



BEIT MIDRASH ZICHRON DOV TORONTO TORAH

PARASHAT KORACH

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DVAR TORAH KORACH RABBI YEHUDA MANN, ROSH BEIT MIDRASH

Where Will You Blossom?

In this week's Parasha, we learn about the dispute between Korach and his followers against Moshe and Aharon. They argue, "... all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and Hashem is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of Hashem?" (Bamidbar 16:3). We were all at Mount Sinai and we all are holy—so why is Moshe the leader and Aharon the High Priest and not us?

Throughout the Parasha, Moshe and Aharon prove without any doubt that they were chosen for these positions:

1. Moshe tells the nation that if Korach and his followers die an unnatural death, then they will know that "the Lord has sent me to you." Indeed, that happens—the earth opens its mouth and swallows Korah and all his assembly! Moshe, without doubt, is the chosen leader
2. During the plague, when the Angel of Death is moving through the camp and killing people, Moshe tells Aharon to take the *machta* and stand before the angel and tell him he cannot proceed. Aharon indeed stops the Angel of Death. Aharon, without a doubt, is the Kohen Gadol.

But all this is not enough, and for the third time, Moshe provides a proof. Moshe

instructs from each tribe to take a staff and place it in the Mishkan to see what happens to the staves. Indeed, only Aaron's staff blossoms; all the other staves remain dry. The Torah concludes and says, "And they saw and took each man his staff." They take back their staves.

The question is: Why are so many proofs needed? Wasn't it enough that the earth swallowed people and that Aharon stopped the Angel of Death? And after all this, why were they required to take the staves back with them—what would they do with the staves?

The Lubavitcher Rebbe answers these questions with an inspiring and powerful message—the need for the miracle of the staves was to answer the most significant question they asked, they received an answer and evidence that Moshe was the leader, and that Aharon was indeed the Kohen Gadol, but the most important question remained unanswered—"what about us?", "We also want to be holy!", "What will become of us if you take all the holiness, and we are left with nothing?"

This is the purpose of the final miracle—Moshe is conveying the message that one should not think there is only one way to serve G-d—only if a person is a prophet and leader like Moshe, or only if he is a Kohen like Aharon. Each of us has our

role—our mission that G-d wants us to fulfill. This is the message of the staves.

Moshe asks all the tribes to place themselves—represented by the staves in the Mishkan—but only Aharon's staff will blossom, only he will truly fulfill his potential because that is his role and this is the right place for him. And the rest — Moshe instructs to take their staves for the purpose of placing them elsewhere, where they will blossom, where they will grow, where they will truly fulfill their potential—because the role of the rest of the people is not here, but some place else.

Many times in our lives, we think there is only one way to succeed—to study in this particular yeshiva, to attend this particular university, or to get this particular job. Without all this, we feel we are failures.

We must recognize—this university, this job, is not the right place for everyone. It is not certain that we will flourish in that place. Although some or many may flourish there because it is truly their place, many will not flourish there because it is not the right place for them.

By understanding that there is more than one way to success in life, we can take ourselves elsewhere, like the staves, to a place that suits us—and there we will blossom.



Yirmiyahu 27

In Chapter 26, at the start of the reign of King Yehoyakim, Yirmiyahu warns the Jews to repent; perhaps they could still avoid being crushed by the Babylonians. The reception is violent; Yirmiyahu's audience nearly kills him. In Chapter 27, authored in that same year, Yirmiyahu turns to our eastern and northern neighbours — Edom, Moav, Amon, Tyre and Tzidon — and warns them to accept the imminent yoke of Nevuchadnezzar.

Hashem instructs Yirmiyahu to place ropes and reins upon his own neck. Then, when the kings of these five neighbours send agents to King Tzidkiyahu, Yirmiyahu is to give them the reins, as well as a prophetic message. [Fifteen years elapse from the start of Yehoyakim's reign until those agents arrive; Rashi contends that Yirmiyahu wears the ropes and reins for fifteen years,

but Radak states that he dons them only at the end.] (27:1-3)

Why do those kings send agents to King Tzidkiyahu? Radak and Abarbanel both contend that they want the Jews to join a rebellion against the Babylonians, but Rashi cites a midrash asserting that Nevuchadnezzar placed those nations under the auspices of King Tzidkiyahu, when Tzidkiyahu pledged fealty to Nevuchadnezzar.

