



What distinguishes the first 2  
**Commands** from the remaining 8?  
 The first is knowing G-d, the second is denying idolatry.  
 Read this weeks article, "The First II Commandments."

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Dedicated to Scriptural and Rabbinic Verification  
 of Authentic Jewish Beliefs and Practices

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## IN THIS ISSUE:

MISHPATIM: R. CHAIT	1,2,3
MISHPATIM: R. FOX	1,8,9
THE FIRST II COMMANDS	1,5,6,7
G-D KNOWS MAN'S ACTIONS	3,4
GIBSON'S PASSION: DEICIDE	9
THE SABBATH	10
ISRAEL: EXPELLING JEWS	11

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## THE FIRST II COMMANDS

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

In this week's Torah reading of parshas Mishpatim, the following verse seizes our attention, Deut. 24:12: "And G-d said to Moses, 'ascend to Me to the mountain, and remain there, and I will give you the Tablets of Stone, and the Torah, and the Mitzvah that I wrote, that you may instruct them.'"

This verse recounts G-d's command to Moses just prior to His giving to Moses the Tablets. The Sages differ in their opinions of what is referred to by the two references of "Torah" and "Mitzvah". Saadia Gaon suggests they refer to the Written and Oral Laws respectively. Accordingly, Saadia Gaon is of the opinion that G-d is about to give Moses three entities: the Tablets of Stone, the Written Law, and the Oral Law.

Unlike Saadia Gaon, Sforno states that at this moment in history, G-d is giving but one thing: the Tablets of Stone.



## MISHPATIM

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

This Parsha contains many laws with respect to inter-personal relationships. We would like to analyze one of these laws, which can help us understand the Torah's perspective of a man's relationship with his fellow man.

The Torah states in Exodus Chapter 23 Verse 5, "If you see the donkey of him that hates you lying under its burden, and you shall forbear to help him, you shall surely help him." The language of the verse is difficult, "ve,chadalta me,azov", "you will cease from helping him". Onkelos explains, the verse should be understood literally. Leave what is in your heart and help him. Onkelos' interpretation affords us a penetrating insight of the Torah's perspective of human relations. The Torah demands that one reject

## MISHPATIM

RABBI BERNARD FOX

**"Do not curse judges. Do not curse a leader of you r people."**  
 (Shemot 22:27)

On the simplest level, the above passage prohibits us from cursing judges. What is the reason for this prohibition? A study of Maimonides'

(continued on page 8)

(continued on page 5)

(continued on next page)

# MISHPATIM

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

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his emotional response. When one sees the donkey of his enemy overburdened, his initial response is to refrain from helping his enemy. However, the Torah instructs us to the contrary. Leave what is in your heart; do not allow your emotions to dictate your actions. Act in accordance with justice and help your fellow man. The Torah is not telling one to deny his emotions. One must recognize his emotions and overcome them. To simply deny and obliterate ones emotional reaction is not the Torah's response. We must recognize and be cognizant of our emotions but realize that it stems from the lower part of human behavior. Accordingly, one must modify his ethical behavior and respond in conformance with the principles of justice.

The greatest danger facing an individual in his struggle for ethical perfection is the external influences exerted by the outside world. The gentile response would be to deny ones emotions. Such denials pose dangerous pratfalls. These denials become construed as virtuous because you are denying an evil emotion, which seems morally repugnant. However, this denial is causing the individual great personal harm. The person by denying any evil proclivities that he may possess is ultimately capable of perpetuating the greatest atrocities. This denial facilitates the performance of terrible cruelty as merely an expression of his G-d like qualities. The crusades perpetrated unspeakable human suffering in the glory of ostensibly virtuous missions, in the name of G-d. The part of man, which is inherently evil and unjust, stems from the corrupt and instinctual component of human nature.

When Jacob wrestled the angel the Torah tells us that he faced a powerful opponent. The struggle lasted late into the night. Chazal inform us that the angel appeared b,demus talmid chacham, the image of a scholar. The evil inclination poses the gravest dangers when disguising itself in the form of the religious emotion. Man must possess great intellectual fortitude and conviction to do battle with such a cunning opponent. Our father Jacob possessed such inner strength.

The Torah is teaching us, by utilizing this halacha as an illustration, that the greatest danger is denying one's emotions. On the contrary, leave behind your emotions and act with righteousness based upon the ideals of justice. When a person is involved in the painstaking task of doing teshuva he must maintain intellectual integrity in encountering his emotions. The greatest deterrent in doing teshuva is when a person fails to

recognize the sin because he denies his emotions. The Torah is not simply concerned with the mundane task of helping the individual get back on the road. The Torah is teaching us the essential elements of ethical perfection. One must recognize the influences of his emotions and the powerful exertion it asserts on his conduct. However, the Torah is teaching us that he must leave these emotions behind and act with justice in the face of such overwhelming emotions. A person can feel very comfortable in denying the wicked part of his personality. However, such a denial causes the person irreparable harm. He

will profess himself to be virtuous and thus incapable of perceiving any of his foibles. The Nazi's professed themselves as very respectable cultured people, well educated and patrons of the arts. They were incapable of appreciating the depth of their corruption.

