



# BEIT MIDRASH ZICHRON DOV

# TORONTO TORAH

## PARASHAT NITZAVIM-VAYELECH

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This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Mark Mietkiewicz in loving memory of his late father Mike Mietkiewicz, Melech ben Moshe Dovid z”l, whose 33rd yahrzeit is on Erev Rosh HaShanah



**PARASHAT HASHAVUA** RABBI YEHUDA MANN, ROSH BEIT MIDRASH

## Teshuva: Yes You Can!

We are in the midst of the month of Elul – the month of mercy and forgiveness – in which we strive to repent to the best of our ability. In this week’s Parasha, there are a number of verses which discuss the concept of repentance (Devarim 30:1-2). The Torah even refers to this as a commandment as elucidated in the verse “For this *commandment*... is very near to you” (Devarim 30:11-14, according to the commentary of Ramban).

The early and later commentators discussed the following question- if indeed this is a commandment, how come there is no blessing for the commandment of repentance? Why do we recite blessings before (almost) every other commandment, such as the lulav, shofar, tzitzit, and tefillin, yet not before fulfilling the commandment of repentance? Several answers were provided:

1. Rabbi Shlomo ben Aedret (passed away in 1310), in his responsa “Shut HaRashba” (Part 1, Chapter 18), brings a list of commandments that do not have a blessing associated with them. Among them is the commandment of returning stolen property. The reason we don’t recite a blessing on that mitzva is because it was created due to a transgression (theft), and commandments which were generated from sins do not require a blessing. Similarly, one should not bless for

the commandment of repentance, which involves returning to G-d as a result of transgressions and sins that were committed.

*True and sincere  
efforts for repentance  
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accepted by G-d*

2. Rabbi Aharon Lewin, the Rabbi of the city of Rzeszów in Poland (murdered during the Holocaust in 1941), offers two answers in his work “Birkat Aharon”:

- First Answer: Blessings were instituted for physical commandments such as shaking the lulav, blowing the shofar, and wearing tefillin. The commandment of repentance is not focused on physical actions but rather on an internal feeling in one’s heart – a genuine sense of regret and sorrow for past deeds. As this commandment is dependent on one’s heart, there is no blessing for it.

Second Answer: Rabbi Lewin draws a connection between the commandments of repentance and charity (tzedakah) which also doesn’t have a blessing prior to the mitzva. The reason there is no beracha before giving tzedakah according to many is because the obligation to give charity isn’t

entirely dependent on the giver’s intent to fulfill it, but rather depends on the will of the recipient in accepting the charity. Similarly, repentance, also isn’t fully dependent on the person doing teshuva but rather involves another entity as well – it involves G-d’s willingness to accept one’s return. Since the success of repentance relies on G-d’s acceptance, says Rabbi Lewin, there is no beracha for this commandment.

However, Rabbi Yosef P’tznovsky (who perished in the Lodz Ghetto in 1942) in his work “Pardes Yosef,” refutes the last answer. He emphasizes that there’s a clear distinction between charity and repentance. While the success of charity depends on the recipient’s acceptance, and without his acceptance there is no mitzvah, when a person performs true and sincere efforts for repentance, it will undoubtedly be accepted by G-d. Therefore, unlike charity, where the giver’s efforts might not guarantee fulfillment of the commandment, in the case of repentance, with genuine effort and a true desire to return to G-d, success is certain.

It’s crucial to remember this during the days of Elul, for those who may be hesitant about doing teshuva. We should heed the words of Rabbi Yosef P’tznovsky, acknowledging that if there is a genuine desire to return to G-d, it is guaranteed we will be successful in having a close relationship with Hashem once again.



## Yeshayahu 57

Yeshayahu concluded Chapter 56 with an outburst of wrath against leaders who are not loyal to Hashem. The majority of Chapter 57 continues to offer rebuke, apparently speaking to the generations preceding the destruction of the first Beit haMikdash.

First, Yeshayahu describes the loss of the righteous. They will pass away in peace; per Radak, this is a promise that they will be spared experiencing the downfall of the nation. [This passage is the source for part of the *Kel malei rachamim* memorial prayer; it says, “*yavo shalom, yanuchu al mishkevotam* – May they come to peace, and rest upon their beds”.] But the nation will not even notice their loss, and they will not appreciate that they are under threat. (57:1-2)

Yeshayahu targets idol worship, specifically. He accuses the previous generation of idolatry as well as sexual immorality,

and says that their descendants will have nowhere to turn for support. They lust for idolatry, and even slaughter their own children for this service. The idolatry is everywhere – in wadis and streams, high up on mountains, and behind closed doors in their homes. Radak notes that this conduct is the opposite of what Hashem commanded for Jewish worship; we are supposed to worship in the Beit haMikdash rather than out in the open or in scattered locations, and our doorposts are a place where we remember Hashem via the mezuzah. (57:3-8)

It is odd that Yeshayahu describes idolatry both exposed and hidden; why would they hide, if they could act in the open? One midrash suggests that this reflects a progression; the lack of social consequences made people more bold over time. (Eichah Rabbah, Petichta 22) Alternatively, the

verse may predict what happened to King Yoshiyahu. Our Sages say that King Yoshiyahu thought he had eradicated idolatry, but people worshiped it in secret, behind closed doors. [See the kinah of *Vayikonein Yirmiyahu*.]

