

HOW TORAH HAS INFLUENCED MY LIFE

Theo (Avraham) Yale

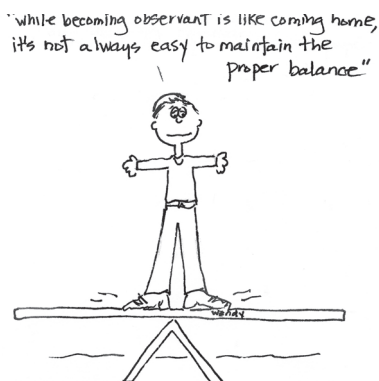
When Rabbi Buchwald asked me to write about how Torah has influenced my life, I began with a simple thought experiment. I asked myself: How different would my life be today if I had never become religious? What am I doing now that I never would have done if not for Judaism, or what would I be doing if not "held back" by Divine imperative?

Considering that Torah is such a big part of my life, dictating pretty much everything I can and cannot do, I was shocked to realize that I could not think of much, not big things anyway. By-and-large Judaism's changes to my lifestyle have been rather superficial (that is, of course, in terms of disruption, not significance): The Torah dictates what I eat and how I pray, not who I am nor what I aim for. That Judaism has something to say about everything we do, but also leaves us so much flexibility, is surely to the Torah's credit, and shows the continual truth and relevance of our faith.

I come from a mixed-faith family. You could count on one shop-teacher's hand the number of times my family went to church or synagogue while I was growing up. Most years we had a Christmas tree, and, once in a while, we lit Chanukah candles, but that was about it for religion in our household. Yet, for reasons I still do not understand, something inside me always felt that Jews are supposed to practice Judaism. Unlike many Baalei Teshuva (returnees to Judaism) I never had a religious epiphany: A Bible never stopped a bullet meant for my heart; I never felt the Western Wall tremble. Becoming religious was just a matter of turning sentiment into practice.

Given such a secular upbringing, adopting a Torah lifestyle did take its toll on my daily routine. To my parents' chagrin, the lists of things I could not do, of foods I could not eat, and of observances for which I had to make room, grew and grew as I learned more about a Jew's religious obligations--a process accelerated by Rabbi Buchwald's dynamic and patient teaching. I could not travel on holidays, I no longer helped decorate the Christmas tree, I had to make sure I had kosher food, to take time for tefillin and prayer, and so on.

These changes are not insignificant. But consider this: If a friend told you one day that he was planning on joining a 3,300 year old religion codified over a millennium ago in Babylonia, what would



you expect? You might imagine him joining the likes of John Walker Lindh (the white American who moved to Afghanistan to join the Taliban), or at the very least among the Amish, sporting funny clothes, eating strange food, speaking an exotic tongue and living off-the-grid somewhere. Goodbye Starbucks, hello Kabul. But Judaism is different. For all the changes it makes to our lifestyle, it places remarkably few constraints on the lives we choose to live.

As in all things, there are extremes.

There are those Jews who join insular *chareidi* communities and cut themselves off from much of the rest of the world. This lifestyle, however, is not intrinsic to Jewish observance. So long as one keeps all the commandments, the Manhattan Jew who goes to Yankee games and owns a television is no less observant or Orthodox than the bearded chasid who never leaves Brooklyn.

I like to think of my own life in these terms. My wife and I do not "compromise" on keeping kosher, or Shabbat, or any other mitzvah (commandment) large or small. Yet we are also able to participate fully in American life and society. I went to secular college where I studied science and classics, and my wife will be studying geosciences next year at Temple University. Since college, I had a (short-lived) run for Congress, invented and marketed a hangover prevention pill, and am currently applying to the U.S. Army's chaplain training program. Living a Torah lifestyle has meant making accommodations during these undertakings, but it has ruled none of them out.

Now, as global religiosity is dividing between radical extremism and watered-down platitudes, Judaism is among the few religions that have remained authentic and meaningful, yet also contemporary. Perhaps the Torah itself (Leviticus 18:5), alludes to this balance when it says of the commandments that we should, "Live by them." God's ways and laws should become part of one's life, not replace it.

For a Jew, returning to Judaism--and it is returning even if you were never religious before--feels more like coming home than joining a cult. That it does, is testament to the Torah's continued relevance to the lives of Jews in every place and time.

Theo Yale is a 24 year old graduate of Princeton University (Magna Cum Laude in Classics). He is currently enrolled in a smicha program and is a candidate to become a chaplain in the U.S. Army.

