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Faith Within Reason, and Without

Adam Friedmann

The parshah introduces us to the spiritual greatness of Avraham Avinu and recounts many of the trials that he faced, as well as several interactions that he had with G-d. Only in the penultimate encounter, which describes the *brit bein habetarim* (covenant between the parts) does Avraham speak. Responding to a promise from G-d, "I am your protector, your reward is very great" (Bereishit 15:1), Avraham expresses concern about his lack of progeny: "My Lord G-d, what can you give me? I go childless..." (ibid. 15:2). G-d responds by reassuring Avraham that his own child, not anyone else, will inherit him. He then takes Avraham outside and invites him to count the stars, if he can, affirming that his descendants would be just as numerous. The sentence following this exchange reads, "He believed in G-d and it was considered to him righteousness" (Ibid. 15:6, translated according to Rashi). The implication is that Avraham fortified himself with new *emunah* at this point, and this was considered a credit to him. What exactly was this new facet of *emunah* which Avraham, who by this point had already seemingly proven his complete faith, gained?

The details of the first 75 years of Avraham's life are famously missing from the Torah. The Rambam (Hilchot Avodah Zarah 1:3) describes Avraham's recognition of G-d in the midst of the pagans of Ur Kasdim as a kind of philosophical awakening: "As soon as this mighty one was weaned

he began to stray in his thinking (from the idolatry of his surroundings) while he was still small and began thinking day and night... And his heart strayed and understood until he comprehended the path of truth and understood the route of justice using his correct intellect. And he knew that there is only one G-d and He conducts the spheres and He created everything, and there isn't any G-d in existence except Him." It was based on this awareness and the conviction in the truth of his philosophical analyses that Avraham began his early efforts of convincing others of the truth of G-d. Presumably, Avraham held fast in this philosophically based *emunah* even after G-d revealed Himself, and throughout the early trials we find in the parshah. In leaving his homeland for Canaan, being forced down to Egypt, and confronting Lot, Avraham displayed unwavering faith. Indeed, when G-d told him that his descendants would inherit the land, he did not question, and he responded with joy and sacrifices (ibid. 12:7-8, 13:14-18). Why then, in the exchange described above, did Avraham suddenly emphasize his current lack of children?

The commentators expend great effort to explain the precise nature of Avraham's thought process. One facet is highlighted by several commentators: Avraham did not think it was **reasonable** for him to expect to have children. In explaining G-d's emphasis on counting the stars, Rashi (ibid. 15:5) cites a midrash that Avraham had concluded, based on astrology, that he

was never destined to have children. However, Ramban (ibid. 15:2) notes that part of Avraham's concern stemmed from his advanced age. Perhaps he didn't merit the miracle required to have a child at that stage. And yet, G-d promises that a direct child of Avraham will inherit him. It is in this moment that the rational nature of Avraham's faith is challenged. In order to maintain his belief in G-d's promise, Avraham would need to abandon, at least in this detail, his rational assumptions and move forward purely on the basis of his trust in G-d. And this is precisely what he does. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (ibid. 15:6) explains that the term "belief in G-d" describes a relation which is deeper than just the intellectual "belief of" something and relates to a relationship of trust. It is this new facet of *emunah* which Avraham discovered.

In the course of our lives as religious people, both approaches to *emunah* seem valid and important. On the one hand, one may seek to intellectualize faith in order to grasp it more tangibly in the mind, and communicate it to others. On the other hand, certain moments require us to step outside of the rational, and to stake our faith on the bonds of love and trust which typify G-d's relationship with Klal Yisrael.

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OUR BEIT MIDRASH

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B'Malchut haKedushah
Bikkur b'Heichalo shel ha'Admor
meiHosiatin: Admor Tzioni b'Tel Aviv
The World of Rabbi Yaakov
Friedman: a Chasidic-Zionist Leader
in Tel Aviv
Rabbi Yehudah Brandes
Tevunot, 2006

The Admor of Hosiatin

B'Malchut haKedushah offers a look into the life and thought of one of the great and unique Admorim (leaders of chassidic sects) of recent times: Rabbi Yaakov Friedman of Hosiatin. The book lays out the fundamental philosophy of the Admor of Hosiatin, whose base of operations was in Tel Aviv in the years before the Holocaust, and who lived to see the establishment of the State.

The Admor of Hosiatin blended the old with the new, and a commitment to Torah and Chasidism with a relationship with the State and all that surrounded it. In particular, Rabbi Yaakov of Hosiatin, as well as his predecessor, Rabbi Yisrael of Hosiatin, was a Zionist, and an engaged and active supporter of the Mizrachi movement. Rabbi Yisrael of Hosiatin had settled in central Tel Aviv, among

the general population rather than in an enclave of Chasidim, and to this day his home functions as a synagogue in central Tel Aviv.

