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ON **KORACH** 5783

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date: Jun 22, 2023

subject: Rabbi Reisman's Weekly Chumash Shiur

Rabbi Reisman – Parshas Korach 5783

1 – Topic – A beautiful thought on the beginning of the Parsha

I just came from the Seudas Preida in Yeshiva Torah Vo'daas where the Zman ended and the young men are going to camp IY"Y this coming week even as I head out Boruch Hashem to Eretz Yisrael. Rav Savitzky said a really beautiful Vort and I would like to share it with you.

It says about On Ben Peles that his wife saved him. You all know this. (תְּכַמֹּזוֹת נָשִׁים, בְּנֵתָהּ בִּיתָהּ) as Rashi says she told him why are you getting mixed into this. Now Moshe Rabbeinu is the king and you are the follower. Later Korach will be the king and you will be the follower. So why get mixed into this mess?

He asked a Kasha. That is (תְּכַמֹּזוֹת נָשִׁים, בְּנֵתָהּ בִּיתָהּ), that is Chochma, wisdom? It is a Cheshbon, it is a logical reasoning of why get mixed in as you have nothing to gain from it. It is not Chochma, it is a practical Eitza.

He asked another Kasha. Who said Korach wanted to be Melech, Korach didn't say that he wanted to be Melech. He said as is found in 16:3 (כִּי כָל-הָעֵדָה בָּלָם קֹדְשִׁים). He was a Kofer

in Toras Moshe, who said that Korach was looking to be Melech. He had an ideology that was contrary to what Moshe Rabbeinu was teaching?

Rav Savitzky answered, it is true that Korach got up and had an ideology that Moshe Rabbeinu is a fake Navi and that Moshe Rabbeinu is not telling the truth. Lo Hashem She'lacho, Hashem didn't send him. The wisdom of the wife of On Ben Peles was that she understood, Korach wasn't really coming because he was a man who had convictions and ideologies that Moshe is a Shakran and his Torah is Sheker. No!

She understood that Korach is a person who wants to rule. Korach is a person who wants everything for himself. Korach is a person looking for power. In order to get power he had to get Moshe Rabbeinu out of the way and he created an ideology to justify what he was doing. (תְּכַמֹּזוֹת נָשִׁים, בְּנֵתָהּ בִּיתָהּ). She understood this. She understood that Korach was going to be a Melech. That is all that is going to happen from this whole ideology.

It is that way. People especially in western society, when there is something they want, we create Shittos, we create ideas, we create justification for what we do. Nisht Geshtoigen, Nisht Gefloigen. Even when it is not right, when we have a Yeitzer Hora for something, we create ideology to make it right. This is what we see going on around us all of the time. Values that for centuries, for millennium that human beings have always appreciated are being changed. Why is the ideology not first and the conclusion second? The conclusion is first and then the ideology is made to fit the conclusion.

We have to be careful. Sometimes we justify things we do. Be careful. When your justification is first and what you are doing is second and other times when it is the way it should be where you figure out what is right and then you come to a conclusion. A beautiful thought on the beginning of the Parsha.

2 – Topic – Rebbe's Upcoming Trip to Eretz Yisrael

A lot has been said about the differences in . We are Laining Korach in Chutz L'aretz and in Eretz Yisrael they are Laining Chukas. Does an individual have an obligation to make up the Parsha or not. This is a very basic Machlokes which is discussed in many places. If Krias Hatorah is a Chiyuv on every Yachid or a Chiyuv on the Tzibbur. If it is a Chiyuv on the Tzibbur, whatever Tzibbur you are part of that Shabbos that is your entire Chiyuv. If it is a Chiyuv on the Yachid then the Yachid has an obligation to hear all of the Parshios Hatorah.

This is a Machlokes that goes back and there is a lot written on it. What is the bottom line? Our Posek Acharon is Rav Moshe Feinstein. In Igros Moshe Cheilek Vav, in Orach Chaim Siman Chaf Gimmel (Ed. Note: I couldn't find that this is the Teshuva – any help is appreciated), Rav Moshe Paskens that it is a Chiyuv on the Yachid. Not only that, Rav Moshe says if you are in a Shul and you miss a word of Laining, perhaps you

stepped out because you went to the restroom and missed just one word of Laining, you are obligated to go to a different Shul to hear the entire Laining. Rav Moshe goes with the Shittah that Krias Hatorah on Shabbos is a Chiyuv on every Yachid.

Based on that, it is proper, last week I mentioned the problem of where am I going to get Parshas Korach. So my good friend Mordechai (Basch) called and told me that there is a place you can hear it in the Agudah of Avenue L at 2 pm Shabbos afternoon they have a Laining for those going to Eretz Yisroel and I am very thankful for that.

I want to share with you what seems to be a Stirah in the Mishna Brura. What is his Psak? He is a Posek Acharon for Klal Yisrael. Does he hold Chiyuv Yachid or Chiyuv Tzibbur? Let me give you two Mar Mekomos and let's come up with an answer.

The first is in Siman Kuf Mem, S'if Beis. The Shulchan Aruch in S'if Beis brings a Shittah that during Krias Hatorah an individual has a right to turn around and learn as long as there are 10 people listening to Krias Hatorah. (מהדרר אפיה וגרס).

There is a Shittah that explains the Gemara this way. The Bi'ur Halacha is Matmia. He says what does it help if 10 people are listening if every individual is Chayuv in Krias Hatorah?

Therefore, he is Matmia how there can be such a Shittah. He is Matchik, maybe this means that this man already heard Krias Hatorah and is in Shul now. So if there are only 10 then he would have to listen, if not, then he doesn't have to. But you see that the Mishna Brura holds like Rav Moshe is saying in the Teshuva that it is a Chiyuv on every Yachid. He doesn't understand how can one person be (מהדרר אפיה) turn around and miss. So then it would come out that Rav Moshe and the Mishna Brura are both Paskening it is a Chiyuv on the Yachid.

Problem. In Siman Kuf Lamed Hei, S'if Zayin talks about a case where an entire Tzibbur did not hear Krias Hatorah. It can happen. A person can be in a bungalow colony with one Sefer Torah and they find a Psul and it could be that they didn't hear Krias Hatorah. It could be there is no Baal Korei and they didn't hear Krias Hatorah. What do they do? The following week they have to make up for it and they Lain both Parshios. This is true whether it is a Chiyuv on the Tzibbur or a Chiyuv on the Yachid. If you have a whole Tzibbur that missed so they make it up the following week.

Then it says in Mishna Brura, let's say you are in a Shul with 100 people and all didn't hear Krias Hatorah. They have to make it up the next week. 60 of them on Shabbos walk to another building and heard Krias Hatorah. 40 didn't. There are still 40 people who haven't heard Krias Hatorah. The Mishna Brura says that if Rubim Halchu to a second Beis Hak'neses, Niftaru Kulam, they are all Patur. This Tzibbur heard Krias Hatorah. According to this Mishna Brura if you have 10 Yechidim who didn't hear Krias Hatorah last week and come

together in Shul this week, they certainly don't Lain Krias Hatorah as they are 10 Yechidim. As long as the Shul they were in, the Tzibbur heard even if they walked to a different building. If the Tzibbur they were in heard Krias Hatorah then the individuals don't make up for that. Rav Moshe argues and says that if 10 Yechidim get together and they all miss Krias Hatorah last week, of course they hear Krias Hatorah. So it seems to be a contradiction in the Psak. The Mishna Brura is Mitzvah L'yasheiv.

As for me, Boruch Hashem HKB"H blessed me with very special circumstances and a very special person and I have not missed even during Covid, I didn't miss a single Parsha on Shabbos Boruch Hashem. Certainly I don't want to miss a Krias Hatorah, and Boruch Hashem I didn't have to.

