

# Toronto Torah

**Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov**

Parshat Bo

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**This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Golda Brown and Harry Krakowsky  
for the yahrtzeit of Harry's father, Joe Krakowsky ז"ל, יוסף בן משה ז"ל**

## Constant Development

**Rabbi Yedidya Noiman**

*In honour of  
the North American Conference  
of Torah MiTzion,  
this week's column is written by  
Rosh Kollel Yedidya Noiman  
Kollel Torah MiTzion, Montreal*

This week's parshah highlights the first and famous mitzvot of sanctifying the moon and regarding Nisan as the first month in the Jewish calendar. This passage is also known as Parshat HaChodesh, one of the four parshiyot we read from the beginning of Adar through Pesach. Given the understanding that each of the four has importance and significance, we should seek the messages of this portion which are the basis for the obligation to read it on the verge of Nisan.

### Mitzvah #1: Sanctifying the Moon

The S'fat Emet (the second Gerrer Rebbe) teaches that the first mitzvah, sanctifying the moon, symbolizes a Jewish perspective on nature. The moon, appearing and disappearing consistently every month, embodies the notion that even under the strict "laws of nature" there can be development and progress. Unlike other philosophies, Judaism views the laws of nature as flexible, since they are always generated by Hashem. We understand that nature's might is not a competitor, nor is it a replacement for, Hashem's role in the world.

Every morning, during Shacharit, we say that G-d, "in His goodness continually renews the work of Creation, day after day." "Continually renews," meaning that every new day is an expression of Hashem's kindness

and should not be taken for granted. We recognize that even our very basic existence is a gift from Hashem, who chooses again and again to bring life to our world. Accepting this fact enables us to handle life's constant demands to improve, and to find happiness in the challenge this presents.

### Mitzvah #2: Nisan is Our First Month

The S'fat Emet understands the second mitzvah of Parshat HaChodesh, establishing Nisan as the first month for the calendar of every Jew, as expanding the concept of constant growth to another arena: our own lives. Am Yisrael (the Jewish nation) should live with the idea that its presence isn't only an unchanging existence. Connecting our national destiny to the moon is meant to make us embrace the reality of constant renewal. Am Yisrael as a nation should understand that there are always many ups and downs, and stability is not granted. Our fate is linked to this tradition of improvement and development and constant challenge.

This acceptance of change might be the reason why we, as a nation, feel comfortable with the vital and constantly expanding world of Torah study. Generation after generation, we continue the mission of strengthening the connection between Hashem and the world by revealing new dimensions in the currently existing Torah. The oral part of the Torah, in particular, is based firmly on the traits of our nation, and this may be why it has succeeded to thrive for so many years, since we received it at Mount Sinai.

### Applying the Value of Change

Holding this characteristic of change and growth in our DNA, Am Yisrael has the ability and the obligation to show the way to other nations, and in this way, expand the notion of constant growth even further. Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook stated (*Ma'amarei HaRa'ayah*) that 'The exodus from Egypt will forever be the spring of all nations, and not only the beginning of our nation.' This means that our existence and way of life has an immediate impact on the world. Am Yisrael carries this torch proudly, and is a role model for all. Am Yisrael's stories and values continue to inspire the world by suggesting the possibility of redemption even in the midst of tragedy.

This year we are celebrating the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Medinat Yisrael, and it seems that the concepts of change and improvement are still very relevant. As a state we are constantly challenged to improvise and re-invent, and somehow we manage to pull it off. One could argue that this happens by accident, but it seems that this is not the case. The story of our country is simply following the deepest characteristic of our holy nation. At its heart, our nation is connected to an unlimited spirit that pushes us to grow and grow, enabling us to be creative and optimistic no matter what challenges we face.

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## OUR BEIT MIDRASH

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הורשתם את הארץ וישבתם בה (במדבר לו)

Marking the State of Israel's 70<sup>th</sup> Year!

