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## IN THIS ISSUE

PARSHA: BEHALOTECHA	I-5
40 YEARS & THE MANNA	I,8
LETTERS	I,6,7
COMMUNITY	9

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Detroit	8:51	Philadelphia	8:11
Houston	8:04	Phoenix	7:20
Jerusalem	7:26	Pittsburgh	8:32
Johannesburg	5:05	Seattle	8:49
Los Angeles	7:46	Sydney	4:37
London	8:58	Tokyo	6:38
Miami	7:54	Toronto	8:41
Montreal	8:24	Washington DC	8:15

## Weekly Parsha

# Behalotecha

RABBI BERNIE FOX

**The Pesach Sacrifice  
Offered the First Year of  
Bnai Yisrael's Travels in the  
Wilderness**

*And Bnai Yisrael should prepare  
the Pesach offering in its time.*  
(BeMidbar 9:2)

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# 40 Years & the Manna

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

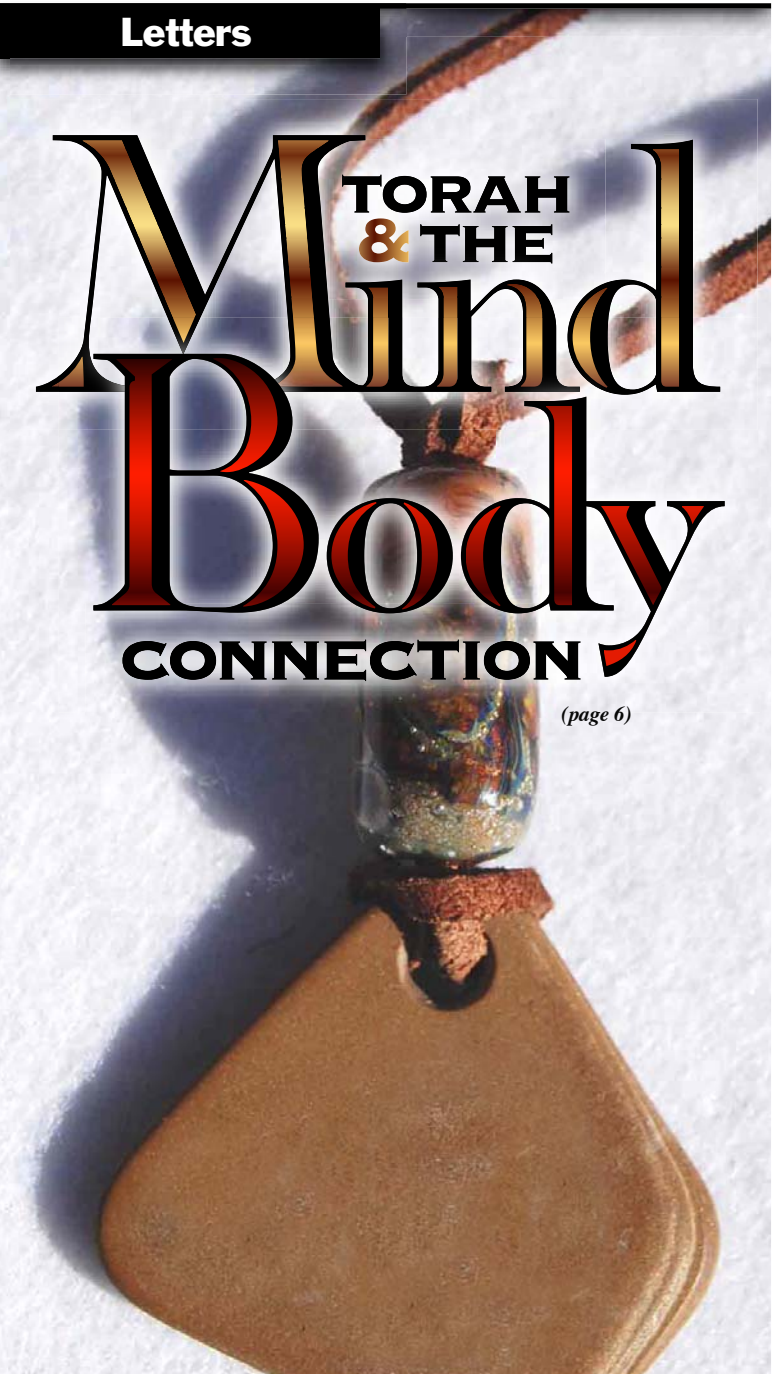
In order to understand the concepts in the manna, we must understand the events immediately preceding its appearance: The Jews traveled to Israel, and were promised its inheritance by God. No doubts were presented to them regarding their ability to conquer the land. While treading Israel's borders, the people desired to send spies to evaluate the land. This was not commanded by God or Moses. Moses consented to this, for he desired that they see there is nothing to hide. Moses hoped the Jews would abandon their wish to spy the land upon seeing Moses' own conviction that all their requests were complied with forthright (Rashi). However, the Jews insisted and spied the land. After their return forty days later, ten of the twelve spies incited a riot. They terrified the people with the spread of a defeatist position - they felt the current inhabitants were invincible, thereby denying God's word. Along with their heretic opinions and projections, they decided not to take on the land.