I am told for those in Eretz Yisrael, or going to Eretz Yisrael this week that in the Beis Yisrael Shtibilach, at 11 AM they have a Krias Hatorah every week for people who have arrived from America. (I don't have to go because I already heard Parshas Korach). But it is a good Yedi'a to have.

With that, I wish myself a wonderful trip to Eretz Yisrael and I am sure you will all say Amen. I wish you all that you be Zoche to come to Eretz Yisrael and lock yourself in a Beis Medrash and sit and learn Toras Eretz Yisrael which is different than Toras Chutz L'aretz.

I was once flying on a 1:30 flight that took off at 4:30 very delayed. I dozed off. Rabbi Goldwicht a tremendous Oheiv Eretz Yisrael came to wake me up and he told me they are Davening Maariv. I almost missed Maariv. I went to the Minyan and I told him that I have a Shaila. I am going to be in Eretz Yisrael for a few hours. Is it more important that I should go to the Kosel and Daven as how can I go to Eretz Yisrael and not go to the Kosel, but then I won't have time to learn on Erev Shabbos as we are coming in so late and I am going up north to a Simcha. Or is it better that I should go straight to my destination in the north and have the day to learn but then I will have come to Eretz Yisrael without Davening at the Kosel. How can I do that?

He thought about it. Afterwards he said to me, just like Tefillas Eretz Yisrael is different, so too Toras Eretz Yisrael is different. What a Tai'yira expression from a tremendous Oheiv Eretz Yisrael. Toras Eretz Yisrael. That is why we go. Use Eretz Yisrael as a place to connect to the Borei Olam, to Shteig in everything we do. A Gutten Shabbos to one and all!

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Is Religion Rational?

Moshe Taragin

The legendary King Solomon was gifted with unlimited intelligence. His fabled intellectual talents drew curious tourists from across the globe. Not only did he master the

classic fields of learning, but he also studied the secret languages of the natural and animal kingdoms. Nothing lay beyond his penetrating intellect, except for the logic of one solitary divine commandment, which perplexed him. Even with his scintillating intellect, Solomon failed to decode the great mystery of parah adumah, or the red heifer ceremony. Ashes taken from a burnt red cow, mixed with natural spring water, applied twice during a one-week interval, eliminates halachik impurity from someone who had contact with a corpse. Once released from this legal state of impurity, the person can return to the Temple precincts.

Understandably, this bizarre service baffled the smartest man to ever live. Not only is the ceremony irrational, but it is also enigmatic and counterintuitive. Though the application of this watery mixture removes impurity from the recipient, it introduces impurity to the officials who administer this sacred suspension. The parah adumah ritual is a riddle wrapped in an enigma, and it bewildered the greatest brain in the history of Mankind. Surrendering to this mystery, Solomon lamented: "I had hoped to acquire this knowledge but, alas, it remained distant from me". The red heifer ceremony is the classic model of an irrational religious commandment so inexplicable that it remained impervious even to Solomon's wisdom.

Though the red heifer ceremony is exceptional, it is also iconic. This ceremony, devoid of any apparent logic, demonstrates, that all commandments, even the so-called logical ones, lie beyond the grasp of human comprehension. The red heifer ceremony merely accentuates the inner illogic of every divine command.

Are Commandments Logical?

Though the Torah rarely provides direct or clear reasons for commandments, each divine instruction possesses a purpose and provides a benefit, either material or spiritual. God doesn't issue arbitrary or capricious mandates, but provides us invaluable guidelines for human behavior. Throughout history, supreme confidence in the rational nature of divine commandments inspired persistent efforts to map the hidden reasons behind divine commandments. Some commandments such as moral laws and the rules governing society appear to be rational, while most commandments such as rituals, dietary laws and marital regulations appear to be less logical. Many scholars, most prominently Maimonides, attempted to uncover the hidden reasons behind all divine commandments.

Maimonides' efforts were highly controversial and elicited significant opposition. Some of the backlash stemmed from concerns that attaching reasons to commandments could, potentially, contextualize them and undermine their authority. Opponents of Maimonides worried that when divine instructions are hinged to a particular reason, they are more easily miscast as obsolete once the reasons fade. For divine commandments to be timeless they must be untethered to any specific context, set of customs, or time period. Ironically,

Solomon himself failed this test, by misconstruing the reason for a Biblical injunction and incorrectly assuming it didn't apply to him. He justified that the Biblical injunction against marrying an excessive number of wives was only geared to prevent distractions from a king's national responsibilities. Confident in his own ability to attend to his royal duties, Solomon violated this injunction, married too many women and, ultimately, was sidetracked. Solomon's failed gamble is a cautionary tale. Tracing commandments to specific reasons can undermine their timelessness and subject them to selective performance.

Piety and Obedience Additionally, asserting a rational basis for the performance of a divine obligation may dilute the piety of the experience. Divine mandates condition us toward unconditional submission to God and His will. Fulfillment of a divine obligation without fully understanding its underlying reason or without deriving any personal benefit fosters obedience and piety. As the 20th century philosopher, CS Lewis, articulated, "when we have said that God commands things only because they are good, we must add that one of the things intrinsically good is that rational creatures should freely surrender themselves to their Creator in obedience.

...the mere obeying is also intrinsically good, for, in obeying, a rational creature... reverses the act by which we fell, treads Adam's dance backward, and returns." The highest "intrinsic good" is to express our obedience to a Higher being. For this reason, the red heifer ceremony is intentionally programmed without rhyme or reason. This illogical ceremony, which rescues us from the world of death, underscores the fact, that humans don't possess all the answers. Just as we have no solution for death, we are similarly limited in our understanding of many other truths. Religion asks us to submit our own limited intellects to a Higher authority whose wisdom lies "beyond", whose thoughts aren't our thoughts and whose ways aren't our ways. Though we strive to discover logic within divine commands we never condition religious observance upon human understanding. Every religious command is similar to the red heifer ceremony: a leap into the unknown, beyond human logic and beyond human comprehension. Ultimately, religion is dependent upon a leap of faith. Science Never Leaps The modern world is far too rational for leaps of faith. In an ancient world which was dark and confusing, it was obvious that deeper wisdoms lay beyond the reach of human intellect. In that frightening and unpredictable world, truth could only be found at the delicate intersection between rati on and irrationality. Truth was always a blend between observed facts and articles of faith. Great leaps of the imagination were necessary just to survive. Contemporary culture has been completely reshaped by five centuries of scientific revolution. Our rational world only attributes validity to the facts which empirical experimentation and sensory experience confirm. As John

Locke asserted "the only true knowledge that could be accessible to the human mind was that which was based on experience". Strict scientific analysis, based upon unprejudiced experimentation is the only pathway to truth. In our world of stark empiricism, irrational religious leaps of faith seem, to many, foolish and outdated. Empiricism discourages the unverifiable, and therefore, in the modern secular city, religion has gradually collapsed. Very little about faith can be proven. Ironically, once we assume that God spoke with us at Sinai it is completely logical to obey His commands and His word. However, proof of that foundational moment or of the seminal act of creation lies beyond empirical experimentation. It takes courage and higher intellect to accept non-empirical truth. Artificial Intelligence and Human Identity The rise of Artificial Intelligence may have unintended positive consequences for religious belief. Many religious people are legitimately concerned about how AI will affect our religious practice, our view of human identity, and ultimately, our commitment to religion. Ironically AI may help restore the value of non-rational elements of human identity. By creating higher beings of intelligence, whose rational capacities far outstrip human potential, we may more deeply value the non-rational capabilities which make us uniquely human. If rational and cognitive faculties are endowed to machines, they can no longer be viewed as central components of human identity. By offloading rational processing to robots, we may better appreciate human immortality and the distinctly human ability to take leaps of faith and to accept delivered truths from others. Machines can never discern Higher intellect. We, alone, are touched by God, and we alone can find Him through courageous leaps of our imagination. The writer is a rabbi at Yeshivat Har Etzion/Gush, a hesder yeshiva. He has smicha and a BA in computer science from Yeshiva University as well as a masters degree in English literature from the City University of New York