### Israeli Landmarks: The Underground Synagogue

Yaron Perez

In 1904, the Sephardic community in Jerusalem purchased an area along Derech Yafo; this area is now the part of Yafo Street flanking Machaneh Yehudah. They built a large orphanage on the site. During World War I, the German Army commandeered the structure for a command post, which they abandoned at war's end.

"Unity of Israel" was a religious movement within Zeev Jabotinsky's Revisionist Zionist movement. In 1937, they established a synagogue in a school in central Jerusalem; in 1946, after several moves, the synagogue came to rest in the building which had housed an orphanage.

The founders and members of this synagogue were largely fighters from the Irgun ("Etsel") and Lechi, so that the synagogue was named, "The Underground Synagogue". The pious Rabbi Aryeh Levin, who took upon himself to look after the physical and spiritual needs of the underground fighters, volunteered as the synagogue's Rabbi.

The synagogue's Aron Kodesh (Ark) was built above a space used to hide anti-British pamphlets. One of the Torah scrolls was written in Egypt in memory of Lechi fighters Eliyahu Hakim and Eliyahu Beit Zuri, who were executed by Egyptian authorities in 1945. The Torah eventually ended up in a synagogue in Montreal, Beth Ora. In 1982, in an official ceremony involving Chief Rabbis Rabbi Shlomo Goren and Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, as well as then-Foreign Minister (and former Lechi fighter) Yitzhak Shamir, the Torah was donated to the Underground Synagogue. The bimah is decorated with symbols of the Irgun, Lechi, Brit haChashmonaim [see Toronto Torah for Vaera 5778], and other organizations.

On the north wall of the synagogue, a giant memorial board hangs. The top line memorializes leaders of the movement - Zeev Jabotinsky, Irgun commander David Raziell, Lechi commander Avraham Stern, and more. Below them appear the names of twelve men who were executed by the

government - 9 Irgun fighters, and 3 Lechi fighters. Below them appear the names of all 497 fallen Irgun and Lechi fighters. In 1992, after the death of Prime Minister (and former Irgun commander) Menachem Begin, a memorial board for him and for his wife Aliza was placed in the synagogue.

For many years, the synagogue was run by Yosef Wittelson, a former Irgun fighter, as requested by Rabbi Aryeh Levin before his passing. More recently, a younger generation has begun to fill the synagogue, among the older regulars. Rabbi Benji Levin, grandson of Rabbi Aryeh Levin, serves as Rabbi, and Eitan Wittelson, son of Yosef Wittelson, is the Gabbai. The synagogue only operates on Shabbat; after Shacharit, there is a kiddush, as well as stories of the fighters and a tour for guests.

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### The Zionist Idea: The Torah of the Land of Israel

Rabbi Jonathan Ziring

While Torah can be studied and practiced both in and out of Israel, many sources discuss the uniqueness of *Torat Eretz Yisrael* - the Torah of the Land of Israel. (For a collection, see: <http://www.yesmalot.co.il/torat-il/mekorot.asp>) A midrash (Bereshit Rabbah 16:4) writes that, "There is no Torah like that of the Land of Israel, and no wisdom like that of the Land of Israel." The Talmud (Bava Metzia 85a) records that when Rabbi Zeira moved from Bavel to Israel, he prayed that he would forget the Torah he had learned in Bavel. He also attributed some of his changed opinions to the insights he gained when he moved to Israel where "the air makes one wise" (Bava Batra 158a). What is unique about the Torah of Israel?

Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook discussed this in many articles, arguing that *Torat Eretz Yisrael* should be more influenced by prophecy, mysticism, and aggadic (non-legal) concepts. He thought it should focus on the nation more than on the individual, and on clear legal argumentation more than theoretical analysis. He specifically called on people to embrace this approach to Torah study.

While Rabbi Avraham Kook's son, Rabbi Tzvi Yehudah Kook, also discussed this concept of *Torat Eretz Yisrael*, he did not engage in it practically, and he opposed the incorporation of aggadic material into legal discussions. Many of his students, therefore, focus on more classical modes of learning.

