

# Toronto Torah

## Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Shemot

21 Tevet, 5783 / Jan. 14, 2023

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This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Mimi and Byron Shore to commemorate the yahrtzeit (21 Tevet) of Mimi's mother, Chaya Dabrusa bat Shneur Zalman z"l. May her neshamah have an aliyah.

### Gratitude, Ingratitude and the Exodus

Rabbi Jonathan Ziring

The mitzvot are often divided into two central categories: *bein adam la-Makom* (between man and G-d) and *bein adam la-chaveiro* (between human beings). However, the division between the categories is often blurry.

A striking example is the commandment of "You shall walk in His ways (Devarim 28:9)," to imitate G-d, which seems to be *bein adam la-Makom*. While the obligation to act kindly to others is grounded in the *bein adam la-chaveiro* mitzvah to love others (see, for example, Rambam Hilchot Avel 14:1), those same commandments are also grounded in our obligation to mimic G-d's acts of kindness. (See So-tah 14a, Rambam Sefer HaMitzvot 8) Thus, treating others properly becomes a *bein adam la-Makom* expression of an understanding of the way G-d acts.

The *Midrash Sheloshim U'Shtayim Middot* (also known as *Midrash Rabbi Eliezer*) sees another connection between these two categories of mitzvot, and grounds it in Pharaoh's actions in the opening narratives of Sefer Shemot.

Why does the Torah punish so much those who are ungrateful? It is because ingratitude is like denial of the Holy One Blessed be He. The one who denies the Holy One Blessed be He is also ungrateful. This person is ungrateful to his friend, and tomorrow he will be ungrateful to his Creator.

So too it says of Pharaoh "that he did not know Yosef." (Shemot 1:8) However, until that day, Egypt had

known the kindness of Yosef. However, [it must mean] that he knew but paid no attention and denied his goodness. In the end, he denied the goodness of the Holy One Blessed be He, as it says, "I do not know G-d" (Shemot 5:2) Thus, you learn that being ungrateful is comparable to denying that which is fundamental.

Several fascinating points emerge from this midrash. On one level, it highlights the importance of gratitude. More audaciously, this midrash suggests that the way we treat other people shapes our orientation to G-d. While people may think that one can be "religious" while treating other people improperly, our midrash suggests that often is not the case. The attitudes that we form affect the way we interact with all, whether people or G-d. Thus, if one fails to recognize the importance of gratitude towards other people, one will be prone to do the same to G-d. When it comes to the latter, this quickly turns into heresy. If one truly believed in G-d, one could not deny His goodness. The corollary of this is that to deny His goodness is to deny Him!

The midrash continues to establish this character trait as essential to the acceptance of Torah.

So too, the Holy One Blessed be He said to the Jews, "I am Hashem your G-d." What does this teach? "That I took you out." (Shemot 20:2) He said to them, "Be careful not to be ungrateful, for one who is ungrateful cannot accept the kingdom

of Heaven." So too, Yehoshua told the Jews: if you are ungrateful for this good, you will be unable to serve G-d....

Rav Saadia Gaon (*Emunot V'Deiot*, Introduction to Section 3) grounds the rationality of many mitzvot in the concept of gratitude, contending that the idea that one must show appreciation is simply logical. This is true of human relationships as well as in the relationship between man and G-d. Performing mitzvot is part of how we show appreciation.

Thus, it is not simply that to be a fully committed Jew one must attend to the totality of his responsibilities, both interpersonal and those to G-d. Rather, inherent in our psychology is that the way we treat others shapes the kind of people we become. This in turn determines the kind of relationship we are capable of creating with G-d. As both stem from who we are, the effects of a flawed character will manifest in all aspects of our religious life.

Furthermore, as this midrash states, the possibility of accepting the Torah from "the G-d who took us out of Egypt" requires us appreciating that act of kindness, and rejecting the attitude of the taskmaster from whom G-d freed us.

