



BEIT MIDRASH ZICHRON DOV TORONTO TORAH

תַּזְרִיעַ-מִּצְרָה - TAZRIA-METZORA

Vol. 19 Num. 23 (#683) · 30 Nissan 5786 / April 17, 2026

Candle lighting: 7:45 pm  Havdallah: 8:54pm (50 minutes after שקיעה)

Dedicated by Rick and Dianna Zauderer in
memory of our dear father A'H,
Elazar (Alfred) Zauderer.

If you would like to sponsor an issue of
Toronto Torah, please contact Esther Rutledge at:
info@torontotorah.com



RABBI YEHUDA MANN, ROSH BEIT MIDRASH

Investing in 'There': Building Toronto's Torah Future

There is a well-known Gemara that describes the moment when Bnei Yisrael received the Torah at Har Sinai. The Torah tells us that they stood "at the foot of the mountain," and the Gemara famously explains that this means something far more dramatic: Hashem lifted the mountain over their heads and declared, "If you accept the Torah—wonderful. But if not, *there* will be your burial." In other words, Hashem compelled Am Yisrael to accept the Torah under the threat of the mountain itself.

But let us focus on a powerful and subtle question. The Gemara records Hashem's warning as: "If not—*there* ('sham') will be your burial." Why "there"? Should it not have said "here"—under the mountain?

A beautiful explanation, cited by Rabbi Ephraim Goldberg, offers a powerful and deeply relevant insight.

The word "there" is not referring to that moment at Har Sinai—it is pointing to the future.

Hashem was teaching a timeless lesson: A Jew in one generation may choose to distance himself from Torah and mitzvot, yet still remain connected to the Jewish people through culture, identity, or shared values. It is possible that such a person will not immediately lose their Jewish identity. But the real danger lies "there"—in the next generation.

If Torah and mitzvot are not the foundation of Jewish life, then "there," in the lives of one's children or grandchildren, that connection may disappear entirely. The continuity of Jewish identity cannot be sustained on culture alone. Without Torah, the link weakens—and eventually breaks.

History has borne this out time and again. Communities that attempted to build a "Jewish identity" detached from Torah and mitzvot often endured for a generation or two. But "there," a few generations later, their distinctiveness faded, and their connection to the Jewish people was lost.

The message is both sobering and empowering: The only true guarantee of Jewish continuity is a life rooted in Torah and mitzvot.

This Shabbat, Beit Midrash Zichron Dov is proud to host, for the second time this year, four families from the Yeshiva University semicha program as part of the BMZD–YU Fellowship. The goal of this initiative is to introduce these talented rabbinic couples to the beauty and warmth of the Toronto community—its schools, shuls, and vibrant spirit—while also giving them meaningful opportunities to teach and connect. At the same time, this program has a broader impact: these families will return and share their experiences with friends and colleagues, helping to spread awareness of the strength

and warmth of the Toronto community, and encouraging others to envision a future here—as mechanchim, teachers, and rabbanim serving and building our city.

At Beit Midrash Zichron Dov, we recognize that if we are to preserve and strengthen Jewish identity in Toronto, it must be built on a deep love for Torah and mitzvot. Without that foundation, chas v'shalom, we risk the reality of "there will be your burial"—a break in the chain of our children and grandchildren.

We are therefore immensely proud of this program, which invests in the future—spiritually, educationally, and communally. Baruch Hashem, it has already seen tremendous success, with one family committing to join the Toronto community next year and become part of Bnei Akiva Schools.

In this publication, we have invited our fellows to share divrei Torah reflecting on this meaningful time of year—Yom HaZikaron, Yom HaAtzmaut, Sefirat HaOmer, and the weekly parsha.

May we all merit to receive the Torah with love and joy. And through that commitment, may it be that "there," in the generations to come, our children and grandchildren will look to us as examples, embracing the Torah with the same passion—ensuring the eternal continuity of Am Yisrael.



יום העצמאות

Miracles are performed for us every single day. Yet, because of the pace of our lives, we often have difficulty recognizing the extent to which Hashem watches over us and protects us. As we emerge from Pesach and begin counting toward Shavuot, we are given a unique opportunity to pause, reflect, and develop a deeper sense of *hakarat hatov* for all that Hashem has done—and continues to do—for His people.

This awareness takes on added meaning as we arrive at Yom Ha'atzmaut, a day that celebrates one of the greatest gifts in modern Jewish history: the reestablishment of Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel. Especially in light of recent challenges, the miracles experienced by our nation are countless. At the same time, we are called to recognize the strength of our people—the resilience of our brothers and sisters in Israel, the courage of its soldiers, and the unwavering spirit of a nation that continues to persevere. Israel and

its people embody a strength, resilience and faith that are unmatched.

