

# Toronto Torah

## Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Lech Lecha

11 Cheshvan, 5783 / Nov. 5, 2022

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**This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Yaakov and Lea Hollander and family to commemorate the fourth yahrtzeit of beloved father and grandfather Israel Schapira, Yisrael ben Yaakov Zvi z"l**

**This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Professor and Mrs. Paul Socken in memory of Paul's beloved mother, Rochel bas Yechezkel z"l, on the occasion of her 66<sup>th</sup> yahrtzeit (9 Cheshvan)**

### Don't Just Learn Torah. Teach Torah.

**Rabbi Jared Anstandig**

What made Avraham so great? The simple answer is that he was the first monotheist – the first (at least in several generations) to recognize G-d as the Supreme Being in the universe.

Interestingly, as Rambam explains the greatness of Avraham, he emphasizes a particular aspect of Avraham's approach. It was not only that he was the first monotheist, but that he taught his monotheism to others. Rambam writes that as soon as Avraham recognized G-d, he sprang into action and "began to teach the people that it is fitting to serve only the G-d of the world... he would explain to each one of [of his followers] according to their understanding...." (Hilchot Avodat Kochavim 1:3; translation by Rabbi Eliyahu Touger, [bam.alhatorah.org](http://www.bam.alhatorah.org)) The crowning feature of Avraham was that once he began to learn about G-d, he began to teach about G-d.

The Talmud (Sotah 49b) makes a similar point, highlighting that this – learning Torah to teach Torah – is the ideal way to learn Torah. The Talmud quotes Proverbs 31:26, which references "a Torah of kindness." The Talmud asks, "Is there such a thing as Torah that is not of kindness?" It answers, "Torah studied in order to teach to others, that is a Torah of kindness; Torah studied with the intent of not teaching to others, that is a Torah that is not of kindness." (adapted from the translation of Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz,

[shas.alhatorah.org](http://www.shas.alhatorah.org)) Learning Torah is an incredibly important mitzvah; but to engage in the highest level of learning Torah, that is the Torah of kindness, we must learn in order to pass it along. And this is the model that Avraham set for us.

In fact, Rabbi Eliezer Pappo laments those who believe that educating others is beneath them. He writes, "It is not right that Torah scholars do not want to learn with their children and students, since they see it as a waste of time, since in one day of independent learning they can cover several pages of the Talmud... Unlike when they learn with students, they need to spend a significant amount of time reviewing and reviewing until the student learns anything." (*Pele Yoetz* Entry 389, "Torah") Some scholars maintain that their time is better spent in high-level learning rather than low-level teaching. Rabbi Pappo condemns this approach, explaining that nothing brings G-d greater satisfaction than when Torah is being transmitted to others.

This is relevant not only for great Torah scholars. Every one of us has something to teach someone else. In a letter written on 18 Elul 5710, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson elaborates on the well-known mitzvah of tzedakah. He notes that there are two categories of tzedakah, material and spiritual. Material tzedakah is the more familiar type, giving financial support to those in need of it. But there is also spiritual tzedakah

– giving spiritual support, i.e., teaching, those who need. And, the Rebbe continues, "Just as for material tzedakah, even the materially poor individual is obligated to give – for there is no pauper who has no way to help his fellow pauper – so too with spiritual tzedakah, even the spiritually poor person is obligated to give – for there is no Jewish man or woman who cannot positively impact another Jew and bring them closer to G-d, Torah, and mitzvot." (*Igrot Kodesh*, letter 749, volume 3, pages 462-464)

It is worth noting that Hillel said, "At a time when people are gathering [Torah], spread it. At a time when people are spreading [Torah], gather it in." (Berachot 63a) But as explained by Rashi there, this is less about limiting one's teaching of Torah, and more about humility in the presence of greater teachers.

The greatness of Avraham was not only his knowledge of G-d, but his commitment and dedication to sharing his knowledge with others. Whether we study advanced Talmud, or are still working on the aleph bet, let us find ways to share what we have with others.