The message of the ropes and reins is simple: Accept the rule of Nevuchadnezzar upon yourselves. Hashem declares, "I formed the earth, humanity and the beasts of the world with My great might and outstretched arm, and I have given it to the one who was right in My eyes." Hashem casts Nevuchadnezzar as His servant. Whoever accepts Babylonian rule will remain in their land; those who rebel will suffer sword,

famine, plague, and destruction (27:4-8).

Yirmiyahu warns: Do not listen to false prophets, who encourage revolt! And Yirmiyahu advises the five kings that he has given the same message to King Tzidkiyahu, to the kohanim, and to the entire Jewish nation (27:9-17).

Yirmiyahu concludes this message by describing the fate of the vessels of the Beit HaMikdash; they will be taken into exile, and they will remain there until the day Hashem chooses to bring them back. [This verse is cited in *Ketuvot* 110b-111a to support the view that Jews are not to return to Israel until Hashem brings us back.] If the prophets who promote rebellion are genuine, let them intercede with Hashem to prevent the exile of the last vessels of the Beit HaMikdash! But they cannot; the decree has been issued, and nothing will alter it (27:18-22).



Week 3: The Rambam of Mishneh Torah

While Rabbi Soloveitchik rejected philosophical attempts of Rambam the philosopher to explain mitzvot, he embraced the philosophy of Rambam the halakhist, pointing to several key passages in *Mishneh Torah*, the Rambam's halakhic work, that provide a proper model for interpreting mitzvot. As he writes:

It is worthy of note that Maimonides, the halakhic scholar, came nearer to the core of philosophical truth than Maimonides, the speculative philosopher. In contradistinction to the causal method of the philosophical Guide ... the halakhic Code (the Mishneh Torah) apprehends the religious act in an entirely different light. (Halakhic Mind, pp 93-4)

There, Rambam does not seek "why" God commanded given mitzvot. Instead, he extrapolates lessons that can emerge from the mitzvot. For example:

Even though the sounding of the shofar on Rosh HaShanah is a decree, it contains an allusion. It is as if [the shofar's call] is saying: Wake up you sleepy ones from your sleep and you who slumber, arise. Inspect your deeds, repent, remember your Creator. Those who

forget the truth in the vanities of time and throughout the entire year, devote their energies to vanity and emptiness which will not benefit or save: Look to your souls. Improve your ways and your deeds and let every one of you abandon his evil path and thoughts. (Hilchot Teshuva 3:4, alhatorah)

Similarly, concerning the laws of purity and immersion in the mikvah:

Although it is a Scriptural decree, there is an allusion involved: One who focuses his heart on purifying himself becomes purified once he immerses, even though there was no change in his body. Similarly, one who focuses his heart on purifying his soul from the impurities of the soul, which are wicked thoughts and bad character traits, becomes purified when he resolves within his heart to distance himself from such counsel and immerse his soul in the waters of knowledge. And Ezekiel 36:25 states: "I will pour over you pure water and you will be purified from all your impurities and from all your false deities, I will purify you." (Hilchot Mikvaot 11:12)

We will expand on this next week.



Is it permissible to take vitamins on Shabbat?

Question: I am a “bodybuilder” and I do a lot of exercise, so I take protein supplements daily. Is it permissible to take these on Shabbat?

Answer: Your question touches on whether it is permissible to take vitamins on Shabbat. Chazal forbade taking medicine on Shabbat in certain situations because, in the past, medicines were made from ground herbs, and there is a concern that one might grind these herbs on Shabbat to prepare the medicine. Does this rule also apply to vitamins?

The *Shulchan Aruch* in Orach Chaim [328:37] provides the following guidelines: Something considered “food for the healthy” is permissible to take on Shabbat. Something that is “not food for the healthy” may be taken by a healthy person but not by someone who is ill. Regarding “food that is not for the healthy,” the *Mishnah Berurah* brings a differing opinion that if a healthy person takes the medicine for health reasons, it will be problematic. Based on this, various opinions among the halachic authorities have been given regarding vitamins. We will present these opinions from the most

lenient to the most stringent [as found in the *Mishnah Berurah Dirshu*, siman 328 note 108].

(a) Rabbi Ben Zion Abba Shaul permitted it completely because he believed that vitamins fall into the category of “food for the healthy,” which everyone agrees is permissible to take on Shabbat.

