

# Toronto Torah

## Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshiyot Chukat-Balak

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This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Rabbi Dr. Moshe & Esty Yeres on the yahrzeit of their daughter Batsheva a"h (9 Tammuz) לעילוי נשמת בת שבע בלימה בת הרב משה יוסף הלוי ואסתר and the yahrtzeit of Rabbi Yeres' mother Shaindel Yeres a"h (15 Tammuz) לעילוי נשמת חיה שיינדל בת אלכסנדר הלוי and in honour of their grandson Pini Yeres graduating from Yeshivas Eitz Chaim as valedictorian

### In and Out of the Zone

### Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

For decades, sports psychologists have used the term "the Zone" to describe a state in which athletes are capable of peak performance. As Dr. Shane Murphy explained it, "the Zone" is a "special place where performance is exceptional and consistent, automatic and flowing. An athlete is able to ignore all the pressures and let his or her body deliver the performance that has been learned so well." (*The Achievement Zone*, Putnam 1996, pg. 4; and see Dr. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, Harper Collins 1990)

We may (very loosely) borrow the "Zone" concept to understand how Moshe Rabbeinu could miraculously bring water from a stone. Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra wrote, "Know that when a piece of the Whole is familiar with the Whole of which it is a part, it adheres to the greater Whole, and it is capable of creating new wonders and miracles." (Ibn Ezra to Bamidbar 20:8) In other words, Moshe's close attachment to Hashem enabled him to tap into supernatural abilities.

This description of Moshe echoes an observation by Rabbi Meir Simchah of Dvinsk. At Har Sinai, Hashem promised Moshe that the Jews would "believe in you forever." Rav Meir Simchah asked: How could Hashem know that Moshe would never falter? And he explained, "Hashem removed free choice from Moshe in entirety, such that he remained compelled [to obey], like a *malach*." Moshe was completely

attached to Hashem. (*Meshech Chochmah*, Introduction to Shemot, and see Rambam, *Shemonah Perakim* #7, and *Likutei Amarim Tanya* Chapter 10)

Moshe's exclusive attachment to Hashem is manifest across the Torah. Moshe wears a veil after communing with Hashem, because the nation cannot bear his radiance. (Shemot 34:33-35) The Talmud records that Moshe separated from his wife Tziporah to be exclusively available for Hashem. (Shabbat 87a) And a midrash claims that Betzalel had a greater understanding than Moshe of how to create the Mishkan, because he was more grounded in this world. (Berachot 55a, as explained in *Gur Aryeh* to Shemot 38:22)

In truth, this sort of "Zone" experience is dangerous. Given the importance of social relationships and social mitzvot within Judaism, separating from the community could be religiously catastrophic. Indeed, a midrash describes Hashem criticizing Moshe when he wanted to dismiss the women's contributions of their mirrors as materials for the Mishkan; in Moshe's eyes the mirrors were repellent, but to Hashem they represented greatness. (Tanchuma Pekudei 9) But for Moshe, this was the ideal state; he succeeded in harmonizing his attachment to Hashem with his love and care for the Jewish nation.

But given Moshe's total attachment to Hashem, how did he make the mistake of striking the stone instead of speaking to it? Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra attrib-

utes it to emotion, which disrupted Moshe's closeness to Hashem and took him out of "the Zone". The nation assembled upon Moshe and Aharon, taking a position of aggression. (Bamidbar 20:2, and see Ibn Ezra to Bamidbar 17:7) Moshe and Aharon then went to the tent of Meeting "from before the community," and Ibn Ezra explains that they were fleeing, "like fugitives." (ibid. 20:6) And so Ibn Ezra explained that "they did not speak [to the stone], due to the aggression of the nation against Moshe. And so the portion split off [from the Whole]." Moshe fell away from the Whole, and out of the Zone.

This is why Moshe could not lead the Jews into Eretz Yisrael; he no longer lived in a state of constant, consummate attachment to Hashem. And so leadership switched to Yehoshua, whose reputation was built on his constant total devotion, the fact that he **never** left the Tent. (Shemot 33:11)

This perspective on Moshe is daunting and inspiring. Until the end of his term, Moshe reached a level at which he could act in tandem with the Creator of Heaven and Earth! Judaism does not posit a religion in which we are passive subjects cowering in a frightening universe. The Jew must see herself as a literal partner in Creation, capable of partnering with Hashem. We are not Moshe, but we can approach the Zone. The recipe is for us to do as Moshe did, and as Yehoshua did, exerting our utmost effort to attach ourselves to the Divine. When we do that, miracles may follow.