[jjziring@torontotorah.com](mailto:jjziring@torontotorah.com)

#### OUR BEIT MIDRASH

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<b>WOMEN'S POST-HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM</b>	ORLY AZIZA, ATARA GASNER, CHAYA JUNI, MAXINE LEE-EWASCHUK, AILEEN MORRIS, HADASSAH NAUENBERG, YEJIDE OMOTOSO, FEIGA WERNER, RIVKA WERNER, KINNERET WITTY



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**Summary**

This chapter continues the prophecy of what will happen when the Assyrians are defeated in their attempt to conquer Jerusalem. It can be divided into three sections:

The first section describes the political leadership that will emerge in the Kingdom of Judah at this future point. It will be characterized by a king and ministers who rule with fairness and righteousness. The king will defend these values and become “a refuge from the wind, a shelter from the storm, a shade from the heat”. As a result, things will begin to change among the people of the kingdom. Their perspective, which was previously informed by lies, will be drawn to the truth. Simple people will become wise and those who had difficulty speaking, either physically or because of political pressure, will be able to speak openly. The scoundrels (*naval*) and swindlers (*kilai*) who were previously lauded as political heroes will be recognized for what they are. Instead, noble people who act out their noble intentions will be lionized.(32:1-8)

The second section of the chapter switches from the vision of the future to the present. Isaiah addresses the “carefree” women of Judah who are

confident in their continued prosperity. He warns these women that soon the enemy will come and eat up all the land’s produce. The castles and fortresses will be destroyed and left to wild animals. Therefore, the women would do better to put on clothes of mourning and sing lamentations.(9-14)

The third section of the chapter switches back to the spiritual revival that will come after the Assyrians are defeated. G-d will send an influx of spiritual and physical blessings. The desert will be transformed into lush farmland. Society will run on the values of righteousness and fairness. As a result of this, the kingdom will be filled with peace, tranquility, and prosperity. (15-20)

**Insight**

The chapter describes how the people in Judah had promoted scoundrels and swindlers to places of prominence in society. Isaiah details the behaviors of these two types of people. Scoundrels are brash and aggressive. They speak offensively, including about G-d, and they openly exploit the vulnerable people in society. Swindlers take advantage of a society that tolerates lies. They use carefully crafted lies to undermine honest people, including in

the courts.

How was it that such corrupt people ended up being lauded by Judean society? The answer may lie in the beginning of the chapter. The power politics of a society are the direct result of the values enforced by its rulers. If a society tolerates lies and aggressive behavior then the people who are willing to engage in these behaviors come to dominate. In this situation, honest and upright people are forced to “praise” these people, just to get by. Isaiah sketches a political reality where the leadership refuses to tolerate these things. In that case, the hegemony of the scoundrels and swindlers is broken and the honest acts of noble people can come to the fore.

*afriedmann@torontotorah.com*

**Siddur Insights: The “Speech Impediment” Prayer**

**Idan Rakovsky**

What do Winston Churchill, Ed Sheeran and - *l’havdil* - Moshe Rabbeinu have in common? They all had a speech impediment, and this didn’t prevent them from becoming a successful prime minister, a famous singer, and the greatest Jewish leader of all time!

There is a special prayer in our siddur that we say three times on each weekday and four times on Shabbat and festivals. This prayer, which comes from Tehillim 51:17, is the opener of the Amidah, recited quietly before the first blessing: “My Lord, open my lips, that my mouth may declare Your praise” (Artscroll translation) .I believe that this special prayer can explain what I call “stuttering in prayer.”

What are we requesting in this line, and what is the connection between this prayer and the Amidah that comes right after? A possible answer comes from the basic way humans communicate with one another. The first and most basic interaction is done with our face - with our eyes we see, with our nose we smell, and with our ears we listen to others. But among all of the elements of communication, moving the lips to talk is the most difficult. After all, unless we force ourselves to close our eyes, we see by default. Same with our senses of smelling and hearing. But talking is different – in order to speak, to unmute our silence, we need to *choose* to do so. A person needs to overcome the default mode of silence, to open one’s mouth and move one’s lips. Only then are we able to produce the sounds that will become expressions. We experience this challenge throughout our lives – whether it’s on a first date, with a boss at work, or maybe in

front of a large crowd. Our lips are blocked, and the great challenge is to move them.

If so, we can understand this initial prayer as a basic request from G-d, that before we start talking with Him, that He open our lips. In this sense, prayer is not so different from the other forms of communication, and maybe even harder: when standing in front of the King of the Universe, it is not easy to just open up and speak.

But the request does not end with asking for our lips to be opened. The prayer has a second part, “that my mouth may declare Your praise.” At first glance this should be unnecessary! After we have managed to finally open our lips, we should smoothly start praying! But this short and beautiful prayer teaches us that continuing isn’t so simple either. Even after we have managed to open our mouths and begin praying, we still need help to learn how to speak smoothly before G-d, with no disturbances or distractions. In that sense we all have a little bit of a speech impediment in our prayer.