There have been several attempts to develop brands of *Torat Eretz Yisrael* based on Rabbi Avraham Kook's ideas:

- Some, such as Rabbi Yehoshua Weitzman, have tried to understand legal passages by incorporating non-legal material, such as the ethical and narrative parts of Talmud, mystical passages from the Zohar, and philosophical ideas from Rabbi Kook and other works.
- Some, such as Rabbi Yuval Sherlow, focus on "prophetic Torah", by which they mean inclusion of the spirit of the law in discussions about the letter of the law.
- Others, such as Rabbi She'ar Yashuv HaKohen and *Machon HaYerushalmi - Talmud shel Eretz Yisrael* (The Jerusalem Institute - the Talmud of Israel), have increased study of the Talmud Yerushalmi, which was written in Israel, in addition to the Talmud Bavli.

Some, such as my late teacher, Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein, opposed any attempt to change the nature of Torah study in the land of Israel. Others have specifically opposed advocating for halachic innovations due to these new methodologies. Often, however, the phrase *Torat Eretz Yisrael* is simply used to describe the Torah thought that emerges from the Religious Zionist community.

One thing is clear. The presence of a vibrant Torah culture in Israel, debating the best way to learn and practice Torah, expresses the prophetic dream that, "Torah will come from Zion and the word of G-d from Jerusalem." (Yeshayah 2:3) Welcome to all of the representatives of the Torah mi'Tzion Kollelim who have come to share their Torah in Toronto this week!

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## Biography

### Rabbi Yehosef Schwarz

Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

Rabbi Yehosef Schwarz was born in 1804 in Bavaria (today Germany); his father, Menachem, was also a rabbi. After finishing his studies at local schools, he moved, at the age of seventeen, to Würzburg, where he learned under Rabbi Avraham Segal Bing, who was a student of the famous Rabbi Nathan Adler. Another well-known student from the same time was Rabbi Yaakov Ettlinger, author of *Aruch L'Ner*. The two together attended the local German university, where Rabbi Yehosef was joined by his brother, Yisrael. After five years of learning history and geography, Rabbi Yehosef was able to print a beautiful map of Eretz Yisrael, one of the first of its kind in the modern era.

However, Rabbi Yehosef was not content to write about the Holy Land from afar; he wanted to feel it with his own hands. In 1832, he left behind his concerned family and began his long journey to the promised land, a journey which was delayed repeatedly for reasons much beyond his control, such as a cholera epidemic.

In the middle of Pesach, 1833, Rabbi Schwarz arrived in Jerusalem. He settled down, married, bought a house, and joined *Kollel Hod*, which supported Jews from the Netherlands and Germany. Schwarz then began a series of journeys and explorations in various parts of the land, to which he devoted about fifteen years. The results of his investigations and researches into the history, geography, geology, and biology of that country have placed him in the front rank of the Land of Israel's explorers and geographers. Interestingly, one of the first of his undertakings was to record from personal observations, made on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, the exact time of sunrise and sunset for every day in the year, for the purpose of determining the proper time for the morning recitation of Shema.

Rabbi Schwarz's most important work is his book *Tevuot Ha'Aretz*, for which he was decorated by the Emperor of Austria. The book has been translated to many languages, including English. Rabbi Yehosef Schwarz's *yahrzeit* will be this Thursday, Shevat 9.

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## Torah and Translation

### Birkat haGomel While En Route

Rabbi Yehosef Schwarz, Divrei Yosef 58

Translated by Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

**שאלה :** איש אחד מעיר הקדש חברון הלך ונסע לעיר הקדש צפת, ועבר דרך עיר הקדש ירושלים, ועמד שם יום או יומיים, אם מחויב לברך ברכת הגומל בכל המקומות שעובר עליהם, אף שלא הגיע עדיין למחוז חפצו: ירושלים, שכס, טבריה, או לא יברך בכל הדרך כי אם עד בואו צפתה.