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Rabbi Moshe Taragin – RAM Yeshivat Har Etzion

Geulas Yisrael #7 Korach, Chassidut and the State of Israel
 Korach was a roguish demagogue who fomented an angry mob against Moshe's authority. Demagogues typically spew ridiculous claims, baseless accusations and exaggerated truths in riling up their followers. For demagoguery to be successful however, it must contain at least a kernel of the truth or some accurate claims. Otherwise, it loses all its credibility- even in the eyes of the most ardent supporters. Among all of Korach's nonsensical statements, one deeply resonates as true: "the entire nation is holy and is vested with Divine presence". Of course, he manipulated this truth, demanding in turn, that every Jew serve jointly in the mishkan. His propaganda

ignored the important concept of religious "specialization". Every Jew is holy, but the mishkan requires very specific prerequisites which not every ordinary person can maintain. Likewise, every commoner is holy, but only certain sainted people like Moshe can achieve prophecy and leadership. None the less, there is a sample of truth to Korach's basic claim. Thousands of years later, Korach's message served as a cornerstone of the Chassidic revolution. In general, all human beings are created in the image of G-d and are imbued with Divine qualities such as free will, consciousness, emotions, intellect, and cognitive speech. Beyond these gifts delivered to every human being, Jews were endowed with unique national traits such as courage and defiance (am k'shei oref), ability to process supernatural information such as prophecy, and enduring compassion. Emboldened with freedom of choice human beings can "take advantage" of these traits or they can squander them. A sinful life wastes these talents and tarnishes our Divine image and our Jewish identity. Based on Kabbalistic ideas, Chassidut introduced a bold new concept: Jews aren't just crafted in the image of G-d; every Jew is imbued with a part of G-d Himself. The metaphor which captures this "Divine imbuing" is the description of Hashem "breathing" into Adam (Vayipach b'apav). Speaking streams air through our larynx, but Respiration draws air from our "core"; by exhaling into Adam Hashem instilled a part of Himself into Adam and subsequently into every Jew. This Divine "infusion" yields an important principle- sometimes referred to as "segulat yisrael". Being vested with a part of the Divine essence, grants a Jew inalienable virtue. No matter how errant or deviant a Jew's behavior, he remains inherently and intrinsically sacred. This was a radical concept in Jewish thought and a departure from previous views about non-religious Jews. Traditionally "wayward Jews" who exhibited religious delinquency were embraced because of their 'teshuva potential'. As candidates for teshuva and for potential repair, even sinful Jews were incorporated into the Jewish community and the Jewish formula. Chassidut asserted that even "before" turning their hearts back to G-d, and even "without" full halachik compliance, every Jew possessed latent sanctity. Any sins or transgressions were merely extrinsic. Sin can be likened to a glittering stone falling into dirt. The jewel hasn't lost its basic glow, its shine is merely temporarily and externally concealed by the dirt. Chassidut identified the intrinsic and irremovable sanctity of every Jew, thereby creating a concept of Jewish inclusion. For various ideological and historical reasons Chassidut has undergone dramatic changes since its inception nearly 370 years ago. Today's Chassidut communities, are, by and large, far more insular than the images of a community articulated by the movement's founders. However, the intellectual basis of Chassidut is still pivoted upon Korach's legitimate claim about G-d resting within each Jew. The modern State of Israel has reimagined a

new version of Korach's claim. Life in Israel includes Jews who do not adhere, by and large, to the classic system of a halacha. Yet every Jew in the State of Israel is a partner in crafting the final arc of Jewish history and in our return to our homeland. The state provides a framework to incorporate Jews who no longer practice the rituals and ceremonies of halacha. As deeply religious Jews, we are certainly saddened by Jews who deviate from halacha, and we certainly dream of a day in which every Jew will turn back to G-d and not only believe in Him but also obey His commandments. However, until that day, we live in Israel together with millions of Jews who reflect Korach's valid claim. Every Jew possesses latent sanctity. Sadly, historical pressures have expunged classic halachik behavior from so many. However, so many non-Orthodox Jews in Israel continue to demonstrate extraordinary commitment to our land, our people and our history. This is a modern glimmer of the sanctity which every Jew possesses. We await a day in which this glimmer will become a more radiant glow. Until that day, a "glimmer" will have to do.

Fw From Hamelaket@gmail.com

Avoiding Controversy, and Attitude Towards Christians Revivim

Rabbi Eliezer Melamed

The sin of the complainers was particularly severe in God's eyes, because it implied a kind of agreement with Korach and his evil followers * Signs to identify evil people: They tell lies, and see nothing good in those who disagree with them * Love between all people of all religions must be heightened, and most definitely, it is forbidden to spit in front of Christians * Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Kook and Rabbi Yaakov Kaminetzky treated Christian clerics with respect and kindness

In the Torah portion Korach (chapter 17), it is explained that after the earth opened its mouth and swallowed Korach and his followers, "The next day the whole Israelite community railed against Moshe and Aaron, saying, "You two have brought death upon God's people!" While they were complaining, suddenly the pillar of cloud descended, covered the Tent of Meeting, and the Presence of God appeared. "But as the community gathered against them, Moshe and Aaron turned toward the Tent of Meeting; the cloud had covered it and the Presence of God appeared." The entire community trembled, and Moshe was called to the sacred place, and Aaron joined him. They still did not know what the meaning of the revelation was. "God spoke to Moshe, saying: 'Remove yourselves from this community, that I may annihilate them in an instant.' They fell on their faces."

While still falling on his face in a prayer of self-sacrifice for Israel, Moshe realized that the angel of death had already received permission to strike, and while still in prayer, Moshe adjusted himself, and ordered Aaron to burn incense, thereby violating God's command, "refusing an order", and instead of

separating from the people – to go towards them with the incense to stop the plague. "Then Moshe said to Aaron, "Take the fire pan, and put on it fire from the altar. Add incense and take it quickly to the community and make expiation for them. For wrath has gone forth from God the plague has begun!" Aaron took it, as Moshe had ordered, and ran to the midst of the congregation, where the plague had begun among the people. He put on the incense and made expiation for the people; he stood between the dead and the living until the plague was checked. Those who died of the plague came to fourteen thousand and seven hundred, aside from those who died on account of Korach. Aaron then returned to Moshe at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, since the plague was checked."

What was the Wrath All About

Israel indeed sinned by complaining about Moshe and Aaron, but still, the question remains: why was this sin considered so severe, to the point they were sentenced to death?

Rather, in their complaint, they included themselves as full partners in the dispute against Moshe Rabbeinu. Korach and his followers were a negligible minority – just a few hundred alone from Israel. Had the people revolted against them, Korach and his followers would have retreated in shame, and no dispute would have developed. This is how Israel should have behaved, after all the good they received in that generation through Moshe Rabbeinu. However, they stood by and saw how Korach and his followers shamed Moshe and Aharon, and remained silent. There was even fear they would kill Moshe and Aaron, since during the events of the controversy there were situations in which Moshe and Aaron stood alone in front of Korach's hundreds of followers; but even then, Israel remained silent, and let the disputants threaten Moshe and Aaron and stir up the people, until Moshe Rabbeinu had to ask for God's help, namely, that He punish Korach's followers so everyone would know that His Torah was true.