*(continued on page 8)*

## Letters

# TORAH & THE Mind Body CONNECTION

(page 6)



(Behalotecha cont. from pg. 1)

## Weekly Parsha

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Bnai Yisrael completed the first year of their travels in the wilderness. Hashem commanded the nation to observe the Pesach celebration on the anniversary of the exodus from Egypt. Our Sages explain that during the forty years that Bnai Yisrael traveled in the wilderness they only offered the Pesach sacrifice on this occasion. The remaining years the sacrifice was not offered.[1] Why was that commandment to offer the Pesach not observed during the subsequent years of their journey and why was the commandment observed during the first year?

Nachmanides raises an additional question. The commandment to offer the Pesach is one of the mitzvot of the Torah. These commandments are to be performed in every generation. Why did Hashem command Bnai Yisrael to offer the Pesach on the first anniversary of the Exodus? This is one of the mitzvot that the people accepted at Sinai. No additional command should be needed!

In response to Nachmanides' above question, he explains that the permanent mitzvah of offering the Pesach took effect only after Bnai Yisrael entered the Land of Israel. This commandment did not apply during the travels in the wilderness. Therefore, offering of the Pesach on this first anniversary required a special commandment.[2] However, Nachmanides' answer raises a new question: Why did the permanent mitzvah to offer the Pesach not come into effect until the land was entered? Nachmanides does not comment on this issue. However, there is an obvious explanation. The Pesach sacrifice commemorates the redemption from Egypt. This redemption was not completed with the departure from Egypt. The process of redemption included the receiving of the Torah and the entry into Israel.[3] At the first anniversary of the Exodus, the Torah had been received at Sinai. However, the people had not yet entered the Land of Israel. The process of redemption was not complete. Therefore, the permanent mitzvah of offering the Pesach could not take effect. For this reason a special commandment was needed to legislate the offering of the Pesach.

We must now return to our original questions. Our questions were: Why was the Pesach not offered after the first year of Bani Yisrael's sojourn in wilderness and why was it offered the first year? According to Nachmanides, the first question is easily answered. The nation only became

obligated to annually offer the Pesach after entering the land. During the travels in the wilderness they were not subject to this mitzvah. However, our second question still requires a response. Why was the first year different from these subsequent years? Why was the nation provided with a special commandment to offer the sacrifice the first year of their journey? In other words, the Pesach could only be offered in the wilderness in response to a special commandment. This commandment was issued during the first year in the wilderness. It was not re-issued the remaining forty years. Why did Hashem not re-issue this special command the remaining years of the travels?

In order to answer this question we must consider subsequent events. Originally, Bnai Yisrael was to enter the land of Israel during this second year. The nation was to be in Israel at the third anniversary of the exodus. The permanent mitzvah of offering the Pesach would then apply. In short, had this original plan been followed the offering of the Pesach would have taken place on each anniversary of the Exodus. There would not have been an interruption.

Why did Hashem abandon this plan? The nation sent spies to scout the land. They returned with a discouraging report. The spies questioned the ability of Bnai Yisrael to conquer the nations occupying Israel. The people became fearful and refused to proceed. They were punished. The nation was condemned to wander in the wilderness for forty years. Conquest was postponed. The process of redemption was suspended.

Let us return to our question. Why did Hashem not re-issue the command to observe the Pesach sacrifice during the forty years of wandering? As we have explained, the Pesach offering reflects redemption. During the wandering, redemption was not complete. A special command was required for this period. However, this special command was very similar to the permanent command. In both commands the Pesach offering reflected and recognized the redemption. The Pesach of the permanent mitzvah recognized a redemption that was complete. The special mitzvah related to redemption that was an on-going process.

(continued on next page)



During this period of wandering the process of redemption was suspended. The redemption was not complete. Neither was the process on-going. Therefore, the permanent command and the special command were not appropriate for this period.

