



BEIT MIDRASH ZICHRON DOV TORONTO TORAH

PARASHAT BEHA'ALOTCHA

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DVAR TORAH BEHA'ALOTCHA RABBI YEHUDA MANN, ROSH BEIT MIDRASH

What Does it Mean to Be a Jew?

This week we are learning about one of the many complaints of the Israelites: the manna. The Torah describes in Bamidbar 11:10, "Moshe heard the people of every family wailing, each at the entrance to their tents." The simple explanation is that they cried in their homes about the manna. However, Rashi offers a different explanation, saying that when the Torah mentions "the people wailing at the entrances of their tents," it means they cried about the Torah's prohibition against marrying close relatives.

The Maharal of Prague raises a famous question: Why did the Israelites cry about the prohibition against marrying close relatives? According to Jewish law, they were not considered close relatives at all. This is because when the Israelites received the Torah, they underwent a process of conversion. In conversion, there is a principle that "a convert who converts is like a newborn child," meaning that technically, a convert can marry his sister if she converted separately from him because their lives start anew upon entering the world of Torah. If so, why did the Israelites cry about their families, since they were no longer close relatives and could marry each other?

The Maharal resolves his own question by establishing that although we generally say a convert is like a newborn child who starts

his life anew, this was not the case with the Israelites at Mount Sinai. The reason for this is that the Talmud in *Shabbat* 88a says that G-d coerced the Israelites into accepting the Torah ("*Kafa Aleihem Har Kegigit*"). The principle that a convert is like a newborn child applies only when he converts by choice, but when someone converts under coercion, he is not considered a newborn child. The logic behind this is that for a person to change fundamentally, he must make decisions and choices on his own and not be forced to do so. A person who is forced to do something does not connect with the thing he is forced to do, but when a person chooses to do something, it becomes part of his personality.

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (*Harerei Kedem*, Part Two, Section 125) also says that in the case of the conversion at Mount Sinai, the principle of "a convert who converts is like a newborn child" did not apply, but he offers a different explanation as to why this is so. According to him, to enter the Jewish people, a person must accept two things upon himself: one, the commandments of God, and two, joining the "family" of the Jewish people. To be Jewish, it is not enough to observe the 613 commandments; one must also feel connected, bonded, and responsible for the Jewish people. Rabbi Soloveitchik proves from the words of

Maimonides in *Hilchot Teshuva* (3:11): "One who separates from the ways of the community, even though he has not committed any transgressions, but simply holds himself apart from the congregation of Israel, ... but goes his own way as if he were one of the nations of the world and not part of them—has no share in the World to Come." This Jew observes all the commandments and, according to Maimonides, does not commit transgressions, but he still has no share in the World to Come because he lacks a significant component of being Jewish—being connected to his Jewish brothers and sisters, sharing in their sorrows, and rejoicing in their happiness. Rabbi Soloveitchik explains that at the giving of the Torah, what was included in the conversion was accepting the commandments of God, but there was no need to join the Jewish people because they were already the descendants of "Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov," and therefore, the principle of "a convert who converts is like a newborn child" did not apply. This idea teaches us, a week after Shavuot that although we now aspire to strengthen our study of the Torah and observance of the commandments, we must not neglect an equally important component of our Jewish identity—feeling responsibility and mutual accountability for every Jew, wherever they may be.



Yirmiyahu 25

Yirmiyahu's vision in Chapter 24 followed upon the exile of King Yehoyachin to Babylon, along with the leaders of Judea. Now Yirmiyahu moves back in time, speaking in the fourth year of the reign of Yehoyachin's father, King Yehoyakim. Yirmiyahu warns of a future the reader has already seen, predicting that Divine wrath is coming for everyone.

First, Yirmiyahu castigates the Jews for ignoring the prophets. For 23 years, since the 13th year of King Yoshiyahu, Yirmiyahu has been proclaiming a daily summons to repentance, and the nation has ignored him (25:1-7).

Therefore, Hashem is going to bring Nevuchadnezzar upon the land, eliminating all rejoicing. The land will be in ruins, and the Jews and their neighbours will serve the Babylonians for seventy years. Hashem calls Nevuchadnezzar "My servant," a title given to only eighteen people in Tanach, reflecting

his role in carrying out a Divine mission. [See Avot d'Rabbi Natan II 43.] But after the seventy years, Hashem will punish Nevuchadnezzar; the Babylonians will take their turn as servants to other nations (25:8-14).

One might ask: why should the Babylonians be punished, if they are servants of Hashem? Rambam explains that there was

Hashem calls Nevuchadnezzar "My servant"

never any decree compelling anyone to perform wicked acts. No individual Babylonian was ever forced to harm a single Jew. They were satisfying a Divine desire, but they could have chosen otherwise (*Hilchot Teshuvah* 6:3-5).