After all this, the Israelites still dared to complain about the harsh death of those who disagreed with Moshe, and then, God repaid them for keeping silent and not protesting, and for causing a dispute that endangered the future of the people and heritage of the Torah. And although there were very respectable people among Korach's followers, the people should have chosen Moshe, and strongly protested those who rose against him.

The Wife of On ben Pelet

On ben Pelet was initially a participant in the controversy, and was supposed to perish together with Korach and his followers, but his wife saved him (Sanhedrin 109b). This is how our teacher and rabbi, Rabbi Tzvi Yehuda HaKohen Kook ztz'l, recounted the incident: "His wife was a tzaddeket (a righteous woman), and he was saved in her merit. At first, he was swayed after the 'gang', and his wife begged him not to

enter the dispute, yet, he could not cease. He said to her: Soon, they will come to call for me. His wife answered him: I will sit outside our tent with chutzpah, indecently, with my hair uncovered, and being “tzaddikim”, when they see this, they will run away. Indeed, that is exactly what happened. In previous generations, and even today, the dispute-mongers are considered “tzaddikim”. Our Sages call them rasha'im (evil), but they are erroneously termed “tzaddikim,” or “haredim” (“Sichot Ha'Ritz'ya, Bamidbar, p. 195).

Signs of Evil Dispute-Mongers

The problem is, it is not always easy to know who the dissidents are who endanger Israel, since they know how to misrepresent their words, to the point where it is difficult to discern their malice. The more serious problem is that they also tend to convince themselves, to the point where they are unable to discern their increasingly evil ways.

The sign of a dispute for the sake of heaven, like the dispute between Beit Shamai and Beit Hillel, is that the disputants focus on the substantive debate, but beyond the debate, respect one another, and see the good in each of them. On the other hand, the clear sign of an evil dispute that is not for heaven's sake, is that the disputants do not respect one another, and as a result, do not recognize the good sides of those who disagree with them.

Another sign of baalei machloket (dispute-mongers) is that they lie. Some of them lie maliciously, thinking that for the sake of their “holy” purpose, it is appropriate to lie and slander the other party. Some of them lie accidentally – since they only see badly of the other side, any evil rumor about it is accepted without proper investigation, and consequently, they spread lies. Indeed, inaccuracies can be found in almost every person, but among baalei machloket, we find people who regularly lie and insult, and even when it turns out they are wrong, do not draw conclusions, but immediately move on to a new claim – which most probably is also false.

The Duty to Criticize, and Stay Away from Baalei Machloket
In absence of condemning the wicked, the righteous have no chance of winning, since according to logic, every struggle between the righteous and the wicked should seemingly end in victory of the wicked. After all, a righteous person has moral inhibitions: he cannot lie and spread slander, and cannot take revenge, punish, or eliminate opponents.

However, the righteous do have one advantage: the moral advantage. They can define evil. And since values, truth and justice carry crucial importance, the determination that so-and-so adopts immoral positions will gradually cause the evil to be weakened, until it is completely abolished. It thus turns out that when the righteous act according to the rules of morality, they win. There is no need for a lot of work – just define the nature of the evil of the disputant and express it publicly, quietly and calmly, and the truth will take its course. However,

if the righteous concede their right to morally define evil, they have no chance of winning.

Respect for Humanity – For Christians as Well

Q: Recently, cases of Jews spitting on Christian tourists were published. Is it permissible to behave in such a way according to the Torah?

A: It is forbidden to humiliate people, and whoever does so is a sinner. “They said about Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai that no one ever preceded him in issuing a greeting, not even a non-Jew in the marketplace, as Rabban Yoḥanan would always greet him first” (Berakhot 17a). In the days of Rabbi Yoḥanan ben Zakkai, all Christians were idolaters, and even so, he was careful to precede them with a greeting. For certain, he did not humiliate them, or spit on them. It is also stated in Tractate Avot: “Shammai used to say... and receive all men with a pleasant countenance” (1:15). “All men” includes all human beings, without exception.

All the more so when it comes to tourists who are guests of the State of Israel, and generally, come here out of respect for the people of Israel. Our Sages said that the guests that Abraham our forefather ran to receive, appeared to him to be lowly worshipers of idolatry who bowed down to the dust on their feet (Bava Metzia 86b), but despite this, he greatly respected them, observed the mitzvah of hosting guests, and as a result, merited receiving the good news about the birth of Isaac. This is the opportunity to mention the words of Maran Rabbi Kook, about the attitude of love and respect that should be shown towards members of other religions (Middot Haraya: Ahava 10). In his words, he explained that it is necessary to love all creatures created by God, and especially man, and this love “should spread to all people, despite all differences of opinions, religions and beliefs, and despite all the divisions of races, and environments.” Not only that, Rabbi Kook further explained that love of Israel should also be based on a general love for all human beings, “because only in a soul rich in love of mankind and love of humanity, can the love of the nation be exalted in its noble genius, and spiritual and practical greatness.” On the other hand, “stinginess that causes one to see in everything outside the perimeter of the special nation, even if it is outside the boundary of Israel, only ugliness and impurity, is one of the terrible darkness's that cause a general destruction of the entire building of spiritual goodness, whose light, every gentle soul anticipates.”

Rabbi Yaakov Kaminetzky and his Attitude towards Christian Nuns

The story is told about Rabbi Yaakov Kaminetzky ztz”l, one of the heads of the Council of Torah Sages of Agudath Yisrael in the United States, who respected every person, “even Christians were given full respect, and a pleasant countenance. One day a resident of Monsey was surprised when he was stopped in the street by the Mother Superior of the monastery located on the street where Rabbi Yaacov lived. She sought to

understand why the monastery's Jewish neighbors looked away, or crossed the street, whenever a nun passed by. Everyone – except for one old rabbi, who always makes sure to greet them with a smile and a friendly greeting” (Sefer Rabbi Ya'akov p. 327).

Rabbi Kaminetzky (1891-1986) was born in Lithuania, and studied at the Slavodka and Slutsk yeshivas. He was a rabbi in Lithuania, afterwards immigrated to the United States, and was a rabbi in Seattle, and later in Toronto. For many years, he headed the 'Torah ve Daat' yeshiva in New York. He was known as a gaon (Torah genius) in iyun (in-depth analysis) and halakha, and for his middot tovot (excellent character traits). This article appears in the 'Besheva' newspaper and was translated from Hebrew.
Rabbi Eliezer Melamed

from: **Rabbi YY Jacobson** <rabbiyy@theyeshiva.net>
date: Jun 22, 2023, 6:02 PM

Let There Be Life! - Essay by Rabbi YY

The Rebbe's Advice for the Boy Who Smoked on Shabbos
By: Rabbi YY Jacobson Stop Pounding Rabbi Sam Wolfson was giving his speech to the Jewish Federation about the "Tragedy of Jewish Assimilation." Toward the end of his long speech, the Rabbi clapped his hands... waited 10 seconds... and clapped his hands again.

The Audience looked puzzled. The Rabbi then explained that every time he clapped his hands some Jew married a non-Jew. Immediately Morris jumped up from his seat in the audience and shouted, "Nu... So Stop With Your Clapping!"

A Blossoming Staff

It is a baffling story. The portion of Korach tells of the "Test of the Staffs" conducted when people contested Aaron's appointment to the High Priesthood. G-d instructs Moses to take a staff from each tribe, each inscribed with the name of the tribe's leader; Aaron's name was written on the Levite Tribe's staff. The sticks were placed overnight in the Holy of Holies in the Sanctuary. When they were removed the following morning, the entire nation beheld that Aaron's staff had blossomed overnight and bore fruit, demonstrating that Aaron was G-d's choice for High Priest.