Yeshayahu then rebukes the Jews for seeking support elsewhere, sending gifts to foreign kings as King Uziyahu did. The Jews should rely on Hashem, who has taught them righteous behaviour. (57:9-14)

We then begin a new, positive phase; this is the start of the Haftorah for the morning of Yom Kippur. Yeshayahu explains why the Jews should change their ways: Hashem will take care of them and bring them peace when they repent. The wicked, on the other hand, will be storm-tossed and have no peace. (57:15-21)



## Week 3: Action

Virtue ethics has practical implications, as seen by Rambam’s position on how to distribute charity.

The Talmud (Eruvin 63a) rules that anyone who gives all the priestly gifts to a single Kohen brings famine to the world. While many contend that this is a local law that relates to Kohanim, Shulchan Aruch (YD 253:9, based on Mordechai) understands this as a more general rule about charity, that one should give to many people rather than one.

Rambam expands this further, not only forbidding giving charity to one person, but preferring many small acts of charity to fewer large ones, as the consistent acts of giving will improve the person’s generosity. We will assume like Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan (Ahavat Chesed 2:13), that this is an ethical preference, though others argue it was an *educational* one. Rambam explains that:

*[This is] because this one repeated the act of generosity a thousand times and a strong acquisition of it came to him [in this way]. But [the other] only aroused his soul with a great arousal towards a good*

*act, and afterwards it ceased from him.* (Rambam Avot 3:15, Sefaria translation)

As Sefer HaChinuch (16) writes, *acharei hapeulot nimshachim halevavot*, after actions, hearts are pulled.

Rabbi Yaakov Emden (Lechem Shamayim Avot 3:15) disagreed, preferring the larger donation. While part of his argument focuses on the impact on the receiver, he further argues that the generosity required to give a larger gift will change the giver more than giving smaller gifts. Thus, while practically arguing with Rambam, he does not fully reject Rambam’s ethical framework.

Maharal (Netiv HaTzedaka 4), however, argues it is better to help a single poor person in a more significant way than many poor people in lesser ways. However, he does not reject Rambam’s framework. Rather, he argues that *charity* is results-oriented, but other acts of kindness are about virtue (Netiv Gemilut Chasadim 2).

Next week we will see implications for whether it is better to struggle to keep the Torah or for it to be natural.



## Sleeping on Rosh Hashanah

**Question:** Is it true that one should not sleep during the day on Rosh Hashanah? Does the halacha change this year when Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat?

**Answer:** The Rema in Orach Chaim 584:2 mentions the custom not to sleep during the day on Rosh Hashanah. The Mishnah Berurah in Seif Katan 9 cites the source of this custom from the Talmud Yerushalmi, which states that if someone sleeps on Rosh Hashanah, his “*mazal*” [luck or fortune] will sleep throughout the year.

However, there are various opinions and leniencies regarding this prohibition:

a. The Mishnah Berurah mentions the approach of the AriZal, who believed that after midday one can sleep because the angel has awakened due to the blowing of the shofar. As a result, there is a debate among scholars about whether there should be stricter observance when Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat,

on which the shofar is not blown. Some, like Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky, hold that one should not sleep on Shabbat of Rosh Hashanah, while others, like Rabbi Nissim Karelitz, believe it’s permissible to sleep after midday on Rosh Hashanah, as the sanctity of Shabbat replaces the shofar blowing. (Mishnah Berurah, Dirshu, note 16).

b. The Bach writes that the Maharam of Rothenburg did not follow the Rema’s ruling practically and indeed slept. The Mishnah Berurah adds that if the alternative to sleeping is idleness, then sleeping is preferable.

c. A lenient approach is derived from Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky’s explanation of the Yerushalmi above. According to him, the Talmud Yerushalmi’s words “*Dedameich b’reish shata dameich mazla*” should not be translated as “one who sleeps on Rosh Hashanah” but rather as “one who lies down on Rosh Hashanah.” Thus,

the prohibition is against sleeping in a lying-down position, but sitting down and resting one’s head is permitted.

d. The Aruch Hashulchan in Siman 584 states that the custom not to sleep only applies on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, and on the second day one can definitely be lenient.

