בס"ד

# Toronto Torah

## Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Vayeshev | 23 Kislev, 5782/November 27, 2021 | Vol. 13 Num. 13 (#514)

**This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Robbie and Brian Schwartz in memory of Brian's parents, Frank and Lyla Schwartz, Ephraim ben Noach z"l and Masha Leah bat Ze'ev z"l**

**This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by the loving grandchildren of Howard Kleinberg z"l, in commemoration of his upcoming first yahrzeit on the 24th of Kislev**

## Who Was That Man?

**Rabbi Jared Anstandig**

As Yosef wanders around the city of Shechem looking for his brothers, the Torah tells that an anonymous individual finds him. When asked what he is looking for, Yosef responds that he is looking for his brothers, and he asks this man where they are currently shepherding their sheep. The man responds that the brothers left Shechem and traveled to the city of Dotan. Yosef goes and indeed finds them there. (Bereishit 37:15-17)

While this conversation appears to be minor, when we consider its results, we realize how momentous it really is. Had this man not been there, Yosef likely would have returned home without ever finding his brothers. If so, then the rest of the Torah may never have happened. If Yosef never finds his brothers, he is never sold to Egypt, which means that Yaakov and his sons may never settle in Egypt and the enslavement (and subsequent Exodus) may never happen. Despite its seemingly minor relevance, this is arguably one of the most consequential conversations in the Torah.

Before considering the weight of this dialogue, however, the very surface of this narrative requires explanation. Rabbi Naftali Zvi Yehudah Berlin, known as "Netziv", in his commentary to the Torah (Bereishit 37:15), asks a basic question: Why does Yosef think that this man knows anything about his brothers? Yosef provides no meaningful description of his brothers, yet still this man knows who and where they are. Netziv offers two options, which are reflected in the opinions of the medieval commentaries that preceded him.

Rashi (Bereishit 37:15) citing a midrash answers that this is no ordinary man. In fact, it is the angel Gavriel. This explains not only how this man knows where the brothers are (since he is a celestial being), but it also explains why Yosef even bothers to ask him where they are in the first place. Commenting on Rashi, Rabbi Eliyahu Mizrachi observes that had Yosef believed this to be a normal man, he would have first asked *if* the man knew his brothers. Only after an affirmative response, Yosef would have asked if he knew where they were. By only asking "Where are they?" Yosef reveals that he knows this man to be more than an average person. Especially when we consider the historical weight of this conversation, it is understandable that G-d would assign an angel to this task.

Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra, in his commentary to the Torah (Bereishit 37:15), disagrees with Rashi. He suggests that this man is just that – a man. The Torah typically highlights interactions with angels, and it makes no mention of anything memorable here. Accordingly, writes Ibn Ezra, this man is a mere mortal. As for Rabbi Mizrachi's point as to why Yosef immediately asks where they are, Ibn Ezra appends the words, "if you know" to Yosef's question. Meaning, Yosef indeed only asks the man *if* he knows where the brothers are. At no point does he assume that the man knows anything more. According to Ibn Ezra there is nothing otherworldly about this anonymous man. If so, it is remarkable that G-d tasks an unwitting passerby with such an impactful role.

Returning to Netziv, he offers both the position of Rashi and Ibn Ezra and adds yet another layer of understanding to the text. Netziv highlights the story's beginning, "and a man found him" (Bereishit 37:15). He asks why the Torah doesn't phrase this as, "And Yosef found a man," since Yosef is the primary individual here. He answers that the wording teaches that this man was sent by G-d for this historic purpose. Whether an angel or not, this man serves as a Divine emissary. Similarly, Rabbi Avraham ben HaRambam argues (Bereishit 37:15) that though he is a man of flesh and blood, he has angelic significance as a messenger of G-d.

It is worth mentioning that neither Netziv nor Rabbi Avraham explains whether this man ever realizes his Divinely ordained mission. Perhaps this man never recognized how his conversation with Yosef changed the course of Jewish history. And, just like him, perhaps we don't recognize enough the power we have to impact others around us.

