



BEIT MIDRASH ZICHRON DOV TORONTO TORAH

PARASHAT VAYAKHEL

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DVAR TORAH VAYAKHEL RABBI NOAH SONENBERG, DEAN

United by a Common Purpose

The Torah spends a great deal of time describing the instructions to construct the Tabernacle in parashat Terumah and then repeats the details in our parasha. I recall commenting to a member of my shul that it seemed to be an excessive amount of detail shared with us for a construction project which had limited relevance over the course of Jewish history due to the eventual replacement of the Tabernacle with the Temple in Jerusalem. This member replied and said that in his opinion the details were too sparse and he would have in fact appreciated even more information. He, as an architect, was keenly aware that the Torah was clearly not providing an instruction manual about how to build or visualize the Tabernacle due to a lack of necessary instruction that is normally required for construction projects. This short conversation has changed the way I have approached these parshiyot and I now look at the details shared not as instructions for building but rather as sharing messages about the ideals and values that are projected by the Tabernacle's construction and design.

Hashem tells us that "they shall make for me a Sanctuary and I will dwell in their midst" (Shemot 25:8). He didn't say that "you" will make for me a Sanctuary but rather the people as a whole will make it. This is why

it was necessary for everyone to contribute to the construction project. When the people brought too much material there was a miracle which caused the excess material to be completely used without any going to waste so that every contribution would be used and every participant would be valued (Or HaChaim, Shemot 36:7). A united people contributing to a common purpose had the ability to create a situation where Hashem's presence would reside with them.

Values that are projected by the Tabernacle's construction and design

The details of the construction can allude to the way to create a united nation. When describing the curtains which covered the Tabernacle we see the Torah stress the goal of making the Tabernacle become one (36:13,18). The method of fastening the curtains teaches us an important lesson about joining together. The Torah describes the curtains that are fastened together as having loops that are opposite each other with an external hook joining them. This method of fastening seems to be less efficient than sewing the hooks to one curtain and then attaching them to the loops found opposite them on the connecting curtain.

True unity requires equality where we value the opinions and perspectives of others and don't simply impose our opinions on others. If one party claims superiority over the other, when they join together they are in fact not mutually unified but are rather in a coerced relationship (hooks attaching to loops). At the same time, if both parties have equal claim to their opinions and perspectives and don't relent, then they risk finding no ability to become united (two loops). The ideal way to unite a group is to value our differences but at the same time look to find an external joining force which is universally accepted which can unite us (independent hooks).

Jewish thought values and accepts different perspectives with the idea that in debates that are for the sake of Heaven such as that between Beit Hillel and Beit Shamai: both opinions are to be considered "the words of the living G-d" (Talmud Bavli, Eruvin 13b). When we prioritize living according to the will of Hashem and recognize this value being present in those with whom we disagree, we can all join together peacefully and with respect under His canopy. By doing so, we create a world of healthy debate and mutual respect that is fit for His presence to reside in.



Yirmiyahu 13

Yirmiyahu's prophecies began with dramatic images of almond branches and boiling pots, but then they settled into dialogue. In Chapter 13, a vivid image returns!

Hashem tells Yirmiyahu to purchase and don a belt made of flax, taking care not to expose it to water; and Yirmiyahu does so. Then Hashem tells him to remove the belt and embed it in a rock in the Euphrates River, which he does. Then, after "many days," Hashem tells Yirmiyahu to retrieve the belt. Yirmiyahu digs it out—and it is ruined, useless (13:1-7).

Hashem explains to Yirmiyahu that the belt represents the strength of Judea and Jerusalem; the idolatrous Jews, once powerful, will now be decrepit and useless. The reason for choosing a belt for this message is that Hashem had drawn the Jews close,

like a belt to the wearer, but now that relationship was in ruins (13:8-11).

Hashem then tells Yirmiyahu to convey a cryptic message: every flask is filled with wine. The listeners will remark that this is natural and well-known, and then

Hashem will intoxicate the residents and leaders, and set them against each other

Yirmiyahu is to explain that Hashem is going to intoxicate all of the residents and leaders, and set them against each other to the point of destruction (13:12-14). Radak explains the choice of imagery: when flasks bang against each other, they smash into shards.