CONGRATULATIONS AND MAZAL TOV

ENGAGEMENT

Rivka (Olga) Urquijo and David Gorin



MARRIAGES

Rachel Mello and Benjamin Zev Gutman
Chava (Hillary) Guiney and Yosef McCaba
Rachael Liknaitzky and Eliezer Zev Stromberg

Mazal Tov to parents

Esther Chana (Linden) and Eliya (Gene) Stromberg

Michla Goldberg and Yosef Dov Steinberg

Mazal Tov to parents Shaindel and Yaakov (Tom) Steinberg

Esther Gewirtz and Avi Weisblatt

Mazal Tov to parents Barbara Gewirtz
and Shlomo Dov Gewirtz

BIRTHS

Dana Kramer and Peter Herpich on birth of a girl,

Penny Bea Kramer

Mazal Tov to grandparents Eva and Gerald Kramer

Edya Shushana Kalev and Yair Lewis on birth of a girl, Swan
Mazal Tov to grandparents Susan Kalev
and Jonah Kalev

Rachael and Mendel Simmons on birth of a girl, Sara Leah
Mazal Tov to grandparents Sharone D'vora and
Shmuel Goodman

BAR/BAT MITZVAH

Zevi Bennett

Mazal Tov to parents Drs. Janice and Richard Bennett

Jake Akiva Gerber

Mazal Tov to parents Tracy and Sander Gerber

James (Jim) Margolin on his adult Bar Mitzvah

Michael Margolin

Mazal Tov to parents Nancy Friedman and James Margolin

Yosef Tzvi Wildes

Mazal Tov to parents Jill and Rabbi Mark Wildes

CONDOLENCES

Hy Drusin, on the loss of his mother, Fanny Drusin

Mark Esken on the loss of his mother, Mary Esposito

Harvey Giwanter on the loss of his aunt, Esther Ruth Giwanter

Digna (Dina Chaya) Perez on the loss of her brother,

John Diaz

Dr Rivkah (Cathrin) Weinstein on the loss of her mother,

Anita Schulz

SPEEDY RECOVERY/REFUAH SH'LAIMA

Evelyn Ebenstein, Chava bat Miriam

Raphi Leicht, Raphael Eliezer ben Rina Raizl

Reuven ben Baila

CONGRATULATIONS

Aviva and Mickey Gottlieb, honored at the Annual Dinner
of the Joseph Kushner Hebrew Academy/Rae Kushner
Yeshiva High School

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Tue May 18, 2010 - 5th of Sivan
EREV SHAUVOT
 Candle Lighting 7:52 PM
 Mincha 7:55 PM
 Torah Classes Beginning . . . 11:30 PM

Wed May 19, 2010 - 6th of Sivan
SHAUVOT
 Morning Services . . . 5:05 and 9:00 AM
 Talmud & Bible Classes . . . 6:55 PM
 Mincha 7:55 PM
 Light Yom Tov Candles after . . . 8:52 PM

Thu May 20, 2010 - 7th of Sivan
SHAUVOT
 Morning Services . . 8:00 and 9:00 AM
 Talmud & Bible Classes 6:55 PM
 Mincha 7:55 PM
 Maariv/Yom Tov ends 8:53 PM

Fri May 21, 2010 - 8th of Sivan
 Morning Services . . . 7:10 and 7:50 AM
 Earliest Candle Lighting 6:41 PM
 Candle Lighting 7:55 PM
 Mincha 6:45 and 8:00 PM

Sat May 22, 2010 - 9th of Sivan Nasso
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Morning Services . . . 7:40, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Talmud & Bible Classes 6:45 PM
 Mincha 7:45 PM
 Maariv/Shabbat ends 8:55 PM
 Daily Mincha & Maariv 8:05 PM

Fri May 28, 2010 - 15th of Sivan
 Morning Services . . . 7:10 and 7:50 AM
 Earliest Candle Lighting 6:46 PM
 Candle Lighting 8:01 PM
 Mincha 6:45 and 8:05 PM

Sat May 29, 2010 - 16th of Sivan
Be'ha'alotcha
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Morning Services . . . 7:40, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Talmud & Bible Classes 6:50 PM
 Mincha 7:50 PM
 Maariv/Shabbat ends 9:01 PM
 Daily Mincha & Maariv 8:10 PM

Mon May 31, 2010 - 18th of Sivan
MEMORIAL DAY
 Morning Services . . . 7:00 and 8:30 AM

Fri June 4, 2010 - 22nd of Sivan
 Morning Services . . . 7:10 and 7:50 AM
 Earliest Candle Lighting 6:50 PM
 Candle Lighting 8:06 PM
 Mincha 6:45 and 8:10 PM

Sat June 5, 2010 - 23rd of Sivan Sh'lach
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Morning Services . . . 7:40, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Talmud & Bible Classes 6:55 PM
 Mincha 7:55 PM
 Maariv/Shabbat ends 9:06 PM
 Daily Mincha & Maariv 8:15 PM

