

Toronto Torah

Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Devarim

6 Menachem Av, 5774/August 2, 2014

Vol. 5 Num. 44

This issue of Toronto Torah is sponsored by Esther and Craig Guttmann and Family
in honour of the yahrtzeit of Sheila Guttmann ז"ל שרה טובה בת יהושע ז"ל

Yachin and Boaz: Pillars of Our Faith

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Our pre-Tisha b'Av curriculum tends to outline themes of mourning and destruction, but our efforts during this period ought also to be directed toward studying the Beit haMikdash itself, as a step toward memorializing and rebuilding what we once had. As a midrash teaches, "When you involve yourself therein, it is as though you had built it." (Vayikra Rabbah 7:3) Therefore, let us look at a particular element of the Beit haMikdash: The two pillars, Yachin and Boaz.

In detailing the construction of the first Beit haMikdash, Melachim I 7:21 states, "And he erected the pillars for the hall of the sanctuary, and he erected the right-hand pillar and called it *Yachin* [Establishment], and he erected the left-hand pillar and called it *Boaz* [Strength]." In an arid list of relatively minor elements, this verse is easily overlooked – but surely naming doorposts ought to raise our eyebrows!

Rabbi David Kimchi explained that these portals were named in order to provide a positive message for those who passed between them. The question remains, though: Why did these particular structural elements warrant names? What is the unique character of entrance pillars?

We might begin to comprehend the significance of Yachin and Boaz by examining the broader biblical role of entrances and their doorposts. The best-known biblical doorposts were those of our homes in Egypt, on which our ancestors placed the blood of their korban pesach to mark the transition from an external world of Egyptian idolatry and slavery to an inner space dedicated to recognizing the reign of Hashem. The practice remains to this day, with our mezuzah ensuring that we remember our loyalty to Hashem as

we cross our thresholds; as Sefer haChinuch (423) writes, "Among the roots of this mitzvah is to act as a reminder of faith on Hashem whenever a person enters or exits the home."

Sacred transition at a portal is a broad biblical theme, joining jambs separated by centuries. Whether the inaccessible gate to Gan Eden or Kayin's metaphorical entrance of opportunity to sin, whether the gopherwood gangplank of Noah's sheltering Ark or the clandestine entry to Lot's angel-protected home in Sdom or the Heavenly gates of Yaakov's dream, the doorway is a pivot between worlds, a point from which one may travel in different, and sometimes even diametrically opposite, directions.

Nowhere is this more true than the entrance to the Mishkan. At this portal Aharon and his sons were consecrated for their service. At this portal the Jews delivered their korbanot. At this portal Jewish women gathered to learn the word of Hashem. At this portal Moshe received Divine instruction.

A Jew who stood on one side of the Mishkan's portal in a state of impurity violated no law, but if he stepped mere inches across the threshold he was liable for serious punishment. On one side, a korban was brought upon an altar for Hashem; on the other side, civilization butchered animals for personal satisfaction. Portions of certain korbanot were required to remain within the hall, and the uniform of the kohanim could not be worn outside. Outside, one could stand or sit or recline, spit or sleep or eat; inside, one was required to stand, and to comport one's self as one in the presence of the King of Kings. The outer space was the realm of human-focussed activity; the

inner space was dedicated to communion with G-d. In between stood the portal, and its pair of pillars.

We now perceive that the titles of the two gargantuan copper limbs of this sacred portal were not mere nicknames for familiar elements of a national monument. The twin pillars flanked the point at which a Jew transitioned from the mundane to the sacred, from a world of tumah to a world of taharah, from a world of consumption to a world of korban. Via their names, these pillars informed every individual who passed between them, "We are invested with Divine strength, and we will be established forever. There will never come a time when entering this Sanctuary will fail to transport you into another realm, and there will never come a time when this portal will cease to be available to any and all."