### The Significance of the Passages 12:35-36 in Sefer BeMidbar

*And when the Ark went forth Moshe said: "Arise, Hashem and disperse Your enemies. And those that hate You will flee from before You." And when it came to rest he said, "Return, Hashem to the myriads of the thousand of Israel." (BeMidbar 12:35-36)*

In a Torah scroll these two pesukim are set apart from the preceding and following passages. An inverted Hebrew letter nun appears before the passages. The same inverted letter follows the passages. Why are these passages set apart? The Talmud, in Tractate Shabbat, explains that these passages are regarded as a separate book of the Torah. They are set apart to indicate this special status.[4]

This explanation only raises an additional question. Why are these passages given the status of a separate book of the Torah? There are various responses to this issue. Many of the answers assume that the Torah is attributing some special significance to the content of the passages. However, Rav Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin Zt"l (Netziv) offers another approach. Netziv bases his explanation upon a discussion in Tractate Shabbat. The Talmud comments that the Torah is not actually composed of five books. It is composed of seven. Beresheit, Shemot VaYikra and Devarim are each counted as single books – contributing four of the total seven books. However, BeMidbar is counted as three books. This is because our pesukim compose a separate book. This two-passage book divides BeMidbar into two additional books. The section preceding our passages is one book. Our pesukim constitute a second book. The section following our passages is a third book.[5]

Netziv explains that our passages are not set apart because of their unique content. They are set apart in order to divide Sefer BeMidbar into two separate parts. This break is designed to contrast the first portion of the sefer with the material that will follow the break. What is this contrast?

Netziv explains that the first part of the sefer depicts the close relationship between Hashem

and His nation. The sefer begins with a detailed description of the encampment in the wilderness. The various tribes camped around the Mishcan – the Tabernacle. The influence of Hashem was manifest in the Mishcan. Hashem was among the people. Also, the inauguration of the Mishcan is described.

The mitzvah of sotah that is related in the previous parasha captures this relationship. This test of a suspected adulteress relies on the intervention of Hashem. The woman is given a mixture to drink. This mixture is harmless. However, if the woman is guilty of adultery, Hashem will perform a miracle. The mixture will kill the woman. This entire concept assumes a remarkably close relationship between Hashem and Bnai Yisrael.

The latter section of the sefer depicts a different relationship. The nation begins to complain against Hashem. They send spies to study the Land of Israel. The nation refuses to enter the land. Korach and his followers rebel. As the nation removes itself from Hashem, He responds. He distances Himself from His people. In response to the nation's refusal to enter the land, He condemns the generation to death in the wilderness. According to our Sages, their punishment also included the eventual exile of the nation from the Land of Israel. Various other punishments are depicted, throughout the latter half of the sefer.

We can now define the contrast contained in Sefer BeMidbar. The nation entered the wilderness with a unique closeness to Hashem. The sefer contrasts this intimacy with the more distant relationship that developed in the course of the sojourn in the wilderness. Our pesukim are the dividing point between these two relationships.

We can now understand the reason Sefer BeMidbar is characterized as a single book and as three separate books. It can be described as three books because our pesukim divide the first portion of the sefer from the latter portion. These two portions describe very different relationships between Hashem and His nation. On this basis the opening and closing sections can be regarded as separate books divided by a third intervening book.

BeMidbar can also be described as a single book. It is designed to express contrast. The contrast is created through including the two relationships in a single book. From this perspective, BeMidbar deserves to be regarded as a single book. [6]



### The Prohibition against Lashon Ha'ra and a Strategy for Addressing the Behavior

*And Miryam and Aharon spoke about Moshe regarding the beautiful woman he had married – for he had married a beautiful woman. (BeMidbar 12:1)*

The above pasuk tells us that Miryam and Aharon spoke about their brother Moshe. The Torah does not provide many details regarding the specific conversation that took place between Miryam and Aharon, but our Sages provide some details. They explain that Miryam initiated the conversation. Aharon participated by listening. Miryam told Aharon that she understood from Moshe's wife – Tziporah – that Moshe was not longer intimate with her.[7] Miryam and Aharon found this astounding. They too were prophets. Yet, they had not abandoned intimacy with their spouses.[8] By engaging in this conversation, Miryam and Aharon violated the prohibition of lashon hara – speaking in a derogatory manner about another person.

The Torah explains that as a result of this sin, Miryam was stricken with tzara'at. Tzara'at is a skin disease described in Sefer VaYikra. From the account in Sefer VaYikra it is apparent that tzara'at is a punishment. However, it is not clear from that account what sin precipitates this punishment. Based on this incident in our parasha, it is clear that lashon hara is one of the sins that results in tzara'at.