Yirmiyahu calls upon the Jews to set aside their arrogance and humbly give honour

to Hashem, before darkness comes for them and they stumble. If they will not listen, Yirmiyahu will weep for the flock of Hashem, who will be destroyed. Yirmiyahu demands of his listeners: Tell the king (Yehoyachin) and his mother to humble themselves, for their splendor has been removed, their cities are locked up, their people are exiled. The invader (Babylon) is coming from the north, and where will their flock be then? (13:15-21)

Yirmiyahu concludes the chapter on a hopeless note: When you ask why this befell you, recognize that it is because your sins became an inherent part of you. Like an Ethiopian whose skin colour does not change, and a leopard who cannot alter his spots, so you have become incapable of good. You will never purify yourselves (13:22-27).



Week 7: Rabbi Chasdai Crescas's *Ikkarim*

Rabbi Yosef Albo's teacher, Rabbi Chasdai Crescas, also enumerates *ikkarim* in his book, *Or Hashem*. Like Rabbi Albo, he seems to focus on fundamentals that make faith coherent rather than dogmas. However, unlike Rabbi Albo who focuses on the three principles that are essential to *dat elokit*, religion in general, Rabbi Crescas (Maamar 2) counts six that are necessary for belief in Torah.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Knowledge of God | more limited belief in free will |
| 2. God's Providence | than many other thinkers, |
| 3. God's Power/Ability | especially the Rambam) |
| 4. Prophecy | 6. The purpose of the Torah, |
| 5. Free will (though he has a much | namely that it is critical and |
| | leads to the perfection of man. |

In addition, he counts eight beliefs that one must have to not be considered a heretic, similar to the way the Rambam used the notion of *ikkar*, as dogmas, many of which indeed overlap. They are:

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|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| 1. The creation of the world | 2. The survival of the soul after death |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 3. Reward and Punishment | 7. That the Kohen Gadol would be |
| 4. Resurrection of the dead | answered when he asked ques- |
| 5. The eternity of the Torah | tions of the <i>Urim v'Tumim</i> |
| 6. The unique prophecy of Moshe | 8. Mashiach |

He has a third category, the beliefs that are related to mitzvot. I would refer to these as emergent beliefs, those that may not be necessary *a priori*, but clearly emerge from the mitzvot as central themes.

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|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. The efficacy of prayer and <i>birkat kohanim</i> (the priestly blessing) | 3. The importance of Yom Kippur and the uniqueness of different times of year as reflected by holidays. |
| 2. The efficacy of repentance | |

Clearly, while the Rambam and Rabbi Albo each took a single understanding of the idea of *ikkarim*, Rabbi Crescas felt that there were different interpretations that each providing important insight into our system of beliefs. Thus, he includes models similar to that of the other two scholars and includes another that has no parallel.



Nefillat Apayim Without a Sefer Torah

Question: I daven Mincha every day in the office—should I rest my head on my arm [*Nefillat Apayim*] during the recitation of *Tachanun*?

Answer: The Beit Yosef in Siman 131 brings the opinion of the Rokeach that one should only do *nefillat apayim* in the presence of a Sefer Torah, as it is stated in the Book of Yehoshua (7:6) "And Yehoshua fell on his face to the ground before the Ark of the Lord." However, the Beit Yosef himself believes that this is not mandatory by law.

The *Shulchan Aruch* (which was also authored by the Beit Yosef) indeed does not mention that one should only do *nefillat apayim* in the presence of a Sefer Torah, but the Rema writes (Orach Chayim 131:2) that one should only do *nefillat apayim* in the presence of an Aron Kodesh and a Sefer Torah.

According to this law, when you daven in the office, you should not do *nefillat apayim* because I assume that you do not have a Sefer Torah there.

However, there are some exceptional cases to consider:

1. *Nefillat apayim* in a place where there are holy books—the *Mishnah Berurah* brings a discussion whether one should do *nefillat apayim* in a place where there are holy books such as Talmud, Tanakh, Mishnah. It seems from the *Mishnah Berurah* that it is not customary to do so. However, I have seen that Rabbi Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky practiced this in his home, and likewise, the *Igrot Moshe* relied on this approach with children to educate them in *nefillat apayim*. (*Mishnah Berura Dirshu*, 131, footnote 17).
2. Jerusalem—It is the custom in Jerusalem to do *nefillat apayim* even if there is no Sefer Torah in the vicinity because Jerusalem is considered a holy place where the Divine Presence resides entirely, and therefore one should do *nefillat apayim* as if in the presence of an Aron and Torah. The Rabbis are divided whether this custom applies only in the Old City or also

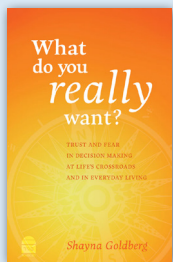
in the new neighborhoods of Jerusalem.

