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ב"ר משה גרוסמן זצ"ל

Dedicated in loving memory of  
HaRav Yosef Grossman zt"l

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## QUACK ATTACK: FOLK MEDICINE OR FAKE MEDICINE?

Adapted from the writings of Dayan Yitzhak Grossman

AP reports:

A New York midwife who gave nearly 1,500 children homeopathic pellets instead of required vaccinations has been fined \$300,000, the state's health department announced this week.

Jeanette Breen, who operates Baldwin Midwifery on Long Island, administered the pellets as an alternative to vaccinations and then falsified the immunization records, the agency said Wednesday.

The scheme, which goes back at least to the 2019-2020 school year, involved families throughout the state, but the majority reside in suburban Long Island. In 2019, New York ended a religious exemption to vaccine requirements for schoolchildren...

Breen, a state-licensed healthcare provider, supplied patients with the "Real Immunity Homeoprophylaxis Program," a series of oral pellets that are marketed as an alternative to vaccination but are not recognized or approved by state or federal regulators as valid immunizations, according to the health department.

She administered 12,449 of the fake immunizations to roughly 1,500 school-aged patients before submitting information to the state's immunization database claiming the children had received their required vaccinations against measles, mumps, rubella, polio, chickenpox, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, hepatitis B, and a host of other diseases, the department said.<sup>1</sup>

This account raises several very important and interesting questions, regarding attitudes toward vaccination per se as well as vaccine mandates; the falsification of official records; and the line between legitimate governmental authority and overreach. In this article, however, we consider only the topic of homeopathy itself.

### WHAT IS HOMEOPATHY?

The National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH), a unit of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), explains:

Homeopathy, also known as homeopathic medicine, is a medical system that was

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Marcelo, NY midwife who gave kids homeopathic pellets instead of vaccines fined \$300K for falsifying records, AP News, <https://apnews.com/article/vaccinations-midwife-children-homeopathic-pellets-new-york-b19344ea114e211811e465ad9f0550967>.



### PARSHAS BESHALACH

#### TRIVIAL PURSUITS

Excerpted and adapted from a shiur by HaRav Yitzchok Sorotzkin

Hashem said to Moshe, "Behold—I shall rain down for you food from heaven; let the people go out and pick each day's portion on its day, so that I can test them, whether they will follow My teaching or not.

Shmos 16:4

The Kli Yakar observes that people who have much more wealth than they require to live often don't find time to study Torah, as they are too busy managing their assets, so Hashem tested Bnei Yisrael by giving them only as much *man* as they needed. If they would not invest their time and energy in Torah study despite having no distractions, it would indicate that they are not truly interested in Torah.

The Mishnah in Avos says that the way of Torah is to eat bread with salt, drink water, and live frugally, and one who does so will be happy in both *olam hazeh* and *olam haba*: Not only will a person who follows this practice merit the greatest reward in *olam haba*; he who lives simply will also be happier in this world.

A similar message can be inferred from the Gemara that declares that the entire world was sustained in the merit of R' Chanina ben Dosa, but R' Chanina himself was sustained by a *kav* of carob. The Ben Yehoyada explains that R' Chanina was satisfied with his own meager portion, had no desire to live like others, and was satisfied with what he had. May we merit to focus our energies in this world mainly on

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Q&A from the  
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### Snowman: Abominable?

Q May one build a snowman on Shabbos?

A Clean rainwater is not *muktzeh*, whether it fell before or on Shabbos (Mishnah Brurah 338:30); most *poskim* apply this to snow as well. But R' Moshe Feinstein (O.C. 5:22) holds that snow is *muktzeh*, even if it fell before Shabbos (Halachos of Muktzah by R' Pinchas Bodner p. 165; heard from R' Moshe by the author).

Other *isurim* are also involved. The Rambam (Hil. Shabbos 7:6) says that assembling parts until

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developed in Germany more than 200 years ago. It's based on two unconventional theories:

- "Like cures like"—the notion that a disease can be cured by a substance that produces similar symptoms in healthy people.
- "The law of minimum dose"—the notion that the lower the dose of the medication, the greater its effectiveness. Many homeopathic products are so diluted that no molecules of the original substance remain...

