



BEIT MIDRASH ZICHRON DOV

TORONTO TORAH

PARASHAT VAYERA

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This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Alina and Steve Mayer in memory of Alina's father, יצחק אלעזר בן מרדכי ז"ל, and anonymously sponsored for the safety and well-being of the courageous IDF soldiers, the unwavering dedication of the members of the Emergency Services, the full and speedy recovery of the wounded, and the safe and quick return of the hostages.



DVAR TORAH VAYERA RABBI YEHUDA MANN, ROSH BEIT MIDRASH

When Torah is a Blessing

A person wakes up in the morning, and the first thing that comes to his mind is the fascinating *Shiur* he heard and participated in the previous night. Is this allowed? Is it okay to think about Torah before reciting Birkot HaTorah? The Shulchan Aruch, *Orach Chayim*, 47-4, states that it is allowed to think about and contemplate matters of Torah before reciting the blessings, as "thought is not like speech" (*hirhur lav kedi-bur*). However, the Shulchan Aruch seems to contradict himself, since in 47-3, he rules that one who writes Torah words must recite the blessings before writing. The question that arises is: What is the difference between writing and contemplating? After all, both writing and contemplating are not considered actual speech, so why the distinction?

This question can be answered based on an idea in this week's parasha. In our parasha, Hashem plans to destroy Sodom, but before that He decides to involve Abraham in the plan, as it says, "Shall I hide from Avraham what I am about to do? Avraham will become a great nation..." (Bereishit 18:17-18). The commentary Da'at Zekenim explains that G-d decided to involve Avraham only because he "will become a great nation" and will teach his descendants about the story of Sodom. If not for this, He would not have revealed it to him.

Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz (*Sichot Mus-sar*, Ma'amar 73) raises a question: Why did G-d reveal His plans to Avraham only because he would have children and teach them? Isn't Avraham righteous enough to deserve knowing G-d's plans even without having children to teach later? Rabbi Chaim explains that the Da'at Zekenim teaches us a crucial principle: Everything given to a person from Heaven, whether it's wisdom or material and spiritual achievements, is given so that he can pass it on to others. While Avraham was indeed righteous and worthy of knowing G-d's plan, without the prospect of teaching it to his descendants it would not have been revealed to him, because Torah is at its best when Torah is being delivered to others.

With this idea, some of the 18th century Rabbis (*Responso Shav Yaakov*, Rabbi Akiva Eiger, and others) explained the distinction between writing and contemplating Torah. While both writing and contemplating do not qualify as speaking words of Torah, there is a significant difference between them. Contemplation keeps Torah knowledge in the mind of the person and cannot be passed on to others. On the other hand, written Torah can be transmitted from one person to another, because Torah can be passed on to others not only orally but also in written form. **The blessing for Torah is specifically for Torah that can be passed on,**

which is why one must recite the blessing before writing or speaking Torah.

A week ago, Am Yisrael lost one of the leading teachers and transmitters of Torah: Rabbi Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi zt"l. Much can be said about Rabbi Ezrachi—the leader, the magnificent orator, but above all is his dedication to teaching Torah. He started by giving lessons in the Chevron Yeshiva and Kneset Chizkiyahu Yeshiva. He went on to establish the Ateret Israel Yeshiva, teaching and educating thousands of students. However, perhaps the most unique teaching opportunity of Rabbi Ezrachi was in his summer camp he held every summer: There, he worked in outreach and exposed high school boys with very little Torah background to the sweetness of Torah and made a major impact on thousands—including myself.

What we can learn from Rabbi Ezrachi is that we should strive that our Torah study should be devoted not only to our personal growth but also to constantly try to inspire others as well. When we study alone, we can try to invite others who do not study to join and have a *chavruta*. Instead of learning at home alone, we can learn in communal Beit Midrash to enhance the atmosphere of learning for others. May we all merit to study Torah as Rabbi Baruch Mordechai did—Torah that deserves a blessing, Torah that inspires others as well.



Yeshayahu 63

The last few chapters have been upbeat, so much so that the final haftorah of consolation recited after Tisha b'Av begins in Chapter 61, continues through Chapter 62, and includes more than half of our current chapter, Chapter 63. But after that, the optimism recedes.

We start with the image of Hashem as a warrior, battling our foes. Hashem is described as crushing Edom, our incessant tormentor, as one crushes grapes in a winepress. No one else will come to the aid of the Jews, but Hashem will do it independently. Then Hashem describes doing the same to unnamed other nations, rendering them intoxicated with the beverage that is His outrage (63:1-6).

