

Toronto Torah

Parshat Bereshit

Vol. I

Marcheshvan- A Month of Renewal

~Netanel Javasky~

Every four or five weeks, we are afforded the opportunity to bless the upcoming Jewish month and to contemplate its inherent message. At times the Chazan may even sing a tune corresponding to the special days ahead. However, as we stand in shul this week and bless the month of Marcheshvan our minds may draw a blank. What does this month offer? Is there anything at all that we can anticipate in this Jewish month, or must we accept the fact that this month holds nothing out of the ordinary, and wait for Kislev and its Chanukah festivities to arrive?

Unfortunately, seeking out special days may cause us to forget the opportunities and the underlying theme of this special month of Marcheshvan: Renewal.

A mishnah (Taanit 2:2)

states that in Eretz Yisrael we begin asking Hashem for rain near the beginning of Marcheshvan. Rain, which ensures the world's continued survival, begins to fall in this month. Additionally, the Mabul which started in Marcheshvan also ended in this month, and it was then that Noach and his family had the opportunity to rebuild the world properly.

This theme of renewal resonates for us at this time of year, every year. During Elul and the Yamim Noraim, we re-think and re-shape our lives, and design approaches to improvement. Immediately after this we are rushed into Sukkot; although we may gain further inspiration from the Sukkot holiday, we lack the opportunity

to implement our High Holiday resolutions. Finally, Marcheshvan arrives with no other specific Avodah, and now we are afforded the chance to implement our "game plan." Rather than light candles or eat matzah, we focus on the day-to-day of living a life devoted to serving Hashem.

Melachim I (6:38) says that the Beit HaMikdash was prepared in the month of Marcheshvan, but not erected until the following Tishrei. A midrash (Yalkut Shimoni) says that just as the month of Kislev, when the Mishkan was completed but not erected, was granted the honour of hosting the rededication of the Beit HaMikdash in the days of the Chashmonaim, so the month of Marcheshvan will be granted recompense for its loss. The Bnei Yissaschar clarified that Marcheshvan will be rewarded with the building of the third Beit HaMikdash.

This also stresses the Marcheshvan theme of renewal; Marcheshvan will see the construction of a Beit HaMikdash that will endure forever. May we merit to appreciate this month of renewal, and may Hashem renew the days of old with the construction of the eternal Beit HaMikdash.

Parsha Questions

-Meir Lipschitz

- 1) **Why does the Torah begin with Creation rather than with the mitzvot? (Rashi Bereishit 1:1, Ramban Bereishit 1:1)**
- 2) **From what type of tree did Chavah and Adam eat? (Sanhedrin 70a-b, Berachot 40a, Bereishit Rabbah 15:7)**
- 3) **Why isn't פרו ורבו considered one of the seven מצוות בני נח? (Sanhedrin 59a-b, Minchat Chinuch 1 "ועיין")**

Bereishit: The Origin of Human Dignity

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

More than twenty years ago, a family celebrated a bar mitzvah at a shul in Riverdale, New York. They wanted to honor a certain man with an aliyah, but this man had recently become crippled and could not ascend to the Torah. When the rabbi told the man he could be lifted on to the bimah, the man refused, saying, "When I come to the Torah, I will come on my own, with dignity, or not at all."

This anecdote illustrates a bedrock principle of our Jewish and social lives: If we fail to provide human dignity then we keep people from our Torah, sever relationships, and undermine institutions. On the other hand, offering this most basic respect enables people to appreciate our Torah, unites families and catalyzes friendships, and encourages the growth of our communal institutions.

Judaism teaches us the basics of human dignity right at the start of Creation, in describing the way

HaShem designed Adam and Chavah. HaShem created them בצלם אלוקים "in the image of G-d." We believe that G-d doesn't have an image; rather, as Rashi explains, "the image of G-d" means "the image G-d chose specially for humanity." Human beings, with our divinely granted design, are categorically different from all other creations; regardless of our phenotypical diversity, we are created in this special צלם this special image.

This unique Divine design mandates that we accord dignity to all human beings. The Gemara titles that basic dignity "כבוד הבריות", and extends it to all human beings - Jew and non-Jew, man and woman, scholarly and less learned. We take this כבוד הבריות imperative so far that it even overrides rabbinic law in certain circumstances.