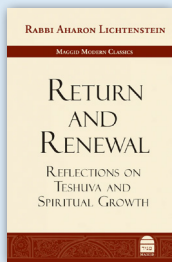
e. The Mishnah Berurah quotes the Chayei Adam who says that if one truly cannot go through these days without proper sleep, it is permissible to sleep. Consequently, if a person needs to sleep in order to daven properly, there is good reason to allow this person to rest during the day of Rosh Hashanah.

**In conclusion:** While there are different leniencies that permit sleeping on Rosh Hashanah, one should strive to utilize these special days for Torah study and prayer.

*Have a halachic question? Share it with Rabbi Mann at [ymann@torontotorah.com](mailto:ymann@torontotorah.com).*



## Week 3: Tending the Garden



**Return and Renewal:**  
*Reflections on Teshuva and Spiritual Growth*  
By Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein  
Maggid Press, 2018

*“It is a truism of religious philosophy that we are, in effect, shomerim, custodians. On the one hand, we are custodians of the world at large; God placed Adam in the Garden of Eden ‘to cultivate it and to guard it’ (Bereshit 2:15). But first and foremost we are custodians of ourselves, and the injunction ‘to cultivate it and to guard it’ applies equally to this domain.”* (Page 114, “Mediocre Teshuva and the Teshuva of the Mediocre”)

responsibility – not only do we care for the land and our surroundings, but we also care for ourselves.

A garden cannot flourish without maintenance. If it is to bloom and blossom, one must consciously supervise and manage it. So too with our lives. We cannot expect to float through life, blissfully unaware of ourselves and be surprised when life doesn’t go our way.

Elul and the season of teshuva is a time for us to tend to the metaphorical garden that is our lives. What needs to be watered and what needs to be pruned and what simply requires time and patience in order to grow?

*The book 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.*

The Torah states that Adam’s charge in the Garden of Eden is to nurture and to develop it. Here, Rav Lichtenstein expands this



## TABLE TALK RABBI NOAH SONENBERG, DEAN

### Source: Devarim 29

(18) It shall happen, when he hears the words of this curse, that he will bless himself in his heart, saying, "I shall have peace, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart, to destroy the moist with the dry."

- What explains people's capacity to act in ways that they should know will cause them harm?

### Source: Devarim 30

(5) And Hashem your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will do you good, and multiply you above your fathers.

- How do you see this blessing in our current historical reality?

*After Shabbat, please share your family's answers with us at nsonenberg@torontotorah.com to enter our raffle for a challah and six bilkas from Richmond Bakery to enjoy at your Shabbat table next week!*

## WEEKLY SCHEDULE

<b>Shabbat</b>	Halacha from the Parasha	Clanton Park	After Hashkama Minyan	Rabbi Mann
	Men's Gemara	BAYT	Between Mincha & Maariv	Rabbi Guttenberg
<b>Sunday</b>	Tzurba M'Rabanan – Halacha	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:30 am	Rabbi Shor
	Men's Semichat Chaver: Hilchot Seuda	Clanton Park	9:00 am	R. Spitz & R. Mann
<b>Monday</b>	Teshuva in the Tales of Rebbe Nachman	Zoom	2:00 pm	R' Rakovsky
	Men's Halacha: Towards Tishrei	Shomrai Shabbos	8:30 pm	Rabbi Mann
<b>Tuesday</b>	Then and Now: Returning to the Land of Israel – a Study in Tanach	Zoom	1:30 pm starting Sept. 19	Rabbi Horovitz
	Women's Gemara Shiur	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:00 pm	Rabbi Anstandig
	Women's Contemporary Halacha Shiur	Clanton Park	8:15 pm	Rabbi Mann
<b>Wednesday</b>	The Nature of Sin and the Evil Inclination	Zoom	10:00 am	Rabbi Sonenberg
	Men's Contemporary Halacha: Tishrei	Clanton Park	After Mincha/Maariv	Rabbi Mann
	Men's Gemara Bekiut	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:00 pm	Rabbi Sonenberg
	The Binding of Isaac	Shaarei Tefillah	8:00 pm	R' Rakovsky
<b>Thursday</b>	Men's Tzurba M'Rabanan – Halacha	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

Selichot	Kehillat Shaarei Torah	Motzaei Shabbat, September 9	11:00 pm	Rabbi Mann
Selichot	Shaarei Tefillah	Motzaei Shabbat, September 9	11:15 pm	Rabbi Sonenberg
Selichot & Kumzitz	Clanton Park	Motzaei Shabbat, September 9	12:00 am	Rabbi Mann
Selichot	Aish Thornhill	Motzaei Shabbat, September 9	12:15 am	R' Diena
Tishrei in a Night	Shaarei Shomayim	Sunday, September 10	8:00 pm	Community Educators
Tishrei in a Night	BAYT	Wednesday, September 13	8:00 pm	Community Educators
Book Club	Or Chaim	Thursday, September 21	8:00 pm	Rabbi Anstandig

## YOUR BEIT MIDRASH

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