Fri June 11, 2010 - 29th of Sivan
 Morning Services . . . 7:10 and 7:50 AM
 Earliest Candle Lighting 6:54 PM
 Candle Lighting 8:10 PM
 Mincha 6:45 and 8:15 PM

Sat June 12, 2010 - 30th of Sivan
Korach ROSH CHODESH
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Morning Services . . . 7:40, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Talmud & Bible Classes 7:00 PM
 Mincha 8:00 PM
 Maariv/Shabbat ends 9:10 PM
 Daily Mincha & Maariv 8:20 PM

Sun June 13, 2010 - 1st of Tammuz
ROSH CHODESH
 Morning Services . . . 7:00 and 8:30 AM

Fri June 18, 2010 - 6th of Tammuz
 Morning Services . . . 7:10 and 7:50 AM
 Earliest Candle Lighting 6:56 PM
 Candle Lighting 8:13 PM
 Mincha 6:45 and 8:20 PM

Sat June 19, 2010 - 7th of Tammuz
Chukat
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Morning Services . . . 7:40, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Talmud & Bible Classes 7:05 PM
 Mincha 8:05 PM
 Maariv/Shabbat ends 9:13 PM
 Daily Mincha & Maariv 8:20 PM

Fri June 25, 2010 - 13th of Tammuz
 Morning Services . . . 7:10 and 7:50 AM
 Earliest Candle Lighting 6:58 PM
 Candle Lighting 8:14 PM
 Mincha 6:45 and 8:20 PM

Sat June 26, 2010 - 14th of Tammuz Balak
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Morning Services . . . 7:40, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Talmud & Bible Classes 7:05 PM
 Mincha 8:05 PM
 Maariv/Shabbat ends 9:14 PM
 Daily Mincha & Maariv 8:20 PM

Tue June 29, 2010 - 17th of Tammuz
SHIVA ASSAR B'TAMMUZ
 Fast begins 4:14 AM
 Morning Services . . . 6:50 and 7:40 AM
 Mincha 8:10 PM
 Fast ends 9:03 PM

Fri July 2, 2010 - 20th of Tammuz
 Morning Services . . . 7:10 and 7:50 AM
 Earliest Candle Lighting 6:57 PM
 Candle Lighting 8:14 PM
 Mincha 6:45 and 8:20 PM

Sat July 3, 2010 - 21st of Tammuz
Pinchas
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Morning Services . . . 7:40, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Talmud & Bible Classes 7:05 PM
 Mincha 8:05 PM
 Maariv/Shabbat ends 9:14 PM
 Daily Mincha & Maariv 8:20 PM

Mon July 5, 2010 - 23rd of Tammuz
INDEPENDENCE DAY
 Morning Services . . . 7:00 and 8:30 AM

Fri July 9, 2010 - 27th of Tammuz
 Morning Services . . . 7:10 and 7:50 AM
 Earliest Candle Lighting 6:56 PM
 Candle Lighting 8:12 PM
 Mincha 6:45 and 8:15 PM

Sat July 10, 2010 - 28 Tammuz
Matot-Masei
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Morning Services . . . 7:40, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Talmud & Bible Classes 7:00 PM
 Mincha 8:00 PM
 Maariv/Shabbat ends 9:12 PM
 Daily Mincha & Maariv 8:15 PM

Mon July 12, 2010 - 1st of Av
ROSH CHODESH
 Morning Services . . . 7:00 and 7:40 AM

Fri July 16, 2010 - 5th of Av
 Morning Services . . . 7:10 and 7:50 AM
 Earliest Candle Lighting 6:53 PM
 Candle Lighting 8:08 PM
 Mincha 6:45 and 8:15 PM

Sat July 17, 2010 - 6th of Av Devarim
SHABBAT HAZON
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Morning Services . . . 7:40, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Talmud & Bible Classes 7:00 PM
 Mincha 8:00 PM
 Maariv/Shabbat ends 9:08 PM
 Daily Mincha & Maariv 8:10 PM

Mon July 19, 2010 - 8th of Av
EREV TISH'A B'AV
 Mincha 8:10 PM
 Fast begins 8:24 PM
 Maariv and Kinnot 8:55 PM

Tue July 20, 2010 - 9th of Av TISH'A B'AV
 Morning Services . . . 6:30 and 8:00 AM
 Chatzot 1:02 PM
 Early Mincha 1:39 PM
 Late Mincha 7:55 PM
 Fast ends 8:54 PM

Fri July 23, 2010 - 12th of Av
 Morning Services . . . 7:10 and 7:50 AM
 Earliest Candle Lighting 6:49 PM
 Candle Lighting 8:03 PM
 Mincha 6:45 and 8:10 PM