Rabbi Yaakov Friedman produced *Ohalei Yaakov*, a book of speeches on the weekly Torah portion presenting Ruzhiner Chasidic insights relating to the parshah, general world affairs, and developments in Eretz Yisrael specifically.

The Book

In general, books on Chasidism tend to lay out general Chasidic ideas, or to focus on the biography of a particular Admor. Uniquely, Rabbi Brandes blends both elements. He provides structured instruction and deep insight into the Chasidic thought of the Admor of Hosiatin via analysis of his *Ohalei Yaakov*, while simultaneously including historical information and biography.

In the opening chapters of the book, Rabbi Brandes introduces the reader to the philosophy of Ruzhiner Hasidism, to enable the reader to understand how the worldview of Rabbi Friedman fits into that

framework. The reader recognizes the blend of Hasidism and Zionism found in the Beit Midrash of Ruzhin, and then in the thought of Rabbi Yaakov Friedman. Along the way, Rabi Brandes also describes the piety of Rabbi Friedman, as well as his general worldview. He provides many citations from *Ohalei Yaakov* to illustrate his points.

Chasidism and Zionism

Few books emphasize the strong connection between Chasidism and Zionism; indeed, there have been attempts to conceal this connection in recent generations, among the descendants of the Chasidim who lived in Eretz Yisrael before the establishment of the State. Even within segments of Ruzhiner Chasidim, there are those who wish to conceal this connection; a censored edition of *Ohalei Yaakov* has been produced, eliminating the Admor's statements supporting Zionism and the State of Israel. But Zionism did exist historically within some of the Chasidic streams, and this book is an important record of that fact.

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Israel's Chief Rabbis: Rabbi Betzalel Zolty, Jerusalem

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Rabbi Yaakov Betzalel Zolty
1920 (Poland) – 1982 (Israel)
Chief Rabbi (Ashkenazi) of Jerusalem, 1978-1982

Biography

Sarah Rachel and Moshe Aryeh Zolty ascended from Vitebsk, Poland to Israel with their six-year-old son, Yaakov Betzalel, in 1926. They settled in Jerusalem, where young Yaakov Betzalel attended Yeshivat Eitz Chaim, headed by Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer and Rabbi Aryeh Levin, and then Yeshivat Chevron. He was recognized from an early age as an outstanding and dedicated student, known for studying for fifteen hours without interruption.

Rabbi Zolty apprenticed with Rabbi Zvi Pesach Frank and served on the chief Rabbinical Court of Jerusalem, before becoming a member of the chief Rabbinical Court for the State of Israel at the age of 35. Rabbi Zolty was awarded the Rav Kook Israel Prize for Torah Literature twice, once for his general work in 1954 and again for his *Mishnat Yaavetz* in 1964. In 1973, Rabbi Zolty's candidacy for the Chief Rabbinate of the State of Israel was defeated by the successful campaign to elect Rabbi Shlomo Goren. Five years later, Rabbi Zolty was selected over Rabbi Dov Lior to fill the long-vacant seat of Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem, and he served in that role until his passing on the 30th of Cheshvan in 1982.

Rabbi Zolty's daughter, Chanah Bat Shachar-Eichenstein, is an award-winning Israeli author. His son, Rabbi Aryeh Zolty, is Rosh Kollel of a branch of the Chevron Yeshiva.

Public Positions

Rabbi Zolty was known for an uncompromising commitment to halachah, and a refusal to cater to political authority. In one example, Rabbi Zolty expressed harsh opposition to Rabbi Goren's leniency in the highly-publicized Langer affair, a complicated case involving the descendants of a woman who had been married to a man who may or may not have converted to Judaism. [For more on this debate, see Rabbi J. David Bleich, *Contemporary Halakhic Problems* Vol. 1.]

In another community controversy, Rabbi Zolty removed the kosher certification of the Jerusalem Hilton, as part of a campaign to enforce Shabbat observance at eighteen of the city's "Jewish" hotels. He declared, "If there is no Sabbath observance, there is no kashruth. One can't have faith in one without the other." (Time Magazine 112:20, 11/13/1978) Rabbi Zolty also prohibited the use of flowers at IDF military funerals, contending that this was a non-Jewish practice. (Noam 2)

It is worth noting that Rabbi Zolty was not uniformly strict. A letter he wrote one month before his passing permitted the levying of alimony payments against husbands who are legally separated from their wives but refuse to provide a *get*. This is the basis for halachic prenuptial agreements meant to prevent *agunah* situations. (Rachel Levmore, *Get-Refusal and the Agreement for Mutual Respect: Israel Today*, Hakirah 9)

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Biography

Rabbi Tzvi H. Chajes

Rabbi Jonathan Ziring

Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Chajes (1805-1855), was a leading Galician Talmud scholar. He was a student of many great scholars, most notably Rabbi Ephraim Zalman Margulies. While most of the Galician rabbis of his time opposed any accommodation or embrace of modernity, Rabbi Chajes was unique. Leaders like Rabbi Moshe Sofer (Chatam Sofer) went to extreme lengths to oppose the *haskalah* and declared *chadash assur min hatorah* [new things are forbidden by biblical law], but Rabbi Chajes accepted many elements of modern culture. He was educated in modern and classical languages, geography, history, and philosophy. According to some, he received a doctorate, making him the only person to publish comments in the standard Vilna Talmud Bavli and to hold a doctorate. He also embraced the emancipation of European Jewry, although others, such as Rabbi Sofer had been more hesitant.