The connection between tzara'at and lashon hara is also indicated by another set of passages. In Sefer Devarim the Torah tells us to carefully follow the directions of the kohen in the diagnosis and treatment of tzara'at. Then the Torah further admonishes us to remember the incident of Miryam.[9] According to our Sages, the message is that to avoid tzara'at we must refrain from the behavior of Miryam. In other words, one must avoid lashon hara.[10]

All behaviors that are prohibited or required by the Torah are included in one of the 613 mitzvot. What mitzvah prohibits speaking lashon hara? In order to answer this question, we must first define

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our terms. Maimonides in his code of halachah – the Mishne Torah – in Hilchot Dey'ot explains that lashon hara is one type of prohibited speech. It is not the only form of speech about others that is prohibited. There are three types of speech that are prohibited. The first is rechilut. This is gossip. It need not be negative. It is merely the act of discussing someone's affairs with a third party. Lashon hara is a special case of rechilut. It is negative gossip; speaking in a disparaging manner about someone. However, there is one interesting qualification that must be met in order for this prohibition to be violated. Lashon hara involves imparting disparaging information that is true. Lashon hara does not include making up outright lies. Spreading disparaging, false rumors is motzi shem ra. In short, gossip is rechilut; lashon hara is speaking about someone in a disparaging manner – albeit that the statement is true. Spreading false, disparaging rumors is motzi shem ra.[11] We can now identify the mitzvah violated by lashon hara. According to Maimonides no mitzvah prohibits specifically lashon hara. Instead, the Torah prohibits rechilut and this includes the special case of lashon hara.

Nachmanides disagrees with Maimonides. He insists that there is a specific mitzvah prohibiting lashon hara. Nachmanides argues that our Sages regarded lashon hara as a serious sin. They went so far as to compare lashon hara to the spilling of blood.[12] It is incomprehensible that there is no specific command prohibiting the behavior! He adds that the Torah prescribes a very serious punishment to lashon hara – tzara'at. We would expect that this serious consequence would be in response to the violation of a specific commandment. He concludes that this specific mitzvah is derived from our parasha and the Torah's latter admonition – in Sefer Devarim – to guard ourselves from tzara'at and to remember this experience of Miryam. The specific commandment is either a negative commandment communicated in the admonition to avoid tzara'at or a positive command contained in the admonition to remember the experience of Miryam.[13]

In summary, Maimonides and Nachmanides agree that lashon hara is prohibited. However, according to Maimonides, it is included in the general mitzvah prohibiting gossip. Nachmanides insists that there is a separate mitzvah that specifically prohibits lashon hara.

Let us take a moment to understand the basis of this argument. Each position seems to have its merit. It seems that Nachmanides' argument is rather compelling. Lashon hara is a serious sin. Does it not make sense that it deserves its own mitzvah? How might Maimonides respond to this

issue? However Maimonides' position is also reasonable. Maimonides maintains that lashon hara is a form of gossip and is included in the general prohibition against gossip. What is so objectionable to including the prohibition against lashon hara in the more general mitzvah prohibiting rechilut?

It is clear that the Nachmanides' basic premise is that lashon hara must be assessed in view of the damage and hurt that it causes. Our Sages compare the lashon hara to the spilling of blood. Clearly, they are evaluating lashon hara from the perspective of the destruction caused. From this perspective it does not make sense to compare lashon hara to innocent gossip. Gossip is inappropriate. But from the perspective of causing damage it is a very different activity than lashon hara. Unlike gossip, lashon hara is an explicit attack against a person's reputation. It is not appropriate to include the damaging behavior of lashon hara in the general mitzvah prohibiting senseless gossip. Therefore, Nachmanides argues that lashon hara deserves its own mitzvah and should not be included in the general prohibition against rechilut.

So, why does Maimonides include lashon hara within the mitzvah prohibiting rechilut? It is important to note that Maimonides includes the laws of rechilut in the Hilchot Dey'ot section of the Mishne Torah. What is the subject matter of

Hilchot Dayot? In this section of the Mishne Torah, Maimonides outlines the perimeters of general emotional and physical health. The inclusion of the mitzvah prohibiting rechilut in this section implies that engaging in gossip represents a self-destructive behavior. The person that engages in gossip is undermining his or her own emotional wellbeing. From this perspective, it is appropriate to include lashon hara within the mitzvah prohibiting all forms of gossip. All of these forms of gossip cause harm to one's own emotional wellbeing.

We can now understand the dispute between Nachmanides and Maimonides. According to Nachmanides, the essential aspect of lashon hara is the harm caused to others. Therefore, lashon hara cannot be included in the general mitzvah prohibiting gossip. Maimonides maintains that essential component of lashon hara is the harm caused to oneself. From this perspective it is appropriate to include lashon hara in the general mitzvah prohibiting rechilut.

However, it must be noted that Maimonides does acknowledge that lashon hara is a special case of rechilut. This acknowledgement implies that the harm caused by lashon hara to one's personal wellbeing is somewhat different from the harm generated by general rechilut. However, it is not clear from Maimonides' comments exactly wherein the difference lies.

