



WHICH TEXT WILL BE OUR OMER MADNESS CHAMPION?

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Championship Study Question for both texts:

- What in your opinion would make someone a prophet? What about a sage?
- Has there ever been an event in your family like “Sinai” that even family members not present feel connected to it and talk about it as though they were there?
- What is your favorite of the 613 *mitzvot* (commandments)? Least favorite?
- Do you find it easier to explain the Torah with a list of condensed principles or by relating the narrative stories? Is one aspect more important than the other?

[Midrash] Exodus Rabbah 28:4-6

“And God spoke all these words, saying” (Exodus 20:1). Rabbi Isaac said: At Mount Sinai the prophets of each and every generation received what they were to prophesy, for Moses told Israel, “But with them that stands here with us this day before Adonai our God, and also with them that are not here with us this day” (Deuteronomy 29:14). [Moses] did not say, “[Those who are] not standing here with us this day,” but “[Those who are] not here with us this day,” a way of referring to souls that are destined to be created. Because as yet these had no substance, Moses did not use the word “standing” for them. Still, even though they did not as yet exist, each one received their share of the Torah. Nor were the future prophets the only ones who received at Sinai the prophecy they were to utter. The sages who were to rise in each and every generation—each and every one of them also received at Sinai the wisdom [Moses] was to utter.

Babylonian Talmud Makkot 3b-24a

The Holy One, blessed be God, desired to make Israel worthy, therefore God gave them the Law [to study] and many commandments [to do]; for it is said, Adonai was pleased, for Israel’s righteousness’ sake, to make the Law great and glorious (Isaiah 42:21). [...]

Rabbi Simlai when preaching said: Six hundred and thirteen *mitzvot*/precepts were communicated to Moses, three hundred and sixty-five negative precepts (“thou shalt not”s...), corresponding to the number of solar days [in the year], and two hundred and forty-eight positive precepts (“thou shalt”s...), corresponding to the number of the members [joints or bones] of a human’s body.

Said Rabbi Hamnuna, [...] David came and reduced them to eleven [principles], as it is written, “A Psalm of David. Adonai, who shall sojourn in Your House? Who shall dwell upon Your Holy Mountain?— (1)

They that walk uprightly, and (2) do righteousness, and (3) speak the truth in their heart; that (4) has no slander upon their tongue, (5) nor does evil to their neighbors, (6) nor take up criticism against their neighbor; (7) who only seeks good companions, (8) Who honors them that are faithful to God, (9) who does not blame others, (10) who does not take advantage of those less fortunate, (11) nor takes bribes; they shall never be shaken” (Psalms 15:1-5). [...]

Isaiah came and reduced them to six [principles], as it is written,
“(1) One that walks righteously, and (2) speaks uprightly; (3) One that fights the oppression, (4) One that does not take bribes, (5) One that refuses to listen to evil (6) and shuts their eyes from looking upon evil; they shall dwell on high” (Isaiah 33:15). [...]

Micah came and reduced them to three [principles], as it is written,
“It hath been told to you, ‘Do what is good, and what God does require of you: (1) only to do justly, and (2) to love mercy, and (3) to walk humbly with your God’” (Micah 6:8). [...]

Again came Isaiah and reduced them to two [principles], as it is said,
“This says God: (1) keep justice, and (2) do righteousness” (Isaiah 56:1).

Amos came and reduced them to one [principle], as it is said,
“God said to the house of Israel: Seek Me, and live” (Amos 5:4).

To this Rabbi Nahman ben Isaac demurred, saying, [Might it not be taken as,] “Seek Me by observing the whole Torah and live?” But it is Habakkuk who came and based them all on one [principle], as it is said, “But the righteous shall live by their faith” (Habakkuk 2:4).