



BEIT MIDRASH ZICHRON DOV TORONTO TORAH

PARASHAT ACHAREI MOT

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DVAR TORAH ACHAREI MOT RABBI NOAH SONENBERG, DEAN

Risk Benefit Analysis

Financial advisors might suggest that low risk investments tend to offer lower returns while high risk investments could offer higher returns. It is then up to the investor to decide what their risk tolerance is and balance this with their savings goals. When it comes to spiritual returns there is a similar sentiment as expressed in Avot 5:23:

Ben Ha Ha says: According to the suffering is the reward. [The more "suffering" that you invest in toiling in Torah study and in doing mitzvot, the greater will be your reward.]

We see that when confronted with this choice Eisav chose to avoid the high risk option when he sold his birthright of being firstborn that came with greater responsibility and with potential greater reward but also with a higher risk of death (See Rashi Bereishit 25:32).

This potential concern of managing risk could explain the connection between the death of Aharon's sons and the instructions for the Kohen Gadol's required actions during the Yom Kippur service. After witnessing the tragic deaths due to incorrect service in the holy of holies Aharon might have had some trepidation about his role. Hashem instructs him to "not come at all times into the Holy [Sanctuary] that is inside of the

Curtain, before the Ark-cover that is on the Ark so that he not die, for in a cloud I shall appear on the Ark-cover" (Vayikra 16:2). It is true that there is risk but with the proper approach and care the risk could be mitigated and his service in the holy of holies would generate the desired results while avoiding the danger.

***With the proper approach
and care the risk
could be mitigated***

Our parasha ends with a discussion of another mitzvah that has a risk and reward consideration. Living in Israel comes with a risk due to a sensitivity of the land to immoral behaviours. We are told of the sins of the previous inhabitants which caused the land to expel them and are warned not to follow their path in order to avoid a similar fate. "[So that] the land not expel you when you defile it as it expelled the nation before you" (Vayikra 19:28). When considering the risk and benefit of living in Israel, Tosafot in fact say that the ability of one spouse to compel the other to move to Israel didn't apply in his time period due to this very concern.

Rabbi Chaim would say, 'Now it is not a

commandment to dwell in the Land of Israel because there are several commandments dependent on the land and several punishments that we cannot be cautious about and adhere to. (Tosafot, Ketubot 110b)

In the time of Tosafot, perhaps there were limited ways to mitigate the risk and as such their approach was to suggest that those who couldn't manage the risk should avoid living there. We have been blessed to live in a time where it has become easy to follow the mitzvot that are dependent on the land and as such it would seem that in our time, the mitzvah of living in Israel would be applicable.

When it comes to the risk a person is prepared to take with their finances each person should evaluate their own risk tolerance. However, when it comes to mitzvot, we should all engage with every mitzvah with the awareness of the requirements present in each mitzvah so as to be able to benefit from the gains while avoiding the risk of sin. The Torah was given to us to better our lives and by fully engaging with its commandments with proper care may we merit the blessing found within Shema: "In order that your days be prolonged, and the days of your children..." (Devarim 11:21).



Yirmiyahu 18

In Chapter 13 we saw Hashem instruct Yirmiyahu to immerse a flax belt in the Euphrates River, making a public demonstration illustrating a prophetic message. The belt's deterioration portended the predicted deterioration of the nation. In our chapter, Hashem sends another message with a visual aid.

Hashem instructs Yirmiyahu to visit a potter, and watch what happens when the potter's work goes awry and the product is defective: the potter reshapes it into another vessel. Hashem declares that He could do the same with the Jews, who are "like clay in the hand of the potter." Hashem could instantly send a nation to attack and destroy us, or to halt. If the Jews do not repent, Hashem will indeed bring punishment upon us (18:1-11).

But Hashem predicts that the Jews will refuse to cooperate. He charges Yirmiyahu: ask any nation, who ever heard of a nation abandoning its Benefactor in this way? Would people abandon a cool, refreshing stream flowing from melted snow? And yet, the Jews abandon Hashem and bring punishment upon themselves (18:12-17).

Like clay in the hands of the potter

Then it's Yirmiyahu's turn to complain, with a message that mirrors Hashem's complaint. Yirmiyahu quotes his enemies, who protest that he never stops teaching and presenting Divine messages. He appeals to Hashem to listen to him now. He has spent his career defending the Jews to Hashem and attempting to dispel Divine wrath, as

we saw in Chapter 14. And this is their gratitude! Yirmiyahu has made this point before (see 11:18-20 and 15:15-18), but now he goes further. The prophet actually demands of Hashem: punish these people with starvation and the sword! They plot against me to murder me; do not forgive them, but instead act against them! (18:18-23)

This chapter is very harsh, but our Sages (*Berachot* 32a) saw a silver lining in Hashem's description of the Jews as "clay in the hands of the potter." This is not only about Hashem's ability to shape our destiny, but Hashem's power to shape us, personally. If Hashem wished, our *yetzer hara* would vanish and we would no longer be drawn to rebel. If so, then the responsibility for our guilt is not on our shoulders alone; we are here, in this struggle, because Hashem placed us here and wants us to be here.