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If we pursue this issue we will discover that Maimonides' position provides an essential insight into the behavior of lashon hara. We notice that despite the widespread desire to curtail our engagement in lashon hara, this determination does not easily translate into an actual change in behavior. Why is this behavior so difficult to modify and correct? Part of the answer may lie in the traditional method used to address the problem. We notice that the most common method for addressing the problem of lashon hara is to read more about the gravity of the sin. Books about lashon hara are Judaic best-sellers. But it seems that in the long-run learning more about the specific laws of lashon hara and the gravity of the sin has limited impact on the behavior.

In fact, this outcome is not surprising. If a person wants to change one's eating habits does one seriously think that reading diet books will foster this change? One who wishes to be less of a couch potato will probably not meet this challenge simply by reading about exercise. This reading may provide temporary inspiration. But in the long-run this approach does not usually lead to permanent results. Instead, it may be more helpful to identify and address the root source of the behavior. In the case of eating, perhaps one should consider why he or she overeats. What is the attraction? What function is food serving in the person's life?

It makes sense that the same approach can be effective in approaching the problem of lashon hara. What causes us to engage in this behavior?

Our Sages provide an amazing insight into this issue. They tell us the when we depreciate others we are really reflecting upon our own inadequacies.[14] In other words, we speak about others in order to deflect our attention – or the attention of others – from our own insecurities, failings and faults.

Let us consider this assertion more closely. We can all acknowledge that one of the greatest challenges we face in achieving personal growth is the need to critically evaluate our own attitudes and behaviors. The more deep-set a behavior or attitude, the more difficult it is to recognize and acknowledge. But this does not mean that we are not in some sense aware of our personal faults. We are frustrated with these imperfections and yet, we are unwilling to completely acknowledge them and confront them. How do we tend to deal with this frustration? Our Sages are suggesting that we "self-medicate." We escape our frustration by transferring our attention to the shortcomings of others. Rather than focus on ourselves, we change the focus of our attention to the other person. We evaluate that person and dissect the person's behaviors and attitudes with the precision that we should direct towards the more painful and difficult task of introspection.

This is the reason the Maimonides regards rechilus as a behavior that undermines our own personal health. We are diverting our attention from ourselves and attaching it to another person. Lashon hara is an extreme manifestation of this mechanism. Gossip is a simple diversion. In

speaking lashon hara we are actually aware – at some level – of a personal deficiency. But rather than acknowledging our personal shortcoming, we focus our attention on this failing as manifested in someone else. In this manner, we actually engage in denial of our own faults.

This insight of our Sages suggests an approach to dealing with the urge to speak and participate in lashon hara and rechilus. The urge is apparently motivated by the presence of an awareness of some personal failing. But this awareness evokes an unhealthy response. We transfer our focus from ourselves to the other person. If this is correct, then each time we feel the urge to participate in lashon hara or rechilus, we need to respond with a question. What is bothering me about myself? What am I trying to avoid considering? Rather than allowing our attention to be diverted, we need to sharpen our focus on ourselves and allow for a moment of introspection.

This is not an easy solution to apply. But it seems to respond to the fundamental motivations behind lashon hara and rechilus. Perhaps, if we keep our Sages insight in mind, we will be better able to overcome the urge to participate in lashon hara and rechilus. ■

[1] Sifrei, Parshat BeHa'alotecha, Chapter 9.

[2] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer BeMidbar 9:1.

[3] Sefer Shemot 6:6-8.

[4] Mesechet Shabbat 116a.

[5] Mesechet Shabbat 116a.

[6] Rav Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin (Netziv), Commentary Hamek Davar on Sefer BeMidbar, Introduction.

[7] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer BeMidbar 12:1.

[8] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer BeMidbar 12:2.

[9] Sefer Devarim 24:8-9.

[10] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Devarim 24:9.

[11] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Dey'ot 7:1-2.

[12] Mesechet Erechim 15b.

[13] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Devarim 24:9.

[14] Mesechet Kedushin 70b.

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(cont. from page 1)

## Letters



# Letters

from our

## READERS



**Bryan:** Talmud Sabbath 66b discusses the Sabbath prohibition for women to carry the "Evven Takumah" [miscarriage prevention stone]. I wanted to know if there is more info on it.

