



BEIT MIDRASH ZICHRON DOV TORONTO TORAH

PARASHAT BECHUKOTAI

VOL. 15 NUM. 35 (#619) • 24 IYAR 5784 / JUNE 1, 2024

This edition of Toronto Torah is sponsored by Moshe and Brenda Bessin and Family in honour of the Rabbis and Avreichim of Beit Midrash Zichron Dov for their incredible dedication and commitment to teaching Torah all over Toronto, and by Allan and Tova Gutenberg to commemorate the yahrtzeit of Allan's father, Menachem Mendel ben Natan Nota Gutenberg ז"ל, מנחם מענדל בן נתן נטע.



DVAR TORAH BECHUKOTAI RABBI NOAH SONENBERG, DEAN

Are there Four Cardinal Sins?

We are told in Masechet Yoma 9b, that the first temple was destroyed as a result of the sins of idolatry, murder and prohibited sexual relationships. It seems reasonable that these cardinal sins would justify such a serious consequence, as they undermine the very fabric of our religious society. This week's parasha has the first of the two sets of curses found in the Torah, which Ramban tells us correlates with the destruction of the first temple and the subsequent exile to Babylon. In the text we are told that the reason for the exile was due not only to idolatry:

And I will cast your carcasses upon the carcasses of your idols" (Vayikra, 26:30)

The exile was also due to the failure of the nation to follow the rules of the sabbatical years where the land was not allowed to be worked:

Then shall the land be paid her Sabbaths, as long as it lies desolate, and you are in your enemies' land; even then shall the land rest, and repay her Sabbaths. (Vayikra 26:34)

It seems strange that failing to follow the laws of the sabbatical year would be equated to the cardinal sins in bringing this severe punishment. It's clear that there is more to these laws than is seen at first glance.

The warning that precedes the punishment in our parasha says:

*But if you will not listen to me, and will not do all these **commandments**, and if you shall reject my **statutes**, and if your soul abhors my **ordinances**, so that you will not do all my **commandments**, but break my covenant. (Vayikra, 26:14-15)*

Parallel language in the book of Devarim suggests that one of the causes of the nation failing to follow the laws of Hashem is their failure to appreciate that He is the one who is responsible for their prosperity.

There is more to these laws than is seen at first glance

*Beware lest you forget Hashem your God, in not keeping his **commandments**, and his **ordinances**, and his **statutes**, which I **command** you this day, lest, when you have eaten and are full, and have built goodly houses, and lived therein... Lest you say in your heart, "My power and the might of my hand has gotten me this wealth." (Devarim, 8:11,12,17)*

The secret to success then, is an ability to overcome our natural propensity to take credit for the successes which stem from our labour. In an agricultural society where wealth is generated from the produce of

the land it becomes of utmost importance for the land owners to be aware that the land and its produce are entrusted to us but are ultimately owned by Hashem and we are simply stewards of the land. Our efforts, while necessary, do not guarantee our financial success as we need His blessing to see our hard work bear fruit. The laws of the sabbatical year instill this idea into society as they become aware that they can only work the land when the owner of the land allows it. Even though the land is their inheritance, they still need the permission of Hashem to use it.

In our world which has moved away from an agricultural focus, the Rabbis have advised us of another way to keep this essential idea in the forefront of our minds. We are told that saying Ashrei three times a day guarantees us a place in the next world. The gemara in Brachot 4b tells us that one of the reasons for this merit is due to the phrase found in the chapter which strengthens our awareness of our dependence on Hashem in providing for our success.

You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing. (Tehillim 145:16)

May we all be blessed to find success in our labour while being able to maintain our awareness that success ultimately comes from Hashem.



Yirmiyahu 22

In Chapter 21, King Tzidkiyahu asked Yirmiyahu to petition Hashem for assistance against the impending assault by Nevuchadnezzar of Babylon. It was not repentance, but an attempt to use Yirmiyahu as an intercessor. Yirmiyahu responded scornfully, promising that the king would fall to the Babylonians. He offered the nation the choice of dying in the city or surrendering to the Babylonians. And he demanded that the royal family reform themselves, practicing justice, lest they be punished.

