



BEIT MIDRASH ZICHRON DOV

TORONTO TORAH

PARASHAT HAAZINU

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This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Paul and Chavi Jacobs to commemorate the Yahrzeit of Paul's mother, Pearl Schraub Jacobs, Perel Hadassah bas Yosef, a"h.



DVAR TORAH HAAZINU RABBI YEHUDA MANN, ROSH BEIT MIDRASH

The Importance of Being Involved

Imagine that you are at an engagement party, and a friend of the groom is about to give a Dvar Torah and a blessing. He is talking about the qualities of the groom and says the usual—"he is smart," "he is funny," "he is pleasant to his friends." But then he adds some unusual compliments—"he never steals, and he never raises his hand against his friends"... Surely it would be very strange to praise the groom in this way; you need to primarily tell his good qualities, and not start telling what bad traits he does not have...

But in our parasha, in the song of Haazinu, Moshe says words of praise about Hashem, and it sounds like the friend at the engagement party mentioned above: "The Rock! His deeds are perfect, for all His ways are just, a faithful God, and there is no wrong (*Ein Avel*); righteous and upright is He" (*Devarim 32-4*). What kind of a praise is it to Hashem declaring that "He does no wrong?" We should praise how "His deeds are perfect," and how "righteous" He is. Not how "not bad He is!"

Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian, the famous Mashgiach of the Kfar Hasidim Yeshiva explains why it is words of praise to say that Hashem "does no wrong." He explains that when a person commits a crime and is judged in regular courts, the judge does not take into account his family, friends and his community. If a person commits a crime that should result in him going to jail or paying a hefty fine to

society, he receives the punishment despite the fact that it will also affect his wife, children and perhaps his friends. But Hashem does not act this way; He "does no wrong." Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian says that if Hashem sees that a person deserves punishment, but if He punishes him, others who are innocent will suffer as well—his wife will suffer, his children will suffer, perhaps a person in the

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community that was supported by him will suffer, then this is considered "wrong," and concerning Hashem, "there is no wrong." Therefore he will not be punished!

A similar idea is said in the name of Rabbi Yitzchak Zeev Soloveitchik who asked how is it that we count among the thirteen attributes of mercy of Hashem the midah of "Emet" - truth. Isn't truth without any compromise an expression of *Midat HaDin* (justice) and not *Midat Harachamim* (mercy)? Rav Soloveichik shares the same idea—it won't be truthful to punish Reuven for his bad deeds if it will affect Shimon, who didn't do anything wrong, therefore Hashem will express mercy towards Reuven by being truthful.

This reminds me of a story I once heard about Rabbi Avraham Yeshayahu Karelitz—the *Chazon Ish*, who advised a person not to acquire life insurance because it is possible that Hashem wanted to punish that person but left him alive and healthy because his family needed him to support them. But now, with life insurance in place, Hashem could punish him as he deserved, and the family would be able to manage because of the regular income from the insurance. (It is important to note that all halachic authorities, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch, and others, have said that it is allowed and even obligatory to take out life insurance due to the duty of human effort (*Igrot Moshe Orach Chaim 2-III, Teshuvot Vehanhagot 4-325*).

The message learned from this is that if a person wants to merit being sealed for a good and blessed year, he must be involved in society by doing acts of kindness and charity. He must prove to Hashem that he is His partner in caring for people, and as a result, Hashem, will not be able to punish him because He "needs him" in this world to continue doing good deeds.

May we all merit being involved in society and the community—in performing good deeds and acts of kindness, and in this way, we will certainly merit a "*Gmar Chatima tova*."



Yeshayahu 59 – Haazinu/Shuvah 5784

Yeshayahu spoke to Jews who lived in Israel, with a Beit HaMikdash, but Chapter 58 offered hope to a future, exiled generation of Jews. The prophet promised that fasting appropriately, with repentance and aid for the needy, would bring about their redemption. Observing Shabbat would bring them “the portion of Yaakov.”

Chapter 59 begins with a very different tone, blaming those exiled Jews for Hashem’s remote stance. Yeshayahu declared that Hashem heard them and was able to rescue them. [This is in contrast to idols, which lack awareness and the ability to act.] But the Jews’ sins caused a separation between them and Hashem (59:1-2).

Yeshayahu then explained that the Divine distance was specifically due to their sins against each other. He switched from

speaking directly to the Jews, to speak about his audience in the third person; perhaps Yeshayahu did this to convey his revulsion with their actions. Their hands were stained with blood, and their mouths spoke deceitfully; there was no honesty, only false promises. Yeshayahu compared them to venomous snakes and cunning spiders. He also warned that the nation would not profit from their wrongdoing; their webs would not clothe them, and their evil deeds would not provide shelter (59:3-8).