(b-c) The *Igrot Moshe* and Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach said that vitamins may be taken in certain situations:

1. The *Igrot Moshe* understood from the *Mishnah Berurah* that if taken for health reasons, it would be problematic, implying the person is not completely healthy. Why would a completely healthy person take vitamins? Only someone who is “a little ill” would want to take vitamins, and thus it would be forbidden.

2. Rabbi Auerbach also ruled according to the *Mishnah Berurah* that if taken for health reasons, it would be forbidden. Therefore, if one takes vitamins because doctors said they have a deficiency in a

particular vitamin, it would be problematic as it is considered to be medicine prohibited on Shabbat. However, if one takes vitamins instead of eating oranges rich in vitamin C, but does not have a vitamin C deficiency, they are considered healthy, and it would be permissible even according to the *Mishnah Berurah*.

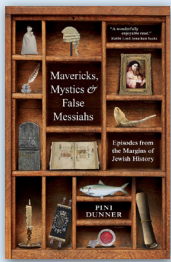
(d) The most stringent opinion is that of Rabbi Nissim Karelitz, who held like the straightforward interpretation of the Magen Avraham, that if the purpose of taking the vitamin is for health reasons, it would be forbidden as medicinal use on Shabbat.

In practice, I have seen many who are lenient about taking vitamins nowadays because, in addition to the more lenient opinions mentioned above, one must consider the position of “Ketzot HaShulchan,” who argued that today, medicines are manufactured in laboratories and factories, and there is no concern of grinding herbs. [*Minchat Asher*, Part 3, Siman 23].

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



Week 3: Rabbi Emden versus Rabbi Eybeschütz



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

“Rabbi Yaakov [Emden] took the amulet and carefully unfolded it. It contained a roughly drawn Star of David, with Hebrew letters inside and surrounding it. The letters seemed random, forming unintelligible words that only made sense to someone familiar with the craft of writing kabbalistic formulas. The rabbi was quiet as he turned the amulet this way and that. He held it up to the window to examine it in the light. Suddenly his face creased into a frown, and he gazed intently at one of the words on the amulet. He looked up.

“Are you absolutely sure this was written by Rabbi Yonatan [Eybeschütz]?” he asked. “We are completely certain,” Prager replied. “It was received directly from the pregnant woman he gave it to.” “That is not good, not good at all. Come over here and let me show you something.” The men shuffled over to the window, and Rabbi Yaakov held the amulet up to the light, pointing to the handwritten word he had just closely examined.

He looked at them, but they all shrugged their shoulders. They had no idea what the word meant. Rabbi Yaakov's voice began to shake with emotion. “This word is made up of an acrostic using a cryptic code known as ATBASH ... What this word actually says is ‘King Messiah Shabbetai Tzvi’” (*Mavericks, Mystics & False Messiahs*, page 55-56)

In the mid-1700s, the European Jewish community erupted with the controversy between two rabbinic leaders: Rabbi Yaakov Emden and Rabbi Yonatan Eybeschütz. As described in the above account, Rabbi Emden accused the latter of being a closet follower of Shabbetai Tzvi (see last week’s issue for more on Shabbetai Tzvi), a charge which Rabbi Eybeschütz forcefully denied. In this chapter, the longest in the book by far, Rabbi Dunner details the ins and outs of the entire controversy, from initial suspicions to Rabbi Emden’s startling deathbed revelation. Read through this chapter and see if you can figure out the truth!

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



TABLE TALK RABBI NOAH SONENBERG, DEAN

Source: Mishna Avot 5:17

Every dispute that is for the sake of Heaven, will in the end endure; But one that is not for the sake of Heaven, will not endure...And which is the controversy that is not for the sake of Heaven? Such was the controversy of Korah and all his congregation.

Questions to Discuss

- What is the goal of an argument that is for the sake of Heaven?
- How does arguing help achieve that goal?
- What is the goal of an argument that is selfish?
- How does arguing further one from that goal?

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	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	Women's Gemara Shiur	Zoom: tiny.cc/bmzdwbm	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 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

YOUR BEIT MIDRASH

Rosh Beit Midrash

Rabbi Yehuda Mann
ymann@torontotorah.com

Dean

Rabbi Noah Sonenberg
nsonenberg@torontotorah.com

Maggidei Shiur

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

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Ronit Bendayan
rbendayan@torontotorah.com
(416) 630-6772 x 243

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