In the words of the Torah (Numbers 16): “And on the following day Moses came to the Tent of Testimony, and behold, Aaron's staff for the house of Levi had blossomed! It gave forth blossoms, sprouted buds, and produced ripe almonds. Moses took out all the staffs from before the Lord, to the children of Israel; they saw and they took, each man his staff.”

What was the meaning of this strange miracle? G-d could have chosen many ways to demonstrate the authenticity of Aaron's position.

What is more, three previous incidents have already proven this very truth: the swallowing of Korach and his fellow rebels

who staged a revolt against Moses and Aaron; the burning of the 250 leaders who led the mutiny; and the epidemic that spread among those who accused Moses and Aaron of killing the nation. If these three miracles did not suffice, what would a fourth one possibly achieve? What then was the point and message of the blossoming stick?

One answer I heard from my teacher was this: The blossoming of the staff was meant not so much to prove who the high priest is (that was already established by three previous earth-shattering events), but rather to demonstrate what it takes to be chosen as a high priest of G-d, and to explain why it was Aaron was chosen to this position. What are the qualifications required to be a leader?

From Death to Life

Before being severed from the tree, this staff grew, produced leaves, and was full of vitality. But now, severed from its roots, it has become dry and lifeless.

The primary quality of a Kohen Gadol, of a High Priest, of a man of G-d, is his or her ability to transform lifeless sticks into living orchards. The real leader is the person who sees the possibility for growth and life where others see stagnation and lifelessness. The Jewish leader perceives even in a dead stick the potential for rejuvenation.

Let There Be Life

How relevant this story is to our generation.

Following the greatest tragedy ever to have struck our people, the Holocaust, the Jewish world appeared like a lifeless staff. Mounds and mounds of ashes, the only remains of the six million, left a nation devastated to its core. An entire world went up in smoke.

What happened next will one day be told as one of the great acts of reconstruction in the history of mankind. Holocaust survivors and refugees set about rebuilding on new soil the world they had seen go up in the smoke of Auschwitz and Treblinka.

One of the remarkable individuals who spearheaded this revival was the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902-1994), whose 29th yartzeit is this Thursday, the third of Tammuz, June 22. The Rebbe, together with other great Jewish sages and leaders from many diverse communities, refused to yield to despair. While others responded to the Holocaust by building memorials, endowing lectureships, convening conferences, and writing books – all vital and noble tributes to create memories of a tree which once lived but was now dead -- the Rebbe urged every person he could touch to bring the stick back to life: to marry and have lots of children, to rebuild Jewish life in every possible way. He built schools, communities, synagogues, Jewish centers, summer camps, and yeshivas, and encouraged and inspired countless Jews to do the same. He opened his heart to an orphaned generation, imbuing it with hope, vision, and determination. He became the most well-known address for

scores of activists, rabbis, philanthropists, leaders, influential people, and laymen and women from all walks of life – giving them the confidence to reconstruct a shattered universe. He sent out emissaries to virtually every Jewish community in the world to help rekindle the Jewish smile when a vast river of tears threatened to obliterate it.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe urged his beloved people to use the horrors of destruction as an impetus to generate the greatest Jewish renaissance and to create “re-Jew-venation.” He gazed at a dead staff and saw in it the potential for new life.

His new home, the United States, was a country that until then had dissolved Jewish identity. It was, as they used to say in those days, a “treifene medinah,” a non-kosher land. Yet the Rebbe saw the possibility of using American culture as a medium for new forms of Jewish activity, using modern means to spread Yiddishkeit. The Rebbe realized that the secularity of the modern world concealed a deep yearning for spirituality, and he knew how to address it. Where others saw the crisis of a dead staff, he saw an opportunity for a new wave of renewal and redemption.

The Phoenix

Rabbi Yehudah Krinsky, one of the Rebbe’s secretaries, related the following episode.

“It was around 1973, when the widow of Jacques Lifschitz, the renowned sculptor, had come for a private audience with the Lubavitcher Rebbe, shortly after her husband’s sudden passing. “In the course of her meeting with the Rebbe, she mentioned that when her husband died, he was nearing completion of a massive sculpture of a phoenix in the abstract, a work commissioned by Hadassah Women’s Organization for the Hadassah Hospital on Mt. Scopus, in Jerusalem.

“As an artist and sculptor in her own right, she said that she would have liked to complete her husband’s work, but, she told the Rebbe, she had been advised by Jewish leaders that the phoenix is a non-Jewish symbol. It could never be placed in Jerusalem!

“I was standing near the door to the Rebbe’s office that night, when he called for me and asked that I bring him the book of Job, from his bookshelf, which I did.

“The Rebbe turned to Chapter 29, verse 18, “I shall multiply my days like the Chole.”

“And then the Rebbe proceeded to explain to Mrs. Lifschitz the Midrashic commentary on this verse which describes the Chole as a bird that lives for a thousand years, then dies, and is later resurrected from its ashes. Clearly then, a Jewish symbol.”

“Mrs. Lifschitz was absolutely delighted. The project was completed soon thereafter.”

In his own way, the Rebbe had brought new hope to this broken widow. And in the recurring theme of his life, he did the same for the spirit of the Jewish people, which he raised from the ashes of the Holocaust to new, invigorated life. He

attempted to reenact the “miracle of the blossoming staff” every day of his life with every person he came in contact with.

To Expel or Not to Expel?

A story:

Rabbi Berel Baumgarten (d. in 1978) was a Jewish educator in an orthodox religious yeshiva in Brooklyn, NY, prior to relocating to Buenos Aires. He once wrote a letter to the Rebbe asking for advice. Each Shabbos afternoon, when he would meet up with his students for a study session, one student would walk into the room smelling from cigarette smoke. Clearly, he was smoking on the Shabbos. “His influence may cause his religious class-mates to also cease keeping the Shabbos,” Rabbi Baumgarten was concerned. “Must I expel him from the school, even with the lack of clear evidence that he is violating the Shabbos?”

The Rebbe’s answer was no more than a scholarly reference: “See Avos Derabi Noson chapter 12.” That’s it.

Avos Derabi Noson is a Talmudic tractate, an addendum to the Ethics of the Fathers, composed in the 4th century CE by a Talmudic sage known as Reb Nasan Habavli (hence the name Avos Derabi Noson.) I was curious to understand the Rebbe’s response. Rabbi Baumgarten was looking for practical advice, and the Rebbe is sending him to an ancient text...

I opened an Avos Derabi Noson to that particular chapter. I found a story told there about Aaron, our very own High Priest of Israel.

Aaron, the sages relate, brought back many Jews from a life of sin to a life of purity. He was the first one in Jewish history to make “baalei teshuvah,” to inspire Jews to re-embrace their heritage, faith, and inner spiritual mission. But, unlike today, during Aaron’s times to be a sinner you had to be a real no-goodnik. Because the Jews of his generation have seen G-d in His full glory; and to rebel against the Torah way of life was a sign of true betrayal and carelessness.

How then did Aaron do it? He would greet each person warmly. Even a grand sinner would be greeted by Aaron with tremendous grace and love. Aaron would embrace these so-called “Jewish sinners” with endless warmth and respect. The following day when this person would crave to sin, he would say to himself: How will I be able to look Aaron in the eyes after I commit such a serious sin? I am too ashamed. He holds me in such high moral esteem, how can I deceive him and let him down? And this person would abstain from immoral behavior.

He Gave Them Dignity

We come here full circle: Aaron was a leader, a High Priest, because even his staff blossomed. He never gave up on the dried-out sticks. He never looked at someone and said, “This person is a lost cause, he is completely cut off from his tree, of

any possibility of growth. He is dry, brittle, and lifeless.” For Aaron, even dry sticks would blossom and produce fruit. This is the story related in Avos Derabi Noson. This was the story the Lubavitcher Rebbe wanted Rabbi Berel Baumgarten to study and internalize. Should I expel the child from school was his question; he is, Jewishly speaking, a dried-out and one tough stick!

