

Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Chayei Sarah

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This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Rabbi Dr. Mervyn and Joyce Fried and Family in loving memory of Mervyn's mother, איטא וירה בת ישראל משה הלוי ז"ל

This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Esther and Craig Guttman and Family for the yahrtzeit of Shimon Berglas שמעון אריה בן חיים ז"ל

This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Lori and Larry Wolynetz and Family for the seventh yahrtzeit of Lori's father Dov Ber ben Yisrael Tzvi, דב בער בן ישראל צבי ז"ל

Don't Leave Home / Leave Home!

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

On first read, the following story seems to be all about Yitzchak. Avraham charges his servant with finding a wife for Yitzchak from the Aramean branch of the family. The servant asks, "Maybe she will not agree to follow me to Canaan; shall I return your son to the land you left?" To which Avraham replies, "Guard yourself, lest you bring my son back there. Hashem, who took me from my father's house and my birthplace, who spoke to me and swore to me, 'I have given this land to your progeny,' He will send His agent before you, and you will take a wife for my son from there. And if she does not wish to follow you, you will be freed from this oath [to find Yitzchak a wife]. Only do not bring my son back there." (Bereishit 24:3-8)

Why must Yitzchak remain in the land? Commentators offer at least three approaches, with a focus on Yitzchak's welfare and mission.

1) Eretz Yisrael - Some suggest that Avraham insists because Eretz Yisrael is a wonderful land. (Abarbanel) This view is amplified in a midrash which notes that Avraham had offered Yitzchak as a sacrifice; leaving the sacred land would desecrate his sanctity. (Pesikta Zutrita Bereishit 24:6)

2) Aram - Rabbi Ephraim Luntschitz adds that moving to Aram could have a negative impact, beyond the loss of the holiness of Israel. Avraham sought

Yitzchak's wife from Aram and intended for Yitzchak to live in Israel, to impose distance between him and the potential negative influence of his in-laws. (*Kli Yakar* to Bereishit 24:3) Similarly, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch contended that Hashem told Avraham to abandon his family and birthplace; the mission of "Lech lecha" continued for Yitzchak and Yaakov. (Commentary to Bereishit 24:8; and see Malbim to Bereishit 24:6) Thus Avraham emphasized that Hashem drew him from his father's house and his birthplace.

3) Future of the Jews - Avraham quoted Hashem's promise, "I have given this land to your progeny." As Radak (Commentary to Bereishit 24:6) explains, Avraham had gained a hold in Eretz Yisrael, and Yitzchak was continuing to develop that presence. Leaving would mean abandoning the mission of establishing Jewish life in Eretz Yisrael.

Somewhat more mystically, Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin (*Haameik Davar* to Bereishit 24:6) contends that each generation of Avraham's family is linked with a stage of Jewish history. Avraham's experiences represented the Jews who wandered from Egypt to Eretz Yisrael. Yaakov's experiences represented Jews of exile. And in between them, Yitzchak represented the Jews of Eretz Yisrael. Since Hashem wanted us to remain in Israel forever (Vayikra 25:18), it was important that Yitzchak, our avatar, remain in Israel for his entire life.

Certainly, all of the above are important reasons why **Yitzchak** should remain in Eretz Yisrael. But surely Avraham's demand was also important for **Rivkah**. Rivkah would carry Yaakov and Esav inside her; would understand the nature of both of her sons and the importance of the family mission; would perceive the need to undermine Esav at a critical moment and have Esav's trust to make that possible (see Rashi to Bereishit 27:15); would cajole Yaakov into the most un-Yaakov act of misleading his father and gaining his blessing; would appreciate the threat to Yaakov from Esav and persuade Yitzchak to send Yaakov away on the journey to Aram that Yitzchak never made himself.

The person who could do this would have to value the holiness of Eretz Yisrael. The person who could do this would have to understand the difference between Eretz Yisrael and Aram, and shun the latter. The person who could do this would have to commit to securing future generations of Jews in their mission in Eretz Yisrael. Yitzchak must remain in Israel, and Rivkah must choose to leave Aram and live in Israel. This was Rivkah's "Lech lecha" journey.