### PERSPECTIVES ON HOMEOPATHY

In 5742 (1982), R' Chaim Rosenberg of Antwerp queried several *gedolei* Torah regarding homeopathic preparations. He was concerned that they might contain nonkosher ingredients, and he considered various arguments for allowing their use nonetheless.

Rav Rosenberg submitted his analysis to R' Moshe Feinstein, and he received the following reply from R' Moshe's son-in-law R' Moshe David Tendler:

My master and father-in-law Rav Feinstein *shlit"o* asked me to inform you that he does not desire to relate to your question, despite its interesting halachic aspects...

Homeopathic therapy cannot be considered therapy that is "proven and tested" and thus possible for people to use without it being in opposition to the will of Hashem.

A therapeutic doctrine that disparages rationality leads to nonsensical beliefs and renders its practitioners dangerously susceptible to the influence of foreign worship, hidden beliefs, and finally to the denial of the order of the world ordained by Hashem Yisbarach.

Since he does not wish to be involved with these doctrines, Rav Feinstein *shlit"o* is compelled to decline to respond to your query.<sup>2</sup>

Rav Rosenberg records that upon receiving this acerbic reply, he became quite disturbed and realized that while he had been completely convinced of homeopathy's efficacy and legitimacy, the matter was apparently not as clear as he had thought, so he consulted a number of other rabanim.

### R' MEIR AMSEL: MUSSAR OR HORA'AH?

He had apparently corresponded previously on homeopathy with R' Meir Amsel, the editor of the rabbinic journal *Hamaor*. (He had been one of R' Moshe's formidable opponents in the fierce controversy, two decades earlier, about the permissibility of artificial insemination of a married woman with donor sperm.) In response to Rav Rosenberg's report of the reply he had received in the name of R' Moshe, Rav Amsel insinuated that Rav Tendler may have been putting his own words into the mouth of his father-in-law:

The words of Rav Tendler are baffling—he has written like a *ba'al* mussar, not like a *ba'al hora'ah*. Particularly baffling are his words in the name of his father-in-law, the gaon R' Moshe Feinstein *shlit"o*, whose style is always that of a pillar of *hora'ah*, halacha *lema'aseh*, and does not utilize words of mussar.

Rav Amsel raised various objections to the letter's

opposition to homeopathy, and he concludes by apparently directing Rav Rosenberg to ignore it and continue in his embrace of homeopathy.<sup>3</sup>

### R' MENASHE KLEIN: NO DIFFERENT FROM CONVENTIONAL MEDICINE

Rav Rosenberg also reported the letter to R' Menashe Klein, who, apparently unaware of the fundamental distinctions between conventional and homeopathic medicine, was baffled by the letter's objection to homeopathy:

I have not understood his intention, for all these (homeopathic) therapies are, on the contrary, natural therapies, which are made from various types of herbs, and most (conventional) medicines and therapies come from various herbs...and I therefore do not know what he is talking about that this is not in the category of rational therapy...

I have not seen any basis to be stringent in our case and not utilize these (homeopathic) therapies that are made from various sorts of herbs, and these are the therapies that were traditionally used, and it is not a new thing...<sup>4</sup>

### R' SHMUEL WOSNER: NATURAL VS. SUPERNATURAL MEDICINE

Rav Rosenberg consulted R' Shmuel Wosner (the Sheivet Halevi), who, in the course of his analysis, considers the question of whether homeopathy's (putative) efficacy should be characterized as supernatural (based on *sgulah*) or natural (based on *teva*):

Perhaps this is one of the laws of nature that Hakadosh Baruch Hu established in Creation, but we do not know,<sup>5</sup> and why should it be called supernatural?