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**OUR BEIT MIDRASH**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Rosh Beit Midrash** | Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner |
| **Sgan Rosh Beit Midrash** | Rabbi Jared Anstandig, Rabbi Yehuda Mann |
| **Avreichim** | Rabbi Steven Gotlib, Idan Rakovsky, Rabbi Chaim Metzger |
| **Seder Boker Director** | Rabbi Moshe Yeres |
| **Women's Beit Midrash** | Mrs. Shira Metzger |
| **Israeli Correspondents** | Rabbi Adam Friedmann, Rabbi Jonathan Ziring |
| **Chaverim** | Eitan Markus, Daniel Sheinis, Natan Snowbell, Eli Weltman |
| **Chaverot** | Orly Aziza, Ariella Markus, Kinneret Witty |

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**We are grateful to Continental Press**

## *Journey Through Tanach:* Melachim II, Chapter 6

**Rabbi Steven Gotlib**

**Summary**

The chapter continues a series of stories involving the prophet Elisha's miracles. It opens with Elisha's students complaining that their quarters are too cramped, so he goes with them to cut wood for seating in a new learning space. (6:1-4) As one of the students is cutting, the tip of his borrowed axe falls into the water. Elisha throws a stick into the water where it fell, and the iron axe tip miraculously floats to the surface. (6:5-7)

While the king of Aram is leading a war against Israel, he sets up camp. Elisha sends a message to the king of Israel not to pass through that area. The Israelites fortify the area, which annoys the king of Aram. This process repeats itself several times. (6:8-11)

Knowing this is no coincidence, the Aramean king demands to know which of his men has been informing Israel. The officers respond that it is the prophet Elisha, and the king demands his capture. Elisha's attendant wakes up early and notices the surrounding Aramean army. Elisha tells him not to worry, and he prays that G-d open the attendant's eyes so he can see the horses and chariots of fire protecting them. (6: 12-17)

Elisha prays that the Aramean forces become confused, and he tells them that they are in the wrong place. He leads the troops to Shomron, capital of the kingdom of Israel, where their confusion is lifted. The king of Israel finds them there and asks Elisha if he should kill them. Elisha says no, and has them fed before returning them to their king. (6:18-23)

The Aramean king lays siege to Shomron sometime later, which results in famine. (6:24-26) A woman cries to the king of Israel, who responds that she should ask G-d instead, but he wonders what is troubling her. She recounts a horrible experience: she and another woman contracted with each other to eat their children to survive, but after the first woman slaughtered her child, the other woman hid hers. The king tears his clothing and continues walking along the wall so that his people can see his sorrow. He declares that he will execute Elisha. (6:27-31)

Elisha is at home with the elders when one of the king's men approaches. Elisha says that the king has sent someone to kill him, and asks that the door stay closed. The king then declares that this famine comes from G-d; what more can be expected? (6:32-33, as explained by Rashi and Radak)

**Insight**

Elisha invokes G-d's Name when he prays to open the eyes of his attendant (6:17) but not when he prays for the confusion of the Arameans. (6:18) A midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 3:6) provides a potential reason for this, stating that G-d does not involve His Name with bad things, such as curses. Although this curse was warranted, Elisha did not invoke G-d's Name because he knew that G-d would not appreciate it. Maintaining a clear distinction between good (blessing) and bad (curse), even when we are required to make difficult decisions, is part of what it means to be a Jew.

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## *It Happened in Israel:* How Our Sages Enjoyed Eretz Yisrael

**Rabbi Yehuda Mann**

The Talmud describes certain customs our Sages used to express their love of the Land of Israel**:**

- Rabbi Abba would kiss the rocks of Akko.
- Rabbi Ḥanina would repair its stumbling blocks and potholes so that travelers would not fall and consequently speak ill of Eretz Yisrael.
- Rabbi Ammi and Rabbi Asi would stand and pass from a sunny spot to a shady one, and from a shady spot to a sunny one, so that they would always sit in comfort and never have cause to remark that they were uncomfortable in Eretz Yisrael.
- Rabbi Chiya bar Gamda would roll in the dust of the land, as it is stated: "For Your servants take pleasure in her stones and love her dust" (Psalms 102:15).

(Ketubot 112a-b, Davidson translation c/o sefaria.org).