Sat July 24, 2010 - 13th of Av
Va'etchanan SHABBAT NACHAMU
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Morning Services . . . 7:40, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Talmud & Bible Classes 6:55 PM
 Mincha 7:55 PM
 Maariv/Shabbat ends 9:03 PM
 Daily Mincha & Maariv 8:05 PM

Fri July 30, 2010 - 19th of Av
 Morning Services . . . 7:10 and 7:50 AM
 Earliest Candle Lighting 6:44 PM
 Candle Lighting 7:57 PM
 Mincha 6:45 and 8:00 PM

Sat July 31, 2010 - 20th of Av Eikev
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Morning Services . . . 7:40, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Talmud & Bible Classes 6:45 PM
 Mincha 7:45 PM
 Maariv/Shabbat ends 8:57 PM
 Daily Mincha & Maariv 7:55 PM

Fri August 6, 2010 - 27th of Av
 Morning Services . . . 7:10 and 7:50 AM
 Earliest Candle Lighting 6:38 PM
 Candle Lighting 7:49 PM
 Mincha 6:45 and 7:55 PM

Sat August 7, 2010 - 28th of Av Re'eh
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Morning Services . . . 7:40, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Talmud & Bible Classes 6:40 PM
 Mincha 7:40 PM
 Maariv/Shabbat ends 8:49 PM
 Daily Mincha & Maariv 7:50 PM

Tue August 10, 2010 - 30th of Av
ROSH CHODESH
 Morning Services . . . 7:00 and 7:40 AM

Wed August 11, 2010 - 1st of Elul
ROSH CHODESH
 Morning Services . . . 7:00 and 7:40 AM

Fri August 13, 2010 - 3th of Elul
 Morning Services . . . 7:10 and 7:50 AM
 Earliest Candle Lighting 6:31 PM
 Candle Lighting 7:40 PM
 Mincha 6:45 and 7:45 PM

Sat August 14, 2010 - 4th of Elul
Shoftim
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Morning Services . . . 7:40, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Talmud & Bible Classes 6:30 PM
 Mincha 7:30 PM
 Maariv/Shabbat ends 8:40 PM
 Daily Mincha & Maariv 7:35 PM

Fri August 20, 2010 - 10th of Elul
 Morning Services . . . 7:10 and 7:50 AM
 Earliest Candle Lighting 6:22 PM
 Candle Lighting 7:30 PM
 Mincha 6:45 and 7:35 PM

Sat August 21, 2010 - 11th of Elul
Ki Teitzei
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Morning Services . . . 7:40, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Talmud & Bible Classes 6:20 PM
 Mincha 7:20 PM
 Maariv/Shabbat ends 8:30 PM
 Daily Mincha & Maariv 7:25 PM

Fri August 27, 2010 - 17th of Elul
 Morning Services . . . 7:10 and 7:50 AM
 Candle Lighting 7:19 PM
 Mincha 7:25 PM

Sat August 28, 2010 - 18th of Elul
Ki Tavo
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Morning Services . . . 7:40, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Talmud & Bible Classes 6:10 PM
 Mincha 7:10 PM
 Maariv/Shabbat ends 8:19 PM
 Daily Mincha & Maariv 7:15 PM

Fri September 3, 2010 - 24th of Elul
 Morning Services . . . 7:10 and 7:50 AM
 Candle Lighting 7:08 PM
 Mincha 7:15 PM

Sat September 4, 2010 - 25th of Elul
Nitzavim-Vayeilech
 Daf Yomi 7:00 AM
 Bible Class 8:30 AM
 Morning Services . . . 7:40, 9:00 & 9:45 AM
 Talmud & Bible Classes 6:00 PM
 Mincha 7:00 PM
 Maariv/Shabbat ends 8:08 PM
 Selichot 10:00 PM and 12:55 AM
 Daily Mincha & Maariv 7:05 PM

Mon September 6, 2010 - 27th of Elul
LABOR DAY
 Selichot/Morning Services 6:40 and 8:10 AM

Tue September 7, 2010 - 28th of Elul
 Selichot/Morning Services 6:40 and 7:30 AM
 Maariv/Selichot 9:00 PM

Wed September 8, 2010 - 29th of Elul
EREV ROSH HASHANA
 Selichot/Morning Services 6:00 and 6:45 AM
 Candlelighting 7:00 PM
 Mincha 7:05 PM

SAVE THE DATE

All Night Shavuot Learn-a-thon

Tues, May 18
 11:30 PM - 7:00 AM

Final Beginners Shabbat Luncheon of the Season
 Sat, June 5 - \$20

First Beginners Shabbat Luncheon of the Season
 Sat, Sept 4 - \$20

Rosh Hashanah
 Wed-Fri, Sept 8 - Sept 10