

זכור אתיום השבת לקדשו.
ששת ימים תעבד ועשית כל-מלאכתך,
יום השביעי שבת לה'

PARASHAT TERUMA

4TH ADAR 5783

24TH & 25TH FEBRUARY 2023

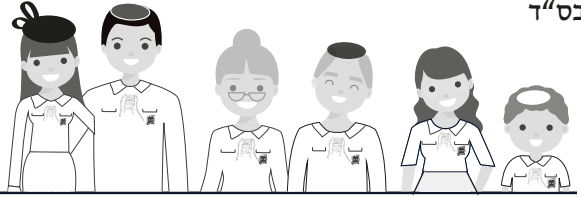
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בס"ד

SHABBAT LASHEM

THE VOICE OF BNEI AKIVA UK



IF THE MISHKAN HAD WHEELS IT WOULD BE A BICYCLE

DANIA MANN-WINEBERG
SHEVET AVICHAI

When I obtained an electric folding bike a few months ago, it seemed like all the difficulties I had previously had commuting to various locations for placements would now be over. I had visions of myself masterfully and smugly gliding it into a compact position and effortlessly lifting it onto trains and trams with one hand, the other casually containing a flask of coffee, as my fellow commuters would stare impressed at how put together I clearly was. What I had not factored in when imagining this idyllic experience, of course, was how incredibly heavy my new bike would be. Whilst riding the bike is a pleasant and convenient experience, constructing and deconstructing it in public spaces has been far from the breeze that I imagined it to be, and more than once, members of the public have very kindly offered to help me navigate this manoeuvre because clearly, I don't look quite as cool and at ease as I thought. It is clear that it is quite a challenge to create a structure that can fold and be transported, without detracting from its quality.

When the construction of the *mishkan* is described in the Torah, a similar dichotomy of priorities is seen. It is appropriate, important and necessary to fill the *mishkan* with items of value and meaning, according to exact specifications laid out in the Torah. We can see in this week's *parasha* the intricate and detailed description of which materials were to be used and how they should be measured. However, there is also the more practical consideration, which is ensuring the portability of the *mishkan*.

The concept of balancing something's value and weight with its potential burden is one that is relevant in many

areas. For many people, this can be particularly poignant in the way that they relate to serving Hashem. The idea of how to respond when Judaism starts to feel burdensome is discussed by many great minds across the generations of Jewish thought, often with different terms being used to model this debate. Rabbi Yehuda Amital, former *Rosh Yeshiva* of Yeshivat Har Etzion, characterised the intersection of obligation and choice with regards to *mitzvot* as '*ne'emanut*', meaning loyalty and faithfulness, rather than '*mechuyavut*', meaning obligation. If Judaism is approached as something entirely burdensome then it is likely to become too heavy and not transportable, with potentially devastating ramifications.

Let's take a look at the purpose of the Mishkan itself, as explained in our parasha:

וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְתוֹכָם:

'And let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them (*Shemot* 25:8)'

The *Shelah* comments of the fact that the text does not say *בְּתוֹכוֹ* (in it) but rather *בְּתוֹכָם* (in them). The *mishkan* was not there to just contain Hashem's *shekhina*. Rather, it was a way of bringing Hashem's presence to the forefront of every person's mind. It can be tempting to let our experience of Judaism be contained to institutions and buildings. Perhaps the burden of what the Torah seems to expect from us can become exhausting and it some might respond by dropping it altogether in order to lighten the load. Instead, in true *mishkan* style, lets continue to look for ways to understand the structure in front of us, 'deconstruct' the difficulties and questions that we may have, and be there for others who might currently have a different carrying capacity to us so that we can collectively continue to transport the Torah with us, through whatever wilderness we happen to find ourselves in.

DANIA IS IN SHEVET AVICHAI AND WAS MEDIC ON ALEPH MACHANE 5782

London	In 17:17 Out 18:20	Leeds	In 17:21 Out 18:28	Birmingham	In 17:24 Out 18:30
Manchester	In 17:24 Out 18:31	Nottingham	In 17:21 Out 18:27	Liverpool	In 17:27 Out 18:34
Thaxted	In 17:16 Out 18:21	Brighton	In 17:20 Out 18:24	Bristol	In 17:29 Out 18:33
Cambridge	In 17:17 Out 18:22	Oxford	In 17:23 Out 18:28	Jerusalem	In 16:57 Out 18:11

SHALIACH'S CORNER: UNDERSTANDING OUR ROOTS

RABBI AKIVA PART 3 - BEHIND EVERY GREAT MAN...