As Tisha b'Av reminds us, the literal promise of Yachin and Boaz was not fulfilled; the physical portal vanished nearly two thousand years ago. (See Melachim II 25:13, and Ibn Ezra to Amos 9:1) Nonetheless, the commitment of Yachin and Boaz remains firm at the thresholds of the synagogues and study halls which are our poor substitute for the Beit haMikdash. A Jew may still transition from the mundane to the sacred, when entering the space of prayer study. The pillars yet stand.

During this period when we mourn the loss of the Beit haMikdash and increase our longing for its rebuilding, we are inspired to re-double our efforts to retrieve the authentic portal. May our study of these elements of the Beit haMikdash bring about their speedy return, and may we join our family in Israel, in eternal safety and peace.

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Who is the prophet of our haftorah?

Yeshayah (Isaiah) was a prophet in the period leading up to the exile of the ten northern tribes of Yisrael by the Assyrians. He lived in the southern kingdom of Yehudah, and he prophesied during the reigns of Kings Uziyahu, Yotam, Achaz and Chizkiyahu. Per the Talmud (Sotah 10a), he descended from Yehudah and Tamar.

As the Talmud (Bava Batra 15a) informs us, the book of Yeshayah was compiled by King Chizkiyahu and associates of his. The prophecies of Yeshayah may be classified in two categories, Rebuke and Redemption; the former dominates the early chapters of the book, while the latter occupies the latter portion. The split is not clean, though; portions of the former include redemption, and portions of the latter include rebuke.

What is the message of our haftorah?

Our haftorah, which begins Yeshayah's book, is a harsh rebuke to the Jewish nation. Yeshayah rebukes the people for their misdeeds, and threatens that suffering will befall them should they fail to correct their ways. Surprisingly, many commentaries (Malbim, Radak, Daat Mikra) locate this prophecy in the time of one of the most righteous kings:

Chizkiyahu. They base this mostly upon Yeshayah's description of Yerushalayim as the only city remaining of Judea (Yeshayah 1:5-9), and because of the similarity of this prophecy to Michah's prophecy (Michah 3), which we know was delivered at the time of King Chizkiyahu. [See Yirmiyahu 26:18.] Why is Yeshayah harsh to a righteous king?

It seems that Yeshayah concentrates his attack not on idolatry, as Yirmiyahu did last week, but rather on the nation's internal relationships. Yehudah is compared to S'dom. (1:10) Furthermore, Yeshayah emphasizes that G-d is not interested in the offerings of bloody hands. (1:11-15) He orders Judea to practice goodness, seek justice, and fight for the orphan and widow. (1:17) The leadership is characterized as rebels and thieves, loving bribes and pursuing payments. (1:23)

The haftorah concludes with Hashem's promise that the judges will return, bringing back righteousness and faithfulness. Zion shall be redeemed through justice, and her penitents through righteousness. (1:24-27)

What is the link to Tisha b'Av?

Yeshayah's prophecy is a telling testimony of a people who bring their offerings and behave well between man and G-d, and yet disastrously fail between man and his fellow. The weak are suppressed and stepped upon, and the leadership is corrupt. This situation cannot but remind us of the oft-cited Talmudic statement (Yoma 9b), "Why was the Second Temple, in which they were engaged in Torah, mitzvot and kindness, destroyed? For baseless hatred existed there."

Destruction of society's fabric, which expresses itself in hate for those different from one's self, is an ever-existing danger. Even worse, it is a fate looming over every society, unless steps are taken to prevent it. Empathy towards a neighbour who is different is not a natural human trait, and it must be developed.

Our haftorah has a happy ending. Chizkiyahu repaired the situation, making himself worthy of the miraculous salvation he experienced later. In the case of Tisha b'Av, though, we still await the needed correction.