Yeshayahu thanks Hashem for all of the kindness He has shown us. Hashem replies: "This is My nation, these are children who

will not betray Me!" Of course, Hashem is perfectly aware of our historical tendency toward betrayal, but Rashi explains that Hashem is willing to treat us as though we were going to remain loyal (63:7-8).

Yeshayahu then adds, "In all of their pain, there was no pain." Radak explains that this means that even when we were

*In all of their pain,
there is pain for Him.*

attacked, Hashem acted to mitigate our suffering, so the pain was reduced. But that version of the phrase is the ktiv—the way the words are written. The phrase ends "lo tzar", and lo is spelled lamed-alef. There is also a kri, the way it is meant to be read, in which lo is spelled lamed-vav. That layer translates to, "In all of their pain, there is pain for Him." Meaning, as the Talmud

(Taanit 16a) states, Hashem is pained by our pain. This concludes the haftorah of consolation (63:9).

The prophecy then turns harsh, speaking of how we rejected Hashem's support and acted as an enemy, and so Hashem did battle against us. Yeshayahu then yearns for Moshe Rabbeinu, through whom we were brought out of Egypt, rescued at the Sea, and led through the desert. Even though we sinned then as well, we were rescued (63:10-14).

The chapter concludes with Yeshayahu's plea before Hashem on behalf of the nation: You are our Redeemer; Avraham and Yaakov did not save us, You have always been the one, do not estrange Yourself from us (63:15-19). [For an interesting midrash on the omission of Yitzchak, see Shabbat 89b.]



Week 4: The Spirit of the Law on Shabbat

On Shabbat, the Torah forbids performance of *melacha*, work or creative activity. On Yom Tov, certain *melachot* are permitted for the purpose of *ochel nefesh*, food preparation. However, Yeshayahu 58 records other activities that are prohibited, such as business and certain kinds of mundane speech. The rabbis prohibit many activities, including the above, as well as limiting what can be moved (*muktzeh*) and many other activities (known as *Shevut*). While the source of these prohibitions are the prophetic books and rabbinic enactments, Ramban contends that they find their source in the Torah. Shabbat and the holidays are often referred to as *Shabbaton*, days of rest. From this, Ramban extrapolates that in addition to avoiding *melacha*, the Torah demands that we make these days different, and that calls for much more, including many of those things included above. The rabbinic prohibitions, referred to as *Shevut*, in fact capture something essentially biblical about Shabbat, namely the requirement to actively make it a day of rest.

"We are biblically commanded to rest on Yom Tov even from those

activities that technically do not qualify as melachah. We should not strain all day to measure grain, weigh fruit ... to move utensils, and even stones, from house to house and place to place ... to load up donkeys ... And all packages would be delivered on Yom Tov; and the marketplace would be filled with ongoing commerce ... and the workers would arise for their duties and hire themselves out like the rest of the week, and so on ... Therefore, the Torah commands us "Shabbaton"—that these should be days of rest and cessation of work, and not days of labor and toil" (Vayikra 23:24).

If the prohibitions against business and *muktzah* are biblical, why did the rabbis need to prohibit them? Some argue that on a biblical level, one would only violate *Shabbaton* by violating these laws regularly, as that would destroy the spirit of Shabbat. However, a single violation of these actions would not destroy Shabbat, and thus are only forbidden rabbinically. In other words, the rabbis forbade doing actions that would destroy Shabbat if done regularly (see Ritva Rosh HaShana 32b, Chatam Sofer YD 5:195).



Carrying Weapons on Shabbat

Question: Is it permissible to carry weapons on Shabbat in a place without an Eruv?

Answer: Last week we discussed the topic of entering a shul with a gun, this week we will address the question of whether it is permissible to carry weapons on Shabbat in a place without an Eruv.

Our sages in the Mishna discuss this matter in Masechet Shabbat 6-4. According to Rabbi Eliezer, it is considered an ornament, and therefore, it is allowed to be carried on the Shabbat. However, *chachamim* [the majority of Rabbis at the time] argue that it is not an ornament because, in the future, it is said, "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (Isaiah, Chapter 2). Therefore, it is forbidden to carry weapons on Shabbat. This opinion is *halacha lemaase*, the accepted law, in the Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 301-7.

However, the Aruch Hashulchan (Rabbi Yechiel Epstein, 19th century) is of the

opinion that the Shulchan Aruch's ruling applies only to a regular person, but for a soldier or a police officer, carrying a weapon is considered part of their clothing and gear. Thus, they are allowed to carry weapons on Shabbat, just like other permissible clothing items on Shabbat.