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**Summary**

This prophecy is about Jerusalem. Jerusalem is in the mountains, but Yeshayahu describes it as a valley because the prophecy is about Jerusalem having a low status. (Radak to 22:1) Yeshayahu laments that the city of Jerusalem was once a city of happiness and joy, but now it is a city in which people fear pending war and hide on their rooftops. (22:1-2)

Yeshayahu predicts that the king and his ministers will try to flee from the war, but they will all be captured. Because of that, the prophet says not to comfort him. He knows of the suffering his people will endure, and the day of defeat of the city of Hashem is approaching. (22:3-5)

The prophet says that soldiers from Eilam and Ashur are going to join the battle against Israel. He describes many soldiers attacking Israel, filling the valleys and besieging the cities. The enemy is going to take away our spiritual protection - the Beit HaMikdash. Instead of repenting, Israel will prepare themselves for battle in natural ways. They will enhance the walls of the city and make all sorts of traps for the enemy. (22:6-11)

Yeshayahu says that Hashem was expecting to see the people repent and fast, but instead the people are eating and drinking as much as they can, since they expect to die soon. Because of this behavior, Hashem promises that they will be punished. (22:12-14)

Hashem tells Yeshayahu the destiny of Shevna, a person who worked in the Beit HaMikdash, betrayed the Jewish people and joined Assyria. He thought this would bring him honour and protection, but he will be humiliated and murdered by the Assyrians themselves. (22:15-19)

Hashem tells Yeshayahu that the person who is going to replace Shevna in the Beit HaMikdash will be Elyakim ben Chilkياهو. He will gain the great honour that Shevna sought. (22:20-25).

**Insight**

The Talmud elaborates upon the story of Shevna. (Sanhedrin 26a-b) According to our Sages, Shevna taught Torah publicly and had 130,000 participants, while only 110,000 people learned in Chizkiyahu's classes. The Talmud also states that Shevna wanted to surrender to the Assyrians, and Chizkiyahu

was concerned that Hashem might be with Shevna, as more people supported Shevna. However, Hashem told Chizkiyahu that "the conspiracy of the wicked does not count."

Often we feel that whatever the majority thinks or does obligates us as well, even though we don't feel that this is the right path. Across history we have seen majorities hold abhorrent views and do terrible things. The message of the current Torah readings, about Noach and Avraham, support the Talmud's message here - we must stand alone against popular opinion in order to do the right thing. The same is true with Chizkiyahu and Shevna; that which is more popular is not necessarily correct.

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**Siddur Insights: Praying for Rain****Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner**

On Shemini Atzeret we began to mention rain in the second *berachah* of the *amidah*, saying "*Mashiv haruach umorid hageshem.*" With this clause we acknowledge that Hashem's powers include causing the wind to blow and the rain to fall. This past week, Israelis began to ask Hashem for rain, adding the request "*V'ten tal umatar*" to the *amidah*. Jews living outside of Israel will start to make this request in the beginning of December.

On the face of it, the need to insert these rain references in our davening is self-evident; our ancestors consistently looked to Hashem for rain. Chumash is filled with references to Hashem bringing or halting rain. Tanach presents several stories in which Hashem withheld rain, or people davened for rain. Consider the rain-linked famine in Dovid HaMelech's time (Shemuel II 21), and the droughts in the generations of Eliyahu and Elisha (Melachim I 17, Melachim II 3). The precedent is most evident in Shlomo HaMelech's prayer dedicating the Beit haMikdash, in which he asked Hashem to accept our prayers during times of drought. (Melachim I 8:35-36)

Despite the above, the Talmud (Taanit 2a) feels a need to justify our inclusion of rain in the *amidah*. It asks, "How do we know to mention this in the *amidah*?" And the Talmud responds that Devarim 11:13 presents the mitzvah of prayer ("to serve Hashem with your entire hearts") and the next verse depicts Hashem sending rain. Why does the Talmud think this exegesis is necessary? What does it add to the numerous examples in Tanach?

**1: When we are not in need**

In one approach, Rabbi Shemuel Eidels suggests that the Talmud is teaching us to appeal to Hashem for rain even

when we are not experiencing a drought, and we are not in immediate need. (*Maharsha* to Taanit 2a) Similarly, Rabbi Yitzchak Minkovsky and Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter pointed out that the Talmudic passage is discussing mentioning Hashem's power to bring rain (*Mashiv haruach umorid hageshem*), not our actual requests for rain (*V'ten tal umatar*). (*Keren Orah* and *Sfat Emet* to Taanit 2a)

**2: An essential prayer**

But Rabbi Alter also offers another idea: there is a difference between knowing that Jews have always appealed to Hashem for rain, and identifying rain as a **fundamental** part of Jewish prayer, such that one who omits the mention of rain must repeat the *amidah*. We pray for rain not only because our ancestors did so, but because Hashem told us that prayers for rain are basic to our entire prayer experience.