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613 Mitzvot: #395

Maaser Rishon

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

After Korach's rebellion, the Jews receive a series of mitzvot which outline the roles of *kohanim*, *leviyyim* and *yisraelim*, and which describe the gifts to be given to the *kohanim*. Toward the end of Parshat Korach, we also learn of a gift for the *levi*: *maaser rishon*. We separate one-tenth of our Israeli produce and give it to a *levi* of our choice; this is the Torah's 395th mitzvah, per *Sefer haChinuch*. (Bamidbar 18:21-24)

As *Sefer haChinuch* explains, the goal of *maaser rishon* is to provide the *levi* with an honourable means of support, while he is engaged in his service for the nation. *Sefer haChinuch* writes, "Their meal should be provided for them via others, who will prepare it for them, and they will need to be involved only in the valuable service of the King."

The support provided to the *leviyyim* is actually disproportionate to their population; the entire tribe of Levi – including both *leviyyim* and *kohanim* – should constitute only one-twelfth of the nation, but the *leviyyim* receive one-tenth of the produce! As *Sefer haChinuch* writes, "This excess is also for their honour; since they are attached to the royal palace, it is suitable for them to have a greater portion than others have. Further, there is a great advantage in receiving this one-tenth portion without needing to spend to work and maintain the land."

For us, having lived through eras in history when elite classes chose to tax the greater population to support themselves, the idea of providing special benefits to those who claim to serve G-d is unpopular. However, the Torah takes pains to remind us of several points:

- This gift is assigned by G-d; the same faith we have in all of the other mitzvot of the Torah ought to apply here as well. (ibid. 18:21)
- The service of the *leviyyim* prevents a recurrence of the death which came with Korach's rebellion. (ibid. 18:22)
- The service of the *leviyyim* comes with great responsibility, and severe penalties for error. (ibid. 18:23)
- The tribe of Levi is entirely dependent upon the benevolence of its neighbours, as it does not receive the tribal portions of land that the rest of the nation does. (ibid. 18:23-24)

Further, per *Sefer haChinuch*, the Jew who supports the tribe of Levi receives great blessing, and we are even promised (Malachi 3:10) that we may test G-d to see whether our tithes have been paid back by G-d.

Unlike the *terumah* tithe given to a kohen, *maaser rishon* may be consumed by a non-*levi*, and by one who is ritually impure. We separate the tithe from one's produce and give it to a *levi*, but then the *levi* may share it with others.

At the start of the second Beit haMikdash, a very small percentage of *leviyyim* returned from Babylon. To punish the tribe, Ezra removed from them their claim to the *maaser rishon* tithe; thenceforth, Jews would be obligated to separate *maaser rishon* from their produce, but they could eat it themselves [after separating *terumat maaser* – see Mitzvah 396]. (Yevamot 86b; Mishneh Torah Hilchot Maaser 1:4)

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Biography

Rabbi Moshe Sofer

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

One of the most prominent halachic authorities of the past 300 years, a committed mystic, a staunch conservative, an ardent supporter of *aliyah* and an architect of a powerful rabbinic dynasty, Rabbi Moshe Sofer remains one of the most influential leaders of modern Judaism – all without publishing a single book during his lifetime. Rabbi Sofer is also known as “Chatam Sofer”, the name of the posthumously published books of his talmudic teachings and responsa.

Rabbi Moshe Sofer was born on 7 Tishrei in 1762, in Frankfurt am Main. He studied under Rabbi Pinchas Horowitz, Rabbi of Frankfurt, and Rabbi Nathan Adler, a leading halachic authority as well as mystic. Rabbi Sofer's father passed away in 1779, and in 1782 Rabbi Sofer moved to Moravia to accompany Rabbi Nathan Adler in his own journey. In Moravia, Rabbi Sofer married Sarah Yerwitz, a middle-aged widow of well-known righteousness. He became Rabbi of Dresnitz in 1794, and then of Mattersdorf in 1798. After accepting the Mattersdorf offer he was invited to serve a larger city, Prossnitz, but he declined because he had given his word.

Beginning in Dresnitz and then with greater strength in Mattersdorf, Rabbi Sofer took public positions on the issues of the day, such as drafting of Jews into non-Jewish armies, inequitable distribution of the communal tax burden, public support for Torah study, and the sects of Sabbateanism and Chasidism. In 1802 Rabbi Sofer accepted a rabbinic position in Waag Neustadt, but when a fire decimated Mattersdorf he felt obligated to remain there.