Week 12: Summary of Ikkarei Emunah

As we have seen, there were some thinkers who felt that the entire enterprise of enumerating fundamentals of faith was mistaken. One must accept all entailed by the Torah equally. Others did articulate lists of dogmas and fundamentals. For some, this was merely an educational project. For others, this indicated the conviction that some beliefs are more central than others. This is either (as for Albo) because they are necessary to make religion or Judaism coherent; for others (Rambam) it established the most basic beliefs one must have to not be considered a heretic.

Even as the lists of *ikkarim* became popular, there is a lack of consensus whether this has halakhic weight. Some accepted the notion that one is a heretic if one denies these beliefs, others limited the critical dogmas, and others refused to grant these *ikkarim* unique status.

Furthermore, while liturgy made the concept of *ikkarim* popular,

this often led to subtle, or not so subtle, divergences from the original formulations. As such, even those who granted special status to the *ikkarim* may not have done so in the precise way that thinkers like Rambam would have desired.

Belief is central to Judaism. However, as we have seen, the implications for that on the project of enumerating *ikkarim* has been hotly debated. Again, that is not only because there are disputes as to some of the content of the *ikkarim*, but also because some wanted to expand the beliefs one must have rather than limit them to a short list. Analyzing the history of these lists, as well as the complex issues they raise, forces us to understand what exactly we believe, rather than boil down our most dearly held beliefs to short adaptations. While there is much more that can be said, and the interested reader is encouraged to read the primary and secondary sources in their entirety, hopefully we provoked interest into these critical questions.



Early Kabbalat Shabbat

Question: Since we moved the clock forward for daylight savings time, my husband started going to early Shabbat services. I wanted to know, am I obligated to accept Shabbat like my husband, or can I continue cooking, cleaning, and doing preparations until the actual onset of Shabbat?

Answer: It is customary for many to accept early Shabbat in the summer starting from "Plag HaMincha" in order to have the Shabbat meal at a normal hour and not too late.

There are differing opinions among the rabbis whether one's wife is drawn after his acceptance of Shabbat and thus she too must cease from prohibited labour from that time. As far as I know, there are three approaches and I will present them from stringent to lenient:

1. Rabbi Shmuel Vosner in his responsa *Shevet Halevi* (Vol. 7-35) holds that the wife is drawn after her husband's acceptance of Shabbat due to the halachic principle of "his wife is like himself" [*Ishto Kegufo*].

Therefore, when the husband goes to shul and accepts Shabbat early, the wife should cease from labour from that time.

2. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein in his responsa *Igrot Moshe* (Orach Chaim Vol. 3, Section 38) believes that the wife is independent in the matter of accepting Shabbat and is not drawn after her husband. However, she is forbidden to do labour for her husband. That is, since the husband accepts Shabbat and is forbidden to do work, it is forbidden for him to benefit from his wife's Shabbat labour on his behalf (unlike other people who work for him which is allowed, and this is due to the special relationship between husband and wife as he writes there).

3. Rabbi Moshe Shternbuch in his responsa *Teshuvot VeHanhagot* (Vol. 3-85) writes that the wife is not drawn after her husband's acceptance of Shabbat and she can continue all preparations until the time of the actual onset of Shabbat. However,

Rabbi Shternbuch believes that women should accept Shabbat at least a moment before her husband enters the home back from the shul. He writes this in light of the words of our sages that when a person returns home from shul on Shabbat, he enters together with two angels, one good and one bad. If everything is arranged when he enters his home and the Shabbat candles are lit, the good angel says, "May it be G-d's will that it should be so for the next Shabbat," and the bad angel says "Amen" to that. Therefore, Rabbi Shternbuch suggests that everything should be ready, and the woman should already have accepted Shabbat before her husband arrives home.

In practice, it seems that many follow the lenient opinion of Rabbi Shternbuch that the woman is not drawn after her husband's acceptance of Shabbat.

Have a halachic question? Share it with Rabbi Mann at ymanntorontorah.com.



New Book: *The Soul*, by Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz



The Soul
By Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz
Maggid Press, 2018

With the holiday of Pesach behind us, we turn our attention to Sefirat Haomer. In the mystical circles, the 49 day count from Pesach to Shavuot is a spiritual opportunity to turn inward and focus our attention on personal growth. To that end, these next few weeks we will be reading Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz's work on the soul, aptly named, *The Soul*.