Yirmiyahu is then given a cup of wine representing Divine wrath, to circulate to

every nation to drink. The drinking begins with Jerusalem and Judea, and then continues with Egypt, the Philistines, Edom, Moav, Amon, Tyre, Arabia, Babylon and numerous other nations. They will drink, they will become intoxicated, they will vomit and they will collapse (25:15-29).

Interestingly, the Talmud Yerushalmi (*Pesachim* 10:1) suggests that the four cups at the Seder reflect four cups of wrath Hashem mentions for His foes in Tanach, and four cups of consolation that Hashem will bring for us. Our cup is the first of the four cups of wrath.

Hashem then sends Yirmiyahu a series of images to describe the coming devastation. He is a lion, roaring. He shouts *heidad!* like someone trampling grapes rhythmically in a winepress. He sends a mighty storm from the ends of the earth. The slaughter is coming for the flocks of sheep. There will be no way to escape (25:30-38).



Week 1: Biography of Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik

Rabbi Yosef Dov (Joseph Ber) Soloveitchik (1903-1993) was among the most important rabbinic leaders and thinkers of the twentieth century and the spiritual leader of Modern Orthodoxy. He was part of the famed Brisker dynasty. His great-great-great-grandfather was the founder of the modern Yeshiva movement, Rabbi Chaim Volozhin. His great-great-grandfather was Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin (the Netziv). His great-grandfather and namesake was the Beit HaLevi. His paternal grandfather, Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik founded the Brisker methodology of Talmud. His maternal grandfather was Rabbi Eliyahu Feinstein (thus making him a cousin of Rabbi Moshe Feinstein). His father was Rabbi Moshe Soloveitchik who was a Rosh Yeshiva at Yeshiva University's rabbinical school, RIETS (Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary), where Rabbi Soloveitchik would also be Rosh Yeshiva.

He studied Talmud mostly with private tutors and his father. He studied philosophy at Freicrich Wilhelm University in Berlin, focusing on many subjects, including philosophy, specifically neo-Kantian thought. He wrote his Ph.D. thesis on the epistemology and metaphysics of Hermann Cohen.

In 1932, he moved to America, settling in Boston. There he led the community, including as the head of the *Vaad HaIr*. He opened the Maimonides school, famously pioneering Talmud study for women by having both boys and girls study. He would later deliver the opening Talmud shiur at Stern College for Women.

In 1941, he succeeded his father as Rosh Yeshiva at RIETS where he would teach and ordain thousands of students. He would become known simply as "The Rav".

He was known for his penetrating Talmud classes as well as his groundbreaking philosophical works including *Halakhic Man*, *Halakhic Mind*, *Lonely Man of Faith*, and others. He also famously broke with his family's anti-Zionism, eventually heading Mizrachi, and writing seminal works on Religious Zionist Thought, such as *Kol Dodi Dofek*. Many of his lectures on Zionism were collected, such as in *Chamesh Derashot*.

While he wrote only a few books in his lifetime, dozens of works based on his writings have been published posthumously, increasing the influence of his thought. We will focus on his philosophy of mitzvot.



Your Non-Jewish Torah Student

Question: Every week, I deliver a Dvar Torah (a Torah thought) at the office, and sometimes a non-Jewish colleague joins in. Should I stop giving the Dvar Torah?

Answer: This is a very interesting question! Indeed, the Gemara in *Sanhedrin* 59a states that a non-Jew is forbidden to study Torah, and in Tractate *Chagigah* 13a, it is stated that a Jew is forbidden to teach Torah to a non-Jew (even if the non-Jew is already studying on his own...). It seems that this is undisputed, so should you perhaps indeed stop this beautiful practice? The answer is that we find many allowances that apparently should also permit you to continue what you started in the office.

Permission 1: Studying the seven Noahide laws. The Gemara in Tractate *Sanhedrin* 59a says that a non-Jew is permitted to study Torah that is within the framework of the seven Noahide laws.

Permission 2: Studying the Written Torah. Many poskim have permitted for

various reasons teaching a non-Jew the Written Torah, and only the Oral Torah, such as Gemara and Midrashim, is forbidden (*Shiltei Gibborim, Sanhedrin* Chapter 7; *Melamed Leho'il, Part 2, 77*).

Permission 3: Studying for the purpose of conversion. The Maharsha on Tractate *Shabbat* 31a says that a non-Jew is permitted to study Torah when he intends to convert. Although there were those who disagreed with the Maharsha, today this is definitely allowed and encouraged, and converts are even tested on the material they learned before joining the Jewish people.

Permission 4: Studying for the sake of acquiring knowledge. A significant novel idea is found in the *Seridei Eish* (Part 2, Siman 55) who states that a non-Jew is permitted to study Torah if his intention is not for religious purposes. The *Seridei Eish* compares the Torah study of a non-Jew to the Sabbath observance of a non-Jew, where the prohibition applies only when he

observes the Sabbath for religious purposes, but if he just lies in bed all day and does not perform Sabbath labors, there is no problem. Similarly, Torah study is permitted if he has no religious intent.