The response of an Aaron is this: Love him even more. Embrace him with every fiber of your being, open your heart to him, cherish him and shower him with warmth and affection. Appreciate him, respect him and let him feel that you really care for him. See in him or her that which he or she may not be able to see in themselves at the moment. View him as a great human being, and you know what? He will become just that.

*) The nucleus of this idea was presented by the Lubavitcher Rebbe to a group of young Jewish girls—the graduates of Beis Rivkah High School and counselors of Camp Emunah in the Catskill Mountains, in NY, on Thursday, Parshas Korach, 28 Sivan, 5743, June 9, 1983.

from: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org>
date: Jun 22, 2023, 6:08 PM
subject: Rav Frand - A Person Can Gain or Lose His World in One Momen
Parshas Korach
A Person Can Gain or Lose His World in One Moment

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand’s Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly portion: #1254 – Why Shouldn’t You Park In a Handicap Space? Good Shabbos!

The Ramban on the pasuk “And the earth opened its mouth and it swallowed them and their houses and all the men that were with Korach...” (Bamidbar 16:32) points out that any person associated with Korach was swallowed up when the ground opened. They were punished together with the rest of his property.

Ironically, however, the Ramban says that this dramatic punishment did not affect Korach’s own sons, as it is written in Parshas Pinchas “And the sons of Korach did not die.” (Bamidbar 26:11) Even though they were initially part of Korach’s assembly, there were spared because they were “great righteous men” whose merit saved them. What happened to Korach’s sons? How were they saved?

The Medrash (Yalkut Shimoni) says that their merit stemmed from the fact that when Korach was initially plotting his rebellion in the presence of his sons, Moshe came in and they covered their faces. They had the following dilemma: If we stand up in the presence of Moshe Rabbeinu (as protocol would demand for the Gadol Hador), this would shame our father, Moshe’s antagonist, and we are obligated to honor our

father. On the other hand, if we do not stand up for Moshe, we would violate the pasuk “Mipnei seivah takum...” (Vayikra 19:32) What should we do?

The Medrash relates that they decided to honor Moshe Rabbeinu even though it would shame their father. At that moment, they had pangs of repentance (hirhurei teshuva), as King David said, “My heart acquired a good matter...” (Tehillim 45:2)

I will share two comments on this Medrash:

1. Why did they choose to give honor to Moshe Rabbeinu over their father? Why did Moshe win out in the end? I saw in the sefer Darash Mordechai that this shows the power of the chinuch (education) of a home. Rashi says that Korach was amongst those who carried the Aron Kodesh (Ark) during the travels in the Wilderness. Any person who carried the Aron Kodesh had to be extremely careful about one thing: Kavod HaTorah. Someone who does not treat the Torah with the proper deference and honor died on the spot when lifting the Aron Kodesh. It was like carrying something that was radioactive. If you did not take the proper precautions, it could kill you.

There was something that permeated the house of Korach more than anything else: Kavod HaTorah. Kavod HaTorah. Kavod HaTorah. When you get something in your mother’s milk, when that becomes the raison d’être of your house – it becomes so important to you that it trumps everything else in your life. So, when they had this dilemma – Kavod haTorah vs. Kibbud Av v’Em, Kavod haTorah won out. This is the first observation.

2. The other observation is recognizing how much a person can accomplish with a single minute. That one minute in the lives of Korach’s sons, in which they were overcome with Kavod haTorah, saved their lives, and – as the Ramban says – they were considered tzadikim as a result of that. Shmuel haNavi descended from them. All because of that action expressing Kavod haTorah to Moshe Rabbeinu, which transpired in one minute! That is what a person can accomplish with one minute. We frequently mention the Gemara, “A person can acquire his world in a single moment.” (Avodah Zarah 10b) A single moment can change a person’s life, but unfortunately it cuts both ways. That which a person might do or say in one minute can cause him irreversible eternal damage as well.

How long do you think the whole story of Korach took? The whole story took place in less than a single day. How do we know that? The pasuk says that Korach had a complaint against Moshe Rabbeinu which led him to start a rebellion. Moshe responded to Korach “(Come) morning and Hashem will make known who belongs to Him...” (Bamidbar 16:5). Rashi notes: Why the emphasis on “morning”? This argument started in the evening. Why did Moshe wait until the next morning to put an end to it?

Rashi explains that Moshe's motivation was that maybe they would sleep on it overnight and change their minds. He stated that the afternoon was a time of drunkenness, not an appropriate time for reaching momentous decisions.

What happened? On the contrary, Korach engaged his followers with mockery of Moshe the entire night. (Does a house that is full of sefarim need a mezuzah? Does a garment that is entirely techeiles require tzisis?) The earth swallowed Korach and his followers the next morning.

Korach was a tzadik, a very prestigious individual. Yet his whole life went down the tube in less than 24 hours. Consider a tale of two categories of people: The Bnei Korach changed in less than one minute. They had a hirhur teshuva. They decided to honor Moshe Rabbeinu. They got a grip on themselves and saved their lives and the lives of their descendants in one minute. Korach let it go all down the drain in less than 24 hours.

A person can acquire his world in a moment, and a person can destroy his world in a moment. This is a scary thought.

Holiness and Machlokes Have Nothing to Do With Each Other
The Gemara (Sanhedrin 110a) says that the wife of Ohn ben Peles (one of the co-conspirators of Korach listed at the beginning of the parsha (Bamidbar 16:1) but not later on) saved him from utter destruction. She came to her husband and said, "Listen here. You have nothing to gain out of this. Regardless of whoever comes out on top here, you will just be second or third or fourth fiddle. Either Moshe Rabbeinu will come out on top and you will stay in the same position or Korach will come out on top and you will stay in the same position. What difference does it make to you?"

Ohn ben Peles (who was probably not the sharpest knife in the shed) responded. "Do you know what? You're right. But I am already too far into this. How do I get out of it?" The famous Gemara records the response of Mrs. Ohn ben Peles. "Don't worry. I will take care of you." She got her husband drunk with wine until he fell asleep. When the band of Korach's followers came around to pick up Ohn ben Peles, his wife sat by the door of her house and uncovered the hair of her head. Korach's followers saw this woman sitting by the door with her hair uncovered. They could not proceed any further into the house so they immediately went on their way. That is how she saved Ohn ben Peles.

The sefer Siach Yaakov brings two observations, which, in a sense, are contradictory.

Observation #1: Note the great level of the kedusha that resided in Am Yisrael at that time. People who were not fazed by the prospect of challenging the prophecy of Moshe Rabbeinu as the nation's leader, nevertheless, would not approach a woman who was immodestly dressed.

Observation #2: Note the great power of machlokes. People who are so holy that they don't want to look at an immodestly dressed woman, are nevertheless willing to go ahead and fight

with Moshe Rabbeinu. In other words, when even the holiest Jews get involved in machlokes, nothing else counts.

Sometimes Speeches Don't Help

My final observation has to do with this week's Haftorah. The Haftorah for Parshas Korach is Shmuel I 11:14 – 12:22. The people come to Shmuel asking for a king. Shmuel lambasts them. He challenges the people to name an incident where he ever cheated any of them or took anything from them. The people were forced to admit that he never oppressed them or took anything from them. They confessed that Shmuel had always been honest with them.

Why is this the Haftorah for Parshas Korach?

This is the Haftorah for Parshas Korach because there is a similar pasuk in our Parsha. "This distressed Moshe greatly and he said to Hashem: 'Do not turn to their gift offering. I have not taken the donkey of any of them, nor have I wronged even one of them.'" (Bamidbar 16:15) This is the parallel.