"Rabbi Akiva was the shepherd of *ben Kalba Savua*, one of the wealthy residents of Jerusalem. His daughter saw that Rabbi Akiva was humble and refined. She said to him: If I betroth myself to you, will

you go to the study hall to learn Torah? He said to her: Yes. She became betrothed to him privately and sent him off to study. Her father heard this and became angry. He removed her from his house and took a vow prohibiting her from benefiting from his property. He went and sat for twelve years in the *Beit HaMidrash*. When he returned, he brought twelve thousand students with him. He heard an old man saying to his wife: 'For how long will you lead the life of a widow of a living man?' She said to him: 'If he listens to me, he would sit for another twelve years!' When Rabbi Akiva heard this he said: 'I have permission.' He went back and sat for another twelve years in the study hall. When he came back he brought twenty-four thousand students with him. His wife heard and went out toward him to greet him... When she came to him she fell on her face and kissed his feet. His attendants pushed her away not knowing who she was, and he said to them: 'Leave her, as my Torah knowledge and yours is actually hers' (*Ketubot* 62b-63a)."

This story paints a vivid picture of Rabbi Akiva's beginnings – not based on his own drive and motivation, as we saw last week. Rather in this story, it was his wife Rachel, daughter of one of the wealthiest men in *Yerushalayim*, through this reverse Cinderella story, who pushes Rabbi Akiva towards his destiny.

Though the story seems to focus on his deeds, the powerful lessons to be learned stem from Rachel's decisions and her values, which find expression through her husband.

First, the mark of a person is not based purely on Torah knowledge or *mitzva* observance, but rather also on moral virtues – by being "humble and refined". It is Rabbi Akiva's ethical conduct, his nobility of character, that Rachel identifies as suitable characteristics for her husband. Rachel teaches us that we have a duty to refine our humanity – but she also teaches us that this is not enough.

Rachel's condition for their marriage is that Rabbi Akiva go off to learn, and she appreciates what will be required in order for his learning to be successful. As the Gemara relates (*berakhot* 5a), Torah is only attained through suffering, through trials and through sacrifice. Only through complete dedication and commitment,

"ONLY THROUGH COMPLETE DEDICATION AND COMMITMENT, ONLY WHEN WE PLACE [TORAH] AS OUR HIGHEST VALUE, CAN WE HOPE TO SUCCEED IN OUR ENDEAVOUR TO LIVE AND LEARN TORAH.."

only when we place it as our highest value, can we hope to succeed in our endeavour to live and learn Torah. Interestingly, that Gemara also states that our success in settling the Land of Israel is similarly tied up in hardship.

So what have we gotten ourselves into with this *Torah Va'Avodah* business?!

Rachel teaches us, as she taught her husband, that it is not the easy path that we should choose for ourselves. Bnei Akiva has chosen to engage in both these endeavours to their fullest extent – despite it being a path that is full of roadblocks and uphill battles. To truly live a life of *Torah Va'Avodah* requires complete dedication, and the tenacity to overcome the trials that lie ahead.

But if we choose the path of sweat and toil, if we choose to dedicate our lives to something greater than ourselves, we too can reach the tremendous heights of Rabbi Akiva, and, like Rachel, to be the one who guides the paths of thousands.

**ELAD ESHEL IS IN SHEVET LEHAVA AND IS ONE OF THE NORTHERN SHLICHIM OF BNEI AKIVA.
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TORAH FROM AROUND THE WORLD

ELIA BENAMOZEGH | NAHALA 7TH ADAR

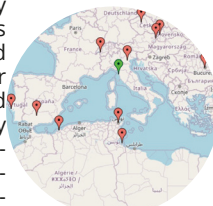
Back on the train to *Aeropuerto de Sevilla* [SVQ], and having blown the budget over the last couple of weeks, it's a trip on RyanAir to *Aeroporto Internazionale di Pisa* [PSA]. After a quick shuttle to *Pisa Centrale* Station, we catch a direct train to *Livorno Centrale* Station and then a local bus to Grande 5, where we arrive at the *Piazza Elia Benamozegh*.

Elia Benamozegh was a 19th century Rabbi in Livorno who joins that lucky cadre of individuals to have had their works put in *cheirem* and to be called a heretic (although it happens so often now it's losing its appeal). His parents, Abraham and Clara, were originally from Fez, possibly explaining his surname 'Benamozegh', meaning 'son of Amazigh', *Amazigh* being the endonym of the North African Berbers; tragically though, his parents died while he was still a child. He received a well-rounded, modern education, learning Hebrew, English and French (alongside Italian), natural sciences, philosophy and theology – not just Jewish but Christian as well. By age 18 he had received *semikha*, and served as quasi-Rabbi of Livorno for around 50 years, as well as a teacher at the university there. He also set up a printing press which published many works of Moroccan *hakhmamim*.