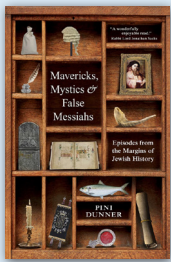
Based on this permission, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein permitted (*Igrot Moshe, Yoreh De'ah* 2:132) teaching a group of Jews even if there is a non-Jew among them, since the teacher's intention is to teach the Jews and not to transmit the Torah to the non-Jew, and thus there is no problem.

Therefore, it would be permissible for you to continue your blessed practice in the office and to interrupt the race for livelihood to deliver words of Torah to your Jewish colleagues. Even if a non-Jewish colleague listens, it is fine since his intention is probably not religious, and your intention is not to teach him but to share Torah with your Jewish friends.

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



Week 1: Chaim Samuel Jacob Falk



Mavericks, Mystics & False Messiahs
By Rabbi Pini Dunner
Toby Press, 2018

“Every child growing up in strictly Orthodox communities around the world is familiar with the picture of the Baal Shem Tov. It is ubiquitous, and no one ever questions its authenticity, which is very strange. How can anyone imagine that an exotic-looking man wearing a large black beret, with a compass in his hand, is the revered founder of the hasidic movement? Why would he be wearing a beret? Surely he should be wearing a fur streimel? And why is he holding a mathematical instrument, of all things? If anything, he should be holding a volume of Talmud, or some other sacred book—or holding nothing at all!

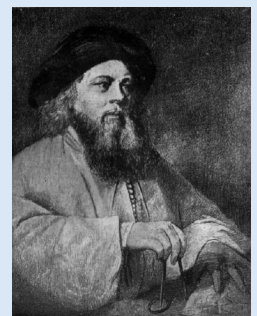
Of course, the answer to all these questions is very simple: the man in the portrait isn't the Baal Shem Tov who founded the hasidic movement. The portrait is of Chaim Samuel Jacob Falk, a mysterious character who

lived in London during the latter part of the eighteenth century.” (*Mavericks, Mystics & False Messiahs*, pages 21-22)

Rabbi Dunner chronicles the strange story of Jacob Falk, a famed kabbalist known as the “Baal Shem of London.” “Baal Shem,” meaning “Master of the Name,” was a title conferred to many kabbalists. His title led to the mistaken identification of his portrait with the more famous “Baal Shem,” Rabbi Yisrael ben Eliezer.

Unfortunately not much is known today about this colourful kabbalist. However, the intrigued reader is encouraged to start with Rabbi Dunner's excellent treatment of Jacob Falk's life.

Mavericks, Mystics & False Messiahs 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



The portrait in question



TABLE TALK RABBI NOAH SONENBERG, DEAN

Source: Bamidbar 10:30

He said to him, "I shall not go; but rather to my land and to my family shall I go."

Rashi: Be it on account of my property or be it on account of my family.

Seforno: My old age can't tolerate the climate and food of another county.

Chizkuni: I won't leave a certainty for a doubt.

Questions to Discuss

- Do you think Chovav's reasons not to go to Israel were legitimate or rationalizations?
- What is the most compelling reason to explain why people don't want to leave their location?

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
	Sefer Shemot	Yeshivat Or Chaim	New Time: 5:00 PM	David Koschitzky
Monday	Men's Halacha	Shomrai Shabbos	8:30 PM	Rabbi Mann
	Introduction to Gemara: Learn how to learn	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:00 PM	Rabbi Sonenberg
Tuesday	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
	Women's Contemporary Halacha Shiur	Clanton Park	8:00 PM	Rabbi Mann
Wednesday	Men's Contemporary Halacha	Clanton Park	1 hour before Mincha	Rabbi Mann
	Men's Gemara Bekiut	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:00 PM	Rabbi Sonenberg
Thursday	Tanach: Sefer Shmuel	Zoom: tiny.cc/BMZDtanach	1:30 PM	Rabbi Horovitz
	Men's Tzurba M'Rabanan	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:00 PM	Rabbi Turtel
	Men's Gemara Iyun	BAYT (Milevsky/Mizrachi)	8:00 PM	R' Diena
Sun-Thu	Bekiut Gemara - Yevamot	Shaarei Shomayim	Sunday: 7:45 PM Mon-Thu: 6:30 PM	R' Diena

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

Medical Ethics: Genetic Screening and Intervention Zoom: tiny.cc/mtorcz Monday, June 24, 2024 7:00–8:30PM
with Rabbi Torczyner

YOUR BEIT MIDRASH

Rosh Beit Midrash

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Maggidei Shiur

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner
Rabbi Jared Anstandig
R' Ezer Diena
Rabbi Josh Gutenberg
Rabbi Hillel Horovitz
R' Idan Rakovsky
Rabbi Bentzi Shor
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