Why is rain so fundamental to our prayers? Perhaps because precipitation can appear natural, and a goal of prayer is to establish that even the apparently natural is actually manipulated by Hashem. Ramban wrote that if there is a biblical mitzvah of prayer, it is a command to believe that Hashem "hears prayer and saves from troubles through prayer". (Challenges to Rambam's Sefer haMitzvot, Aseh #5) By invoking rain in our prayers - whether the *Mashiv haruach umorid hageshem* recognition of Hashem's power, or the *V'ten tal umatar* request - we demonstrate our belief that Hashem operates the water cycle, sending the rain that makes life on our planet possible.

May Hashem send a fructifying rainy season in Israel and beyond.

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**Biography**  
**Rabbi Yehudah**  
**HeChasid**  
**Rabbi Jonathan Ziring**

Rabbi Yehudah HeChasid was a leading member of the Chasidei Ashkenaz, also known as the German Pietists. He was born around 1140 in Speyer and he died in 1217 in Regensburg. His father, Rabbi Shemuel HeChasid was a leading scholar in Speyer. Rabbi Yehudah HeChasid had many prominent students, including several well-known Tosafists, such as Rabbi Yitzchak of Vienna (author of the *Or Zarua*), Rabbi Elazar ben Yehudah (author of the *Rokeach*), Rabbi Moshe of Coucy, (author of the *Semag*), Rabbi Brauch ben Yitzchak (author of the *Sefer HaTerumah*).

His best-known work is *Sefer Chasidim*, a collection of Halachah, custom, ethical teachings, and comments on prayer. While much of the work is from Rabbi Yehudah HeChasid, some of it is from his students.

There are several manuscripts of the *Sefer Chasidim*. The most common edition is the Bologna edition (also referred to as the Margoliot edition as it was edited by Rabbi Reuven Margaliot). The Chida wrote a commentary on this version called *Berit Olam*. The other common manuscript is the Parma edition. *Mishnat Avraham* by Rabbi Avraham Price of Toronto is a commentary on this edition. One can search all versions of the manuscripts on the [Princeton University Sefer Hasidim Database](#).

Rabbi Yehudah heChasid also left an ethical will (the "*Tzava'ah*"), often published along with *Sefer Chasidim*. Whether this will should be considered halachically binding is subject to great dispute, as noted prominently by Rabbi Yechezkel Landau. (Shut Noda B'Yehudah 2 EH 79) Rabbi Yehudah heChasid also wrote a commentary to the Torah (also found in varying manuscripts). Some of the passages there are controversial. In one case, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (Igrot Moshe Yoreh Deah 3:114-5) challenges the authenticity of these pieces (and even the entire work) based on the claims that certain passages in the Torah were inserted from much later personalities such as King David or the Anshei Kneset HaGedolah. Others defended the work, such as Rabbi Menasheh Klein (Shut Mishneh Halachot 12:112 and 16:214), who went as far as to deny that Rabbi Feinstein could have challenged the work. He attributed the rejection to a mistaken student.

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**Torah and Translation**  
**Fear of G-d**  
**Rabbi Yehudah HeChasid, Sefer Chasidim 1017 (Parma ed.)**  
**Translated by Rabbi Jonathan Ziring**

שורש יראת ד' ...

[מרגליות: שורש החסידות יראה].

...כשאדם מתאוה לדבר ועוזב את יצרו בשביל יראתו, ולא שירא מפורענות או בשביל הנאת העולם הזה או מפורענות או בשביל הנאת העולם הזה או מפורענות העולם הבא, אלא ירא פן לא יהיה תמיד תמים. וזהו "כי עתה ידעתי כי ירא אלקים אתה" באהבת הקב"ה.

וכן כשבאה מצוה לידו וקשה עליו לעשותה, ואע"פ שקשה עליו ביותר עושה אותה, כגון אברהם בעקידת יצחק. וכתוב "כי עתה ידעתי כי ירא אלקים אתה." והלא קודם שבראו הוא ידע שנאמ' "בטרם אצורך בבטן ידעתיך, ובטרם תצא מרחם הקדשתיך!" אלא כן אמר לו: לא אנסה אותך עוד, כי זה גדול מכל הנסיונות, כי נודע בזה הדבר כי הוא שלם בכל הדברים אע"פ שלא ניסהו בשאר דברים, כי זה גדול מכולם. ולו אין לומר "עתה ידעתי" ולא קודם אלא "איני צריך לנסותך יותר" כיון שבה ניסיתך הרי הכל בכלל...

ויוסף אמר "את האלקים אני ירא," קשה עליו מאד שאתם מרגלים ויש לי לעזוב אתכם, אבל שהנחתם את בניכם ברעבון אם לא תביאו להם מה יאכלו? וכן "ועובדיהו היה ירא ד'" וקשה עליו פן יגידו לאיזבל ויהרגוהו...