#### OUR BEIT MIDRASH

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**Summary**

This chapter continues prophecies of consolation. The first six verses record that Jerusalem and the Jews will no longer be subject to their enemies.

Jerusalem is personified and told to dress in her glorious clothes as she will no longer be subject to enemies. She is told to shake off her dust and take off the chains on her neck. The Jews were not bought when they were taken away into exile, and thus they need not pay to return to freedom. (52:1-3)

G-d contrasts the slavery in Egypt with the oppression under Assyria. In the former case, at least the Jews went there to live and it later became slavery. The Assyrian oppression had no such origin story. G-d then commits that He will save them because His nation is suffering for no reason, and by saving them, the Jews will know G-d's Name. (4-6)

Jerusalem is told to begin to sing and celebrate because G-d is returning to His city. When he does, the whole world will see G-d's salvation. (7-10)

The Jews are told not to touch anything

impure when they return to Jerusalem, because G-d will come with them, and the Jews will need to bring the vessels of the Beit haMikdash. And since G-d will be with them, they will not need to rush. (11-12)

The Jews, while they were degraded during the exile, will be returned with honor. The nations who see this will be shocked. (13-15)

**Insight**

This chapter is part of the Haftorah for Parshat Shoftim. That Haftorah includes three double words that begin three sections:

- 1) The previous chapter (51:12) had a double *anochi* ("I") which spoke about the Jews' fear of their enemies and G-d's ability to defeat them.
- 2) The second unit (51:17) has a double *hitoriri* (awake) where the past of the Jews' suffering is recorded, as well as G-d's war against their enemies to save the Jews.
- 3) Our chapter begins (52:1) with the double word *uri* (awake) and then mentions not just the Jews' enemies in general, but specifies Egypt and Assyria.

**Rabbi Mosheh Lichtenstein** notes that this pattern can be used to trace the development of the prophecies of consolation. Each doubling is used for emphasis. Furthermore, this chapter offers the most specific prediction and thus develops the consolation from generalities to concrete visions for the redemption. And third, the doubles develop a message regarding how the Jews should deal with their fear.

The primary issue in this section is not the suffering itself but the fear it induced. From that perspective, Rabbi Lichtenstein suggests that the first unit focused on then ramifications of the exile, not the destruction itself. The second unit focuses on the destruction and defeat that came with it. The third unit, captured in our chapter, focuses on the resolution of the "spiritual and emotional problems" that were captured in the earlier sections.

[For more on the doubles in Yeshayahu, see the Tanach column in **last week's Toronto Torah.**]

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**Siddur Insights: The Havineinu Prayer**

**Rabbi Adam Friedmann**

A mishnah (Berachot 4:3) mentions the possibility of reciting a shortened version of Shemoneh Esreih. Following one opinion in the Talmud (Berachot 29a), we conclude that in this shortened version, the middle thirteen blessings are condensed into a single blessing. This blessing is known by its first word, *Havineinu*. The text of the blessing is as follows:

- 1) Grant us understanding, Hashem our G-d, to know Your ways,
- 2) and circumcise our hearts to [be receptive to] Your awe,
- 3) be a Forgiver to us,
- 4) that we may be redeemed
- 5) distance us from pain,
- 6) and satisfy us and cause us to dwell in Your pleasant land,
- 7) and gather the dispersed from the four [corners of the earth],
- 8) and may those who stray from Your opinion be judged,
- 9) and wave Your hand against evil-doers,
- 10) and may the righteous rejoice
- 11) over the rebuilding of Your city and in the restoration of Your Temple,
- 12) and in the flowering pride of David Your servant, and in the preparation of a lamp for the son of Yishai, Your anointed one,
- 13) before we call, may You answer, before we speak may You hear

Blessed are You, Hashem, Who hears prayer.

The numbering above shows how each of the middle thirteen blessings is represented in *Havineinu*. There are marked differences between the full-length blessings in Shemoneh Esreih and their shortened counterparts. Here is a selection:

- In the full-length blessing about wisdom, *Chonein Hada'at*, we ask for wisdom in general. In the shortened we ask spe-

cifically to understand G-d's ways.