Rivkah's family hesitated to send her to Eretz Yisrael, but they asked her: "Will you go with this man?" Rivkah answered, "I will go." (Bereishit 24:58) She accepted the mission, leaving home. The rest is our history, and hers.

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OUR BEIT MIDRASH

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Summary

Having concluded his survey of the regional evildoers, Yeshayahu begins a new theme – but the prophecy is somewhat opaque.

The chapter details a vision of destruction of the land, using images of an earthquake. An unnamed land will be left bare and the people will be scattered. All people, whether those with or without power will similarly suffer. The reason for this destruction is the sins of the people. (24:1-6)

There is no joy, and no singing over wine. The towns are broken, the houses empty and shut. Even when people should be happy, such as when drinking wine, there will be cries. The cities will be desolate. Those who survive will realize that they were only saved because of G-d, and they will sing songs of praise that include acknowledgement of the just punishment of the wicked. (7-16)

Yeshayahu further details the punishment of the wicked with images that sound like an earthquake, with the earth crumbling and the wicked falling into pits. G-d will punish the hosts of heaven along with those on earth and

they will be imprisoned for a long time before they are remembered. The sun and moon will be ashamed, and G-d will rule in Jerusalem. (17-23)

Insight

The nature of the destruction depicted in our chapter is unclear.

- Many understand the “earthquakes” as catastrophic wars. For example, for Rashi, this chapter predicts that the Jews will suffer in attacks by their enemies. Those Jews who survive these wars will praise G-d, and the idolaters will eventually be punished. Malbim assumes that the chapter refers to the Assyrian attacks against the northern Ten Tribes, which leads to their exile. (Note that even if this refers to attacks by Assyria, Shemuel David Luzzatto cites different views as to which king, Shalmaneser or Sancherev, is referred to here.) The latter parts of the prophecy refer to the period of Chizkiyahu.
- Radak and Abarbanel agree with Rashi that the “earthquakes” are metaphorical, but they understand the verses to refer to the destruction of the nations by Mashiach as punishment for their treatment of the Jews.

- Amos Chacham (Yeshayahu, Daat Mikra ed.) assumes that the verses refer to an actual earthquake that will eventually come as punishment for the sins of the entire world. All major populations will be punished, with the major features of civilization being destroyed.

From the verse that predicts that people will not longer sing over wine, the Talmud derives a prohibition against singing at feasts with wine once the Sanhedrin stopped meeting. The Talmud further derives that listening to music after the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash is prohibited. (Sotah 48a)

The exact parameters of this law is subject to dispute, with some prohibiting all music nowadays and others prohibiting only specific kinds of music in particular situations. Either way, however, the centrality of music to creating joy, and thus destruction leading to the loss of music, gains halachic expression in this passage, though in the original context it was merely the result of the loss.

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Siddur Insights: Mentioning Night During the Day**Rabbi Adam Friedmann**

The morning Shema is sandwiched between 3 blessings, *Yotzer Or*, *Ahavah Rabbah*, and *Emet V'Yatziv*. What is the nature of these blessings?

A mishnah (Berachot 1:2) states that the morning Shema can be read until three hours into the day. After this, one who reads the Shema “doesn’t lose out, like someone reading from the Torah.” The Talmud (Berachot 10b) asks why this mishnah includes the seemingly extraneous phrase, “doesn’t lose out.” At this point in the day, the reader is too late and no longer fulfills a mitzvah with this recitation of Shema. Clearly, then, the mitzvah has been “lost!” The Talmud answers that although the fulfillment of Shema has been lost, its blessings have not. One continues to recite these blessings along with Shema, even though one does not fulfill the mitzvah of Shema. The fact that these blessings are recited even when the mitzvah of reading Shema isn’t being fulfilled indicates that they aren’t blessings over a mitzvah. They are recited together with Shema, and they may even be thematically related to it, but they are also distinct prayers that the Sages established for us to recite daily, regardless of the fulfillment of Shema.

