



BEIT MIDRASH ZICHRON DOV TORONTO TORAH

PARASHAT SHELACH

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DVAR TORAH SHELACH RABBI NOAH SONENBERG, DEAN

How to Guarantee Success

When the Torah lists the tribes, they are usually in order of their birth or in the order of the way they camped. In this week's parasha, the list of spies doesn't seem to follow any tribal order. Ramban suggests that the order we see is based on the caliber of each individual (13:4). This approach presents an interesting perspective on the successful completion of the spying mission by Calev and Yehoshua since they only appear in the third and fifth position on the list. That means that there were two individuals of greater stature than Calev and Yehoshua and another individual who was greater than Yehoshua. These three individuals, despite starting from a stronger position, were not able to complete the mission without sinning. Vigilance is always required as past performance is not a guarantee of success. This idea is reflected in Pirkei Avot (2:4) where Hillel is quoted as saying "Do not trust in yourself until the day of your death". Calev and Yehoshua weren't successful just by chance. A close look at the text reveals that deep insight and constant work was required to keep faithful to their mission.

At first glance though, it seems that Yehoshua didn't need to do anything in order to be successful since Moshe Rabbeinu

prayed for his success when changing his name from Hoshea to Yehoshua: "May G-d save you from the evil counsel of the spies" (Rashi 13:16). However, a closer look at the text seems to indicate that Yehoshua was involved with his success as the prayer didn't say "May G-d save him". Moshe Rabbeinu involved Yehoshua by making him aware of the danger and by changing his name. The name change could function as a reminder of this prayer and the need

Past performance is not a guarantee of success

to vigilantly guard against sin, as each time one of the other spies called him he would need to correct them and remind them (and himself) of his new name. Yehoshua was successful because he was aware that someone believed in him and that there was a need to maintain constant vigilance. Not only was the need for this awareness clear to him intellectually but he also had frequent reminders to draw his attention back to his mission and goals. In our lives too, frequent reflection on our mission is essential to keeping on task as is taught in the Ramchal's Mesilat Yesharim (Chapter 3):

I see a need for a man to be meticulous and weigh his ways each and every day ... He should fix definite times and hours for this weighing so that it not be haphazard but rather with the greatest regularity for it yields great results.

Calev was also aware of the potential for sin and on his own devised a solution to this problem. Rashi tells us that he separated himself from the others to pray at the graves of the Patriarchs "that he might be helped not to give way to the enticement of his colleagues and join them in their counsel" (13:22). Even with his awareness of the danger and the need to be cautious around his peers he couldn't stay with them and simply stay vigilant. It was clear to him that the power of peer pressure is such that the awareness of it doesn't prevent its influence. Associating with people who can have a negative influence can't be mitigated only by awareness and vigilance. It's necessary to separate oneself from those individuals and those situations.

Raw talent and previously acquired merit did not guarantee their success but the Torah and commentaries teach us what they did to be successful. We can learn from them and apply these lessons to our own lives.



TANACH RABBI MORDECHAI TORCZYNER, ROSH BEIT MIDRASH EMERITUS

Yirmiyahu 26

Chapter 24 presented a prophetic warning close to the destruction of the first Beit HaMikdash, and Chapter 25 recorded an earlier prophetic warning from the fourth year of the reign of King Yehoyakim. Chapter 26 moves further back in time, to the very beginning of Yehoyakim's reign. The warning is consistent across chapters and monarchies: Repent now, or you will be crushed by the Babylonians.

Hashem tells Yirmiyahu to address those who are coming to serve Hashem in the Beit HaMikdash, and let them know there is still time to repent. On the other hand, Hashem warns that if they don't listen, the Beit HaMikdash will be destroyed as Shiloh was.

At the end of the period of the Shoftim, the Jews thought that Hashem would always guard Shiloh, home of the Mishkan. They brought the Aron (Ark) to war with them,

as a protective totem – and they were routed, and they lost the Aron (Shemuel 1:4). Yirmiyahu's message for his own era is that they should not repeat the error of thinking Hashem will always protect them (26:1-6).

The priests, false prophets and masses seize Yirmiyahu, planning to kill him

If Yirmiyahu's message is familiar, the response of his audience breaks new ground. The priests, false prophets and masses seize Yirmiyahu, planning to kill him. As explained by the Malbim, some of them believe that he is speaking for Hashem but they fear his message, while others allege that he is a false prophet misrepresenting the Divine word. Yirmiyahu responds that they can do what they wish

to him, but he is an innocent agent of Hashem (26:7-15).

Ultimately, Yirmiyahu is spared. Some relent because they recognize that he is speaking for Hashem. Others remember another prophet, Michah, who gave similar warnings. They quote verbatim from Michah 3:12, and they note that King Chizkiyahu did not execute Michah; rather, he listened (26:16-19).