- The full-length blessing about repentance, *Harotzeh Beteshuvah*, is likewise shortened into a request to enable us to be awed by G-d.
- The full-length blessing for material success, *Mevarech Hashanim*, is focused on living in the land of Israel.

**Rabbi Eliyahu Lipshitz** suggests that the *Havineinu* blessing is fundamentally about the redemption of the Jewish people. That's why requests for individual or more temporal needs are replaced with more spiritual and historic ones.

The formulation of *Havineinu* gives us an interesting perspective on what the Sages considered to be the most essential themes of daily prayer. But the reformulation of the Shemoneh Esreih also has halachic ramifications. The Talmud (Berachot 29a) and later halachic authorities (Rambam, Laws of Prayer 2:4; Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 110:1) rule that *Havineinu* shouldn't be recited during the winter months. This is because during those months one must include a special prayer for material success (*v'ten tal umatar livrachah*) that isn't included in *Havineinu*. In this case, the broader historical scope of the shortened blessing comes into conflict with other goals of prayer.

At the practical level, the Shulchan Aruch (ibid.) rules that *Havineinu* may only be recited at a time of pressing need when one doesn't have the time or concentration to recite the whole Shemoneh Esreih. The Beirur Halachah (ibid.) supports the common practice to never recite this blessing. However, other authorities, such as **the IDF Rabbinate**, rule that one may recite *Havineinu* in certain cases.

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## Biography

### Rabbi Meir Dan Plotsky

Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

Rabbi Meir Dan Plotzky was born in 5627 (1867). Son of the local Rabbi in Kutno, Poland, and part of a family of Alexander Chassidim, he became known as a Talmudic genius at a young age. He learned from some of the most famous Torah scholars of his generation, among them Rabbi Yisrael Yehosua MiKutno (author of *Yeshuot Malko* on the Shulchan Aruch) and Rabbi Avrohom Bornsztain, author of *Avnei Nezer* and the first Sochatchover Rebbe, about whom he wrote, "He enlightened my eyes to the way to learn our holy Torah, and it was with him that I began to taste its sweetness."

At the age of 15, Rabbi Meir Dan married and moved to Dvohrt. For ten years he was supported by his wife's parents and he continued to learn. At the age of twenty-five he became the Rabbi of Dvohrt, where he stayed for 27 years.

As a prominent Torah scholar, Rabbi Plotzky wrote several books, the most famous of which is *Kli Chemdah*. *Kli Chemdah* discusses the weekly Torah portion from a halachic angle, often suggesting unique points of view. The book became very popular, and remains so to this day.

Rabbi Meir Dan was recognized not only as a great Torah scholar and halachic authority, but also as a community leader. He fought to expose the forgery of the Talmud Yerushalmi on Kodashim (1907), was an active participant in the establishment of Agudat Yisrael in Poland, and later became the head of the Polish Rabbinical Council. In this latter position he aided women whose husbands were missing after World War I.

In 1926, at the age of 60, Rabbi Meir Dan took part in establishing a new central Polish yeshiva, the Warsaw Metivta. For that purpose he took the then-long and wearying journey to America, hoping to raise funds. Upon returning to Poland he fell sick, and passed away on the 6<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, 5688 (1928).

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## Weekly Halachah

### The Blessing Upon an Ice Cream Cone

Idan Rakovsky

As we stand at the threshold of summer, eagerly anticipating the sweet and refreshing taste of ice cream, it is worth exploring the blessing recited before consuming ice cream in a sugar cone.

The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 168:8) explains that if there is a *rekik* – a thin, batter-based layer – with any kind of topping on top of it, the *rekik* is considered secondary to the topping. In such a case, it is sufficient to recite a blessing only on the topping itself. This may apply to the case of ice cream in a sugar cone.

The Magen Avraham (212:6) explains that the reason for that ruling is that the *rekik* serves only as a holder for a more convenient consumption. However, he emphasizes that if the *rekik* is tasty and the person consuming the food desires not only the topping but also the *rekik* itself, they should recite Mezonot.

The Mishnah Berurah (168:45) distinguishes between two scenarios: one where the *rekik* is baked together with the topping, and thus the blessing of "Mezonot" exempts the entire food, and the other scenario where the two layers are prepared separately and combined afterward. An example of the latter case is ice cream in a sugar cone, where a pre-made scoop of ice cream is placed on a pre-made sugar cone. The Mishnah Berurah states that in this case, two blessings are required, one for each component of the food: the blessing of "Mezonot" on the sugar cone and the blessing of "Shehakol" on the topping.