The system of halacha is a beautiful G-d given system, which helps man achieve moral perfection. If a person finds it difficult to perform a Mitzvah it is indicative of a flaw in his personality. The halachic system is a barometer whereby a difficulty in compliance, is a symptom of a weakness in the individual's personality. When a person encounters a difficulty in doing a Mitzvah or following a halacha, it reflects an underlying problem in his human psyche. A person must do teshuva which requires intensive introspection, and if successful can ameliorate the human condition.

Hillel, one of our greatest scholars, stated that the precept of loving your friend as yourself is a qualitatively important Torah concept. Hillel was not merely espousing the human emotion of fraternity. Every individual shares the very powerful emotion that he considers himself to be special. He thereby identifies with people who share common likes and dislikes. His closest clique of friends consists of individuals who share the same emotional attitudes. He thereby imagines that his friends are special and often views his friends as an extension of himself. Hillel was teaching us to guard against such false notions. The standard that a person utilizes when



evaluating other people based upon his own emotions is superficial. One's sole criteria for evaluating another person should simply be the person's observance of the Mitzvahs. If an individual observes the Torah, then you have an obligation to love him, irrespective of your own personal feelings. Psychologically you may dislike him and share nothing in common with him, however halachically you must love him. One must elevate his self to live life based upon a higher sense of reality. One must view his fellow man based upon the ultimate reality, not predicated upon his personal and petty likes and dislikes.

A person's sense of pride emanates from the opinion one has of his self. The self is that part of the human psyche, which has likes and dislikes and its essence is molded by said likes and dislikes. Thus people who have similar values he likes because such persons partake of his reality. King Solomon, in Ecclesiastics Chapter 9 Verse 6, states with respect to previous generations that perished: "their love, their hate, their jealousy have already expired..." A persons selfish view of reality is temporal. Halacha demands that a person should function on a higher cognitive level. An individual must be aware that his true essence is a metaphysical essence based upon a system of objective reality. One cannot act upon a system of personal likes and dislikes, whereby his views the self as a personal, psychological essence. The Torah is a system of metaphysical reality. If a person observes the precepts of the Torah, you

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# MISHPATIM

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

have an obligation to love him despite one's personal sentiments. If a person's best friend violates the Torah and is defined halachically as wicked, then you have an obligation to hate him. It is not a personal hatred but a hatred, which demands that one despise falsehood.

These observations Hillel emphasized are basic to Judaism. A person's inter-personal relationships must be based upon metaphysical reality. If a person cannot be affable to a fellow man, it is symptomatic of a deficiency in his relationship to G-d. It reflects that the person cannot live his life in accordance with metaphysical reality. This idea is expressed in the prohibitions of revenge and of bearing a grudge. It is forbidden for a person not to lend his neighbor an object because his neighbor acted in a similar fashion. It is likewise forbidden to lend you neighbor an object and state: "I am lending you this object despite the fact that you refused me." Halacha demands that a person live a harmonious existence based upon metaphysical reality. Society cannot live harmoniously if people conduct themselves based upon a psychological reality. True kindness can only be achieved if one is capable of purging his subjective sense of reality, which is based upon identification emanating from his own psychological make up. The sole basis for an individual's conduct with his fellow man should be a metaphysical reality whereby identification stems from ones Torah observance and a sharing of common intellectual convictions. Identification is such a powerful emotion that if one's criteria is a psychological reality, then invariable disharmony will ensue.

"Talmidei chachamim marbim shalom baolam"; "Scholars increase harmony in the world" because they function on the level of a metaphysical reality. Thus, one's personal sentiments are irrelevant and insignificant.

A person that rejects the authenticity of the Torah or the oral tradition, one is obliged to hate him. This hatred is not a personal hatred but is based upon ones love of truth and his disdain for evil. However, that person's children who are ignorant and are not educated in the principles of the Torah are considered pure and akin to those raised ignorantly. One must treat these people with kindness and vigorously attempt to teach them the true ideas. They are not culpable because of their upbringing and must be treated under the principles of loving your neighbor like yourself. The greatest kindness one can manifest to such individuals would be to teach them the true ideas of the Torah. □

# G-D KNOWS ALL of MAN'S ACTIONS

MAIMONIDES' 10TH PRINCIPLE

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

**Reader:** I have a question regarding the tenth of Maimonides' Thirteen Principles of Faith (Sheloshah Assar Ikkarim). The tenth ikkar quite logically and correctly states, "I believe, with complete conviction, that the Creator, blessed be His name, knows all actions of human beings (b'nei adam), and all of their thoughts, as it is stated, "The One who fashions their hearts together, who perceives all their actions" (Tehillim 33:15).