Rabbi Chajes was a prolific author, and he wrote on a wide range of topics. Some of his writing dealt with traditional topics, as in his commentary to the Talmud. Many of his works focused on the halachic process, highlighting the mistakes he saw being made by the emerging Reform movement. Though he opposed the *haskalah*, he did study using the tools identified with that movement, subjecting Torah to academic and historical analysis. He was closely connected with scholars such as Nachman Krochmal and Solomon Leib Rapoport.

Bruria David Hutner (the daughter of Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner) wrote her dissertation examining Rabbi Chajes's life and thought. Her thesis is evident from its title - "The Dual Role of Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Chajes: Traditionalist and Maskil." (<http://bit.ly/2eg55Er>) She argues that while he defended, and was clearly faithful to, the traditional world, he did not realize how much he had been influenced by the *haskalah*. However, to this author, this claim is insufficiently substantiated. Certainly, being able to use the best of the world in our study of Torah and pursuit of truth is a strong part of our tradition. As Rambam said: take the truth from he who says it.

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Torah and Translation Rights of the King

Torat haNeviim, Din Melech b'Yisrael

Rabbi Tzvi Chajes, Kol Kitvei Maharitz Chiyut 1:46-48

Translated by Rabbi Jonathan Ziring

אולם בעיקר הדבר לא ידעתי מהיכן הוציא רבינו דיש רשות למלך לאסור ולהכות בשוטים לכבודו, אבל לא יפקיר ממון ואם הפקיר הרי זה גזל, עיין רמב"ם פ"ג מהלכות מלכים ה"ח. ואם יש לו רשות על חיי העם, מכל שכן על ממונם!

ועוד, דעיקר דין מורד במלכות לא נאמר בתורה כלל, רק הוא מקרא ביהושע, ואם כן דברי קבלה אינם רק מדבריהם...

לכן נראה לי דבר חדש דכל משפטי המלוכה המה רק ענין תקשורת בין המלך להעם, ועל אופנים הללו נאותו הצדדים, והעם התרצו לוותר הונם ורכושם לטובת הכלל להיות דבר אחד לדור אשר יצא לפניו וילחם מלחמותיהם...

ועתה, כיון שראינו דלא וותרו הונם ורכושם רק לצורך ולתועלת המדינה, שוב הדבר מובן מעצמו דהכי שלא נאה שום צמיחת פעולה מלקיחת הונם, שוב חזר דין התורה למקומו ועל אופן זה לא נתרצו הצדדים...

ולאו דוקא ממונם ורכושם הפקירו לצורך כבודו של מלך ולצורך התועלת אשר יגיע מן ממשלתו... ואף דאין אדם מושל ושליט על חיינו ואסור לאבד עצמו לדעת... ואפילו לחבול בעצמו אסור... כיון דקיימא לן דרודף שרודף אחר חברו להרגו הנה דמו מסור ביד כל אדם... כיון שממשלת המלך הטבה כללית לכל העם והפרט שרוצה למרוד ולהרוס יסודי החברה והנהגה ישרה הנה נקרא 'רודף' כיון שמן מרידה נוכל לסתבב ולהסתעף למלחמות והריגות ושפיכות דם נקים... וזה שמורד בו 'רודף' אחר כללית האומה' מקרי.

However, at the core of the matter, I don't know where our teacher [Maimonides] derived that "the king has authority to imprison or beat with rods for the sake of his honour, but he may not declare property ownerless, and if he does make property ownerless, it is theft" (see Rambam Laws of Kings 3:8). If he has authority over the lives of the nation, for sure he should have over their property!

Furthermore, the basis of the law of one who rebels against the kingdom is not mentioned in the Torah at all! Rather, it is from the book of Joshua, and if so the words derived from the prophets are only rabbinic...

Therefore, it appears to me [to suggest] something novel, that all the laws of the monarchy are just an issue of agreement between the king and the nation, and regarding these ways the parties agreed and the people consented to surrender their wealth and assets for the general good, so that there should be one ruler per generation, who will go out before them and fight their battles...