*irakovsky@torontotorah.com*

## Biography

### Rabbi Ben-Zion Uziel

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Rabbi Joseph Raphael Uziel was the head of the *beit din* [community court] of the Sephardic community in Jerusalem at the end of the nineteenth century. His son Ben-Zion Meir was born in 1880, and was married in 1893. Several months later, the elder Rabbi Uziel passed away.

While still in his twenties, Rabbi Ben-Zion Uziel founded a yeshiva, *Machazikvei Torah*, for Sephardi students. In 1911 he was appointed Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Yafu, and in that position he welcomed Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook's arrival as Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of the city. Throughout his career, "Love truth and peace," from Zechariah 8:19, was framed and hung in his office.

During World War I Rabbi Uziel lobbied the Ottoman government so persistently that they exiled him to Damascus. He remained politically active, becoming President of *Mizrachi* in 1919. He represented Jewish Mandate Palestine in various causes, such as the founding of the Jewish Agency. He participated in delegations to the League of Nations (1926), Iraq (1927) and the US (1929). In 1939 he joined protests against the British plan to convert the Mandate into a bi-national Jewish/Arab state.

Rabbi Uziel left Eretz Yisrael to become Chief Rabbi of Salonika for three years in the 1920's, before returning to become Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv. In 1939 he was appointed Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Mandate Palestine. He continued in this post through the end of the British Mandate, and until his death on the 24<sup>th</sup> of Elul in 1953 he served as Sephardic Chief Rabbi of the State of Israel.

The religio-social challenges of the Mandate and early State periods were of great interest to Rabbi Uziel. He supported women's suffrage, and he worked on a unified form of prayer for Ashkenazim and Sephardim. He published responsa on every major issue of his time.

Rabbi Uziel published extensively in newspapers and periodicals, and he won the Rav Kook Prize for Torah scholarship in 1944. Rabbi Uziel ordained Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, who would go on to become a giant in Israel's Sephardic community. Rabbi Uziel's responsa were published in the *Mishpitei Uziel* series of books, and his general writings appear in many more books.

[torczyner@torontotorah.com](mailto:torczyner@torontotorah.com)

## Weekly Halachah: Hats for Davening

Rabbi Steven Gotlib

### Why do some men wear hats for davening?

The hat is one of the most ubiquitous mental images people around the world have of "Jewish man". But is there a halachic basis for it?

The Talmud (Shabbat 10a) notes that one must dress appropriately for prayer, but does little to specify what that should look like across different eras. Rabbi Avraham Danziger (Chayei Adam 22:8) is perhaps the earliest source to specifically mention use of a hat for davening, stating that one should pray dressed as they would present themselves in public. Indeed, Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan (Mishnah Berurah 91:5) adds to this that one should dress the way that they would when greeting a respected person, which necessitates wearing a hat. This concern, however, is implicitly and explicitly determined by one's particular social context. In a society where it is considered normal to go out in public wearing a hat, or to meet with respected individuals as such, then it would be proper to wear one for prayer. But, if not, there is little halachic force.

There is, perhaps, another reason to support wearing a hat rather than just a kippah when davening: *atifat rosh* ("wrapping" one's head). The Rambam (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Tefillah 5:5) and Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 92:6) say that the wise and their students have their heads wrapped; Beit Yosef (Orach Chaim 8:2) presents it as the practice of *tzenuim*. Rabbi Yoel Sirkis (Bach Orach Chaim 183:5) explained that this enhances humility, concentration and awe of Hashem. For this reason, there are some who argue that wearing a hat is preferable to a kippah, as it wraps around one's head as opposed to merely sitting on top. [See, for example, Rabbi Dr. Jason Weiner's article [On the Halachic Basis for Wearing Black Hats](#).] Of course, putting a tallit over one's head or wearing a sufficiently large kippah would also sufficiently wrap one's head. Rabbi Aryeh Leibowitz, director of Yeshiva University's Rabbinical School, even mentions that he began to wear a hat when he learned that Rav Hershel Schachter believes one should have *atifat rosh* when *deva-rim sheb'kedushah* (prayers requiring a minyan) are recited ([Ten Minute Halacha - Wearing a Hat for Davening \(yutorah.org\)](#)). However, it's ultimately hard to argue that *atifah* is obligatory as opposed to just being a good general practice.