In 1806, Rabbi Sofer accepted a rabbinic position in Pressburg (Bratislava), a large stage with a Haskalah-friendly population. Rabbi Sofer did not attempt to change the citizens directly, but he expanded the yeshiva to 150 students, appointed Rabbis to teach interested community members, and gave frequent public lectures. He avoided bans – such as during the attempt of reform-minded rabbis to repeal the prohibition against *kitniyot* in 1810 – but he did take stances

against critical study of Judaism and use of translations in education.

In 1812, Rabbi Sofer's first wife passed away; a few months later he married another widow named Sarah, daughter of the well-known Rabbi Akiva Eiger.

Today, Rabbi Sofer is often remembered as a staunch opponent of innovation within Judaism. The claim largely comes from his 1819 responsum regarding the construction of a Reform temple in Hamburg, but it is inconsistent with much of his greater body of work. (For more, see Toronto Torah Emor 5773.)

Torah and Translation

Why do we fast?

Rabbi Moshe Sofer

Chatam Sofer 1:Orach Chaim 208

Translated by Rabbi Adam Frieberg

...והנה רמב"ם כתב רפ"ה מתענית, יש ימים שכל ישראל מתענים בהם מפני הצרות שאירעו בהם כדי לעורר הלבבות לפתוח דרכי התשובה ויהי' זה זכרון למעשינו הרעים ומעשי אבותינו שהיו כמעשינו עתה עד שגרם להם ולנו אותן הצרות שבזכרון דברים אלו נשוב להטיב שנאמר והתודו את עונם ואת עון אבותם, עכ"ל.

הנה גילה לנו מה שלא היינו מעלים על דעתנו, שהיינו חושבים שהתעניות הללו אינם על דרך התשובה אלא על דרך האבל והצער ביום שאירע רע כמו השמחה ביום שאירע טובה, וכן משמע קצת פ"ק דמגלה [ה' ע"א] דקאמר ט"ב שחל בשבת מאחרין ולא מקדימין מ"ט אקדומי פורענות לא מקדימין. ובוודאי אקדומי תשובה זריזין מקדימין!

מ"מ הודיענו הרמב"ם דלא כן הוא, ועל פיו נהגו לומר וידוים וסליחות באותן הימים (חוץ מט"ב דאיקרי מועד) משום שנקבעו על התשובה, ומ"מ לא הודיעונו נושאי כליו מנ"ל הא.

ולכאורה היינו משום דא"כ מנ"ל לנביאים לחדש דבר שלא מצינו כיוצא בו בתורה, בשלמא לקבוע יום שמחה ביום טובה כגון חנוכה ופורים דאורייתא הוא מק"ו, משיעבוד לגאולה אומרים שירה בפסח מיתה לחיים לא כ"ש [מגילה י"ד ע"א]... אבל לקבוע אבל עולם על צער לא מצינו כיוצא בו, אלא ע"כ על התשובה הוקבעו כדכתיב [ויקרא כ"ו מ'] והתודו את עונם, ותענית מסוגל לכפרה ותשובה ובוודאי אבהון דכולהון יה"כ וצדקו דברי רמב"ם...

....Rambam writes (Laws of Fasts 5:1), “There are days when the entire Jewish people fast because of the calamities that occurred then, to arouse hearts and open up the paths of repentance. This will serve as a reminder of our wicked conduct and that of our ancestors, which resembled our present conduct, to the point that it brought these calamities upon them and upon us. By reminding ourselves of these matters, we will repent and improve [our conduct], as [Vayikra 26:40] states: ‘And they will confess their sin and the sin of their forefathers.’”