But the question must be asked: If Shmuel makes the speech to the people and the speech convinces them and they need to admit that Shmuel was right that he never took anything from them, why didn't Moshe Rabbeinu make the same speech to the people (he only expressed his frustration to Hashem in the above cited pasuk)? It worked for Shmuel. The people confessed that he was right. Why would the same speech not also work for Moshe? Why did he feel that he needed this miracle of the land opening up and swallowing them to put down this rebellion?

The difference between these two situations is that Shmuel was not dealing with a machlokes. When people are not involved in a machlokes it is possible to reason with them. You can then speak to the people and make a case to them. But Moshe Rabbeinu was dealing with rebellion – an open machlokes. When people are acrimonious, they are not reasonable. A person can make the most powerful and eloquent speeches but they will fall on deaf ears. It is like people's brains shut off. Or perhaps their ears shut off. Something shuts off.

Shmuel HaNavi was dealing with people to which he could still speak. He could make a speech: "Who's donkey have I taken?" Moshe Rabbeinu was dealing with disputants in a machlokes. In that situation, speeches don't help. The only thing that helps is opening the earth and swallowing them. That is the distinction between Moshe Rabbeinu's situation and that of Shmuel HaNavi.

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This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. A complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail

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Medicines on Shabbos

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Vitamin E oil

“May I rub Vitamin E oil on Shabbos into my skin to alleviate some discomfort?”

Question #2: Mixed before Shabbos

“May I mix a medicine into food before Shabbos and then take it on Shabbos?”

Introduction

In parshas Chukas, the Torah teaches that when the Bnei Yisroel complained against Hashem and Moshe for taking them through the desert without adequate provisions and for providing them with manna, a plague of poisonous snakes was unleashed among them and killed many Jews. When the Jews did teshuvah and asked Moshe to daven on their behalf, Hashem commanded him to make a snake out of copper and place it on top of a pole. Subsequently, anyone bitten by a poisonous snake would look at the copper snake and live.

The Mishnah (Rosh Hashanah 29a) comments: Does the copper snake determine life and death? No, it does not. When people looked in its direction, they were reminded of Hashem, prayed to Him and survived the bite.

Later in history, an image of a snake wrapped around the upper end of a pole became the international symbol of an apothecary or other medical facility. Obviously, this is the perfect week to discuss the halachos of using medicines on Shabbos, particularly since the work of the pharmacist is the basis for this halachic discussion.

Don't take your medicine!

The Mishnah and Gemara allude to a prohibition that Chazal instituted not to take medicines on Shabbos. For example, the Mishnah (Shabbos 111a) records the following:

Someone whose teeth are causing him pain may not sip vinegar as a remedy, but is permitted to dip his food into vinegar in his usual method of eating; there is no concern if this accomplishes his purpose of using the vinegar as an analgesic.

From this Mishnah, we see that Chazal prohibited doing anything that is clearly performed to alleviate pain or discomfort. This prohibition is called “refuah” by the poskim. The Gemara concludes that it is prohibited to sip vinegar only if he spits it out, but it is permitted to sip vinegar and swallow it, since people sometimes do this to arouse a greater appetite. From a different passage of Gemara (Beitzah 22a), we see that this prohibition also exists on Yom Tov. This article will attempt to clarify the rabbinic prohibition of refuah on

Shabbos. Explaining this topic adequately requires two introductory lists:

Hierarchy of prohibitions

To begin with, we need to understand that there are different levels of prohibition that are set aside for the needs of a person who is ill. First, I will list these, and then afterward, we will see what rules apply to permit these activities – in other words, how ill must a person be to permit them.

A. De'oraisa - A Jew performing an action that is usually prohibited on Shabbos min haTorah.

B. Derabbanan - A Jew performing a rabbinic prohibition.

C. Derabbanan with a shinuy - A Jew performing a rabbinic prohibition in an unusual way.

D. Amirah lenachri - Asking a non-Jew to do something that a Jew is not permitted to do.

E. Refuah - An action that is prohibited solely because it serves a medical purpose.

Hierarchy of conditions

According to most poskim, levels of “illness” or “wellness” are classified under five categories (cf. Eglei Tal, Melech Tochein 17, 18 and notes who disagrees). I am listing these beginning from the category that is most severe medically, where the halacha is most lenient:

1. Choli she'yeish bo sakanah

Any medical condition or situation that might be a threat to life, even if remote, is called a choli she'yeish bo sakanah. In this situation, we perform whatever is necessary to make the patient safe and properly treated. In other words, none of the categories of activities above is prohibited, and it is meritorious and required to perform whatever is necessary as quickly as possible to save the patient (pikuach nefesh). What type of condition qualifies as choli she'yeish bo sakanah?

In general, an internal injury is assumed to be pikuach nefesh until determined otherwise (Avodah Zarah 28a, see Tur, Orach Chayim 328). Excess or unusual internal pain is similarly assumed to be pikuach nefesh until determined otherwise. The extensive details germane to these situations will not be dealt with in this article.

2. Sakanas eiver

This is a situation in which there is no threat to a person's life, but he runs the risk of losing the use of part of his body irreversibly, if it is left untreated. Contemporary authorities rule that this category includes a patient in which the result may be a limp or permanent weakness in a limb (Chut Hashani, Volume 4, 89:27), and even if this result is only a possibility (Minchas Shelomoh, Volume 2:34:36).

The Shulchan Aruch quotes several opinions regarding what the halacha is germane to this situation. He concludes that although violating Torah law is permitted only when there is risk, albeit remote, to someone's life, violating any rabbinic prohibitions is permitted in a situation of sakanas eiver (Orach

Chayim 328:17). This includes asking a non-Jew to do anything for his needs (Ran, Shabbos 39b s.v. Umeiha). It goes without saying that the prohibition not to take medicines does not apply to this category. In other words, to treat this patient, all categories of prohibitions listed above, except for level A, are permitted.

To the best of my knowledge, the approach preferred by the Shulchan Aruch is accepted by all the subsequent authorities (Rema, Magen Avraham, Taz, Gra, Nishmas Adam 69:1, et al.).

3. Choleh kol gufo she'ein bo sakanah

This refers to a condition in which someone is ill in a way that affects his entire body, such as he is ill enough to go to bed (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 328:17). It also includes situations in which the discomfort is intense enough that he feels that his entire body is affected (Rema ad locum), he is running a fever that is higher than his usual body temperature (Shemiras Shabbos Kehilchasah 33:1) or if, without medical intervention, he will end up with a condition similar to one of those mentioned above (Shemiras Shabbos Kehilchasah 33:1). In addition, a child, an elderly person or someone whose general condition is weak may be in this category.

In this situation of choleh kol gufo, we find differing opinions among the rishonim regarding how lenient the halacha is. All authorities agree that a choleh kol gufo may ask a non-Jew to do something for him (level D), and it is prohibited for a Jew to perform on Shabbos or Yom Tov a melacha min haTorah for this patient (level A).

The Rosh was uncertain whether you can perform an issur derabbanan other than asking a non-Jew, and Rashi may have been stringent regarding this issue (levels B and C, see Eglai Tal, Melech Tochein #36 and #38). On the other hand, the Rambam rules that any issur derabbanan is permitted. The Ramban splits the difference, permitting a Jew to do a melacha only with a shinuy, in other words, permitting level C and forbidding level B.

The Shulchan Aruch concludes, according to the Ramban, that an activity that is ordinarily prohibited because of a rabbinic injunction may be performed by a Jew in an indirect way (i.e., with a shinuy). Furthermore, a non-Jew can be asked to do anything for his needs (Ramban and Rashba, Shabbos 129a). In addition, the prohibition of performing a refuah activity does not exist for this person when no other melacha activity is involved. In other words, to treat this patient, all categories listed above, except for levels A and B, are permitted.