In reflecting on these events, Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik described the moment of the founding of the State of Israel as a “knock on the door” of history. In his essay *Kol Dodi Dofek*, he explains that Hashem calls upon us through historical opportunities, urging us to respond with faith and action. The establishment of the State was not merely political—it was a moment of divine significance, demanding that we recognize Hashem's presence and our responsibility.

That responsibility finds expression in our tefillah. Our prayers are not routine; they are powerful and purposeful, shaping our awareness and aspirations. Each day, we begin with “*מה טובו*,” expressing a longing to stand in Hashem's presence in His holy sanctuary. In *אֵלֶּיָּהּ רִבְּהָ*, we beseech Hashem to gather us from the four corners of

the earth and bring us back to our land with dignity, pride, and renewed strength. And at the end of the *Amidah*, we pray for the rebuilding of the Beit Hamikdash and the restoration of our service to Hashem in Jerusalem. These are just a few examples—throughout our *tefillot*, countless other moments reflect this same yearning and connection.

These *tefillot* remind us that our connection to Israel is not only historical or political—it is deeply spiritual. They challenge us to pray with intention, to recognize the gifts we have been given, and to respond to Hashem's “knock” with commitment and gratitude.

As we celebrate Yom Ha'atzmaut, let us not only give thanks for what we have, but also embrace what is being asked of us. May we strengthen our connection to Hashem, to our people, and to our land—and may we merit the ultimate *geulah* *בימינו*.



YITZY TANNER, MISHKAN AVRAHAM

יום הזיכרון - Contemplating Silence

“On Yom Hazikaron, throughout the country [of Israel], there will be a silence of two minutes during which all work will cease and all traffic will stop.”

With this law, passed in 1959, the Knesset established the two minutes of silence that are held every year on Yom Hazikaron. Today, these moments are marked by a siren, during which everyone stops what they are doing. Drivers pull over on the sides of the roads, and everyone stands up in silence as a sign of mourning for fallen soldiers and victims of terror. This practice raised two interconnected halakhic issues that have been dealt with by the poskim. First, may one stand in silence during these sirens or is doing so forbidden as their origin comes from non-Jews and it is therefore a violation of the prohibition of *Chukat Akum* (following in the ways of idolaters)?

Second, if one is learning Torah when the sirens sound, would it be permitted to stand in silence, or would that constitute the prohibition of *Bittul Torah* (neglecting the study of Torah)?

Regarding the first question, Rama rules (*Yoreh Deah* 178:1) that practices that have their origin in idolatry are only prohibited if they contain a breach of modesty or were instituted for no reason. Therefore, Rabbi Eliezer Melamed (*Peninei Halakha Zemanim* 4:13) rules that since standing in the sirens serves a purpose – namely, to remember the fallen – it is not prohibited. Further, it is unclear that standing in silence really has its origins in idolatry. As Rabbi Natan Slifkin points out, it has its conceptual roots in the Torah, when Aharon stood in silence after the death of Nadav and Avihu.

The question of *Bittul Torah* was discussed by Rabbi Yehuda Herzl Henkin (*Shut Bnei Banim* 1:10). After a long essay demonstrating that there is no problem of *Bittul Torah* if one merely stops learning audibly, Rabbi Henkin concludes:

“Therefore, in my opinion, to avoid any possibly problematic practice, and since it does not give honor to the fallen to honor them with something that could be problematic (i.e. to stop learning Torah completely when the siren sounds), one should stand up and think about their studies silently during the moment of silence and only afterwards return to studying out loud.”

When I read these sources, I found myself a bit taken aback. Are these halakhic discussions really appropriate against the backdrop of Yom Hazikaron? Could a Religious Zionist like Rabbi Henkin or Rabbi Eliezer Melamed really consider the possibility that one not stand up in silence when the siren sounds?

Perhaps the answer to this question lies in what we are trying to accomplish by honoring the fallen. If we are only mourning their tragic passing, then indeed, conducting these halakhic discussions seems inappropriate. But if we are also recognizing that it is their sacrifice that allows us and obligates us to live our lives as the Jewish people in Eretz Yisrael, then conducting a halakhic discussion about how best to do so is an appropriate way to honor their memory. In this way, we not only recognize and honor the fallen when we stand in silence, but we also recognize and honor them throughout the rest of our lives, too.



