



# BEIT MIDRASH ZICHRON DOV TORONTO TORAH

## PARASHAT BEHAR

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**DVAR TORAH BEHAR** RABBI YEHUDA MANN, ROSH BEIT MIDRASH

## Love is Not Everything—You Also Need Respect

This coming Sunday, we are going to celebrate *Lag BaOmer*, and the mourning customs observed during this time of year—not getting married, not cutting hair, and not listening to music—will come to an end (for those who observe mourning customs during the first half of the Omer counting).

The reason for observing these mourning customs at this time of year is mentioned in the Talmud, *Yevamot* 62b, where it says that Rabbi Akiva had 24,000 students who all died between Pesach and Shavuot (and according to the majority of opinions, they stopped dying on *Lag BaOmer*). The reason for their death was "because they did not show respect for one another."

The obvious question arising from this statement is: how is it possible that, out of all possible transgressions by Rabbi Akiva's students, their transgression was that they did not show respect for one another? After all, Rabbi Akiva was the one with the slogan, "Love your neighbor as yourself—this is a great principle in the Torah." If this was Rabbi Akiva's slogan, it was undoubtedly the first lesson he tried to instill in his students. How is it possible that Rabbi Akiva's most basic and fundamental message was missed by his students, and they did not show respect for one another?

This question can be answered simply by suggesting that Rabbi Akiva made this statement, "Love your neighbor as yourself—this is a great principle in the Torah," only after witnessing the death of his 24,000 students. Only after seeing the destructive result of neglecting proper interpersonal behavior did he learn the lesson the hard way.

However, I prefer the answer of Rabbi Shmuel Bornstein, the Rebbe of Sochatchov, in his book *Shem MiShmuel*.

The *Shem MiShmuel* states that indeed, Rabbi Akiva's students perfectly adhered to their teacher's words, "Love your neighbor as yourself." They truly loved each other as much as they loved themselves. However, they did not respect each other. Because love and respect are two separate things.

Love is when a husband and wife, a father and son, or even two friends love each other so much that they are considered one entity. Like the famous story of Rabbi Aryeh Levin, who told the doctor, "My wife's leg hurts us"—they had become one.

But there is a problem when one loves another too much; it can cause one to love the other so much that they cause the other to lose their identity. I love my children so much that I know exactly which school they

should attend, which university they should go to, which profession they should choose, and whom they should marry.

But maybe it doesn't suit them? Maybe my children are different from me? Maybe what I think is the best profession or the best match is not suitable for my children?

Here, the concept of "respect" is needed. Respect is about recognizing our differences, acknowledging what makes the other unique from me, and understanding that we don't have to be exactly the same. A person can love, but unfortunately, they might not respect.

The *Shem MiShmuel* says this was the problem of Rabbi Akiva's students. They loved each other as they loved themselves according to their teacher Rabbi Akiva's instruction, but out of excessive love, they thought they understood what would be best for the other and did not respect their differences. They did not allow each other to express their uniqueness.

May it be G-d's will that we all reach the levels of loving our fellow Jews as Rabbi Akiva taught, "Love your neighbor as yourself—this is a great principle in the Torah," while also recognizing and respecting the different perspectives and behaviors of our friends.



## Yirmiyahu 21

In Chapter 20, a man named Pashchur, a corrupt kohen and false prophet, attacked Yirmiyahu and placed him in a stockade in public. Yirmiyahu castigated him and predicted his downfall.

Chapter 21 begins with an about-face, as King Tzidkiyahu sends agents—a different Pashchur, and a kohen named Tzefanyah ben Maaseyah—to seek Yirmiyahu’s help. Specifically, they beseech Yirmiyahu to petition Hashem for assistance against the impending assault by Nevuchadnezzar of Babylon (21:1-2).

Don Isaac Abarbanel clarifies that King Tzidkiyahu has not had a change of heart, but a change of circumstances. In the previous chapter he had yet to face the Babylonians; our chapter takes place when the Babylonians have already laid siege to the city and its inhabitants are starving. [This may be

supported by 21:7.] But Tzidkiyahu does not speak of any sort of repentance. He believes that Yirmiyahu can simply intercede and cause Hashem to help them.

Abarbanel’s insight explains why King Tzidkiyahu’s supporters were so angry when they heard Yirmiyahu’s predictions of destruction in the previous chapter. They believed that Yirmiyahu was making the news, and not only reporting it. As far as they were concerned, if Yirmiyahu would only look upon them favourably, Hashem would do likewise.

Yirmiyahu’s response addresses three different parties:

- First Yirmiyahu addresses King Tzidkiyahu scornfully, telling him that Hashem will gather up the city’s weapons of war and turn them against the Jews. Hashem will wage war against them with

an outstretched hand and a mighty arm. He will deliver to the merciless Babylonians King Tzidkiyahu, his servants, and any who survive the plague, sword and famine that beset the city (21:3-7).