**Insight**

Why is it so important to physically enjoy Eretz Yisrael? Surprisingly, the Torah emphasizes the pleasures of Eretz Yisrael. For instance, the Torah calls it a "Good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey." (Shemot 3:8) In fact, the great value of Eretz Yisrael is to perform mitzvot, as Ramban says in numerous places that the only place which is ideally suited to perform mitzvot is Eretz Yisrael, and the purpose of observing Torah outside of Israel is only to remember how to do mitzvot when we ultimately come back to Eretz Yisrael. [See Ramban to Vayikra 18:25, for example.] So why is it so important to enjoy and derive benefit from the land of Israel, and make sure not to suffer from it?

The Rosh Yeshiva of the Chevron Yeshiva, Rabbi Moshe Mordechai Farbstein shlit"a, says that it is true that the real value of Eretz Yisrael is in its spiritual value, as the perfect place to do mitzvot. But in order to have a strong spiritual connection, we must also have a strong physical and material connection to Eretz Yisrael. Once you are attached to something physically by enjoying and benefiting from it, you also have a spiritual connection as well.

Rav Farbstein brings proof from the Sefer HaChinuch's explanation of the mitzvah to write new Torah scrolls. (Mitzvah 613) The Sefer haChinuch writes that although we might have inherited books, since they are not new and nice, we might not want to learn from them. But when we have clean, new books, then Torah study will be appealing. If we have a physical connection, we can have a spiritual connection as well.

Rav Farbstein says this is why the Torah emphasizes the beauty and pleasures of Eretz Yisrael, and that is why our Sages made sure to enjoy Eretz Yisrael – in order to have a physical connection with Eretz Yisrael, that will ultimately bring about a spiritual connection with the Torah and mitzvot in Eretz Yisrael.

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## Biography
## Rav Shagar
### Idan Rakovsky

Rabbi Shimon Gershon Rosenberg, also known to his students as HaRav Shagar, was a groundbreaking Religious Zionist thinker and Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Siach Yitzchak in Efrat. HaRav Shagar was born in Jerusalem in 1949, and he grew up there. Both of his parents were Holocaust survivors, which had a great impact on his theology, as he mentions in his books. He started to learn Torah in Yeshivat Netiv Meir and in Hesder yeshiva Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh. He later learned in Yeshivat Merkaz HaRav and in Yeshivat Hakotel. He received his nickname Shagar in high school when one of his rabbis saw the initials of his name on his tallit bag, and began to refer to him humorously as "Shagar".

On *Motzei Yom Kippur* in 1973 he was called up for service in the Yom Kippur War. On the next day, during a battle in the Golan Heights, the tank he was driving was hit by enemy fire. Two members of the crew, friends of his from yeshiva, were killed. He himself remained wounded in the field until he was eventually evacuated. The war left deep scars that remained with him for the rest of his life.

HaRav Shagar served as Ram in several yeshivot throughout Israel, until he established Yeshivat Siach Yiztchak along with Rabbi Yair Dreifuss.

In his life and learning HaRav Shagar strove for total religious truth, dedicating himself to intense Torah study and Divine service through learning, teaching and conversations with his students. In addition to studying all aspects of Torah, his studies branched out to various disciplines of secular wisdom: philosophy, psychology, anthropology, history, Hebrew and world literature, science fiction, poetry and more. His life was an attempt to give a religious response to postmodern trends in today's world, claiming that they can be included within a Torah worldview.

HaRav Shagar passed away in 2007 from pancreatic cancer. He left thousands of handwritten pages and computer files which are now being published, exposing the public to his profound and relevant theology.

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## Torah and Translation
# Gratitude, Faith and Redemption
### Rav Shagar, Biurei Likutei Moharan Vol. 2
### Translated by Idan Rakovsky

ימי חנוכה הם ימי הודאה, כמו שכתוב "וקבעו שמונת ימי חנוכה אלו להודות ולהלל וכו'." במרכזם של ימי החנוכה מציב רבי נחמן את ההודאה והכרת הטוב, אותן הוא מתאר כעמדה הדתית היסודית והנצחית. אך מדוע תופסת ההודאה מקום חשוב כל כך, עד שרבי נחמן רואה בה את "עיקר השעשוע" של העולם הבא?