Then another group tells of a prophet named Uriahu, who rebuked the nation similarly. King Yehoyakim and his officers pursued him all the way to Egypt to kill him. Perhaps this should be the precedent for dealing with Yirmiyahu! But a man named Achikam ben Shafan steps up to protect Yirmiyahu, and he is spared. [Achikam's son, Gedaliah, went on to become the governor of Judea after the Beit HaMikdash was destroyed.] (26:20-24)



MACHSHAVA RABBI JONATHAN ZIRING, SGAN ROSH BEIT MIDRASH EMERITUS

Week 2: Critique of Rambam

Perhaps Rabbi Soloveitchik's most complicated work is *Halakhic Mind*. We will focus on his theory of mitzvot as presented in the fourth section. While in Talmud study, Rabbi Soloveitchik spent much time explaining and defending the Rambam, as his grandfather and father did before him, in philosophical issues, he was often quite critical, perhaps never as much as when it came to *taamei hamitzvot*, finding the reason or philosophy of mitzvot.

Rambam, in the third section of *The Guide to the Perplexed*, sets out broad theories of the mitzvot. He finds theological, philosophical, moral, ethical, or scientific considerations for mitzvot to explain why it was rational for G-d to command them. Sometimes, he claims that the mitzvot were commanded for historical reasons that may no longer be as relevant. Thus, for example, he claims that G-d commanded sacrifices as a way of weaning the Jews off of idolatry (3:32). In a world where sacrifices were the norm, G-d could command the Jews to worship Him with sacrifices rather than idols, but could not eliminate them. Many other

commandments are explained as combatting ancient idolatrous practices. In an example of a scientific explanation, he argues that Kashrut is based on health considerations (3:48).

Rambam's *taamei hamitzvot* were challenged by many thinkers, from Rishonim to modern thinkers, both his broad methodology and specific claims.

R. Soloveitchik argues that the entire approach of Rambam is wrong, claiming his reasons "neither edify nor inspire the religious consciousness. They are essentially, if not entirely, valueless for the religious interests we have most at heart" (*Halakhic Mind*, 92). If every mitzvah is merely an expression of some other value, Torah becomes secondary to these ideals. He thus rejects all attempts at "causal" or "genetic" explanations of mitzvot. Rabbi Soloveitchik argues that one should not try to discover the "why" of mitzvot. Instead, one should start from the mitzvot and unpack value from them. We will see next week what this looks like and the source of his inspiration.



Is it permissible to recite Tehillim by heart?

Question: I was at a graduation ceremony, and one of the rabbis reciting Tehillim insisted on reading from a written text rather than reciting by heart. Is it really necessary to recite Tehillim only from a written text?

Answer: The Gemara in *Gittin*, page 60, states that written things should not be recited by heart, and oral things should not be written down. This means that the Written Torah should be studied specifically from a written text, while the Oral Torah, which we received from Sinai, should be studied orally and not from a written text (and indeed, the Mishnah and Gemara were written down later as a special enactment due to "Et Laasot LaHashem-Heferu Toratecha").

There are several explanations for why written things should be studied from a written text:

1. The *Sefer Yereim* (Mitzvah 268)], suggests that it was out of concern that the rabbi might say a teaching and the congregation would not believe him, so the rabbi needed to read from a text to show it was indeed written.

2. The Ran in *Megillah* 14 explains that it is because there are laws derived from the "kri" (the way the verse is read) and the "ktiv" (the way the word is written in the verse), and to learn from the "ktiv" one must examine the text.

The *Shulchan Aruch* in *Orach Chaim* 49 indeed rules that written things should not be recited by heart, but there are several exceptions:

3. The *Shulchan Aruch* himself states that if the texts are well-known, like *Keriyat Shema* it is acceptable.

4. The *Mishnah Berurah* brings a view that the rule about not reciting written things by heart only applies when fulfilling someone else's obligation for a mitzvah, but if not fulfilling someone else's obligation, it can be recited by heart. Based on this, the *Sefer Shmirat Shabbat Kehilchata* (Chapter 47, Halacha 31) rules that Kiddush should be recited from a Siddur because the person reciting Kiddush is fulfilling the obligation for the congregation with the words "Vayechulu,"

which are verses from the Torah and should be recited from a written text, not by heart.

Therefore, the *Mishnah Berurah* says that one may recite Tehillim by heart for two reasons:

5. The person reciting the Tehillim is not fulfilling the obligation for others.

6. The rule about not reciting written things by heart was said only regarding study, not prayer. Since the recitation of Tehillim is a form of prayer and supplication to Hashem the rule of "written things should not be recited by heart" does not apply (*Mishnah Berurah* 49:6).