4. Meichush

The word meichush means an ache, and carries with it the inference that it is a relatively minor discomfort. The term also includes someone who is mildly ill, but does not pass the threshold of the previous category of choleh kol gufo. One of the terms used to describe this category is that the person is walking around like a healthy person – he does not appear to

be ill, but he is suffering from some minor ailment. If it is clearly noticeable that he is in pain or that he is experiencing discomfort, he is not in the category of meichush, but in the previous category of choleh kol gufo.

A meichush does not permit performing any melacha activity, even one that is prohibited only because of a rabbinic decree. Furthermore, he may not attempt to alleviate the discomfort by use of any treatment being performed for that purpose. This is referred to as the prohibition against refuah, established by Chazal. In other words, to treat this patient, all categories listed above are prohibited.

5. Bari

This refers to someone who is perfectly healthy, but would like to do something that is usually considered a medicinal-type act to maintain or bolster his health. All authorities agree that a person may not perform a melacha activity for this purpose, whether the activity is forbidden min haTorah or midrabbanan. There is a dispute between the Shulchan Aruch and the Magen Avraham whether the special prohibition of refuah, i.e., preparing or taking medicinal aids or doing healing acts, applies to someone who is not sick. The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 328:37) rules that it does not; the prohibition to perform refuah applies only to someone who qualifies as being a bit ill. The Magen Avraham concludes that the prohibition of refuah applies, also, to someone who is completely well, but wants to do something that would usually be considered a medicinal type of activity.

In other words, a person who is healthy may certainly not do anything in categories A-D to enhance or bolster his health. Whether the prohibition of refuah, category E, applies is a dispute between the Shulchan Aruch, who is lenient, and the Magen Avraham, who rules strictly. As there does not appear to be a consensus among halachic authorities which approach to follow, I recommend that our readers consult with their rav or posek for halachic guidance.

Why are medicines prohibited on Shabbos?

The rest of this article will focus on explaining what I called above “Category E”: the rabbinic prohibition to do anything on Shabbos that is usually performed for medical reasons.

First we want to understand: Why did Chazal establish this prohibition?

The Gemara (Shabbos 53b) implies that the reason for the prohibition of refuah on Shabbos is because preparing medicines often involves crushing raw herbs, thus violating the melacha of grinding. This reason is mentioned by the primary early rishonim in several places (Rashi, Brachos 36b, Shabbos 108b, Beitzah 11b, Avodah Zarah 28a; Tosafos, Shabbos 64b, 93a, Eiruvim 102b; Rambam, Hilchos Shabbos 21:2; Rashba, Shabbos 129a; Rosh, Avodah Zarah 2:10). Other authorities provide an additional reason for the prohibition: at times, the application of a medicinal preparation involves a different

melacha activity, that of memarei'ach, smearing and smoothing the salve onto the skin (Chayei Adam 69:1). The discussion about this prohibition is scattered across many different places in the Gemara, and the conclusions are explained in Shulchan Aruch in Orach Chayim, Chapters 327 and 328.

At this point, we will return to the Mishnah I quoted above (Shabbos 111a): Someone whose teeth are causing him pain may not sip vinegar as a remedy, but he is permitted to dip his food into vinegar in his usual method of eating; there is no concern if this accomplishes his purpose of using the vinegar as an analgesic. Someone experiencing pain in the sides of his body may not smear wine or vinegar as a remedy, but he may apply oil as long as it is not rose oil.

Based on our previous discussion, we now know that this Mishnah is discussing someone who is uncomfortable because of a toothache or minor irritation on his side, but who does not qualify as a choleh kol gufo -- in other words, what we called before someone suffering from a meichush (category 4). We also see another very important principle: An activity that would commonly be done for a non-medical reason may be done notwithstanding that the person intends to alleviate thereby pain or discomfort -- a medical reason.

Rashi explains that people smear oil on their bodies for other than medical reasons, but not wine, vinegar or rose oil. Wine and vinegar were smeared only for medical reasons, and rose oil was not smeared for non-medical reasons, because it was too expensive to use for this purpose. Therefore, smearing wine, vinegar or rose oil is clearly for a medical reason, and is included under the rabbinic prohibition of refuah, but smearing other oils is not.

Incidentally, we see from this Mishnah that there is no prohibition of memarei'ach when rubbing oil into your skin on Shabbos. This is explained by halachic authorities to be permitted because oil is too thin to smooth out surfaces. Since this is not our topic for today's article, we will not spend more time on it.

Individual circumstances

Whether something is done usually for medical purposes or not might be subjective. In certain societies, there are things that are considered a normal activity, whereas in others, the same activity would not be done except as a medical treatment. How do we determine what is a "normal activity?"

The answer to this question is found in the continuation of the Mishnah, which states: Princes may smear rose oil on their injuries, because they smear it on regular days, even without a medical purpose. Rabbi Shimon rules that all Jews are treated like princes, and that therefore they may all smear rose oil as a medical treatment.

Both the first tanna and Rabbi Shimon agree that an activity that is sometimes performed for non-medical reasons may be done to alleviate a discomfort. Therefore, princes, who might

apply rose oil not as a medical treatment, may use it to alleviate discomfort, whereas, according to the first tanna, common folk, may not. Rabbi Shimon permits someone to do something that a different person would be doing for non-medical reasons, whereas the first tanna requires that he, himself, would do this activity on other occasions when not uncomfortable.

Notwithstanding Rabbi Shimon's position, the majority of early authorities and the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim) conclude according to the first tanna's opinion: someone can do something to alleviate discomfort only if he, himself, might do the same for a non-medical purpose.

Vitamin E oil

Thus, we can now answer our opening question: "May I rub Vitamin E oil on Shabbos into my skin to alleviate some discomfort?"

The answer is that it will depend: If people do rub Vitamin E oil when there is no medical discomfort, this would be permitted. I believe that this is not standard practice, and therefore it would seem to me that this is prohibited on Shabbos, unless the person is a choleh kol gufo.

Local circumstances

We see from this part of the Mishnah that when an act is performed commonly for non-medical reasons, someone may do it on Shabbos to alleviate discomfort or for a different medical reason. The Gemara expands this by noting that Rav permitted people in his town to smear rose oil on Shabbos, because where he lived it was plentiful, inexpensive and was used commonly without medical need. We see that local circumstances can determine what is permitted typical use. Does this concept apply only lekula or even lechumrah? Is an activity that is common for non-medical reasons, be performed in a geographic location where it is done only to alleviate discomfort? The answer is that this concept is true also lechumrah: the Rema (Orach Chayim 327:1) prohibits rubbing oil on the body on Shabbos if locally this is done only for medical reasons.

From this discussion, we see that a Shabbos prohibition existed even to use a medicinal process or aid whose preparation did not involve the melacha of grinding. We also see that an item that might be used by a healthy person is not included in the prohibition, and that determining whether a substance may be used or not can be dependent on local circumstances.

May I mix?

At this point, let us address the second of our opening questions: "May I mix a medicine into food before Shabbos and then take it on Shabbos?"

Based on an extensive analysis of one of the sugyos, Rav Moshe Feinstein permits mixing a medicine into food before Shabbos and eating the food on Shabbos, since people see him eating regular food. Rav Moshe demonstrates that the mixing

of the food must be before Shabbos, not on Shabbos itself (Shu"t Igros Moshe, Orach Chayim 2:86).

Conclusion

The Gemara teaches that the rabbinic laws are dearer to Hashem than the Torah laws. In this context, we can explain the vast halachic literature devoted to understanding this particular prohibition, created by Chazal to protect the Jewish people from major sins.