The first blessing, *Yotzer Or*, addresses Hashem as the Creator of light. It begins by referring to Hashem as “the One who forms light and creates darkness, makes peace and creates everything.” The blessing ends, “Blessed are You Hashem who forms the luminaries.” In between, the blessing addresses other themes of light and creation. It also includes poetic passages which are different on weekdays and Shabbat.

What is the message of this blessing and why did the Sages institute it? The Talmud (Berachot 11b) explains that the

opening of the blessing is based on a verse from Yeshayahu (45:7), “The One who forms light and creates darkness, makes peace and creates evil, I am Hashem who does all of this.” The Talmud asks why a blessing about light should include a reference to darkness. The answer: To “mention the attribute of night during the day.” The first blessing before the evening Shema, *Hama’ariv Aravim*, parallels this. There the day is mentioned during the night.

Why would we want to mention the attribute of darkness in a blessing about light? Some commentators (see for example *Shibbolei HaLeket*, Inyan HaTefillah, 13) suggest that this blessing was instituted as a response to dualistic belief systems such as Zoroastrianism. In these systems light and darkness are viewed as two separate and opposing forces in the world. This claim, though, is debatable (see Beurei Hetefila Institute’s analysis here <https://bit.ly/3Agk5dp>). Nevertheless, the blessing does indicate a need for broad consciousness. Even as we praise Hashem for the lights He created, we need to be aware that Hashem’s creation encompasses far more than them, and even their opposites. This is a fitting introduction to the Shema, where we proclaim Hashem’s ultimate unity.

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Biography

Rabbi Shlomo Kluger

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Rabbi Shlomo ben Yehudah Aharon Kluger was born in Komarov, Poland in Cheshvan 1784. His father was the Rabbi of the city, and young Shlomo showed signs of brilliance from a young age, recording novel observations on Torah from the age of six. His father passed away when Shlomo was only 13, and after a brief period in yeshiva he went to study independently, under the philosophical influence of the Dubno Maggid.

Rabbi Kluger's mother passed away when he was only 15, and he married his wife Liba Malya when he was seventeen. When his father-in-law passed away as well, he went into business as a shopkeeper.

Rabbi Kluger's business ultimately failed, and he accepted a rabbinical position in Kolkov at the age of 25. He and his wife lost their firstborn son, Chaim, and he moved on to a rabbinate in Lublin in 1817, before taking the pulpit in the city of Brody in 1820. He served there until 1845, when he accepted a position in Brezany, but he then contracted typhus. He vowed to return to Brody if he would recover, and he lived to fulfill his vow – but a new Rabbi had already been selected in Brody, and so he lived there in a non-rabbinical capacity until he passed away in 1869.

Rabbi Kluger was known among Jews and non-Jews for his erudition, his work ethic, and his candour. He was consulted by Jewish communities far and wide on halachic matters, and by secular courts for his opinion on their conundrums.

Rabbi Kluger wrote on many branches of Torah, but his main energies went into halachah. Some of his non-halachic writings are available in translation at www.shlomokluger.com.

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Weekly Halachah: The Wedding No-Show

By Idan Rakovsky

Reuven invited Shimon to his wedding. Shimon responded that he would attend. On the day of the wedding, Shimon decided not to attend. Is Shimon liable for the cost of his meal?

Different authorities discuss the liability of a person who made an agreement with someone and eventually caused him a loss by not upholding his agreement.