**תשובה :** חקירה זו כבר הביאו הפוסקים האחרונים, אך לא נמצא הלכה פסוקה בזה...

ולפי עניות דעתי נראה לי להכריע בסייעתא דשמיא בראיה ברורה שלא יוכל לברך כל זמן שלא הגיע למקום חפצו. במסכת מעשרות פרק ב משנה ג: המעלה פירות מן הגליל ליהודה או עולה לירושלים, אוכל מהם עד שהוא מגיע למקום שהוא הולך...

והכוונה: המעלה פירות למקום רחוק, אף שבדרך לן בכל לילה במלון בחצר ובבית, ואף שחצר קובע למעשרות, עם כל זה מותר לו לאכול מן הפירות, לפי שהוא הוחזק בדרך, ודעתו להוליך פירותיו למקום אחר, אין זה נקרא "ראית פני הבית"... כן הדבר דומה בדומה ממש לעניין ברכת הגומל שהולך מיהודה לגליל, שבעוונותינו הרבים כעת הדרכים בחזקת סכנה, בערך תועה במדבר שממון...

ועוד, איך יברך היום על נסו, ויודע שמחר יגיע שנית למקום סכנה, כי לא הגיע עדיין לתכלית מבוקשו, והכרח הוא לו לשום לדרך פעמיו גם למחר ולמחרת. למה הדבר דומה – מי שהיה רחמנא ליצלן חולה מסוכן, ואחר ימים היקל עליו חוליו ונתרפא קצת. ודאי לא יברך עדיין. כי לא ידע אם לא יחזור למחר שנית למדרגת סכנה. כי עדיין לא נתרפא בשלימות. והכרח לו להמתין מלברך עד שנתרפא ממש, וחזר לבריאותו כמאז וכמקדם. כן הדבר שלא יברך ברכת הגומל עד שהגיע למחוז חפצו ויצא בשלימות מהסכנה.

**Question:** A person from the holy city of Chevron traveled to the holy city of Tz'fat, passing via the holy city of Jerusalem, where he stayed for a day or two. Must he recite *Birkat haGomel* in every place he visits, even as he has not yet arrived at his destination - Jerusalem, Shechem, Tiveria - or should he not recite the blessing on the road, until he arrives in Tz'fat?

**Answer:** Recent authorities already brought this question, however no definitive verdict was rendered...

In my humble opinion, it seems that with Divine help we can decide with clear proof that one may not recite the blessing as long as he has not reached his destination.

[Preface: One may eat Israeli produce as a snack without tithing it, if the produce has not yet been fully processed or brought into his dwelling. The nuances of this rule are beyond this column.] In Mishnah Maasrot 2:3: "One who takes produce from Galil to Judea, or ascends to Jerusalem, may eat from it until he reaches his destination. The same applies to his return, etc."... This means: When one takes produce to a faraway place, even if he sleeps each night at an inn, in a yard or in a house – and even though entering a yard normally triggers an obligation to tithe – nonetheless, the traveler is allowed to continue eating from the produce [without tithing], because he is still on the road, and his intention is to bring the produce somewhere else. This is not called "seeing the inside of the house"... So, too, this is similar to the case of *Birkat HaGomel* for one who travels from Judea to the Gallil, as due to our many sins, roads are considered dangerous, the equal of wandering in a desolate wilderness...

Furthermore, how could he bless today for his miracle [of safety], knowing that tomorrow he will again enter a place of danger, for he has not yet reached his destination, and he must take to the road tomorrow and the day after. This is like a sick person, G-d save us, whose illness has eased after some days and who is somewhat cured. For sure, he cannot bless yet, for he does not know that he

will not return to a state of danger the next day. For he is not completely cured yet. He must wait, and bless only when his health is fully restored as it always was. Likewise, he may not recite *Birkat HaGomel* until he reaches his destination and completely removes himself from danger.