- Then Yirmiyahu offers the general population two options. Those who remain in the city will die by the sword, famine and plague. Those who turn themselves over to the Babylonians will live, albeit as prisoners of war (21:8-10).
- Finally, Yirmiyahu turns to the royal family with a call for reform. If they will practice justice each morning – meaning, as their first priority of the day and before pursuing their own needs—and if they will reverse the theft that has been rampant, then they will be spared destruction. Otherwise, they will be punished for their deeds and the city will burn (21:11-14).



## Week 3: Why Are the Obligations of the Heart Not Detailed?

Rabbeinu Bachya, noting the lack of a systematic treatment of these obligations, explores several options to explain a rationale to justify this, each of which he rejects.

1. These are ethical obligations, not formal mitzvot.

He rejects this because:

- As people are made of body and soul, both must have obligations.
- Even the obligations of the body cannot be fulfilled properly without intent.
- There are many explicit commandments, such as loving God, that indicate formal obligations that exist in one’s heart.
- Chazal extensively argue that mitzvot must be performed with proper intent, thus supporting his convictions from tradition.

Thus, it is clear that there are indeed formal obligations of the heart, as proven from all sources of knowledge that guide him, rationality, Torah, and tradition.

His next suggestion for the dearth of writing on this subject was:

2. These mitzvot are not constant.

He rejects this because:

- Mitzvot such as loving God or acknowledging the unity of God are indeed constant. He goes farther and writes:

*The analogy of this is to a slave whose master charged him with two jobs. One in the house and the other in the field. The latter consisted of cultivating the ground and its care at definite periods and times. When those times are past or if he is unable to work there due to some thing which impedes him, he is then to be relieved of his responsibility for the work in the field. But he is never exempt for the work which he is commanded to do in the house, provided there is no impediment or other matter he must tend to. Hence, he is constantly charged to work the house when he is free to do so.*

*Such too is the case for the duties of the heart which are always binding upon us. We have no excuse for their neglect, and there is nothing which impedes us in their fulfillment, except for love of this world, and lack of understanding in regard to our Creator, as written "they do not consider the work of G-d" (Isaiah 5:12). (Sebag translation)*

We will continue his arguments next week.



## Tzitzit on a Flag

**Question:** Hello Rabbi, the last Yom Ha'Atzmaut was wonderful. We had an exciting and uplifting festive davening, and we truly thanked Hashem for the kindness and merit of the State of Israel. In honor of the prayer, I draped an Israeli flag around me, but one Rabbi approached me and said it might be an issue because it could require *tzitzit* (ritual fringes)—is it really a problem?

**Answer:** A garment with four corners worn around a person requires *tzitzit*, and without *tzitzit*, it is forbidden to wear it. Some authorities suggested that there might indeed be an issue with wrapping the body with a flag because it's a garment with four corners.

However, many authorities have said that there is no obligation to put *tzitzit* on a flag due to the following reasons:

- The *Shulchan Aruch* in Siman 10 states that one is exempt from *tzitzit* for a hat and scarf, even if it is wrapped around a

person's body, since their primary purpose is to cover the head or neck and not the body. Therefore, if it is not primarily intended for the body, it is exempt from *tzitzit*. Similarly, a flag is primarily intended to be a flag and not an article of clothing, so even if it is actually worn around a person's body, it is exempt.

- Another reason for exemption I have seen was that a regular *tallit* wraps around a person's body, and therefore parts of the *tallit* are over his shoulders. On the other hand, a flag usually does not wrap around a person's body but is only on the back and tied around the neck. This is not considered wrapping and is exempt from *tzitzit*.
- Another reason to consider is that some authorities believe that garments made of synthetic materials like plastic, polyester, and others are not considered garments. Therefore, some exempt net *tzitzit* found in the market from *tzitzit*.

Similarly, flags are usually made of these materials, so they would also be exempt from *tzitzit*.

Although there is room for argument with each of these exemptions, there seem to be two possible solutions to avoid *tzitzit* altogether:

1. Cutting one corner to make it round. However, in my opinion, it is not dignified to cut the flag.
2. Giving your flag to a friend—if your flag is no longer in your possession, and you are now just borrowing the flag, then a borrowed *tallit* is exempt from *tzitzit*, and then there would be no problem at all.

In summary, while there are reasons to obligate or exempt a flag from *tzitzit*, the simple advice is to give the flag as a gift and borrow it back, at which point the flag is exempt from *tzitzit* in any case.

Have a halachic question? Share it with Rabbi Mann at [ymanntorontorah.com](mailto:ymanntorontorah.com).