ALEXANDER BENOLIEL, SHAAREI SHOMAYIM

ספירת העומר

The Torah presents two distinct mitzvot of counting. Between Pesach and Shavuot, we count Sefirat Ha'Omer, and when the Yovel applies, we count the 49 years before the Yovel. However, the Torah uses slightly different language to describe these two mitzvot. The mitzvah of Sefirat Ha'Omer begins with the words "וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם" (Vayikra 23:15), while that of counting until the Yovel begins "וּסְפַרְתָּ לָךְ" (Vayikra 25:8). Both mean, "and you shall count", but they differ in plurality; Sefirat Ha'Omer is expressed with the plural "you", and the counting of the Yovel is singular. What does this difference represent?

Chazal understood that this indicates the unique performers of these commandments. The Sifra says that the Sanhedrin alone would perform the counting of the Yovel. Many explain that the command is expressed

in the singular because it addresses the nation in its entirety, and the Sanhedrin fulfills it as representatives of the nation. The Talmud (Menachot 65b) states that the plural command of Sefirat Ha'Omer indicates that, rather than a single communal count, each individual counts independently. Some Acharonim even argue that one cannot fulfill their obligation to count by listening to somebody else, which does work with many other mitzvot, like Kiddush on Shabbat and Yom Tov.

Why do these mitzvot differ in who performs them?

The Sefer HaChinuch offers explanations of the purposes of these mitzvot, and they may help us answer this question. According to the Sefer Hachinuch, neither of these counting mitzvot is purely practical.

He explains (mitzvah 330) that the Yovel, when land returns to its original owner, teaches us that truly, everything is Hashem's, and eventually, everything will end up where He wants it to be. By counting towards this event, we are reminded of this idea consistently, not only when the Yovel arrives. With regard to Sefirat Ha'Omer, he explains (mitzvah 306) that people count towards events they are excited for, so we count towards Shavuot to instill in ourselves an excitement for Matan Torah.

Perhaps the difference is that the Sanhedrin's counting toward the Yovel is public education about the ideas of the Yovel, while our individual count of the Omer creates an inner excitement, and while ideas can be taught from the outside, emotions must be generated internally. With this in mind, Sefirat Ha'Omer is an amazing opportunity to not just count the days, but build an inner excitement for Torah



BRIAN CHERNICOFF, OR CHAIM MINYAN

פרשת השבוע

At a superficial level, Parshat Tazria-Metzora comes off as dry, technical and overly legalistic. We are inundated with a long delineation of the laws of Tzara'at, as well as the laws of Tumah regarding bodily emissions. Beyond this, these laws are for the most part not in practice today, making it even more challenging to connect to this Parsha. However, if we take a deeper dive into the teachings of Chazal, we'll discover an idea that emerges from the laws of Tzara'at, that is both awe-inspiring and relevant for all generations.

The Torah teaches us that if a part of a person's body has Tzara'at, then he is Tameh. However, if his ENTIRE BODY is covered in Tzara'at, then he is Tahor. The Torah (Vayikra 13:13) says: "כֹּלֹ הַפֶּךְ", "לִבְנֵי טָהוֹר הוּא", his entire body has turned white, and he is therefore pure. This is astonishing – if just one part of a person's body has Tzara'at, then he is impure, but if his whole body is covered in Tzara'at, then he is pure. How are we to understand this deep mystery?

The Gemara (Sanhedrin 97a) explains that this Passuk actually teaches us a secret about the arc of Jewish history, and the ultimate destiny of Am Yisrael. The Gemara quotes Rabbi Yitzchak as teaching that Mashiach will only come once "עַד שֶׁתִּתְּהַפֵּךְ כָּל", "הַמַּמְלָכוֹת לְמִינֹת", the entire kingdom has converted to heresy. The source for this is the Passuk that we quoted previously, "כֹּלֹ הַפֶּךְ", "לִבְנֵי טָהוֹר הוּא". The Gemara is giving us a deep message of hope – even when things look terrible, and it seems as if one's life is fully covered by Tzara'at, that is when the purity of Mashiach will come.

When it seems as if all hope is gone, and the entire Jewish experience is marred by blemishes, that is when the light of Mashiach will shine forth.

The Gemara cites a Beraita that lists various other horrific attributes about the times leading up to Mashiach – there will be a great increase in brazenness (azut), there will be rampant inflation, and there will be no one willing to accept rebuke for their actions. The Gemara elsewhere (Sotah 49b) tells of other terrible tragedies that will occur before Mashiach arrives – those who fear Hashem will be despised, there will be no truth, and children will have no respect for their parents and elders.