## Weekly Highlights: Jan. 20 — Jan. 26 / 4 Shevat — 10 Shevat

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
שבת Jan. 19-20	<b>Torah MiTzion North American Conference!</b>			
After Hashkamah	Adam Friedmann	Parshah Analysis	Clanton Park	
After musaf	<b>Torah MiTzion North American Conference, with Mizrahi Canada</b> <b>Panel Discussion: North American Jewry: Report from the Field</b> <b>At Shaarei Shomayim</b> <b>Featuring: R' Refael Azugi, Memphis; R' Yedidya Noiman, Montreal;</b> <b>Mrs. Ginat Midler, St. Louis; R' Itiel Oron, Washington DC; R' Mordechai Torczyner, Toronto</b> <b>Moderated by : Rabbi Chaim Strauchler</b>			
After minchah	R' Aaron Greenberg	Gemara Avodah Zarah	BAYT	<b>Freedman Library</b>
Motzaei, 6:30 PM	Yaron Perez	Parent-Child Learning	Shaarei Shomayim	
Motzaei, 7:30 PM	<b>Torah MiTzion North American Conference, with Mizrahi Canada</b> <b>Screening of "The Little Dictator", a Ma'aleh Production</b> <b>At Yeshivat Or Chaim</b> <b>Free of Charge</b>			
<b>Sun. Jan. 21</b>				
8:45 AM	<b>R' Mordechai Torczyner</b>	<b>Medical Halachah: Aiding an Abortion</b>	<b>BAYT Simcha Suite</b>	<b>CME available; laypeople available</b>
8:45 AM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Responsa	BAYT	<b>Not this week</b>
10:00 AM	<b>Mrs. Hasida Pinchuk</b> <b>R' Yehoshua Weber</b>	Redemption Personal & National Life After Death in The Torah	<b>Aish Thornhill Community Shul</b>	<b>For women; refreshments served</b>
<b>Mon. Jan. 22</b>				
8:30 PM	<b>R' Jonathan Ziring</b>	<b>Hair and Halachah 3: Peiot and Beards</b>	<b>Shomrai Shabbos, Upstairs</b>	<b>For men</b>
8:40 PM	<b>R' Mordechai Torczyner</b>	<b>Bnei Akiva MNL</b>	<b>Bnai Torah</b>	
<b>Tue. Jan. 23</b>				
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Nechemiah	Shaarei Shomayim	
7:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Yehoshua: Rebound	129 Theodore Pl.	<b>For men</b>
<b>Wed. Jan. 24</b>				
10:00 AM	<b>R' Mordechai Torczyner</b>	<b>Game of Thrones: Persia Week 3: Achashverosh</b>	<b>Beth Emeth</b>	<b>Fee. Register at: <a href="http://torontotorah.com/persia">torontotorah.com/persia</a></b>
2:30 PM	R' Jonathan Ziring	Exploring Bamidbar	32 Timberlane Ave.	<b>For women</b>
8:00 PM	Adam Friedmann	Why do we do that?	Shaarei Tefillah	
8:00 PM	Yaron Perez	הפרשה ואני	Shaarei Shomayim	<b>Hebrew</b>
<b>Thu. Jan. 25</b>				
1:30 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Shoftim: Like S'dom?	49 Michael Ct.	<b>For women</b>
<b>Fri. Dec. 26</b>				
10:30 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Melachot of Shabbat	Yeshivat Or Chaim	<b>Advanced</b>
<b>For University Men, at Yeshivat Or Chaim</b> <b>11:00 AM Sunday, Rabbi Jonathn Ziring, Contemporary Halachah: Beards and Peiot</b> <b>8:30 AM Monday, Rabbi Jonathan Ziring, Nefesh haChaim</b> <b>8:30 AM Friday, Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, The Book of Yeshayah</b> <b>For University Women, at Ulpanat Orot</b> <b>9:30-11:30 AM Monday, Mrs. Elliezra Perez, From Rachel Imeinu to Racheli Frenkel</b> <b>9:30-11:30 AM Tuesday, Mrs. Ora Ziring, Shabbat</b> <b>9:30-11:30 AM Wednesday, Mrs. Ora Ziring, Contemporary Halachah</b> <b>9:30-11:30 AM Thursday, Mrs. Elliezra Perez, Parshah in the Eyes of Chassidut</b>				