He revealed to us that which would we otherwise not have brought into our thoughts. We would have thought that these fasts were not about achieving atonement, but rather about mourning and [experiencing] pain on the day that terrible events occurred, just as we are [commanded to be] joyful on days when great things happened. This is indicated by Megilah 5a, which says that when Tisha B'Av occurs on Shabbat we push it off [until Sunday] and never make it earlier [i.e. Thursday or Friday]. Why? We never move up suffering. Certainly, we do move up repentance!

Nonetheless, Rambam here informed us that this is not the case. Based on his statement, we recite confessions and *selichot* on these days (other than Tisha B'Av, which is called *mo'ed* [in Eichah 1:15]) for these days were established for repentance. However, the commentaries [on Rambam] never explained to us his source!

Presumably, the [Rambam's] reason is this: Otherwise, how could the prophets create something which does not have a similar model in the Torah? It is understandable that [the prophets] established happy days when good things happened to us, such as Purim and Chanukah, for this is a logical extension: Going from slavery to redemption causes song on Pesach, then certainly we should sing when going from death to life! (Megilah 14a)... But to establish on-going mourning when tragedy occurs, we have no such precedent. Rather, they were established for repentance, as Vayikra 26:40 states, “Then they will confess their sins”. A fast day is beneficial for atonement and repentance, and the father of them all is certainly Yom Kippur, and the Rambam's words are justified...

Introducing: Yisroel Meir Rosenzweig

**We are glad to welcome
Yisroel Meir and Elishva Rosenzweig!
Yisroel Meir will join our Beit Midrash next year
and will serve as Rabbinic Assistant at Clanton Park Synagogue**

Yisroel Meir Rosenzweig grew up in Charleston, South Carolina. He studied music theory and composition at the College of Charleston, while performing as a guitarist with jazz groups in local venues. After graduating, he learned under Rabbi Shimon Green at Yeshivas Bircas HaTorah in the Old City of Yerushalayim.

Yisroel Meir continued his studies at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary at Yeshiva University, where he learned under Rabbi Daniel Stein, Rabbi Eliakim Koenigsberg, and Rabbi Daniel Z. Feldman. While in YU, he was a member of the Marcos and Adina Katz Kollel. Yisroel Meir has an MA in Jewish Education from YU's Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration. Yisroel Meir expects to complete his studies for ordination this coming year.

The past year found Yisroel Meir teaching at Congregation Sherith Israel and the Akiva School in Nashville, TN, where his wife, Elisheva, worked at Vanderbilt University.

Yisroel Meir and Elisheva are excited to be a part of the Toronto community!



Our "kayitz zman" semester is now concluded; watch for more in Elul!

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
SHABBAT AUGUST 2				
Before minchah	R' Mordechai Torczyner	The Meaning of <i>Nachem</i> Today	Ayin l'Tzion	
After minchah	R' Josh Gutenberg	Risking your life to save another	BAYT	
SUNDAY AUGUST 3				
9:15 AM	R' Shalom Krell	Kuzari	Zichron Yisroel	With light breakfast
TUES. AUG. 5	Tisha b'Av			
4:00 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Tisha b'Av and Tzom Gedalyah	Shaarei Shomayim	<i>with Torah in Motion</i>
6:00 PM	R' Josh Gutenberg	How Humility Destroyed the Temple	Shaarei Shomayim	<i>with Torah in Motion</i>
Before the late minchah	R' Mordechai Torczyner	When the Lustre Dimmed	Clanton Park	

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**This is the final issue of Toronto Torah for this year;
Look for us again with Parshat Shoftim, August 29!**

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Aish Thornhill / Thornhill Community Shul ❧ Ayin l'Tzion ❧ Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation
Clanton Park Synagogue ❧ Congregation Bnai Torah ❧ Forest Hill Jewish Centre ❧ Kehilat Shaarei Torah
Magen David Congregation ❧ The Marlee Shul ❧ Mizrachi Bayit ❧ The Or Chaim Minyan ❧ Petah Tikva
Shaarei Shomayim ❧ Shaarei Tefilah ❧ Shomrai Shabbos Chevra Mishnayos ❧ Toras Emes Viewmount
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