



- a. Prophecy is a fundamental tenant of our belief – without it we could not have a Torah (Rambam – 13 Principles of Faith). But the Era of Prophecy came to an end.

Following the death of the last prophets Chaggai, Zachariah and Malachi, Divine Inspiration (*Ruach HaKodesh*) was removed from the Jewish people (Sanhedrin 11a)

- i. Malachi was the last of the prophets; Sages identify him as Ezra
- b. Why is Prophecy important?
- c. Why did it end?
  - i. Sin (Simply didn't fulfill the Torah (Radak, Hag 2:5)) or Mocking the Prophets (Avos D'Rebbe Nosson), or that the Jews did not return to rebuild the Second Temple

Had you, Israel, made yourself like a wall, and gone up, all together, in the days of Ezra, you would have been comparable to silver, which is not subject to decay. But now that you have ascended like doors, you are comparable to cedar which is subject to decay (Yoma 9b)

- ii. The Destruction of the Temple
  - 1. G-d's presence abandons the Temple (leading to its destruction), and that in turn contributes to disappearance of prophecy (Radak, Ezekiel 9:3)
  - 2. We now have no need for prophecy – everything that was foretold happened (Malbim, Zachariah 1:5)
- iii. Spiritual Transition
  - 1. Men of the Great Assembly successfully prayed to end the urge for idolatry. A natural by-product was diminished counter balancing power of prophecy. "When they killed the Evil Inclination for idolatry, prophecy ceased." (Vilna Goan, commentary on Seder Olam)

#### IV. Now What?

- a. The last Prophet, Malachi, left us with a final message, the last recorded prophecy:

(22) Be mindful of the teaching of My servant Moshe - the laws and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel.  
 (23) I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and awesome day of Hashem,  
 (24) That he may turn the heart of the fathers back through the children, and the heart of the children back through their fathers - lest I come and smite the earth with utter destruction.

- b. Hashem would continue to communicate with us - but in a new forum: through His Torah
  - i. R' Tzadok Hakohen of Lublin: In previous generations, people turned to Prophets for absolute religious guidance and knowledge of G-d's Will. But now, the Sages needed to utilize their own human intellect to interpret Divine texts and traditions to arrive at rulings and develop axioms that would keep the eternal Torah relevant as society changed.

- c. There were two forms of Torah study – one from Prophets and one from the Sages
- d. Moshe visits Rabbi Akiva’s classroom (Menachos 29b)

Following the Destruction of the Temple, even though Prophecy was removed from the Prophets, it was not taken from the Sages. Said Amimar: Indeed, a Sage is even better than a Prophet. (Talmud Bava Basra 12a)

**V. Some examples of our partnership**

- a. It’s not in Heaven
- b. Both these and these are the words of the Living G-d
- c. Even when we’re wrong

**VI. Ramifications – Beginning at this time...**

- a. “Names” begin to appear for the first time in the Mishna
- b. Disputes arise and become part of the fabric of interpretation of Jewish Law
- c. The Greek empire, culture of mortal wisdom, begins
- d. Our siddur is developed by the Men of the Great Assembly

**VII. The Wandering Jew**

- a. Following the completion of the Talmud, we scatter throughout the world

## **Addendum:**

### **1. Abolishing the Drive for Idolatry (Yoma 69b)**

And [they] cried out with a great voice unto the L-rd, their G-d. What did they cry? "Woe, woe, it is 'he' [the desire for idolatry] who has destroyed the Sanctuary, burned the Temple, killed all the righteous, driven all Israel into exile, and is still dancing around among us! You have surely given him to us so that we may receive reward through him [by overcoming the desire]. We want neither him, nor the reward through him!" Thereupon, a tablet fell down from heaven to them, upon which the word "Truth" was inscribed ... They ordered a fast of three days and three nights, whereupon he was surrendered to them. He came forth from the Holy of Holies like a young fiery lion. Afterwards, the prophet said to Israel, "This is the evil desire for idolatry."

### **2. Moshe visits Rabbi Akiva's classroom, Menachos (29b):**

Reb. Yehuda, who said in the name of Rab: When Moshe ascended to heaven to receive the Torah he found Hashem engaged in affixing tagin (three small upward strokes in the form of a crown) to the letters.

Moshe then asked, "Master of the Universe, Who is forcing Your hand (that You have to add crowns to the letters)?"

Hashem replied: "There will be a man, after many generations, whose name is Akiva ben Yosef and he will expound a multitude of laws upon each stroke of these coronets."

Moshe asked to be permitted to see that man, and Hashem instructed him to turn around. Moshe sat down behind eight rows of Rabbi Akiva's disciples and listened to their discussions. Moshe found that he could not follow their arguments. He felt as if his strength had been sapped.