Thank you,  
**Bryan**

**Rabbi:** Bryan, let's analyze the source you cited. Bear in mind that stones are not typically permitted for use, transport or carrying on Sabbath:

*"The Rabbis learned: a woman may go outside carrying an Evven Takumah on the Shabbos. Rabbi Meir said, 'She may go outside even with an object of identical weight of the Evven Takumah.'"*

*The permission to carry the stone extends not only to a woman who previously miscarried, but also to women who had not yet miscarried. And the permission extends not only to pregnant women, but also to non-pregnant women, lest they*

*become pregnant and miscarry.*

*Rabbi Yaymar bar Shalmi in Abbaye's name said, "The object of identical weight refers only to an object that is 'naturally' of identical weight, and not that one added or subtracted [to its mass]." (Rashi)*

*Abbaye asked whether an object that equaled the weight to the second weight may be used, and the question was left unanswered."*

We are struck by this Torah law that seemingly contradicts all known medical knowledge: "How does a stone carried by pregnant and even non-pregnant women guard against miscarriages? We can almost hear the defiant Jews and Torah critics blasting our "archaic and outdated sages" for such laws. But not so fast...

What the non-religious Jews, anti-religious Jews, and Torah critics don't know, is the sophisticated and deep science behind Talmud and Torah study.

How could they know it? They didn't spend the decades required to master these areas. They think one reads the Torah and Talmud like any other book...and it's only as deep as the plain meaning. But there's an immense difference: man didn't originate the ideas in Torah and Talmud: God did.

The Torah critics' minimization of Torah is equal to an infant criticizing Einstein.

The Rabbis teach that one who studies an area 100 times, is incomparable to one who studies it 101 times. Amazing. And yes, there IS that much Divine wisdom waiting for human discovery. The treasure we have as Jews is deep, bountiful and in Kind David's words, "It is perfect and refreshes the soul". (Psalms 19:8) We are fortunate beyond belief. Torah critics should have been humble enough to ask themselves why geniuses like King David, Maimonides and so many others found the deepest profundities in Torah and Talmud. They should have asked this before taking up their positions. I'd like to show you just how intelligent this Talmudic portion truly is...

We understand a mother's concern not to lose even one, precious child. This is a tragedy beyond compare. And just so we are clear, Evven Takumah is simply a stone. Nothing more. Women used to carry a stone when pregnant. Normally, a stone cannot be carried on the Sabbath, but it permitted in this case. We understand the apparent oddity of such a practice, but let's line up the questions:

How does carrying a stone (Evven Takumah) guard against miscarriage?

How can it do so, even before a woman is pregnant?

How does the stone's weight play a significant role, that another object of equal weight is also permitted?

And why must that secondary, replacement object "naturally" equal the weight of the primary Evven Takumah?

Finally, what was Abbaye getting at with the Talmud's last question, whether a replacement for the replacement stone was also permitted?

How do we approach such questions? Sure, one can quickly say, "The Rabbis erred by believing in the science of their times". And this might be have happened. For one cannot be fluent in all areas: he or she must rely on current-day knowledge of others just as we do today, as we rely on a doctor's knowledge of the body, allowing him to perform surgery on us. The Rabbis even admitted the Greeks were correct in one case. But we need not apply here this simplified explanation of Rabbinical error, without first examining this case and finding justification to claim they erred. Perhaps there are true ideas that explain this phenomenon.

What's the first step? We must gather all the facts. Referring to its design, the human interactivity, and appreciating that it is not of Torah origin (not located in the verses) what can we derive from Evven Takumah?

We note that the central issue here is that women "carried" something. The CARRYING somehow guarded against misCARRIAGE. (Do you see where we're going?) In fact, the object is not essential, since we learn that a replacement object – of identical weight – was also used, and hence, also permitted. This is significant.

We discover the fundamental issue: carrying an object was associated with carrying the embryo: carrying prevented miscarriage – the same phenomenon. However, since there is no physical association between carrying a stone, and carrying one's embryo, the connection can exist in only one other area: the psyche.

What this means is that when a woman would carry a stone – the Evven Takumah – this activity would affect her psychologically. Just as when we are psychologically uptight or tense, we experience a tightening of our muscles in the form of cramps, this rule applies in other cases. But let's clarify this rule: the

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(cont. from page 6)

## Letters

body can express our psychological state. When uptight, our muscles tighten. When relaxed, we find relaxing our bowels much easier. And again, when one carries something, the body too will carry what's inside and not expel the embryo.

Dr. John E. Sarno has published a number of books explaining how many people with chronic back/body pain can learn to eliminate that pain through use of the mind. I know a number of cases first hand...including myself.

There are many other mind/body correlations, not only tightness and carrying.

When one is nervous about doing something, many times the body starts trembling. We've heard the phrase "tremble in fear". The person is in great conflict about the matter at hand, and then expresses the inability to move on it in the form of an incapacitating trembling. When people are highly emotionally motivated, they can achieve feats requiring great strength. Meaning, the powerful desire to act actually invigorates the person with additional "power" to do what he or she could not do prior. Martial artists use their psychological focus in a manner that enables them to manipulate objects others cannot. Placebos are fake pills (no medicinal value) that fool the body into healing itself. And we learned that Joseph died before his older brothers, because he experienced more stress as Egypt's ruler. The weariness of mind, tired out his body.