In light of these exceptions, Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon made a significant innovation—in his opinion, soldiers currently serving in the defense of the people and the land of Israel should do *nefillat apayim* during prayer even if there is no Aron and Torah nearby because many of the soldiers have Mishnah and Gemara that some Rabbis believe that one should do *nefillat apayim* in the presence of those holy books. Also, it is said in the Torah, "For the Lord your G-d walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you and to give up your enemies before you" (Devarim 23:15). Thus, just as in Jerusalem one should do *nefillat apayim* because the Divine Presence is present throughout the city, it is the same that the Divine Presence is present in the camp of the soldiers who sacrifice themselves for the sake of the people of Israel, and therefore they can pray with *nefillat apayim* without a Torah.

Have a halachic question? Share it with Rabbi Mann at ymann@torontotorah.com.



Week 5: Faith from Doubt



What Do You Really Want?
By Shayna Goldberg
Maggid Press, 2021

"Out of doubt comes certainty; out of angst comes reassurance. When we call out to God, even when we are fearful or angry, our genuine faith is never more alive." (*What Do You Really Want*, page 70)

The context of this quote is an analysis by Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik of a comment by Søren Kierkegaard, a 19th-century philosopher. Kierkegaard critiques the story of 11th-century monk, Anselm of Canterbury, who was deep in prayer for a proof

of God's existence. Kierkegaard chastises Anselm: The mere fact that he prayed to God was proof of God's existence. More proof was redundant (see Soloveitchik, *And From There You Shall Seek*, page 16).

When we ask God for guidance, we demonstrate that we believe in Him and trust in His answers. Curiously, the mere fact that we pray to believe in God and trust God, reveals that we already do.

If we struggle to make a decision, we may feel depressed and hopeless. It can be heartening to know that merely calling out for help is a step toward a resolution.

And we are all capable of asking for help. Indeed, Rabbi Yaakov ibn Habib in *Ein Yaakov* (*Berachot* 63a) cites one of the greatest ironies of prayer and God: "As the saying goes, the thief at the entrance to the tunnel [just before breaking into a house] calls out to God." If the criminal prays for success in his crime, surely we can pray for our success in decision-making. When we do so, our relationship with God grows stronger.

What Do You Really Want? 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: Shemot 35:2

Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you a holy day, a sabbath of rest to the Lord, whoever does any work on it shall be put to death.

Questions to Discuss

- What is the value in work?
- Is it necessary to work six days of the week in

order to properly experience Shabbat?

- What makes a day holy?
- How does resting help you achieve the goal of holiness on Shabbat?
- Why is transgressing Shabbat considered to be such a serious violation of Hashem's law?

After Shabbat, please share your family's answers with us at nsonenberg@torontotorah.com to enter our raffle for a \$15 voucher for Tova's 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	Cancelled this week	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	8:00 PM	David Koschitzky
Monday	The Torah: A Psychic Turn. Psychological Theories in the Eyes of Tanach	Zoom: tiny.cc/idanrak	Cancelled this week	R' Rakovsky
	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	8:15 PM	Rabbi Mann
Wednesday	Exploring the Characters in Megillat Esther	Zoom	10:00 AM	Rabbi Sonenberg
	Men's Contemporary Halacha	Clanton Park	8:00 PM	Rabbi Mann
	Men's Gemara Bekiut	Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:00 PM	Rabbi Sonenberg
	Eliyahu HaNavi: A Prophet of Fire & Water	Shaarei Tefillah	Cancelled this week	R' Rakovsky
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	Men's Community Night Seder	Yeshivat Or Chaim Clanton Park	Sun–Mon, Wed–Thurs: 8:00–9:00 PM Tues: 8:00–9:00 PM	
	Pre-Maariv Shiur	Yeshivat Or Chaim	New Time 8:45–9:00 PM	Rabbi Sonenberg

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

Midreshet Yom Rishon with Rabbi and Mrs. Sonenberg	BAYT	Sunday, March 17, 2024	10:00–11:30 AM
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YOUR BEIT MIDRASH

Rosh Beit Midrash

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