When they came to a certain topic, the students asked Rabbi Akiva (in reference to a law that was being discussed): "From where do we know this?"

Rabbi Akiva responded, "Halacha L'Moshe M'Sinai" - this is an oral law handed down to Moshe at Sinai.

At that moment Moshe was comforted.

### **3. It's not in Heaven - Bava metzia (59a)**

[An oven] that was cut into parts and sand was placed between the parts, Rabbi Eliezer maintained that it is pure (i.e., not susceptible to ritual impurity). The other sages said that it is susceptible to ritual impurity....

On that day, Rabbi Eliezer brought them all sorts of proofs, but they were rejected. Said he to them: "If the law is as I say, may the carob tree prove it." The carob tree was uprooted from its place a distance of 100 cubits. Others say, 400 cubits. Said they to him: "One cannot prove anything from a carob tree."

Said [Rabbi Eliezer] to them: "If the law is as I say, may the aqueduct prove it." The water in the aqueduct began to flow backwards. Said they to him: "One cannot prove anything from an aqueduct."

Said he to them: "If the law is as I say, then may the walls of the house of study prove it." The walls of the house of study began to cave in. Rabbi Yehoshua rebuked them, "If Torah scholars are debating a point of Jewish law, what are your qualifications to intervene?" The walls did not fall, in deference to Rabbi Yehoshua, nor did they straighten up, in deference to Rabbi Eliezer. They still stand there at a slant.

Said he to them: "If the law is as I say, may it be proven from heaven!" There then issued a heavenly voice which proclaimed: "What do you want of Rabbi Eliezer -- the law is as he says..."

Rabbi Yehoshua stood on his feet and said: "The Torah is not in heaven!" ... We take no notice of heavenly voices, since You, G-d, have already, at Sinai, written in the Torah to "follow the majority."

Rabbi Nathan subsequently met Elijah the Prophet and asked him: "What did G-d do at that moment?" [Elijah] replied: "He smiled and said: 'My children have triumphed over Me, My children have triumphed over Me.'"

#### **4. Both These and These are correct (Eruvin 13b)**

For three years there was a dispute between Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai, the former asserting, "The law is in agreement with our views," and the latter contending, "The law is in agreement with our views." Then a bat kol, a voice from heaven, announced, *Eilu v'eilu divrei Elokim Chayim*, "These and those are both the words of the Living G-d," adding, "but the law is in agreement with the rulings of Beit Hillel."

Since both "these and these are the words of the Living G-d," with what did Beit Hillel merit to have the law fixed according to their rulings? Because they were kindly and modest, they studied their own rulings as well as those of Beit Shammai, and were even so humble to mention the words of Beit Shammai before their own

#### **5. Valid rulings even when they're wrong (Rosh Hashana 25a)**

Rabban Gamliel sent to him (Rabbi Yehoshua) I command you to come to me with your staff and your money on the day that Yom Kippur would fall out according to your calculations.

He (Rabbi Yehoshua) was disturbed and went and found Rabbi Akiva. He (Rabbi Akiva) said to him, 'I can prove that everything that Rabban Gamliel did (with regards to declaring the new moon) is a fait accompli. As it says, "These are the appointed festivals of HaShem that you shall proclaim as holy gatherings." This is true whether they are declared in their proper time or not. We only have these festivals and no others.'

He came to Dosa ben Horkanes, who said to him, 'If I was to come and contest with the court of Rabban Gamliel I would have to contest with every court that there had been from the time of Moshe to today. As it says, "Moshe, Aharon Nadav, Avihu and the seventy elders ascended." Why did the verse not give the names of the elders? This is to teach that any time three gather together as a court for Israel they are like the court of Moshe.'

He (Rabbi Yehoshua) took his staff and his money in his hand and went to Yavneh to Rabban Gamliel on the day that his calculation said was Yom Kippur. Rabban Gamliel stood up and kissed him on his head. He said to him, 'Come in peace my teacher and my disciple; my teacher in wisdom and my disciple in that you accepted my words.'

#### **6. Rambam, chapter 2, Laws of Sanctification of the New moon**

Once the court sanctifies the new month, it remains sanctified regardless of whether they erred unwittingly, they were led astray [by false witnesses], or they were forced [to sanctify it]. We are required to calculate [the dates of] the festivals based on the day that they sanctified [as the beginning of the new month].

Even if [a person] knows that [the court] erred, he is obligated to rely on them, for the matter is entrusted to them alone. The One who commanded us to observe the festivals is the One who commanded [us] to rely on them, as [implied by Leviticus 23:2]: "Which you will pronounce as days of holy convocation."