Benamozegh wrote a monumental commentary on Torah entitled *Em Lamikra* (recently made available on Sefaria) which applies the disciplines of philology, criticism and archaeology to the Torah. He further quoted Christian texts and Samaritan and Karaite works – but all this was not simply motivated by a modern, scientific perspective of surveying all available resources. For Benamozegh, there was an additional element at play: he believed that God had incorporated elements already present in other, contemporary pagan religions and imbued them with *kedusha* (sanctity). Further, Benamozegh was a staunch supporter of the *kabbala* – whilst other contemporary scholars such as Heinrich Graetz publicly derided it, he wrote works defending it from the attacks of Shadal (see *Shabbat Lashem Parashat Ha'azinu*) and Leon de Modena (coming up in a few weeks, *be"H*). It did not matter whether the Zohar was written earlier or later – it contains within it a holy core of ancient mystical ideas, and to locate these kabbalistic ideas in ancient texts and practises is to prove their authenticity, and the diffusion of Jewish wisdom among ancient peoples. It was this aspect of his commentary that led the Rabbis of Aleppo to declare that Benamozegh is a heretic and that *Em Lamikra* should be burned. The idea that the 'unholy' practises of other nations should have been incorporated into *mitzvot*, let alone the holy and

esoteric *kabbala*, was an affront to Judaism. Despite the precedent set for this kind of historical-anthropological reasoning, by figures as prominent as Maimonides in his position on *korbanot*, the Rabbis of Jerusalem agreed that the work should be banned, although they argued that Benamozegh was simply 'mistaken', rather than a heretic.

Benamozegh's scholarship is evidenced throughout *Em Lamikra*. For example, on the *pasuk* וְעַתָּה יוֹצֵאת לְבָבְךָ לְכֹתֹב לָבוֹק 'now write for yourselves this song' (*Devarim* 31:19), which he interprets as referring to the Torah, he quotes Vico on the Greek word νόμος (*nomos*), which can mean both 'law' and a type of song as evidence for ancient cultures transmitting their law as songs. He makes reference to Maximus Tyrius, Orpheus and Pythagoras to name but a few. Benamozegh also addressed the recent publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, although not in the context of creationism; Benamozegh had already written that, as per Ibn Ezra (see *Shabbat Lashem Parashat Mishpatim*), the days of creation were obviously not 'normal' days and the idea of incremental development of a species across millions of years was not a problem for him. Instead, the discussion of Darwin comes under the issue of the definition of **species**. Benamozegh foreshadows some of



the modern scientific criticism that would follow Darwin's proposals, and he even suggests divisions based on genotype and phenotype, terms that would not appear in scientific literature for decades.

Another key feature of Benamozegh's philosophy was the universalism of the Torah. The messages of the Torah should not be treated as parochial, but as relevant to all. He saw in Islam and Christianity initial developments towards the universal religion of 'Noahism', i.e. the Noahide code; any religion that adhered to the Noahide code could claim validity for gentile nations. Famously, he discouraged his student Aimé Pallière from converting to Judaism, instead suggesting he remain a non-Jew and find God through 'Noahism'. To this end, Benamozegh wrote *Israel and Humanity*, on the ideal integration of Israel into the world and the message Torah has for all humanity.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

- **Shabbat shoutout** to **Hendon** and **Bushey** who are running their **Shabbatot Ha'irgun** this week!

- **Birmingham SBM** continues this **Monday 27th February**! Join us at the usual location.

- **NEW! Manchester SBM** continues this **Monday 27th February** at the *Northern Bayit*!

- **Lishmah** for bogrot and sixth-form women continues this **Tuesday 28th February**! Join this **dynamic makom torah** for women!

- **London SBM** continues this **Thursday 2nd March** from 7pm at Kinloss! Make sure to sign up so that we can order enough food.

- BA will be running a **Women's Megillah Reading** on **Purim night**! Sign up to attend or to *lein a perek* at tinyurl.com/womens-megillah.

- Our renowned **Purim Seudah** returns! Join us for a **school uniform-themed** bogrim seudah at

the **Goodmans**, starting with *mincha* at 17:00. Sign up now at bauk.org/seuda.

- **Young Families** are invited to a **Manchester Purim Seudah**! Starting at 14:00, sign up at mizrachi.org.uk/class/purim.

- **Shabbat Bogrim** is happening on **17th March**! Join us for a Shabbaton in Coventry catered by **Met Su Yan**!

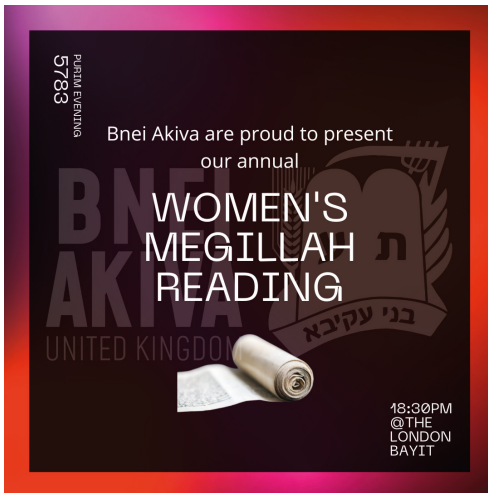
- **Summer Machane** applications are open! Visit bauk.org/camps to sign up.

- **Tafkidim** for **Summer Machane** are open! Visit bauk.org/tafkid to sign up.

- **Mazkirut applications** are now open! Email mazkir@bauk.org for an application form.

- To give any **comments** or **suggestions** to Bnei Akiva, please visit bauk.org/feedback.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ANY OF THESE EVENTS, PLEASE CONTACT BEN AT CHINUCH@BAUK.ORG



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