Yeshayahu then changed his voice again, to speak of the suffering Jews as “we.” We are not rescued, Divine righteousness does not reach us, we hope for light and only receive darkness, we feel our way along like those who cannot see, we moan like bears and doves. But Yeshayahu then reiterates: our problems come about because of our guilt. Our corruption and

our failure to follow Hashem have brought us to this point (59:9-14).

In a classic gemara, Rabbi Yochanan said, “The son of David will come only in a generation that is entirely meritorious or entirely guilty.” [According to Radak to 59:16, “entirely” just means “most”, not everyone.] The idea that Mashiach will arrive when we are entirely guilty comes from the last part of our chapter (as well as Yeshayahu 48:11). Here Yeshayahu declares that when truth is gone, and those who abandon evil are thought to be insane, Hashem will decide to act anyway. He will “wear” righteousness and salvation as armour, and punish our foes as though settling a personal score. Then, “a Redeemer will come to Zion.” Hashem’s covenant will never leave our mouths and the mouths of our descendants, now and forever (59:15-21).



Week 5: Ethics and Knowledge of God

Virtue ethics is a widely embraced theory of ethics among religious and secular philosophers alike. However, it is important to note the difference for religious thinkers such as Rambam. Rabbi Dr. Ira Bedzow devoted his doctorate to this topic, “A Contemporary Jewish Virtue Ethics.” The most celebrated general philosopher to embrace virtue ethics was Aristotle. However, while there are similarities between the view that Aristotle develops in his *Nicomachean Ethics* and the view of Rambam, Rambam is distinct. As Bedzow puts it: “Maimonides’ account adopts Aristotle’s language of actualization in describing moral and intellectual development, yet it replaces Aristotle’s naturalistic description of a person’s motivation with a religious one.”

Rambam believes that ethics is one step on the path to understanding G-d. According to Rambam (Shemona Perakim 7) one cannot know God if he is unethical. The less one is refined, the less he will understand God. Thus, ethics (as expressed in Avot, which is why these eight chapters are his introduction to Avot) are needed to understand God. Moshe was fully perfected and

the only limitations he had in understanding God came from his mortality. Other prophets had some ethical flaws, and thus understood God less.

No prophet received the gift of prophecy, unless he possessed all the mental virtues and a great majority of the most important moral ones. So, the Rabbis said (Nedarim 38a, Shabbat 92a): "Prophecy rests only upon the wise, the brave, and the rich." By the word "wise," they undoubtedly refer to all the mental perfections. By "rich," they designate the moral perfection of contentment...It is not, however, an indispensable requirement that a prophet should possess all the moral virtues...

Rambam gives examples of great, but less perfected prophets, such as David and Shlomo.

Thus, while we have seen in the past weeks that Rambam is a virtue ethicist, his theory is uniquely religious. Rambam’s end goal is to create servants and knowers of G-d, of which ethics is part of, but not the entire story.



There's a Bee in the Sukkah!

Question: Recently, there have been so many bees and wasps, and I wonder what it will be like during Sukkot when we eat outside the house, inside the sukkah. Is it permissible to catch the bee in a cup? Is it permissible to kill the bee? Is it permissible to eat outside the sukkah?

Answer: Great question. let's discuss each of the questions you asked:

1. Catching the bee in a cup—As is known, it is forbidden to trap animals on Shabbat. However, the Shulchan Aruch permits trapping harmful animals in cases of distress when your intention is not to use the animal but solely to remove the danger. The Shulchan Aruch provides examples such as a snake or scorpion that can be trapped when the purpose is to eliminate the threat. Consequently, some authorities have ruled that it is permissible to catch a bee since it causes distress. Other scholars believe that one should be stringent and not catch a bee because the pain

caused by a bee sting is much less severe than the pain caused by a scorpion or snake bite (Orach Chayim 316:7, Mishnah Berurah 546:67, Dirshu footnote 64).

2. Killing the bee—The Shulchan Aruch states that it is permissible to kill dangerous animals on Shabbat due to the principle of saving a life. However, creatures that cause distress but are not life-threatening, such as snakes and scorpions, can only be killed if they are actively pursuing someone to harm them. The Mishnah Berurah adds that small creatures like fleas do not cause much distress, and it is forbidden to kill them. Therefore, although some Rabbis think bees might be like snakes and scorpions, the majority of authorities seem to agree that bees and hornets should not be killed since they are more similar to fleas (Orach Chayim 316:10, Mishnah Berurah 546:82).

