

Where we have been

- Reasons why Torah would reject scientific evidence or theory (the Tereifah, and Copernicus)
- Options for reconciling Torah and science (Copernicus, and the Age of the Universe)
- This week: Is Torah a medical textbook? (Talmudic Medicine)

A practical problem

1. Talmud, Pesachim 76b

Rava of Parzikya prohibited people from eating fish with a dairy dish, if it had been roasted with meat. Mar bar Rav Ashi taught: It is even prohibited to eat this with plain salt; it is bad for smell and for another ailment.

2. Dr. Josh Backon (Faculty of Medicine, Hebrew University), <http://www.aishdas.org/avodah/vol03/v03n091.shtml>
Recent research has found that stearic acid found in beef may actually lower LDL cholesterol (see: American Journal of Clinical Nutrition 1994;60 (Suppl): 1044s). On the other hand, fish contains eicosapentaenoic acid which has been found (paradoxically) to increase lipid peroxidation (J Invest Dermatology 1994;103:151; Intl J Vitamin Nutrition Res 1994;64: 144; Journal of Nutrition 1992;122:2190; Journal of Lipid Research 1991; 32:79). In addition, there may be an interaction in the liver (P450) between stearic acid and eicosapentaenoic acid. There is extensive literature on fish oil induced diabetes. In psoriasis there's: increased lipogenesis, increased susceptibility to diabetes, increased tendency to thrombosis, & elevated plasma lipid levels.

3. Talmud, Shabbat 133b

Rav Pappa said: If a *mohe*/does not draw out the blood, that is dangerous, and we remove him.

4. Talmud, Gittin 68b

For head pain resulting from blood, bring *shorbina* [a type of cedarwood], willow, moist myrtle, olive, *chilfa*, *chilfi d'yama* and *yabla*, boil them together, and pour 300 cups on one side of the head and 300 cups on the other side of the head. If that doesn't work, take a white rose which has all of its petals on one side, boil it, and pour 60 cups on one side of the head and 60 cups on the other side of the head.

The expectation

5. Talmud, Shabbat 61b

Success with 3 kinds of amulets for 3 different people, on 3 occasions for each kind of amulet, certifies the writer and the amulets. Success with 3 kinds of amulets for 3 different people, on one occasion for each kind of amulet, certifies the writer, but not the amulet. Success with one kind of amulet for 3 different people certifies the amulet, but not the writer.

6. Talmud, Avodah Zarah 28b

A maid in Shemuel's household suffered from a burning eye on Shabbat. She cried, but no one paid attention, and her eye erupted. The next day, Shemuel lectured publicly, "If an eye revolts, one may treat it with *kcho*/on Shabbat." Why? Because the nerves of the eye are linked to the fat around the heart.

7. Dr. Yaakov Levi, **שורייני דעינא באובנתא דליבא תליא**, HaMaayan 15:4 (1975)

The Aruch records a reasonable explanation, that this is an expression of revolving. When the doctor sees that a patient's eye is revolving, he is concerned for danger to the entire body. The disease of the eye has disturbed the flow of blood, which is based in the heart's activity, and this is identifiable in the brain.

8. Wikipedia, Oculocardiac Reflex (retrieved 2/6/16)

The Oculocardiac reflex, also known as Aschner phenomenon, Aschner reflex, or Aschner-Dagnini reflex, is a decrease in pulse rate associated with traction applied to extraocular muscles and/or compression of the eyeball. The reflex is mediated by nerve connections ... Bradycardia, junctional rhythm and asystole, all of which may be life-threatening, can be induced through this reflex.

9. UCLA, An Inside Scoop on the Science Behind Chicken Soup and the Common Cold

<http://exploreim.ucla.edu/wellness/an-inside-scoop-on-the-science-behind-chicken-soup-and-the-common-cold/>

10. Pirkei Avot 5:22

Turn it and turn it, for all is in it.

11. Talmud, Sanhedrin 48b

Mar Zutra, son of Rav Nachman, asked Rav Nachman: What is gout? He replied: Like a needle in raw flesh. How did Rav Nachman know this? Perhaps he experienced it. Or perhaps he learned it from his teacher. Or perhaps "The secret of Gd is for those who revere Him, and His covenant to inform them. (Tehillim 25:14)"

12. The neurosurgery diagram of Chazon Ish <http://www.hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?req=21194&pgnum=504>

13. Rabbi Moshe Sofer (18th century Pressburg), Chatam Sofer Yoreh Deah 101

Rabbi Solomon Luria wrote: Based on the fact that Maimonides did not cite the talmudic passage prohibiting fish roasted with meat, we see that in Maimonides' expert knowledge of nature and medicine he was aware that their vapor would not cause harm. It is well-known that this is a forced answer, for then Maimonides should at least have mentioned that one may not actually roast fish and meat together [in physical contact]...

It first occurred to me that Maimonides held that 'Binita' is a specific fish, and that this specific type of fish is prohibited with meat due to danger, but not other fish... and the Binita is not found among us, and so Maimonides excluded it. This appears strained, though, for that fish surely has not been extinguished in its own land, and so Maimonides should have mentioned it for the sake of the people who live in that land!

It appears more likely that in his great knowledge, Maimonides knew and understood that nature had changed regarding this, as we find in a variety of cases... Since we see that Maimonides, whose power in medicine and nature was great, omitted this law, it must be that he experimented and found that nature had changed in this matter...

We would not depend upon this in practice to permit eating fish and meat together, for perhaps this is considered a practice which has been banned by a court's decision... therefore we are careful, and the custom of our ancestors is Torah. However, we still profit in that we are no longer dealing with a concern which has the level of danger, for there is no more danger, and perhaps even in their time the concern extended only to the Binita fish, and not with our fish.

14. Rabbi Shemuel Eidels (16th-17th century Poland), Maharsha to Gittin 68b לדמא

Why did Raveina and Rav Ashi record these in the Talmud? Doesn't Berachot 10b record, explaining Isaiah 38:3, that Hezekiah buried the Book of Cures so that people would pray for mercy, and the Sages praised him for it?

One could answer that permission certainly is given to heal, and to know the cures of all illnesses, but one may not reveal all of them to everyone because of people who are not good, who will not trust in Gd but in their medicine... But it was permitted for them to record the cures and reveal them to the public because one could not remember all of them by heart, and lest they be forgotten. Also, because of this people will see that the Talmud is not lacking any wisdom, since for every illness a complete and true cure may be found there, for those who understand their language. The scorner will not say of the talmudic sages that they were lacking medical knowledge.

But we don't use the Talmud's medicine. Why?

15. Rabbi Sherira Gaon (10th century Iraq), Otzar haGaonim, Eruvin, Teshuvah 376

We must inform you that the rabbis were not doctors, and they stated general things they saw in their times, one by one. These are not mitzvah matters. Therefore, you shall not depend upon these medicines; one should not practice any of them until after they have been checked and we know with certainty from expert physicians that this will not harm or endanger someone. So our fathers and elders taught us and told us, not to practice any of these medicines other than *kibla* which we know causes no harm.

16. Maharil (14th-15th century Germany), Likutim 43

It is prohibited to test any of the cures and incantations in the entire Talmud, for one cannot know their basic nature, and when they do not work then people will mock and scorn the words of the sages.

17. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (1982 USA), Igrot Moshe Choshen Mishpat 2:73:4

In every generation there are surgeries for more illnesses, whether because of new knowledge or new developments in nature, as we see in medicines that there are new developments, whether due to new knowledge or due to new developments in nature.