That message continues in Chapter 22, as Hashem speaks to Yirmiyahu at the site of the Beit HaMikdash and tells him to descend to the royal palace and reiterate, in the king's own house, the message of justice. If he will perform justice and righteousness and save the vulnerable from those who are taking advantage of them,

then the throne of David will be perpetuated among his descendants (22:1-4).

On the other hand, if the royal family fails to reform their ways then Jerusalem will be laid waste. Hashem will commission destructive forces, and nations will overrun Jerusalem. Yirmiyahu quotes Moshe's warning in Devarim 29:23-24, which Hashem reiterated to Shlomo in Melachim I 9:8-9—passersby will ask each other, "Why did Hashem do this to this city?" And they will answer, "Because they abandoned the covenant of Hashem, worshipping idolatry." Idolatry and corruption are the two causes of the impending devastation (22:5-10).

The prophet then conveys a dire message for "King Shalum ben Yoshiyahu of Yehudah." He will be exiled, and he will die there. We don't know of a King Shalum

in Yehudah; Radak theorizes that this was King Yehoyachin [a.k.a. Yechonyah]. He also quotes the Talmud (Horiyot 11b) that this was King Tzidkiyahu, and Ibn Ezra that this was King Yehoachaz. All three of these kings were indeed exiled. Yirmiyahu again urges the king to pursue justice and protect the vulnerable, rather than lurk in his palace and look after his own wealth (22:11-17).

But kings worry about more than their own lifetime; they also fear for their legacy. This includes their own burial, and the fate of their line. Now Yirmiyahu attacks that legacy, warning King Yehoyakim that he will not be mourned respectfully. He will be thrown into a grave like a donkey. [See Sanhedrin 82a regarding what happened to his body.] He will have no future; his son, Yehoyachin, will be turned over to the enemy Babylonians in disgrace (22:18-30).



Week 4: Why Are the Obligations of the Heart Not Detailed?

This week, we continue the possible reasons for a dearth of writing on obligations of the heart.

3. While these obligations exist, perhaps they are not numerous enough to warrant a separate book.

He rejects this, as both the primary categories and the derivatives of these obligations, the roots and branches, are numerous.

4. These obligations are so well known that no book is needed.

He rejects this, as few people know these, and many people reject even the practical mitzvot, and even more so these obligations.

After failing to find compelling reasons for the lack of discussion, and finding that people were failing to fulfill their obligations, Rabbeinu Bachya set out to write a comprehensive work himself, though he notes his extensive hesitations, doubting his own qualifications. However, he eventually realized no one else would do it, and thus it was his mitzvah, so he set out

immediately to write the book. He outlines his goals as follows:

I said to myself that I will compose a book on this subject that would be systematically divided according to the roots of the duties of the heart and the inner commandments; be comprehensive and adequate to the matters, point out the good and right way; serve as a guide to the customs of the earlier Sages and the discipline of the pious; awaken men from their senseless sleep; delve in detail into the depths of this wisdom; recall to men the knowledge of G-d and of His Torah, promote the salvation of the soul; encourage the observant, stir up the negligent, set the eager on the right road, straighten the early, guide beginners and show the way to the perplexed. (Sebag translation)

He notes that these obligations are important because without their fulfillment, even one's practical mitzvot will be flawed, as people are required to have the quality of *tamim*, which he understands as consistency between one's inner and outer worlds. Next week, we will see what is entailed in these obligations.



Keriah on Yerushalayim and the Kotel

Question: I learned that a person visiting Jerusalem and going to the *Kotel* must tear their shirt like a mourner. Is this the law even today, after 57 years of Jerusalem being in our hands and under our control?

Answer: The *Shulchan Aruch* in Orach Chaim 561 indeed rules that a person seeing Jerusalem must perform *keriah* (tearing of the garment), and an additional *keriah* when seeing the site of the Temple. However, it is less common today to see people observing this custom when they arrive in Jerusalem, and although many still tear their garments upon reaching the *Kotel* it seems the majority do not perform *keriah* even there. Several reasons have been given for this:

Keriah for Jerusalem: Rabbi Moshe Feinstein ruled in *Igrot Moshe*, Orach Chaim part 4:70, that since Jerusalem is now under Israeli control, there is no need to tear. Conversely, Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach argued in *Minchat Shlomo* 1:73 that since there are many parts of

Jerusalem not under Jewish control, Jerusalem is still considered in a state of destruction and *keriah* should be performed. However, Rabbi Avigdor Nebenzahl clarifies that this law applies only to the Old City of Jerusalem and not to the newer neighborhoods of Jerusalem.

