women)

8:00 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Gemara Beitzah, email [ymanntorontotorah.com](mailto:ymanntorontotorah.com) for rotating location

8:30 PM R' Jared Anstandig, Moshe vs. Bilam: Two Sides of the Same Coin? Register at <http://tiny.cc/tim>

### Friday July 15

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>

Our Kayitz Zman ends on Friday, but we expect to publish one more issue of Toronto Torah next Shabbat!

And mark your calendars for 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM September 11, 2022  
TISHREI IN A DAY returns in-person at Yeshivat Or Chaim!