The eight days of Chanukah are eight days of thanksgiving. As it says in Al HaNisim: "And they designated these eight days of Chanukah to thank and praise, etc.." Rabbi Nachman of Breslov establishes the thanksgiving and the gratitude at the centre of the days of Chanukah, which he describes as our eternal and fundamental religious position. But why does thanksgiving play such an essential role in our lives? So much so, that Rabbi Nachman calls it "the greatest enjoyment" in the Next World (Likutei Moharan Tinyana 2).

כדי שהאדם יכיר תודה, הוא צריך להעריך את הטוב שנעשה לו. לשם כך אין די בעצם ההנאה, בסיפוק של הרצון לקבל. אדם שכבול לאגו שלו ולרצונותיו, לעולם לא יוכל להודות מעומק הלב. על האדם להכיר בחסד שנעשה איתו, החורג מעבר להנאה לה זכה – "כי טוב חסדך מחיים" (תהילים סג). לכן הכרת תודה אמיתית מלווה בכריעה, בנכונות להתמסר.

In order for a person to be grateful, he first needs to value the good that was done to him. For that purpose, it is not enough to only enjoy the good, nor to have the desire to receive be satisfied. One who is chained to his ego will never be able to thank from the depth of his heart. One should recognize the favour that has been done for him; which far transcends the enjoyment he felt, as it says, "Truly, Your favour is better than life." (Psalms 63:4) Therefore, true thanksgiving is accompanied by bowing, with readiness to be subservient.

כך ביחס לבני אדם, וכך ביחס לקב"ה. הרגש הדתי הראשון הוא הכרת התודה של האדם על מציאותו, על חייו, על כל מה שמתרחש עמו. הכרה זו מביאה לרגש של ממשות, של גאולה. בדרך כלל איננו זוכים להרגשה כזו, אך כאשר אדם יוצא מצרה לרווחה, המעבר יוצר תחושה חזקה של ממשות. אם למשל אדם משתחרר מבית החולים לאחר אשפוז ממושך, ביום הראשון הוא חש תחושה מועצמת של חיים, הוא רואה הכול בעין אחרת וחווה את המציאות הרגילה מתוך אופוריה. אדם זה מרגיש את החסד שנעשה איתו, ומתוך כך חייו הופכים להתרחשות של גאולה.

It is towards Hashem as it is towards human beings. The first religious emotion is the gratitude of one for his life, and for everything that occurs with it. This recognition leads to a tangible sense of redemption. Usually, we do not get to feel this kind of sensation, but when a person comes out of distress to relief, that passage creates a strong tangible sensation. For example, someone who was released from the hospital after a long stay, on the first day he feels a powerful feeling of living, he sees everything with other eyes, and he experiences normal existence with euphoria. This person feels the kindness that was done to him, and consequently, his whole life turns into an occurrence of redemption.

רבי נחמן כותב כי הכרת התודה היא השעשוע של העולם הבא. השעשוע הוא דבר חסר תכלית, ללא כל ערך חיצוני, ערכו ומשמעותו נעוצים בו עצמו. לעתיד לבוא יתבטלו כל הקרבנות, כי כולם קשורים לצרכים מסוימים הכרוכים בעולם הזה. בעולם הבא תישאר רק ההודאה, השמחה והכרת הטוב על החיים עצמם. הודאה זו היא ההארה אליה אנו חותרים כשאנו מדליקים את נרות החנוכה.

[As said above] Rabbi Nachman calls gratitude the enjoyment of the Next World. Amusement is something without purpose, with no external value. Its value and meaning are inherent within itself. In the future, all sacrifices will be halted, since they are all connected to specific needs that are involved in this world. But in the next world, only the thanksgiving will remain, the joy and gratitude of the lives themselves. This kind of thanksgiving is the enlightenment we strive for, when we kindle the candles of Chanukah.