We now understand how carrying a stone can help a woman carry her child with success. We also understand that since this is a psychological phenomenon, the effects can be protracted and assist women not currently pregnant. Now let's answer the other questions.

Perhaps the Rabbis permitted the replacement object, thereby indicating that the effect was not caused by this specific object. Any object will do. And since it is the act of "carrying" that was effective, "weight" was highlighted as the essential factor. Thus, a replacement object must weigh the same as the primary Evven Takumah.

Now, why was it required that this replacement weight equal the Evven's weight "naturally" without adding to or subtracting from the replacement? Perhaps here, we learn more of the Rabbis' keen knowledge of psychology. The rabbis understood what psychological principle was at work here: identification. The (expecting) mother psychosomatically carried her embryo successfully because she identified her baby with the other object she carried – the Evven Takumah. But in order that the identification be complete, the carried object

could not be a manufactured item, but it must be a "natural" object, just as her embryo is a product of nature, without manipulation. Thus, the Rabbis permitted only a replacement stone that was "naturally" equal in weight to the Evven Takumah. Only then would the mother's psyche and bodily functions duplicate the carrying of the stone. And this health benefit was permitted on Sabbath.

It is important to note that without any correlation between a practice and a result, the Rabbis would forbid such acts. Torah endorses what nature says is a truth. Rabbeinu Nissim quotes Rabbi Yonah who suspected as heathen (prohibited) any unproven device. For example, it is heathen and prohibited to gauge one's actions based on unrelated phenomena, like avoiding business deals when black cats cross our paths, or if we break a mirror. In contrast, Evven Takumah is permitted since a natural principle explains the phenomenon.

Finally, Abbaye asked whether a replacement for the replacement stone was also permitted. I feel he was questioning the nature of the Rabbinic ruling: i.e., Must the primary Evven Takumah be in one's mind to be effective, or not? Meaning, when a replacement for the replacement is allowed, is that too far removed from the Evven Takumah to be effective. Or, perhaps any number of replacement stones would be permitted, if the we opine otherwise, that the affect is not due to close association to the Evven, but to the weight alone. In that case, any number of replacement stones would be permitted.

This was unanswered in the Talmud.

Having come this far, let's ask one final question regarding amulets.

Talmud Sabbath 61a-61b discusses vegetation and writings that were used to heal. Many cures are medicinal or derivatives of plants; others were psychologically easing – writings that people contemplated and cured them. Both were permitted....provided they worked three times.

The question is why the Rabbis required that an amulet or its writer be proven effective three times before it was permitted. We don't read that this Evven Takumah required three successes in order to be permitted. It was permitted from the outset.

Why then do amulets require proof, while Evven Takumah's do not? ■

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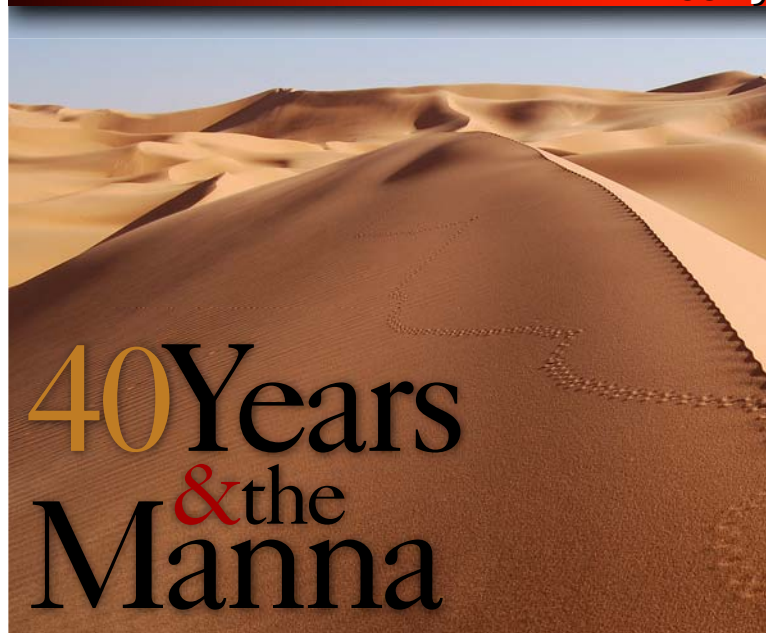
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Due to the Jew's own fears instigated by the spies, they rebelled against God. This rebellion clearly demonstrated their disbelief in God's age old promise to Abraham that they would receive the land. The Jews were then sentenced to roam the desert for forty years until the last of the rebellious people perished.

Question: If the Jews simply did not deserve Israel, why didn't God allow them to reach another land until the sinners died out? What was the reason God desired the Jews to roam the desert for forty years?

