

Torah and Tech Week Three

Miraculously-Created Meat

1. תענית כה"ע"א:

- Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa observed a unique situation with his daughter experiencing distress.
- He inquired about the cause, and she explained that her vinegar jug had been swapped for one filled with oil, allowing her to kindle the Sabbath lights.
- Rabbi Chanina replied indifferently, suggesting that if oil can be used, then vinegar should also be permitted to ignite.
- The Talmud records a case where a miraculous flame burned continuously until they brought it for the Sabbath blessing.

When cultured meat emerged, discussions arose on its halachic status, covering several aspects:

1. Consumption of meat from non-kosher sources using this technology.
2. Sourcing meat from living animals through biopsy instead of traditional slaughter.
3. Concerns about the kashrut of nutrients used.
4. Determining if cultured meat is parev or classified as actual meat.

Rabbi Zvi Ryzman proposed a unique perspective, suggesting that the source of stem cells was irrelevant due to the extra-natural process, comparing it to miraculously created meat. Rabbi Chanoch Kahn's essay explored various approaches, focusing on the identity of cultured meat.

1. Food Descended from Heaven

- The Gemara discusses Adam's prohibition from eating meat until Noah's time when it was permitted.
- Rabbi Yehuda ben Tema suggests that angels used to roast meat for Adam in the Garden of Eden.
- Resolving the contradiction, the Gemara states that meat descending from heaven is not prohibited.
- Rashi and the Ran differ on the reasoning, with the latter suggesting it's not meat according to halacha.
- Chazon Ish proposes that heavenly involvement transforms the meat's status.

2. Heavenly Wheat in Menachot

- Rabbi Zira questions the status of wheat that descended with rain.
- Rashi explains it as wheat carried by rain, and Tosafot suggests it miraculously descended.
- The difference lies in whether it was a natural occurrence or a miraculous event.
- The discussion relates to whether "ממושבותיכם" in the Torah is satisfied by wheat descending in an abnormal manner.

3. Miraculously Multiplied Oil

- The Talmud recounts the miracle of Chanukah where a small amount of oil burned for eight days.
- Acharonim debate whether the oil was consumed gradually or replenished miraculously.
- In a similar narrative with Elisha, a widow's oil miraculously multiplied to pay her debts.
- Rashi links this story to the widow of Obadjahu, who hid prophets, suggesting a miraculous element.

- The discussion revolves around whether miraculously multiplied oil is fit for the Menorah but exempt from tithes.

1. Gemara Stories:

The Gemara stories cited involve instances where animals were supposedly created through spiritual powers, akin to using the Sefer Yetzira. These animals were considered kosher, which raises the question of whether this could serve as a precedent for cultured meat. It's crucial to note that the Gemara shared these stories to argue against the prohibition of witchcraft in using the Sefer Yetzira.

2. Malbim's Question:

The Malbim's perspective suggests that meat created through the Sefer Yetzira has no historical background and, therefore, might not be subject to certain prohibitions, such as the prohibition of consuming meat and milk together. The text asks for other perspectives on the Malbim's question.

3. Shelah's Interpretation:

The Shelah suggests that Joseph's brothers were created through the Sefer Yetzira, possibly exempting them from the prohibition of eating meat from a living animal. However, objections are raised, and there's a query about the authenticity of such miraculous occurrences.

4. Objections by פתחי תשובה:

The פתחי תשובה raises objections against the Shelah's opinion, particularly concerning the need for proper slaughter. These objections may stem from concerns related to the essence of reading the Torah and how it aligns with the opinion of the Ran mentioned in the first source.

5. Further Halachic Implications:

Later authorities, like Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Ashkenazi (חכם צבי), express uncertainties regarding the halachic status of a person created through the Sefer Yetzira. The Chazon Ish and others raise concerns about the neveila status of such meat, asserting it may not be subject to the laws of ritual slaughter.

Responses to Questions:

1. The פתחי תשובה's Objections:

The פתחי תשובה objects to the Shelah's opinion, primarily concerning the need for slaughter and raises questions about the essence of reading the Torah. These objections may align with or contradict the Ran's opinion from the first source, depending on their stance regarding miraculous occurrences.

2. Chazon Ish's Approach:

The Chazon Ish offers a novel perspective suggesting that meat created through Kabbalistic means might be exempt from the prohibition of neveila but still considered meat. The question is whether this aligns with the Gemara he cites as a proof.

3. Is Cultured Meat Created Miraculously?

Rav Asher Weiss rejected the comparison of cultured meat to the cases discussed above.

14. Rav Asher Weiss's Objection:

- Even if one accepts that meat created miraculously through a Sefer Yetzira-like process doesn't require ritual slaughter and is not subject

to the prohibition of mixing meat and milk, Rav Asher Weiss disagrees with applying the same reasoning to cultured meat.

- He argues that cultured meat, despite its unique production method, is not a miraculous creation but rather an accelerated natural process.
- Cultured meat, according to Weiss, originates from natural flesh, growing and multiplying according to the laws of nature, without the intervention of supernatural forces.
- Hence, Weiss concludes that it doesn't fall under the category of miraculous creation and should be judged according to the general rules governing meat.

15. Rabbi Betzalel Stern's Distinction:

- Rabbi Betzalel Stern introduces a crucial distinction between items created miraculously by humans and those created by God.
- He argues that when something is miraculously created by humans, like the meat that descended from heaven, it does not bear the same legal weight as naturally occurring phenomena or those created by God.
- However, creations that are truly miraculous and originate solely from divine intervention, without human involvement, are subject to all the commandments.
- Stern suggests that for the Almighty, who operates outside the confines of nature, there is no difference between miracles and the natural order; both are His creations.
- Therefore, when God provides man with food, whether miraculously or through nature, it is considered food by all standards.

Reflection on Cultured Meat:

- Applying these distinctions to cultured meat, Rav Asher Weiss views it as a product of accelerated natural processes rather than a miraculous creation.
- If one accepts Weiss's perspective, it aligns more closely with Stern's notion of creations with human involvement, deviating from the natural order but not qualifying as true miracles.
- Cultured meat, under this interpretation, might be considered a technological advancement, resembling ordinary daily miracles rather than a supernatural event.

Conclusion:

- The debate on the status of cultured meat is based on whether it is a product of human activity or an accelerated natural process.