In the case you mentioned at the graduation ceremony, I was also present at that event and asked the rabbi why he insisted on reading the Tehillim from the text. He gave the simplest answer: he did not want to get confused, and it is always advisable to *daven*, *bench*, and recite Tehillim from a Siddur to avoid confusion.

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



Week 2: Shabbetai Tzvi



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

"It was at the conclusion of this strange week that Shabbetai Tzvi announced an innovation—a blessing over sin. The blessing ended with the words 'mattir issurim' - a corruption of the blessing recited every morning that ends 'mattir assurim,' which describes G-d as 'He who liberates the imprisoned.' This new blessing, to be used every time someone sinned to please G-d, changed the meaning of the phrase to 'He who permits the forbidden' ... He then took a piece of pork, uttered the altered blessing, and proceeded to eat it." (Mavericks, Mystics & False Messiahs, page 8)

Probably the most famous (or infamous) false messiah in the modern era was Shabbetai Tzvi, born in Turkey in 1626. By his

thirties, Shabbetai Tzvi already had a reputation as a strange individual, exhibiting unusual practices, such as the invented bracha mentioned above. But his life took an extreme turn on the 17th of Sivan, 1665 (359 years ago to the date from this past Sunday) when he declared himself the Messiah.

In his opening chapter, Rabbi Dunner reports the details of Shabbetai Tzvi's life. His messianic pursuits mostly came to an end in 1666, when Shabbetai Tzvi chose to convert to Islam rather than be executed. Still, the chaos that his Messianic claims sowed among the Jewish community and within the Ottoman empire set the stage for the hyper-vigilance against Messianic pretenders that were to come.

Mavericks, Mystics & False Messiahs can be purchased from Koren Publishers at tinyurl.com/KorenBMZD. Use the code TorontoTorah for a 10% discount on this or any other book on their website



TABLE TALK RABBI NOAH SONENBERG, DEAN

Source: Bamidbar 15:39

“...and you shall see it and remember all the commandments of Hashem...”

Rashi:

Because the numerical value of the letters of the word תְּשִׁבָּע is six hundred, and there are eight threads and five knots in the fringes, so that you have six hundred and thirteen

Questions to Discuss

- People would tie a string around their finger to help remember something. How does the tying of tzitzit parallel this idea?
- How does the unique method of tying and the numerical value of the word tzitzit make the reminder even more compelling?

After Shabbat, please share your family's answers with us at nsonenberg@torontotorah.com to enter our raffle for a \$15 voucher for Grodzinski Bakery!

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Shabbat	Halacha from the Parasha Gemara	Clanton Park BAYT	After Hashkama Minyan Between Mincha & Maariv	Rabbi Mann Rabbi Gutenberg
Sunday	Tzurba M'Rabanan – Halacha Men's Semichat Chaver: Hilchot Smachot Shiur b'lvrit	Yeshivat Or Chaim Clanton Park BAYT (Milevsky/ Mizrachi)	8:30 AM 9:00 AM 9:00 AM	Rabbi Shor Rabbi Spitz & Rabbi Mann Rabbi Mann & Rabbi Lax
Monday	Men's Halacha Introduction to Gemara: Learn how to learn	Shomrai Shabbos Yeshivat Or Chaim	8:30 PM 8:00 PM	Rabbi Mann Rabbi Sonenberg
Tuesday	Then and Now: Returning to the Land of Israel – a Study in Tanach Women's Gemara Shiur Women's Contemporary Halacha Shiur	Zoom Zoom Clanton Park	1:30 PM 8:30 PM 8:00 PM	Rabbi Horovitz Rabbi Anstandig Rabbi Mann
Wednesday	Men's Contemporary Halacha Men's Gemara Bekiut	Clanton Park Yeshivat Or Chaim	1 hour before Mincha 8:00 PM	Rabbi Mann Rabbi Sonenberg
Thursday	Tanach: Sefer Shmuel Men's Tzurba M'Rabanan Men's Gemara Iyun	Zoom: tiny.cc/BMZDtanach Yeshivat Or Chaim BAYT (Milevsky/ Mizrachi)	1:30 PM 8:00 PM 8:00 PM	Rabbi Horovitz Rabbi Turtel R' Dina
Sun-Thu	Bekiut Gemara - Yevamot	Shaarei Shomayim	Sunday: 7:45 PM Mon–Thurs: 6:30 PM	R' Dina

YOUR BEIT MIDRASH

Rosh Beit Midrash

Rabbi Yehuda Mann
ymann@torontotorah.com

Dean

Rabbi Noah Sonenberg
nsonenberg@torontotorah.com

Maggidei Shiur

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

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

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