Numerous biblical laws also teach us of the emphasis G-d places upon human dignity:

- "לא תונו איש את עמיתו" One man may not pain his friend.
- "לא תלך רכיל בעמך" Do not pass tales about people.
- "העבט תעביטנו די מחסורי" Enable needy people to live at the standard to which they had once been accustomed.
- "העבט תעביטנו" Provide jobs and loans, rather than straight tzedakah, wherever possible.

The Netziv accentuated the importance of כבוד הבריות in his introduction to Bereishit, in which he wrote that Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov were praised especially as "שרים" "straight" people, saying, "Aside from the fact that they were maximally righteous, pious and committed to serving G-d, they were also שרים", meaning that they acted with the nations of the world, even worshippers of ugly idolatry, with love, and with concern for their benefit."

This is particularly important in the realm of חסד, of generosity toward others. One feature of our Divine design is that a fully self-sufficient צלם אלוקים does not exist; we all thrive with others' assistance. Our responsibility as Jews, as a community and as individuals, is to seek opportunities to offer dignified help - to assist, to welcome, to enfranchise, to include. May we meet this responsibility in the year ahead.

The 613 Mitzvot – Mitzvah 1: Procreation

The first Mitzvah in the Torah is that of bearing children, manifested in G-d's instructions and berachot to Adam and Chavah, as well as to Noach. The *Sefer haChinuch* explains that one reason for this mitzvah is G-d's desire that the world be populated.

It is generally understood that this mitzvah is fulfilled when parents biologically produce one boy and one girl (*Yevamot 61b-62a, Mishneh Torah Hilchot Ishut*

15:4, Shulchan Aruch Even haEzer 1:5), but some authorities suggest that adoption may also fulfill this obligation. Writing in the 19th century, Rav Shlomo Kluger (*Chachmat Shlomo to Even haEzer 1:1*) pointed out that we are taught, "One who raises an orphan is considered as though he had birthed the orphan." He concluded that adoption is considered a partial, and perhaps even complete, fulfillment of this mitzvah of procreation.

Torah in Translation

Shaagat Aryeh 36
Writing a Sefer Torah Today
-Russell Levy-

[In two previous sections, the Sha'agat Aryeh discussed our obligation to write a personal Sefer Torah. This is a translation of part of his third section on the topic. This is not intended as halachic advice, and it is not a comprehensive presentation. For further study, you might see Sefer HaChinuch Mitzvah 613.]

The Tur wrote that the mitzvah of writing a personal Sefer Torah applied only to earlier generations (Yoreh Deah 270):

My father, the Rosh, wrote that this only applied in the previous generations when they learned from the Sifrei Torah that they wrote. Today, though, we keep our Sifrei Torah in the Aron Kodesh for the weekly readings, and so each person has an obligation to write his own chumash, mishnah, gemara and their commentaries, and to study them with his children. This mitzvah to write a Torah is only in order to learn from it...

The Beit Yosef questioned this logic, as it seems the Rosh conflated the mitzvah of writing a Sefer Torah with the mitzvah of Talmud Torah. Instead of justifying our practice of keeping the Sifrei Torah in the Aron Kodesh, we should, in fact, study from those Sifrei Torah!

This [the logic of the Beit Yosef] seems correct. If the sole reason for the mitzvah were to learn from the Sefer Torah, then the means of acquisition would not matter, but the Gemara states, (Sanhedrin 21b), “Even though one inherited a Sefer Torah, he must still write his own.” This does not fit with Rosh’s understanding, as one is able to learn

R’ Aryeh Leib ben Asher Ginzburg

- The Shaagat Aryeh-

-Russell Levy-

R’ Aryeh Leib ben Asher Ginzburg was born in Lithuania circa 5460, and was one of the leading Torah luminaries of his time. He was the Rav of many cities, including Pinsk, Volozhin, and Metz, where he died on the fifteenth of Tamuz, 5545. He also started a yeshiva in Minsk. He also spent many years wandering from town to town with his wife in abject poverty. His chief work is the Shaagat Aryeh, which is set up as a series of responsa. He also wrote commentaries on certain tractates of Seder Moed, under the titles “Turei Even” and “Gevurat Ari.”

R’ Aryeh Leib taught R’ Chaim Volozhiner, the eventual founder of the Volozhin Yeshiva. R’ Chaim

was greatly influenced by his method of study. R’ Aryeh Leib had an amazing memory, and rarely required the use of sefarim; the Vilna Gaon related that the Sha’agat Aryeh “was able to relate to all of Shas in his head in an hour.”