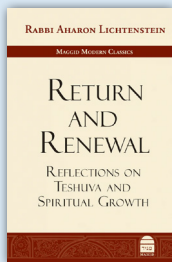
3. Leaving the Sukkah because of bees—There is a significant halachic concept in the laws of the sukkah called "mitzta'er

patur min ha-Sukkah," which means that one who is suffering because of sitting in the sukkah, is exempt from the obligation to stay in the sukkah. In such a case, they are allowed to leave the sukkah to eat or sleep in their home. The Shulchan Aruch gives an example of suffering from flies and fleas. (It's interesting to note that Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach suggested that if there are guests who are disturbing the sukkah owner and preventing him from sleeping, he can consider them like flies, allowing him to sleep in his home). It seems that if there are many bees in the Sukkah that cause discomfort, one is allowed to eat in his house instead. However, it's important to emphasize that this halachic leniency does not apply on the first two nights of Sukkot, and a person should get more guidance from a Rabbi in such a case. (Orach Chayim 640:4).

Have a halachic question? Share it with Rabbi Mann at ymann@torontotorah.com.



Week 5: Approaching Yom Kippur



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

“Rosh Ha-Shana is the day of the completely righteous, those who have already performed teshuva. Yom Kippur, on the other hand, is the day, Chazal tell us (Rosh Ha-shana 16b), of the beinonim, the intermediate people. It is the day of penitents.” (Page 77, “Teshuva: Impetus and Motive”)

As the Ten Days of Repentance draw to a close this weekend, we reflect on the differences between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. Earlier

this week we stood before God on our best behaviour, as it were. In that sense, as Rav Lichtenstein writes, Rosh Hashana was a day for the purely righteous. It was a day that we avoided discussing our sins, failings, and flaws.

Yom Kippur, however, is quite the opposite. In a few days we will recite *vidui*, confession, repeatedly. Even before Yom Kippur begins, we will lay bare our truest selves before God. As Rav Lichtenstein wrote, it is the day of the intermediates. It is a time for us to reflect on the year that was and make positive commitments for the year to come.

This Yom Kippur, may we succeed in putting our past behind us and may we use the day as an inspiration to continue to move forward and to grow.

I am so glad we were able to read Rav Lichtenstein's *Return and Renewal* together, and I look forward to discussing it with you on September 21 at Yeshivat Or Chaim. Our next book will be *What Do You Really Want?* by Shayna Goldberg.

What Do You Really Want? 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: Devarim 31:21

It shall happen, when many evils and troubles have come on them, that this song shall testify before them as a witness; for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed. For I know their inclination which they develop this day, before I have brought them into the land which I swore.

Questions to Discuss

- What makes song different from plain text?
- Why is song chosen to act as a witness to convey Hashem's message?
- What songs do you have in your life that you frequently revisit for inspiration and connection?

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

Some classes are on pause until after Sukkot. We look forward to learning with you after the break at our upcoming classes.

Monday	The Torah: A Psychic Turn. Psychological Theories in the Eyes of Tanach	Zoom	Sukkot Break	R' Rakovsky
	Men's Halacha – Towards Tishrei	Shomrai Shabbos	Sukkot Break	Rabbi Mann
	University Women's Beit Midrash	Yeshivat Or Chaim	New - October 9, 8:00 PM	Rabbi Anstandig
Tuesday	Then and Now: Returning to the Land of Israel – a Study in Tanach	Zoom	New this week - 1:30 PM	Rabbi Horovitz
	Women's Gemara Shiur	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:00 PM	Rabbi Anstandig
	Women's Contemporary Halacha Shiur	Clanton Park	Sukkot Break	Rabbi Mann
Wednesday	Finding Meaning and Connection in the Psalms from the Siddur	Zoom	New - October 11, 10:00 AM	Rabbi Sonenberg
	Eliyahu HaNavi: A Prophet of Fire & Water	Shaarei Tefillah	New - October 11, 8:00 PM	R' Rakovsky
	Men's Contemporary Halacha: Tishrei Edition	Clanton Park	After Mincha/Maariv	Rabbi Mann
	Men's Gemara Bekiut	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:00 PM	Rabbi Sonenberg
Thursday	Men's Tzurba M'Rabanan – Halacha	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:00 PM	Rabbi Turtel
	Men's Gemara Iyun	BAYT (Milevsky/ Mizrachi Beit Midrash)	Sukkot Break	R' Diena
Tues–Thu	Men's Community Night Seder	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:00–9:00 PM	

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

Book Club	Yeshivat Or Chaim	Thursday, September 21	8:00 PM
Women's Midreshet Yom Rishon	Shaarei Shomayim	Sunday, October 15	10:00 AM

YOUR BEIT MIDRASH

Rosh Beit Midrash

Rabbi Yehuda Mann
ymanntorontotorah.com

Dean

Rabbi Noah Sonenberg
nsonenberg@torontotorah.com

Sponsorships & Dedications

Ronit Bendayan • (416) 630-6772 x 243
rbendayan@torontotorah.com

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