Rabbi Yaakov Breish, in his book *Chelkat Yaakov* (Orach Chayim, Siman 96), bases a practical halacha on the Aruch Hashulchan's opinion concerning a Jewish soldier in the Swiss army whose uniform includes a sword. Rabbi Breish rules that it would be permissible for the soldier to carry the sword on Shabbat, as it is considered part of his clothing. This is because a modern soldier's sword is considered an accessory and not a weapon for combat, as swords are not used in modern warfare. In addition, since according to the Swiss law a soldier who does not wear the sword will be punished by his officers, the sword could be considered like the seal of a slave which is also permitted to be carried on Shabbat.

In practice, the book *Orchot Shabbat*

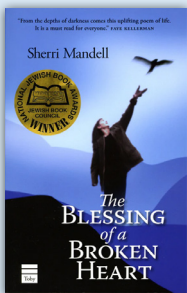
(Volume 3, Chapter 28, 128), rules that in a life-threatening situation, it is certainly allowed to carry weapons in a place without an Eruv. If it is not a life-threatening situation, contemporary halachic authorities have ruled to be stringent and not rely on the Aruch Hashulchan's opinion. According to contemporary halachic authorities, weapons should not be considered ornaments for men like watches because a watch is attached to the person and is, in fact, secondary (*tafel*) to the body and considered to be like part of the body. However, a weapon that is not attached to the person is considered an accessory and, therefore, should not be carried on Shabbat.

*Please note: This halacha is according to the custom and law in Israel. Please do not learn from this column how to conduct yourself in other countries.

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



Week 4: A Life of Contradictions



The Blessing of a Broken Heart
By Sherri Mandell
The Toby Press, 2003

“Chukot [mitzvot with no apparent reason] tell us that we need to live with contradiction, need to live with things unexplained; need to do things just because God commands it, God desires it. And Koby's death seems to say the same thing. I have to live with the contradiction of my son's death – the suffering I experience in the midst of an outpouring of love and support; a son who is alive in my mind and dead at the same time; my need to live in this world

and reach towards the World-to-Come, the terrible beauty of the place that he was killed.” (The Blessing of a Broken Heart, pages 91-92)

Our lives are filled with contradictions. In a moment we can swing between opposing feelings, moving from bawling to laughter and then back again to bawling. To be human is to be dynamic and in constant flux with our emotions.

But, Mandell concludes the aforementioned paragraph with a simple affirmation: “God is the one who can untangle contradiction” (page 92). Hashem is the Constant in our life who brings all sides together. While in our darkness we are filled with confusion and contradiction, we know that from Hashem’s perspective it all makes sense. May we see and experience His resolution soon.

The Blessing of a Broken Heart 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: Bereishit

(17:17) Avraham fell on his face and laughed and said in his heart, "To a one hundred year old, will a child be born? Will Sarah, at ninety years old, give birth?"

(18:12) Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have withered will I have pleasure?! And, my lord is old!"

(21:6) Sarah said, "God has brought laughter to me, all who hear will laugh with me!"

Questions to Discuss

- What circumstances cause people to laugh?
- When is it good to laugh and when is it inappropriate?

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

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	8:30 AM	Rabbi Shor
	Men's Semichat Chaver: Hilchot Smachot	Clanton Park	9:00 AM	Rabbi Spitz and Rabbi Mann
	Shiur b'Ivrit	BAYT (Milevsky/ Mizrachi Beit Midrash)	9:00 AM	Rabbi Mann and Rabbi Lax
Monday	War Issues in Halacha	Zoom	2:00 PM	R' Rakovsky
	Men's Halacha	Shomrai Shabbos	8:30 PM	Rabbi Mann
	University Women's Beit Midrash	Yeshivat Or Chaim	7:45 PM	Rabbi Anstandig
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	8:15 PM	Rabbi Mann
Wednesday	Finding Meaning and Connection in the Psalms from the Siddur	Zoom	10:00 AM	Rabbi Sonenberg
	Men's Contemporary Halacha	Clanton Park	After Mincha/Maariv	Rabbi Mann
	Men's Gemara Bekiut	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:30 PM	Rabbi Sonenberg
	Eliyahu HaNavi: A Prophet of Fire & Water	Shaarei Tefillah	8:00 PM	R' Rakovsky
Thursday	Men's Tzurba M'Rabanan – Halacha	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:30 PM	Rabbi Turtel
	Men's Gemara Iyun	BAYT (Milevsky/ Mizrachi Beit Midrash)	8:00 PM	R' Diena
Sun-Thu	Men's Community Night Seder	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:30-9:30 PM	

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

Shabbaton Shaarei Shomayim December 1-2, 2023

YOUR BEIT MIDRASH

Rosh Beit Midrash

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