And now that we have seen that they only surrendered their wealth and property for the good of the state, it becomes self-evident that where nothing positive emerges from the taking of their wealth, the law of the Torah returns to its initial state, as in this fashion the parties did not agree...

And not only did they give up control over their property and assets for the sake of the honour of the king and the benefit which will be achieved from his rule... Rather, even though a person does not rule and hold mastery over his own life, and he is forbidden to commit suicide... and even wounding himself is forbidden... since we rule that when one pursues another with intent to kill, his blood is given over to all people... the rule of the king is a general good for the entire nation, and the individual who seeks to revolt and destroy the foundations of society and proper direction is called an aggressor, as his rebellion could cause and branch out into war, murder, and bloodshed of innocents... and he who rebels, is an aggressor against the entire nation.

Vayikra 19:19 warns, “And a garment of *kilayim*, *shaatnez*, shall not ascend upon you.” This is clarified in Devarim 22:11, “You shall not wear *shaatnez*: wool and linen together.” Per Sefer haChinuch, this is the 551st mitzvah.

Biblically, this prohibition applies specifically where the two materials are blended together; halachic authorities dispute the degree to which the wool and linen must be blended in order for the garment to be prohibited. (Niddah 61b, Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 300:1-2; Aruch haShulchan Yoreh Deah 300)

Shaatnez is considered a classic case of a *chok*, a law for which we know no rational explanation. Nonetheless, commentators suggest multiple explanations, including:

- Egyptian priests blended the plant and animal kingdoms in their idolatrous rituals. (Rambam, Moreh Nevuchim 3:37)

- The *parochet* curtain in the Mishkan was made of wool and linen, and we are not allowed to model the Mishkan’s elements in our own property. (Daat Zekeinim to Devarim 22:11)
- Kayin offered G-d flax, from which linen is made, and Hevel offered G-d sheep, from which wool comes. The prohibition against wearing *shaatnez* reminds us of the first murder. (Daat Zekeinim *ibid.*)
- G-d embedded unique traits in every element of Creation, and blending them would corrupt our world. This may also relate to prohibitions against blending meat and dairy, and cross-breeding species. (Sefer haChinuch 62)
- Mystically, wool represents Divine purity, and linen represents earthiness. The two should not be merged. (Rokeiach to Vayikra 19:19)

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Weekly Highlights: Nov 12 – 18 / 12 Cheshvan – 18 Cheshvan

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
שבוע Nov. 11-12				
Fri. 4:20 PM	R’ Jonathan Ziring	Parshah and Kugel	BAYT	
After hashkamah	Adam Friedmann	Parshah Analysis	Clanton Park	
Before minchah	R’ Jonathan Ziring	Daf Yomi	BAYT	Rabbi’s Classroom
After minchah	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	The Idolater’s Idol	BAYT	Simcha Suite
Sun. Nov. 13				
8:45 AM	R’ Josh Gutenberg	Contemporary Halachah	BAYT	Third Floor
8:45 AM	R’ Jonathan Ziring	Responsa	BAYT	Hebrew
9:15 AM	R’ Shalom Krell	Book of Shemuel	Associated North	Hebrew
Mon. Nov. 14				
9:30 AM-Noon	Mrs. Elliezra Perez	Tefillah: Connecting to G-d	Ulpanat Orot	University Women
7:45 PM	Adam Friedmann	Gemara: Arvei Pesachim	Clanton Park	
8:30 PM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Avodah Zarah 2 of 6: The Tirupati Sheitel	Shomrai Shabbos	Third floor, Men
Tue. Nov. 15				
9:30 AM-Noon	Mrs. Ora Ziring	Chullin / Hilchot Kashrut	Ulpanat Orot	University Women
1:30 PM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Ezra: The Decree of Cyrus	Shaarei Shomayim	
Wed. Nov. 16				
9:30 AM-Noon	Mrs. Ora Ziring	Tanach	Ulpanat Orot	University Women
10:00 AM	R’ Jonathan Ziring	Arguing with G-d 2 of 6: The Audacity of Moses	Beth Emeth	There is a fee; see torontotorah.com/arguing
12:30 PM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	May a Jew profit from selling medicine?	Zeifmans LLP 201 Bridgeland Ave	Lunch served; RSVP to rk@zeifmans.ca
2:30 PM	R’ Jonathan Ziring	Narratives of Exodus	carolleser@rogers.com	Women
8:00 PM	Adam Friedmann	Why do we do...?	Shaarei Tefillah	
Thu. Nov. 17				
9:30 AM-Noon	Mrs. Elliezra Perez	Netivot Shalom on Parshah	Ulpanat Orot	University Women
1:30 PM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Shoftim: Gidon’s Miracle	49 Michael Ct.	Women
Fri. Nov. 18				
10:30 AM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Laws of Onaah	Yeshivat Or Chaim	Advanced