Rabbeinu Asher (Teshuvot HaRosh 104:6) writes that a customer who retracts after telling a craftsman to make something he would buy from him must pay for the craftsman's expenses. Rabbi Moshe Isserles (Rama Choshen Mishpat 14:5, citing the Mordechai) addresses a case in which two litigants convene a *beit din* in a specific place, and one of them fails to attend. Rabbi Isserles explains that the absentee must reimburse travel expenses and losses caused by his absence. In a similar way, Rabbi Yair Bacharach (*Chavot Yair* 168, and see *Pitchei Teshuvah Choshen Mishpat 14:15*) discusses a case in which two families decided on a wedding on a specific date and place, but one side didn't show up. In that case the absent family must pay all of the expenses and losses of the family that travelled. One might say that our case is similar to these cases.

However, in our case there may be three fundamental differences.

- 1) First, providing a wedding meal is an act of giving a gift, not engaging in a commercial transaction.
- 2) Second, agreeing to attend and then failing to appear may be viewed as *grama* (indirect harm), for which one is liable only in the Divine court and not in *beit din*. (Bava Kama 55b; Choshen Mishpat 386:3) However, one might argue that this case fits the law of *garmi*, where one is liable because there is a direct connection between one's actions and the financial harm. (See *Tosafot Bava Batra 22b*)
- 3) Third, it is well-known and expected that many people RSVP that they will attend and then do not attend, or leave before or during the meal.

Certainly, a *Mazal Tov* and an apology for not attending will always be welcome...

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Sefer haChinuch, Mitzvah 2: Circumcision

By Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

G-d commanded Avraham to circumcise the males in his household. (Bereishit 17) Rambam points out that this is reiterated in Vayikra 12:3 to demonstrate that it remains obligatory even after Sinai. (Peirush haMishnayot, Chullin 7:6) *Sefer haChinuch* counts this as the Torah's second mitzvah, and suggests that one purpose is to mark the Jewish people as physically unique, just as our mitzvot mark us as spiritually unique. *Sefer haChinuch* also notes that this mitzvah shows that just as we complete our bodies with deeds (such as circumcision), so we can complete our souls with our deeds. [And see Midrash Tanchuma Tazria 5, on the importance of human improvement of our world.]

Two blessings are recited at a *brit milah*: *al hamilah* and *l'hachniso b'vrito shel Avraham Avinu*. The former is recited by the *mohel* before the act of circumcision; the latter blessing is recited after the incision begins. [See Rosh Shabbat 19:10, Yoreh Deah 265:1, Chatam Sofer II Yoreh Deah 249, Tzitz Eliezer 5:14.] The latter blessing thanks G-d for instructing us to bring the baby "into the covenant of our ancestor Avraham." The community then responds, "Just as he entered the covenant, so may he enter Torah, *chuppah* and good deeds." Rabbi Yosef Karo explained that Torah is listed before marriage because the Talmud (Kiddushin 29b) advises that one should learn Torah before marrying. Both of those come before "good deeds" because the talmudic age for marriage is 18, and we are taught that one is not liable for misdeeds before the age of 20. (Beit Yosef Yoreh Deah 265:2)

In some communities, *Shehechyanu* is recited as well; see Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 265:7.

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Shabbat Nov 18-19

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 20

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

Monday Nov 21

9:00 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 4 of 5

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

Tuesday Nov 22

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)

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

Wednesday Nov 23 Sigd

10:00 AM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Jews and Clothes Week 4 of 7

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

12:30 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Business Ethics: Changing the Terms of Employment
With Continuing Education credit for Accountants, on ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/bmlunch>
Registration at <https://torontotorah.com/business>

7:00 PM Idan Rakovsky, Issues in Jewish Democracy, Shaarei Tefillah Week 3 *note special time for this week*

7:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, When Will Mashiach Come? Yeshivat Or Chaim (university women)

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

Thursday Nov 24

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

8:00 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Gemara Beitzah (advanced), email ymann@torontotorah.com for location (men)

Friday Nov 25

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 December 9-10

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10:00 AM-12:00 PM Sunday December 11

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7:30-9:00 PM Monday December 12

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10:00 AM to 4:00 PM Sunday December 25

TANACH IN A DAY: JEWS AND NON-JEWS IN TANACH