Sadly, in our times, so many of the Gemara's predictions eerily ring true. There is a heretical movement known as "postmodernism", which claims that there is no such thing as an objective truth. There is the proliferation of the "gentle-parenting" movement, which raises children to be entitled and self-absorbed, and does not teach them to respect their parents and elders. As the Gemara Sotah concludes: "אֵין לָנוּ לְהִישָׁעַן אֵלָּא עַל אֲבִינוּ שְׁבַשְׁמִים" – we can only rely upon our Father in Heaven!

Even though hope seems bleak, the Gemara Sanhedrin teaches us that at the exact time when we as a people are covered in blemishes and are facing difficulties -- כֹּלֹ הַפֶּךְ לֵב -- it's at that moment that we'll experience טָהוֹר הוּא, the light of redemption and the warm embrace of Mashiach. May we experience this speedily in our days.



1. What happens to newborn Jewish boys after eight days?
2. What are the signs of the basic tzara'at?
3. If a person needs to isolate, how long must it be for?
4. What colour is tzara'at in fabric?
5. What will happen if tzara'at in a house has spread after seven days?

1. The boy will be given a Brit Mila.
2. If a person has a rash, their hair has turned white in that spot, and the spot seems to be deeper than just the skin.
3. The person would need to isolate for seven days.
4. A deep green or deep red.
5. The stones which contain the tzara'at should be removed and put outside the city.

Answers:

BEIT MIDRASH ZICHRON DOV | YU FELLOWSHIP SHABBAT

PARSHAT TAZRIA-METZORA

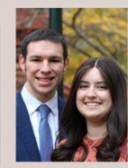
APRIL 17-18

BMZD and YU welcome four semicha couples who'll be exploring our community and giving shiurim in schools and shuls across the GTA.



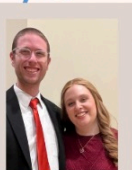
Aish Thornhill & BAYT Isaac and Shayna Safran

Isaac grew up in Montreal, learned in Yeshivat Hakotel and Yeshiva University, graduating with a degree in Accounting. Isaac is in the RIETS Smicha program while working as an accountant at Deloitte, and lives in Washington Heights with his wife, Shayna. Originally from Toronto, Shayna went to U of T and Touro, graduating with a degree in Jewish Studies. She works at the Sephardic Academy of Manhattan.



Mishkan Avraham Yitzy and Eliana Tanner

Eliana studies at YU's Graduate Program in Advanced Talmudic Studies. She holds a BA in Biology with a minor in Jewish Studies from UPENN, following her impactful year at Migdal Oz. Yitzy studies at YU's Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, while serving as the Rabbinic Intern at Shaare Tefillah in Teaneck, NJ and as a Sacks Research Scholar. He received his undergraduate and graduate degrees in Physics from UPENN, after spending 3 years learning at Yeshivat Har Etzion.



Or Chaim Minyan Brian and Haviva Chernigoff

Haviva is the Program Coordinator for the Office of Torah and Spiritual Life at Stern College for Women, and the Program Coordinator for GPATS. Haviva holds a B.Sc in Strategy and Entrepreneurship from YU's Sy Syms School of Business. Brian is a fellow in the Wexner Kollel Elyon at RIETS, and also serves as the Rabbinic Intern at Mount Sinai Jewish Center in Washington Heights. He grew up in Queens, studied at Yeshivat Kerem b'Yavneh, earned his BA from YU and an MA in Medieval Jewish History from the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies.



Shaarei Shomayim Al and Estee Benoliel

Originally from Seattle, Al is a semicha student at RIETS and is studying toward a Master's in Jewish History at Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies. Estee is from Denver and is a Master's student at GPATS. They both love to learn and teach, and they are looking forward to visiting Toronto!

Sponsorship Opportunities Available | info@torontotorah.com



YOUR BEIT MIDRASH

Rosh Beit Midrash
Rabbi Yehuda Mann
ymann@torontotorah.com

Maggidei Shiur Rabbi Ezer Diena · Rabbi Ori Ezra · Mrs. Aviya Ezra · Rabbi Josh Gutenberg · Rabbi Shaanan Scherer · Rabbi Chaim Singer · Mrs. Rifka Sonenberg · Rabbi Shmaya Hendel · Rabbi Aviad Pituchay-Chotam · Rabbi Jeff Turtel · Rabbi Ami Yunger