I believe the answer is that the crime of the Jews was a basic one. Their conviction of how reality operates was based on trust in their own abilities, and nothing else. What is amazing is that after witnessing tremendous miracles in Egypt and at the Red Sea, the Jews still harbored disbelief in God. They felt God wanted to "kill them in the desert". This confirms Maimonides' words that the miracles leave doubt in one's heart. The Jews didn't believe Moses due to miracles. The reason being, miracles lose their significance with their increased frequency. God desired to address the Jews' disbelief. The method utilized by God shows the level of intricacy and depth in God's system of justice.

God forced the Jews into a situation where they were solely dependent upon Him for their very existence in the desert. He desired to train them in the ways of believing His word. God chose to raise the Jews above a simplistic existence. He wished to address their problem by raising them from a reality of self sufficiency (where God plays little or no role), to the true reality where God's existence is primary in all equations - a reality where God's word is 'more real' than the physical reality the Jews currently banked on exclusively. God accomplished this in a number of ways:

1) God sustained the appearance of the miraculous manna.

The aspect of a miraculous food removed 'understanding' from the Jews regarding the manna's properties. Had He fed them vegetation or animal products, there would be a feeling of familiarity and reliance on the natural procurement of these foods. This would afford security and detract from God's goal of forcing them to rely on Him alone. God therefore created a "miracle food" which by its very name "manna" (which means "what is it") the Jews could not find any security. It is also something "their fathers were unfamiliar with". (Deut. 8:3) This alien feeling about the manna contributed to

their feelings of insecurity in themselves, a prerequisite for redirecting their need for security towards God. We learn from the words in Deuteronomy that people are comfortable with that which their forefathers spoke of. The manna did not carry this sense.

2) God limited the manna's "shelf life" to one day and it would rot if left for the next day:

This was done to remove any security in the manna itself. Therefore, the essence of the manna must include temporary shelf life. No emotional security could be attached to it.

3) God caused it to melt each day as the sun warmed it.

Seeing the manna lying on the ground would provoke the feeling of security; "it is here all the time." This is another area in which the Jews would have sought security. Security in the physical was their weakness, which until this point, caused them to sin. Their need for physical security would have to be redirected to security in God alone.

4) God caused the manna to double in size once it was in their homes Friday evening.

On Friday, the Jews were commanded to gather enough for that day. Although the manna did not fall on Shabbos, they would have sustenance through the Shabbos. When they did as they were commanded they found that the manna miraculously doubled in size, to sustain them (Exod. 16:5 -Rashi). Their complete confidence would be in God's word. The manna fell each of the 6 weekdays with just enough for each day, as God promised. Left over manna would become wormy and rot, again, to combat self sufficiency. Not so on Shabbos. Manna leftover from Friday through Shabbos remained fresh. The purpose of this was again, to force the Jews to believe more in God's word than in physical reality and their own securities. All the miracles of the manna described above were to engender faith in the word of God. This integral concept of faith in God's word applies today. We demonstrate this idea by our abstinence in all work on the Shabbos. By doing so, we demonstrate conviction that abstention from work on one day does not threaten our existence and livelihood. God will take care of us, however He does so, even though we may not understand how.

In Deuteronomy 8:3, we read: "He (God) afflicted you and hungered you and fed you the manna, which you didn't know and your fathers didn't know, to show you that not on bread alone does man live, but by all that comes from God's mouth does man live."

The word "alone" teaches us that man should live primarily in accordance with natural law. The purpose of the manna was to show that man's reality - the way for "man to live" - is in the reality of God's word, "but by all that comes from God's mouth does man live." It is clear from this verse that man's existence in the wilderness for forty years was meant to direct his dependency on God alone. The Rashbam also states this when he says, "...you had no "bread in your basket" but your lives were dependent upon Heaven each day".

We see that God's multifaceted manna-plan was required to first strip the Jews of their securities placed in the physical and in their own might, and secondly, to permeate the Jews with belief in God. The manna was used to address those areas where he seeks security. Living in the desert for forty years gave the Jews an opportunity to abandon their flawed emotion of self trust. This was a great blessing. Their need to follow only that which was intelligible was replaced with trust in God, His word, and His system of divine providence. ■



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# Community



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The economy is hurting more and more of us. And many don't let on that they are suffering. It is vital that we all seek out who and how and to help. Whether it's a job offer, a donation, or direction. Make sure your shul, Yeshiva, Gmach, and neighborhood has a plan that is carried out and meets weekly to address those in need.

Rambam teaches that one must be more careful with the mitzvah of Tzedaka, than any other positive command.

May you all be blessed for responding to those in need, while preserving their dignity. ■



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