Rav Wosner actually inclines toward the view that homeopathy is considered a natural remedy. But he nevertheless maintains that the question of using homeopathic preparations containing nonkosher ingredients hinges, at least to some extent, on whether homeopathy's efficacy has been accepted by experts and whether it is supported by a lot of empirical evidence (questions that he is careful to avoid definitively answering).<sup>6</sup>

### R' ASHER WEISS: THE TORAH DOES NOT FORBID BEING FOOLISH

A comprehensive discussion of Torah perspectives on alternative medicine is beyond the scope of this article,<sup>7</sup> but we close with an excerpt of a brief *teshuvah* of R' Asher Weiss that stands in striking contrast to the position that Rav Tendler attributes to R' Moshe:

Regarding that which you asked my opinion on concerning complementary medicine, e.g., "One Brain" and "(applied) kinesiology," and you primarily asked about the therapeutic method of E.F.T. (Emotional Freedom Techniques)...

Now, his honor did not ask my opinion about

<sup>3</sup> Hamaor *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

<sup>4</sup> Shu"t Mishneh Halachos cheilek 10 (*Medar Hateshuvas*) siman 112.

<sup>5</sup> Shmos 10:26.

<sup>6</sup> Shu"t Sheivet Halevi cheilek 5 siman 55. Cf. R' Daniel Mann, Homeopathic Remedies on Shabbos, *Torah Musings*, Jul. 21, 2021; R' David Cohen's Animal Products Ch. 6: Homeopathic Remedies.

<sup>7</sup> See R' Joshua Flug, Halachic Perspectives on Alternative Medicine, *Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society*, spring 2004 (47) 60-90; R' Regev Shatz, Alternative Medicine in Halacha: reviews of it by R' Yair Hoffman, *Alternative Medicine in Halacha: A Review*, and Daniel Shapiro, *Sefer Review: Alternative Medicine in Halacha*. R' Shlomo Aviner, *Refuah Mashlimah Mistit Lemecheztzah-Raik* (Healing); R' Yaakov Goldstein, *Non-conventional Medicine*; R' Yair Hoffman, *The Six Torah Prohibitions in Gem Therapy*; R' Yaron Ben-David, *Refuah Mashlimah Bahalacha*.

<sup>8</sup> Shabbos 67a.

<sup>9</sup> Shu"t Minchas Asher cheilek 2 siman 128.

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they are fused together is a *toldah* of the *melacha* of *boneh* (building). His example is cheesemaking, in which a loose gel (the curd) is turned into a solid mass.



RAV ARYEH  
FINKEL

The Shmiras Shabbos Kehilchusah (16:45)

compares the making of a snowball to cheesemaking, in that myriad snowflakes are pressed together. The Chashukei Chemed (Shabbos 45b) says that if the weather is mild and the snow will melt before the day is done, it is only a *deRabanan* violation of *boneh*, because to qualify as *boneh mide'Oreisa*, the built object must be durable enough to make it through the day (Sha'ar HaTziyon 303:68).

The Be'er Moshe (6:30) rejects the comparison of snowballs to cheese, saying that a fusion of foods is only *boneh* if it changes the consistency, as in cheesemaking, where the final product has a different texture than the original curds. A snowball, however, is just tightly packed snowflakes. But he nevertheless forbids making snowballs, because it involves applying pressure to the snow, which inevitably causes some melting, and melting snow manually is forbidden on Shabbos (320:9).

Some suggest (see Machazei Eliyahu 21:30) that shaping the parts of the snowman's body violates the *melacha* of *memacheik* (smoothing).

So adults may not make snowmen on Shabbos. Because of chinuch, older children (from age 9 or 10) should also be prevented from doing so (Be'er Moshe *ibid.*).

the worth of all these, and to what extent they are effective. In my opinion, most of the things that the masses run after are matters of foolishness and nonsense. But the Torah does not forbid being foolish, and in my humble opinion, there is no prohibition whatsoever in any of these, because according to the doctrines of their practitioners, we are speaking about therapy that is based on the ways of nature, physical and spiritual, and we are not dealing with paranormal matters. And "anything that contains an element of healing does not contain an element of the (prohibited) ways of the Emori."<sup>8,9</sup>

2 Hamaor 5743 Year 35 Shvat-Adar Kuntress 3 p. 34.

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spiritual pursuits, and thereby be *zocheh* to happiness

both in this world and in the next.



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