## Week 4: Our Soul's Approach



*The Soul*  
By Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz  
Maggid Press, 2018

*"The way each soul manifests itself is unique ... The souls of some, for example, originate in the aspect of loving-kindness, hesed, so that they will manifest themselves, both emotionally and consciously, through a tendency toward loving-kindness. Other souls originate in the aspect of strength, gevura, so that they will be manifest, whether in personal experience or spiritual awareness, through the medium of strength. In fact, it is said that the difference between the house of Shammai and the house of Hillel*

*had nothing to do with differing levels of greatness or holiness, but was related, instead, to the roots of their souls, which led them to act and think in a certain way."* (*The Soul*, pages 51–52)

Rabbi Steinsaltz here observes that we each interact and react to the world differently. In his example, he notices that some of

us approach our surroundings from the perspective of kindness while others do so from strength. The difference comes from the nature of our unique soul. Accordingly, if we want to truly develop our soul, it is crucial that we identify our soul's unique outlook.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch in his commentary to the Torah (Bereshit 25:27) highlights the dangers of misjudging one's soul. Speaking of Yaakov and Esav, Rabbi Hirsch reflects on the fundamental differences between the twins. With great humility, Rabbi Hirsch suggests that perhaps Esav became the person that he did because his parents and educators did not understand who he truly was and what he needed.

If we wish to nourish and grow our soul, it is imperative that we understand what motivates and interests it.

*The Soul can be purchased from Koren Publishers at [tinyurl.com/KorenBMZD](http://tinyurl.com/KorenBMZD). Use the code TorontoTorah for a 10% discount on this or any other book on their website*



## TABLE TALK RABBI NOAH SONENBERG, DEAN

### Source: Rashi Vayikra 25:1

And the Lord spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai—What is the relevance of the Sabbatical year in relation to Mount Sinai, weren't all the commandments given from Sinai? Rather, just as the laws of the Sabbatical year were stated with their general principles and details at Sinai, so too were all of them stated with their general principles and details from Sinai.

### Questions to Discuss

- What fundamental principles are found in the laws of the sabbatical year that justify it as being the archetypical case to teach this idea?
- How might these principles explain the connection between failing to follow the laws of the sabbatical year and the curses found in next week's parasha?

After Shabbat, please share your family's answers with us at [nsonenberg@torontotorah.com](mailto:nsonenberg@torontotorah.com) to enter our raffle for a \$15 voucher for Grodzinski Bakery!

## WEEKLY SCHEDULE

<b>Shabbat</b>	Halacha from the Parasha	Clanton Park	After Hashkama Minyan	Rabbi Mann
	Gemara	BAYT	Between Mincha & Maariv	Rabbi Gutenberg
<b>Sunday</b>	Tzurba M'Rabanan – Halacha	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:30 AM	Rabbi Shor
	Men's Semichat Chaver: Hilchot Smachot	Clanton Park	9:00 AM	Rabbi Spitz & Rabbi Mann
	Shiur b'Ivrit	BAYT (Milevsky/Mizrachi)	9:00 AM	Rabbi Mann & Rabbi Lax
	Sefer Shemot	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:00 PM	David Koschitzky
<b>Monday</b>	David and Batsheva	Zoom: <a href="https://tiny.cc/shlomo2024">tiny.cc/shlomo2024</a>	Starting June 3rd at 8 PM	R' Rakovsky
	Men's Halacha	Shomrai Shabbos	8:30 PM	Rabbi Mann
	Introduction to Gemara: Learn how to learn	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:00 PM	Rabbi Sonenberg
<b>Tuesday</b>	Then and Now: Returning to the Land of Israel – a Study in Tanach	Zoom	1:30 PM	Rabbi Horovitz
	Women's Gemara Shiur	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:30 PM	Rabbi Anstandig
	Women's Contemporary Halacha Shiur	Clanton Park	8:00 PM	Rabbi Mann
<b>Wednesday</b>	Men's Contemporary Halacha	Clanton Park	1 hour before Mincha	Rabbi Mann
	The Torah's Insights on Building a Just and Equitable Society	Zoom	10:00 AM	Rabbi Sonenberg
	Men's Gemara Bekiut	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:00 PM	Rabbi Sonenberg
	Antisemitism: From Tanach to our Campuses	Shaarei Tefillah	8:00 PM	R' Rakovsky
<b>Thursday</b>	Tanach: Sefer Shmuel	Zoom: <a href="https://tiny.cc/BMZDtanach">tiny.cc/BMZDtanach</a>	1:30 PM	Rabbi Horovitz
	Men's Tzurba M'Rabanan	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:00 PM	Rabbi Turtel
	Men's Gemara Iyun	BAYT (Milevsky/Mizrachi)	8:00 PM	R' Diena
<b>Sun-Thu</b>	Men's Community Night Seder	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:00-9:00 PM	

## UPCOMING PROGRAMS

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### Rosh Beit Midrash

Rabbi Yehuda Mann  
[ymann@torontotorah.com](mailto:ymann@torontotorah.com)

### Dean

Rabbi Noah Sonenberg  
[nsonenberg@torontotorah.com](mailto:nsonenberg@torontotorah.com)

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