#### **7. Rabbi Berel Wein, Introduction to "The Oral Law of Sinai"**

There is no intellectual work known to the human world that is even similar to the Mishna and its companion work, the Talmud. The Talmud is a law book, a faithful transmission of the Oral Law of Sinai to all later generations of Jews. It is a book of ethical principals and moral values. It is a book of legends and stories, also of psychological and historical observations. It discusses medicine, pharmacology, dreams, botany, astronomy, and mathematics, as well

as human and animal biology. It is a detailed painstaking commentary to the Written Law of the Torah, based on rigorous logic, scrupulous scrutiny of biblical texts, and an unremitting search for truth.

It does not debate matters of faith – it is faith itself. It discovers G-d and His Torah in every nook and cranny of human existence and there is nothing about life, humans, nature, spirituality or physicality that is a taboo subject. All is Torah; all is holiness...

It is a book of love, of compassion, of striving spirituality, and also of withering candor. It is a book for the masses, but is again a book only for the few. It has simple wisdom on its surface and majestic mystery in its depth. It is the book of love between Jews and Jews, between generations and generations, between the people and the G-d of Israel...The creators of the Mishna and the Talmud are worthy successors to the Prophets of Israel in their vision, their fire and passion, their unsparing honesty, their love for the people and G-d of Israel; and most of all in their almost unrealistic yet unquenchable optimism. Theirs is the unshakable faith in the Torah and mission of Israel that sustained generations of Jews for centuries.

Even though the entire Torah, both Written and Oral, is from Sinai, the portion of Torah that is the Oral Law remains solely in Jewish possession, unlike the written Bible that has been co-opted by other faiths...The Oral Law is built upon the Written Torah. Though it was a product of centuries of study, writing, editing and endless review, Judaism posits that the Oral Law – its structures, mechanisms, and interpretations of the Written Law – stems from the Divinity of the Revelation at Sinai. Every subject in the Talmud begins with the question: Where in the written Torah do we find the basis for this Discussion.

However, the development, scholarship and popularization of the Oral Law were accomplished by people. These great human beings accelerated this process of developing the Oral Law after the period of Prophecy in Jewish History, during the era of Ezra and the Men of the Great Assembly (350-300 BCE). In fact, the development of the Oral Law as the main spiritual and intellectual basis of Judaism from the time of Ezra onwards should be seen as the replacement for the now absent gift of prophecy which has previously sustained the nation from the time of Moshe until Ezra. Until the final redaction of the Babylonian Talmud (approximately 450 CE), this process of interpretation and decision making, stretching over almost a millennia in time, continued unabated.

1. Welcome: very exciting to begin a new course, overview of 20 or so of the most influential Books written over the past 1000 years. Different speakers to share their wisdom.
2. Chairs/seating
3. Dr Mark Wainberg. Speaking with the family over the last year and a half, to honour him, thought learning and studying together felt right, Mark was beloved by all, with his good humour brought people together, growth mode, wanting to learn and improve – as a scientist he made the world a better place, but in this shul he was interested in making himself a better person. Susan.
4. Individual classes can be sponsored, several have been taken already – nosh and listed
5. All classes recorded.
6. Selling loose-leafs, please let me know if you want one.

Summarize everything we did last quickly: Hashem created the world, established his everlasting covenant with Avos, promised them the Land of Israel to be the Place where they will keep, and gave them the Torah through which they will both connect and maintain their hold on the Land. When they failed, they were exiled. The 5 Books of the Chumash bring us to the threshold of the Land – the Prophets take us in, and then we watched a steady decline throuought, first the splitting of the Kingdom, and eventual Exile. Taking us to the last few Books, Eicha mourned the loss of the Temple and the exile, the Megillas esther recorded miraculous salvation while in Exile, and then Ezra Nechemia (the last Book chronologically) took us back home. Tells the story of the return and the rebuilding of the walls of Yerushalayim, and what we will become the Second Temple.

This point then is critical. The Tanach is sealed. Finished. Sealed. If the second temple had been rebuilt and we lived happily ever after, that would make sense. But alas we know it didn't happen that way. We're in Atlanta. There is a mosque on Har Habayis. Why is Tanach finished?

Couple of major themes that we need to talk about

Number #1: Most significant shift is about to take place in Jewish history, and will change the course of the way we relate to Torah and all of Jewish Life. For us it's the norm, but it can not be overstated: The end of Prophecy. NEVER in the history of mankind – from Adam to Malachai/Nechemia – did we not have direct communication from Hashem.