The root of fear of G-d is...

[In the Margoliot edition #12, this reads "the root of piety is fear [of G-d]". Thus, rather than defining the fear of G-d, the piece is defining the specific fear of G-d that counts as "piety." (*Mishnat Avraham*)]

... when a man desires something and abandons his inclination only because of his fear [of G-d] and not because he fears retribution, not because of enjoyment of this world, not because of retribution in this world or in the world to come, but rather he fears that he will not always be perfect. This is [what is meant by] "For now I know that you fear G-d." (Bereishit 22:12) [This is] with love of the Holy One Blessed be He.

So, too, when a commandment comes to his hand and it is difficult for him to perform it, and even though it is very difficult for him, he does it, as Avraham did in the binding of Yitzchak, as it is written, "for now I know that you fear G-d." Didn't He know before He created him, as in, "Before I created you in the womb, I knew you, before you were born, I consecrated you (Yirmiyahu 1:5) ? Rather, He said to him, "I will not test you anymore, for this was greater than any of your tests," for through this it was made known that he was complete in all things, even if he was not tested in the other things, for this was greater than all of them. And for Him one cannot say "Now I know" but not before, but rather "I do not have to test you more, for I have tested you with this."...

[This idea of fear of G-d as keeping someone from what he wishes to do is also seen] when Yosef said, "I fear G-d." [Yosef said to his brothers when they arrived seeking food in Egypt], "It is difficult for me, as you are spies and I should abandon you, but you left your children in starvation and if you do not bring to them, what will they eat?" Similarly, with Ovadiah, "Ovadiah feared G-d." (Melachim I 18:3) It was difficult for him, lest they tell Izevel and she would kill him...

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### Shabbat Nov 4-5

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

Before minchah R' Steven Gotlib, Mussar, Village Shul

After minchah R' Mordechai Torczyner, Gemara Ketuvot, BAYT (Milevsky Bais Medrash) (men)

### Sunday Nov 6

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

### Monday Nov 7

9 AM R' Jared Anstandig, Halachic Philosophy of Rav Soloveitchik, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university men)

2:00 PM Idan Rakovsky, Eliyahu: Prophet of Fire & Water, ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/idanrak> Week 2 of 5

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

8:30 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Even ha'Ezer in Bereishit, Shomrai Shabbos (men) Week 2

### Tuesday Nov 8

9:00 AM Idan Rakovsky, Tzidkat haTzaddik, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university men)

1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Wisdom of King Solomon, ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (men)

7:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 16), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (men) *not this week*

8:00 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Hug haTanach: Iyov, ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/hugiyov>

8:30 PM R' Jared Anstandig, Talmud Topics, Shaarei Shomayim (university women)

### Wednesday Nov 9

10:00 AM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Jews and Clothes Week 2 of 7

There is a fee, Register at <https://torontotorah.com/wednesdays>; On ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt>

12:30 PM R' Jared Anstandig, Business Ethics: Debt Forgiveness: Good Religion, Good Business?  
With Continuing Education credit for Accountants, on ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/bmlunch>  
Registration at <https://torontotorah.com/business>

7:30 PM Idan Rakovsky, Issues in Jewish Democracy, Shaarei Tefillah Week 2

8:30 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Contemporary Halachah, Clanton Park *not this week*

### Thursday Nov 10

1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 28), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (women)

### Friday Nov 11

9:00 AM R' Jared Anstandig, Parshah, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university)

10:30 AM R' Jared Anstandig, R' Mordechai Torczyner, R' Yehuda Mann, Ketuvot Perek 1 *advanced*  
In-person at Yeshivat Or Chaim, on ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/frishiur>

### COMING UP!

Shabbat November 11-12

SHABBATON AT BAYT: THE TORAH OF RABBI JONATHAN SACKS!

Leil Limmud in homes Friday Night / Shiurim and Divrei Torah at BAYT during Shabbat day

10-11:20 AM Sunday November 13

MIDRESHET YOM RISHON FOR WOMEN AT BAYT ON PARSHAT CHAYEI SARAH

Ms. Miriam Bessin—The Life and Death of Sarah

Mrs. Shyndee Kestenbaum—When the Apple Falls Far From the Tree

Light refreshments served / No registration needed

7:30 PM Monday evening November 14

VACCINATION AND RISK-TAKING IN JUDAISM

WITH GUEST SPEAKER RABBI DR. JASON WEINER!

In-Person at Yeshivat Or Chaim, 159 Almore Ave.

Registration at <https://torontotorah.com/cme>