Keriah for the Kotel: The straightforward halacha is that *keriah* should be performed upon seeing the *Kotel*, and even Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, who was lenient regarding tearing for Jerusalem, held that *keriah* is required upon seeing the *Kotel*. Nevertheless, to reconcile the practice of not performing *keriah*, several reasons have been proposed:

1. Rabbi Avigdor Nebenzahl suggested that there might be no need to tear if visiting the *Kotel* on Friday afternoon, and some extended this to any day when Tachanun is not recited.
2. Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach is quoted with the sharp opinion that Jerusalem residents who have not gone to the *Kotel*

for thirty days do not need to tear, as the reason for *keriah* is the pain over the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. If someone living near the *Kotel* did not bother to visit for thirty days, it indicates a lack of affection and sorrow for Jerusalem.

3. Similar to the ruling we mentioned last week, where one can transfer ownership of a garment to another to exempt it from needing tzitzit, one can likewise give the garment as a gift to avoid the obligation of *keriah*. However, many authorities have opposed this practice for various halachic reasons and also believe it is not appropriate to evade a clear halacha in the *Shulchan Aruch*.

Despite the various explanations and reasons why people today might not tear their garments when visiting the *Kotel*, it is important to know that many believe that this halacha should be practiced today.

Have a halachic question? Share it with Rabbi Mann at ymanntorontorah.com.



Week 4: The Free Will of the Soul



The Soul

By Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz
Maggid Press, 2018

“Looking to the creation of mankind, the Torah states: “[The Lord God] breathed into his nostrils the breath of life” (Genesis 2:7). The Sages understood this to mean that God figuratively gave part of His living soul to create man’s living soul... [T]he godly component in our soul is what gives us the incredible power to create. Other living creatures also possess a certain level of creativity, but only human beings can develop their intellectual and practical abilities to a degree similar to that of the Creator of the universe.” (*The Soul*, page 60)

The Talmud (*Shabbat* 133b) describes our obligation to emulate God with two examples. One way listed in the Gemara is being compassionate and the other way is being merciful: Just as God is compassionate and is merciful, so too we are obligated to be compassionate and merciful.

In several locations in his writing, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik expands on this idea, appending other actions to how we can copy God. Most notably, Rabbi Soloveitchik argues that just as God is a creative being (after all, He created the world and all its inhabitants), so too we must mimic Him and be creative ourselves (see, for instance, Rabbi Soloveitchik’s *And From There You Shall Seek*, page 89).

Rabbi Steinsaltz’s point here dovetails very nicely with Rabbi Soloveitchik’s interpretation of imitating God. Since our soul emanates directly from the divine, it naturally contains certain elements and attributes of the divine. One such element is our capacity and desire to innovate. To truly resemble Him is to use our divine attributes in the very same way He uses them - to generate and create new things.

The Soul can be purchased from Koren Publishers at 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:

Blessings (Vayikra, 26:3 - 13), (Devarim, 28:1 - 14)

Curses (Vayikra, 26:14 - 41), (Devarim, 28:15 - 68)

The total length of the curses found in the two portions of the Torah is more than three times longer in the text than the preceding blessings.

Questions to Discuss

- Do you notice more when good things happen or when bad things happen?
- Overall in life are blessings or curses more prevalent?
- When things go well how can you look at the situation in a way that will allow you to see the blessing in a multifold way?

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

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Shabbat	Halacha from the Parasha	Clanton Park	After Hashkama Minyan	Rabbi Mann
	Gemara	BAYT	Between Mincha & Maariv	Rabbi Gutenberg
Sunday	Tzurba M'Rabanan – Halacha	Yeshivat Or Chaim	Cancelled this week	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
Monday	David and Batsheva	Zoom: tiny.cc/shlomo2024	NEW 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
Tuesday	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
Wednesday	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
Thursday	Tanach: Sefer Shmuel	Zoom: tiny.cc/BMZDtanach	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
Sun-Thu	Men's Community Night Seder	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:00-9:00 PM	

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

Medical Ethics: Genetic Screening and Intervention	Zoom: tiny.cc/mtorc	June 4, 2024	8-9:30 PM
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Rosh Beit Midrash

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