However, there are other authorities (such as Rabbi [Dov Lior](#) and Rabbi Ovadia Yosef in Yabia Omer 7:36) who maintain, based on the words of the Magen Avraham 212:6, that since the purpose of the sugar cone is merely to serve as a convenient holder for the ice cream and that is its sole purpose, it is sufficient to recite the general blessing of "Shehakol" on the ice cream itself and thereby exempt the sugar cone as well.

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## Sefer haChinuch #32

### Melachah on Shabbat

By Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Shemot 20:10 records the command, "You shall not perform any *melachah*" on Shabbat. The word *melachah*, as used in the context of Shabbat, refers to the tasks performed in the Mishkan. (Shabbat 49b; Bava Kama 2a) According to some commentators, it is limited to tasks involved in *creating* the Mishkan, not in its ongoing operation. (Meiri to Shabbat 73a)

All of these tasks, and tasks which have similar purposes or methods, are prohibited on Shabbat, as an outgrowth of the Torah's instruction, "You shall perform no *melachah*." Sefer haChinuch counts this as the Torah's 32<sup>nd</sup> mitzvah.

Our sages have identified many benefits of refraining from performing melachah on Shabbat, including:

- We are meant to spend Shabbat thinking about Hashem's creation of the universe. (Sefer haChinuch #32)
- Shabbat commemorates our freedom from slavery in Egypt. A slave cannot rest; we are given a day of rest to show that Hashem made us into free people. (Sefer haChinuch #32)
- On Shabbat we cease creating in order to recognize that we are not unlimited masters of this world, to manipulate it as we choose. (Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch, Commentary to Shemot 20:10)

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### Shabbat June 30-July 1

After hashkamah R' Yehuda Mann, Halachah from the Parshah, Clanton Park

After minchah R' Mordechai Torczyner, Gemara Ketuvot, BAYT (Milevsky Bais Medrash) (men)

After minchah, Idan Rakovsky, Halachah in the Parshah, Shaarei Tefillah

### Sun. July 2

9:00 AM R' Zev Spitz & R' Yehuda Mann, Semichat Chaver, Clanton Park (men): Hilchot Seudah

### Mon. July 3

8:30 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Halachah, Shomrai Shabbos (men)

### Tues. July 4

1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Kohelet, ZOOM: <http://tiny.cc/weeklymt> *Last Session*

8:30 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Contemporary Halachah, Clanton Park (women)

### Wed. July 5

1 hour before minchah R' Yehuda Mann, Contemporary Halachah, Clanton Park

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### **Sefer haChinuch Mitzvah 32: Performing Melachah on Shabbat Continued from Page 3**

We have said that Shemot 20:10 prohibits performing *melachah*, meaning the tasks performed in the Mishkan. However, the talmudic sage Rabbah contended that the laws of *muktzeh* are also biblical, based on this same verse and Shemot 16:5. (Pesachim 47b)

In practice, almost all authorities contend that *muktzeh* is rabbinic (see Shabbat 123b). However, Rashi (Beitzah 2b *l'tameih*) promoted the idea of a biblical root, in discussing the status of an egg laid on Yom Tov. [See also Sheiltot Beshalach 47, Tosafot Eruvin 38b *amar Rabbah* and Rashba Beitzah 2a *Rabbah l'tameih*.]

Commentators resolve Rashi's idiosyncratic position in three ways:

- 1) Rashi doesn't mean it's actually biblical; he considers *muktzeh* an *asmachta*, meaning that the concept behind the rabbinic law is reflected in the biblical text (Pnei Yehoshua Shabbat 44a);
- 2) Rashi believes that Rabbah views only the most serious form of *muktzeh*, the category of items which are created on that Shabbat, as biblical (Pnei Yehoshua Beitzah 2a);
- 3) Rashi believes that eating *muktzeh* is biblically prohibited, but handling it is rabbinic. (Chatam Sofer, Introduction to Beitzah)

Although we rule that *muktzeh* is rabbinic, Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein (Aruch haShulchan Orach Chaim 308:4-5) argued that it fulfills a biblical mandate of *shabbaton*, protecting the character of Shabbat as a day when we halt our weekday activities.

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