There are separate discussions regarding particular prayers. For example, the Talmud describes Rav Ashi wrapping his head in a turban for *birkat hamazon*. (Berachot 51a) This is brought by halachic authorities as well; see Bach Orach Chaim 183, Magen Avraham 183:5, Mishneh Berurah 183:11 and Aruch haShulchan Orach Chaim 183:4.

[sgotlib@torontotorah.com](mailto:sgotlib@torontotorah.com)

## Sefer haChinuch, Mitzvot 9 & 11: Eliminate Chametz

By Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

*(continued from last week)*

Historically, some have argued that we should keep a minimal quantity of chametz to destroy *after* midday on Erev Pesach, as that is the biblical time to destroy chametz. They explain that the earlier time we observe for destroying chametz is a rabbinic safeguard, but by burning the chametz early, we miss the opportunity to fulfill the biblical mitzvah; by the time the biblical mitzvah begins, we possess no chametz to destroy. This is consistent with the view of Tosafot, that the mitzvah of destroying chametz requires active destruction. However, Rambam contends that eliminating chametz before that deadline, so that no chametz remains at the deadline, also fulfills the mitzvah. [See Or Zarua II Pesachim 256, Mordechai Pesachim 533 and Minchat Chinuch 9:1.]

The prohibition against owning chametz during Pesach includes a prohibition against taking responsibility for preserving any chametz during Pesach; we equate guardianship with ownership. This creates practical difficulties for a Jew who keeps a refrigerator in her work cubicle and allows non-Jews to keep their food in her refrigerator. Aside from an imperative to avoid any chance that she might accidentally consume the chametz, the Jew would also need to make clear to the chametz-owners that she takes no responsibility for the fate of their chametz. For more on this, see Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 340.

[torczyner@torontotorah.com](mailto:torczyner@torontotorah.com)



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### Shabbat Jan. 13-14

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

20 min before minchah R' Steven Gotlib, Mesillat Yesharim, Village Shul

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

After minchah Idan Rakovsky, Halachah in the Parshah, Shaarei Tefillah

### Sun. Jan. 15

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

10:00 AM to 11:20 AM MIDRESHET YOM RISHON FOR WOMEN AT SHAAREI SHOMAYIM  
Idan Rakovsky: Was Moshe Born a Leader? / Prielle Rakovsky: Why Did Moshe Refuse?  
Light refreshments served / Free of charge

### Mon. Jan. 16

9:00 AM R' Jared Anstandig, Halachic Philosophy of Rav Soloveitchik, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university men)

7:30 PM Prielle & Idan Rakovsky, Song of the Week, ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklysong> *not this week*

7:30 PM to 9:00 PM MEDICAL HALACHAH: EATING DISORDERS IN JUDAISM  
Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, on ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/mtethics>  
Register: <https://torontotorah.com/cme> / Accredited for CME / Laypeople welcome

8:30 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Laws of Gerut #2 of 3, Shomrai Shabbos (men)

### Tues. Jan. 17

9:00 AM Idan Rakovsky, Tzidkat haTzaddik, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university men) *not this week*

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

7:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 17), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (men)

8:15 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Shovavim Shiur (Semichat Chaver Chazarah), Clanton Park (men)

8:30 PM R' Jared Anstandig, Women's Beit Midrash, Shaarei Shomayim (university women)

### Wed. Jan. 18

10:00 AM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Icons of Jewish Morocco 2 of 4: Rabbi Yitzchak Alfasi (Rif)  
There is a fee, Register at <https://torontotorah.com/wednesdays>; On ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt>

7:00 PM Idan Rakovsky, Esther: Week 2 of 5, Shaarei Tefillah Congregation

7:30 PM R' Steven Gotlib, Sephardim and Ashkenazim, Village Shul

8:15 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Contemporary Halachah, Clanton Park

### Thurs. Jan. 19

1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 29), ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> (women)

8:00 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Beitzah (advanced), for location: [yman@torontotorah.com](mailto:yman@torontotorah.com)

### Fri. Jan. 20

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!

7:30 PM Monday February 6  
SONG OF THE WEEK: (POST-)TU B'SHEVAT EDITION  
On ZOOM with Idan and Prielle Rakovsky at <http://tiny.cc/idanrak>

7:30 PM to 9:00 PM Monday February 13  
NUSBAUM FAMILY MEDICAL ETHICS AND HALACHA PROGRAM: THE "SHOTEH"  
Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, on ZOOM at <http://tiny.cc/mtethics>  
Register at <https://torontotorah.com/cme> / Accredited for CME; Laypeople welcome