One day, R’ Aryeh Leib went to research a source in a sefer and the entire bookcase fell upon him. After being carried to a bed, he opened his eyes and said that the sefarim of all the rabbanim with whom he had disagreed had fallen on him, and that he had asked for forgiveness from each one. Only one, R’ Mordechai, the author of the Levush, did not forgive him - and so he now needed to depart from this world. With that declaration, R’ Aryeh Leib passed on.

from such a Torah!

Based on this Gemara, we can reject the opinion of the Shach, which is also brought in the Perishah:

This mitzvah only applied when they learned b’al peh (verbally, without books) and they did not write anything down save for the Sefer Torah, and so it was needed for study. However, since today we are allowed to write down Torah sheb’al peh (the Verbal Torah), we have no reason to degrade our Sifrei Torah by using them for study when we have many other options available.

This logic may be rejected; according to this logic, we should be able to fulfill this mitzvah through an inherited Torah.

However, there is a separate reason

why this mitzvah does not apply today. Neither we, nor the Amora'im, were experts in *chaseirot v’yeterot* [scriptural anomalies] (c.f. Kiddushin 30a). Even when the Gemara in Sanhedrin declared that we could not fulfill our obligation with an inherited Torah and that one must write his own, this was not because the mitzvah applied then; it was only teaching the law, similar to the way it taught the laws of the Temple.

Nevertheless, there is still a *mitzvah d’rabbanan* (rabbinic enactment) instructing us to write a Torah today, lest the Torah be forgotten. Similarly, we are permitted to write down *Torah sheb’al peh* today. It is only fitting to write the Chumash in the form of the Sefer Torah. For this reason, one who inherits a Torah today need not write another one.

You are cordially invited to the launch of the
Yeshiva University Torah miTzion
 Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Sunday,
 October 25, 2009
 8:30 am

BAYT
 613 Clark Avenue West

Attendance at the launch is open to
 the community and FREE of charge.

For more information, or to RSVP,
 please contact Yehuda Gelberger
 at 416.781.1777, or email
 ygelberger@TorontoTorah.com,
 or fax to 416.783.9854.

Program

8:30 AM Breakfast & Registration
 9:00 AM Introductory Remarks
 Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner
 9:10 AM Torah Buffet - Session 1
 9:45 AM Torah Buffet - Session 2
 10:30 AM Torah Buffet - Session 3
 11:15 AM Keynote Address - Rabbi Herschel Schachter
*Rosh Yeshiva, RIETS and the RIETS' Maros and Adina Katz Kollel (Institute for Advanced
 Research in Rabbinics); Nathan and Vivian Fink Distinguished Professor of Talmud*
Honest Judaism: Our Imperative for Ethical Living



Session Options

| Category | Title | Speaker |
|---------------|--|---------------------------|
| Gemara b'lyun | Was Avraham a Jew? | Rabbi Azarya Berzon |
| Halachah | Why do details matter? | Netanel Javasky |
| Machshavah | Aveirah LISHmah: Sinning for G-d | Russell Levy |
| Parshah | Babel's Rebellion and its Towering Ramifications | Meir Lipschitz |
| Ethics | A Physician's Obligation to Heal | Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner |
| Tanach | The Forgiveness of King David (in Hebrew) | Itamar Zolberg |

Launch Event Committee:

Rabbi Scot Berman • Rabbi Glenn Black • Rabbi Kenneth Brander • Esty Edell • Joseph Edell • Rabbi Boaz Genut
 Jack Kahn • David Koschitzky • Sarena Koschitzky • Saul Koschitzky • George Kuhl • Vivian Kuhl • Michael Lax
 Mo Lidsky • Alan Litwack • Jeremy Magence • Shawna Magence • Karen Meyer • Yisroel Dov Meyer • Warren Newfield
 Zale Newman • Steve Roth • Rabbi Meir Rosenberg • Jerry Rosenfield • Kurt Rothschild • Eli Rubinstein
 Renée Rubinstein • Roz Schultz • Phil Schwartz • Norman Winter • Larry Zeifman • Sue Zeifman



Yeshiva University Torah miTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Rosh Chodesh Program for Women invites you to

DANCE&LEARN

Learn Torah and Israeli Dancing

Sunday, Oct 18, 8:00 p.m. at Or Chaim 159 Almore Ave

RSVP: Naomi Zolberg 647-521-6611 (cell)

Cost: \$5.00