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**All in-person indoor classes require vaccination and other protective measures**

**Monday-Thursday**

**10:00 AM - Noon: Adult Seder Boker with Rabbi Moshe Yeres on ZOOM at http://tiny.cc/sederboker (men)**
**Mon/Wed: Talmud Succah, Orot haTeshuvah of Rav Kook / Tues/Thu: Parshah, Tanach: Sefer Melachim**

**Shabbat November 26-27 Shabbaton at BAYT!**

***Shabbaton at BAYT: When Cultures Collide***
**Friday night Dvar Torah before maariv**
**Rabbi Steven Gotlib: Competition or Cooperation?**

**8:15-9:45 PM FRIDAY NIGHT PANEL DISCUSSION: GREEKS & JEWS**
**Rabbi Daniel Korobkin moderator; Panelists: R' Jared Anstandig, R' Yehuda Mann, R' Mordechai Torczyner**

**Divrei Torah at Shacharit Minyanim**
**Hashkamah Minyan: Rabbi Yehuda Mann: Blaming G-d for Our Collisions**
**Young Families Minyan: Rabbi Jared Anstandig: Are We Blessed By Confrontation?**
**JLIC Minyan: Idan Rakovsky: When Brothers Collide**
**Perlis Hall Minyan: Rabbi Chaim Metzger: Stadium vs. Synagogue**

**Shiur After Hashkamah Minyan (TFBM)**
**Rabbi Yehuda Mann: Marriage, Minhag and Machloket**

**3:45 PM Pre-Minchah Shiurim**
**English: Rabbi Jared Anstandig, The Favourite Son: Yehudah vs. Yosef—Main Shul**
**Hebrew: Idan Rakovsky, At Any Price? Shaming & Get Refusal—Simcha Suite**

**Between Minchah and Maariv**
**Rabbi Steven Gotlib, Dignifying Difference, Defying Destruction**

**Sunday November 28**

**8:30-10:45 AM Breakfast and Learning for Fathers and Sons at Yeshivat Or Chaim**
**Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner: Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Greek? Why Chazal Feared Hellenism**

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

**9:15 AM Idan Rakovsky, Postmodernist Jewish Thought, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university)**

**10 AM R' Aaron Greenberg, Talmud Eruvin, Yeshivat Or Chaim or ZOOM: http://bit.ly/jliczoom 613613 (univ)**

**10 AM to NOON: CHANUKAH LEARNATHON!**
**IN PERSON AT FOREST HILL JEWISH CENTRE! Or on ZOOM at http://tiny.cc/chanukathon**
**Rabbi Jared Anstandig: Why the Repetition? The Chanukah Torah Reading**
**Rabbi Steven Gotlib: Why Do We Sing to the Chanukah Candles?**

**Tuesday November 30 Chanukah, Day 2**

**1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, King Solomon's Arc (Melachim I 2), ZOOM: http://tiny.cc/weeklymt**

**7:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 9), ZOOM: http://tiny.cc/weeklymt (men)**

**Wednesday December 1 Chanukah, Day 3**

**6:15 AM R' Jared Anstandig, Talmud: Beitzah, Shaarei Shomayim and ZOOM: http://tiny.cc/beitza**

**10:00 AM R' M Torczyner, The House that David Built, #4 of 4 ZOOM: http://tiny.cc/weeklymt**

**8:15 PM R' Chaim Metzger, Artscroll Through the Ages, BAYT and ZOOM: http://tiny.cc/translated**

**8:30 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Contemporary Halachah Chabura, Clanton Park**

**Thursday December 2 Chanukah, Day 4**

**8:30 AM R' Chaim Metzger, Trei Asar, ZOOM: http://tiny.cc/trei (university)**

**1:30 PM R' Mordechai Torczyner, Shemuel (Chap. 22-23), ZOOM: http://tiny.cc/weeklymt (women)**

**8:00 PM R' Yehuda Mann, Beitzah, email ymann@torontotorah.com for location (advanced, men)**

**Friday December 3 Chanukah, Day 5**

**8:30 AM R' Jared Anstandig, Parshah, Yeshivat Or Chaim (university)**

**10:30 AM R' Jared Anstandig, R' Mordechai Torczyner, R' Yehuda Mann, Bava Batra Perek 2 *advanced***
**In-person at Yeshivat Or Chaim, on Zoom at http://tiny.cc/frishiur *not this week***