What can be confusing is that Hebrew has different terms for "soul." Namely, both *nefesh* and *neshama* refer to what we call a "soul" in English. And so, at the outset, Rabbi Steinsaltz defines his terms. He explains,

We can say that the difference between the nefesh and the neshama lies in their foundations and their basic inclinations. The nefesh is the Self, the more conscious part of our inner being, and

it works within every person to fulfill the needs and desires of the Self, whether they are physical and instinctive or abstract and spiritual ... The neshama, on the other hand ... has no physical anchor; it is spiritual and abstract. It is not directly involved with the human body; it is involved with sanctity and with the human relationship with God.

We have, according to Steinsaltz, two different components to our soul. We have a *nefesh*, which drives our very human needs, but we also have a *neshama* which connects us to the divine. By exploring these two components, and getting a better grasp on what the soul is, we have a more complete picture of our soul and how we can become more soulful people.

I hope you will join me in our study of Rabbi Steinsaltz's *The Soul*! Check out the first 10 pages for free here: tinyurl.com/InsideTS

The Soul can be purchased from Koren Publishers at tinyurl.com/KorenBMZD. Use the code *TorontoTorah* for a 10% discount on this or any other book on their website



TABLE TALK RABBI NOAH SONENBERG, DEAN

Source: Vayikra 18:5

You shall keep My statutes and My laws which if a man obeys he shall live through them; I am the Lord.

Rabbeinu Bachya

"Which man shall carry out and live by them" — These words refer to the **במשפטים**, social laws. It is these laws which ensure the settling of the lands and the continued existence of the world.

Questions to Discuss

- Which social laws are highlighted in our Parasha?
- How do these laws keep society running without conflict?
- If you needed to choose three social laws to stress which would you choose? Why?

After Shabbat, please share your family's answers with us at nsonenberg@torontotorah.com to enter our raffle for a \$15 voucher for Grodzinski Bakery!

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Shabbat	Halacha from the Parasha	Clanton Park	After Hashkama Minyan	Rabbi Mann
	Gemara	BAYT	Between Mincha & Maariv	Rabbi Gutenberg
Sunday	Tzurba M'Rabanan – Halacha	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:30 AM	Rabbi Shor
	Men's Semichat Chaver: Hilchot Smachot	Clanton Park	9:00 AM	Rabbi Spitz & Rabbi Mann
	Shiur b'Ivrit	BAYT (Milevsky/Mizrachi)	9:00 AM	Rabbi Mann & Rabbi Lax
Monday	Sefer Shemot	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:00 PM	David Koschitzky
	The Wisdom of Solomon: Eshet Chayil	Zoom: tiny.cc/idanrak	2:00 PM	R' Rakovsky
	Men's Halacha	Shomrai Shabbos	8:30 PM	Rabbi Mann
Tuesday	Introduction to Gemara: Learn how to learn	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:30 PM	Rabbi Sonenberg
	Then and Now: Returning to the Land of Israel – a Study in Tanach	Zoom	1:30 PM	Rabbi Horovitz
	Women's Gemara Shiur	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:30 PM	Rabbi Anstandig
Wednesday	Women's Contemporary Halacha Shiur	Clanton Park	8:15 PM	Rabbi Mann
	Men's Contemporary Halacha	Clanton Park	After Maariv	Rabbi Mann
	The Torah's Insights on Building a Just and Equitable Society	Zoom	Begins May 15 10:00 AM	Rabbi Sonenberg
	Men's Gemara Bekiut	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:30 PM	Rabbi Sonenberg
Thursday	Exploring the Plagues	Shaarei Tefillah	8:00 PM	R' Rakovsky
	Tanach: Sefer Shmuel	Zoom: tiny.cc/BMZDTanach	1:30 PM	Rabbi Horovitz
	Men's Tzurba M'Rabanan	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:30 PM	Rabbi Turtel
Sun-Thu	Men's Gemara Iyun	BAYT (Milevsky/Mizrachi)	8:00 PM	R' Diena
	Men's Community Night Seder	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:30–9:30 PM	

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

Jewish life before, during, and after the Holocaust	Toronto Holocaust Museum	Tuesday, May 7	8:00–9:00PM
Shabbaton	Shaarei Tefilla	Shabbat, May 11	
Shabbaton with Rabbi Torczyner	Shaarei Shomayim	Shabbat, May 18	
"I Seek My Brethren": Dealing with Pro-Palestinian Jews	BAYT	Sunday, May 19	9:30-11:00 AM

YOUR BEIT MIDRASH

Rosh Beit Midrash

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