Regarding the content and phraseology of this principle I have two questions:

1) Why does the Rambam have to cite a verse for a principle which seems self-evident? This is one particular principle that is accepted by all theistic religions, and can surely be proven by simple philosophy. This seems all the more strange - in light of the fact that the Rambam does not offer a scriptural proof in the text of any of the other principles (not even the one asserting the incorporeality of G-d, an idea that was very controversial in Rambam's day). Why is it this principle alone that merited scriptural verification?

2) How does the verse that Rambam cites prove what he says? Granted, the last part of the verse - "Ha-meivin kol ma'aseiheim", "the One who perceives all their actions" - proves the notion that G-d is aware of all human deeds, but how does the psalmist's statement that G-d "fashions all [human] hearts together" confirm that G-d knows all human thoughts? One notion does not flow directly from the other, since the argument could be made that although G-d fashioned the human mind, He does not possess the capabilities to see into it once it has begun being put to use by the individual. You may answer me that such an argument is preposterous because "G-d has knowledge of everything He created," and therefore surely if He formed the human mind, He can see into it, but that is precisely what Rambam's 10th principle is! To offer such a response would therefore be an effort in circular

reasoning, since the only way to derive Rambam's principle from that verse, would be to infer it therefrom using that exact principle. I would appreciate if you could help me out on this.

**Mesora:** Different from the source you quote, in Maimonides' original "13 Principles" found at the end of Tractate Sanhedrin, he cites verses in support of other principles as well. The reason for citing verses is that doing so is undeniable evidence that a given principle forms part of Torah. This is why he cites a verse, although reason dictates it to be true. His goal is to teach what Torah views are the essential fundamentals.

You are quoting from an abbreviated format found in prayer books. The question why this format cites a verse for the 10th Principle alone is not a question on Maimonides, but on he who compiled this abbreviation. The compiler deviates again, quoting a verse that Maimonides himself did not quote. I do not know who compiled this abbreviation, or why he cites a different verse, but I will offer a suggestion at the very end. But let us understand the verse nonetheless:

*"Who forms as one their hearts, Who understands all of their actions."* (Psalms 33:15)

Ibn Ezra learns comments:

*"Who forms their hearts as One Creator, and the creators (of mankind) are not many, therefore He alone understands all of their actions."*

Ibn Ezra understands this verse to mean the following: G-d is the Sole Creator. By virtue of this exclusive position, He must possess complete knowledge of all mankind's thoughts and actions. We must ask: "How does it follow that as the Sole Creator, G-d must know all of man's thoughts and actions?"

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# G-D KNOWS ALL *of* MAN'S ACTIONS

MAIMONIDES' 10TH PRINCIPLE

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

I believe the Ibn Ezra's reasoning to be sound, and I will explain, after I address another idea, which must form the basis for our answer. You wrote, "...although G-d fashioned the human mind, He does not possess the capabilities to see into it once it has begun being put to use by the individual." You must realize your mistake. G-d does not "perceive". Knowledge and G-d are not two separate entities, whereby He may perceive that which is external to Him. This forms part of the concept of "unity" of G-d. Your statement suggests that G-d requires and act of "observation" to "learn". All such notions, when applied to G-d, such as observing or learning, imply ignorance on His part, i.e., until He has acquired new perception and new knowledge. But this is absolutely absurd. This is a mistake of "projection", where man falsely assumes G-d to be restrained by the very laws He created; i.e., laws of human perception and acquisition of knowledge. However, G-d does not "know" in the same manner that man knows. Man must observe external phenomena in order to possess knowledge. This cannot apply to G-d, as His knowledge spans all that which He created. He knows all, and this is inherent in His being, not through "subsequent observation". G-d's knowledge of what He was yet to create was true knowledge. This proves that He need not "observe" anything to know its existence. Creation had yet to be created, yet, G-d knew what was about to be created.

Ibn Ezra states, since there are not many creators, and multiple creators are what causes there to be something external to either creator, (i.e., one creator is external to the other, by definition) hence, there cannot be any knowledge external to G-d. G-d and His knowledge are one. There is no other cause for knowledge, or anything. Therefore, He cannot be ignorant of any thing that He made, and he made

everything, including man's thoughts and actions. Therefore, G-d knows all of man's thoughts and actions.

Regarding circular reasoning, I do not understand how it is so, as you suggest. It seems clear, Maimonides teaches that G-d knows all man's actions and thoughts, and supports it by referring to a verse. This is not circular reasoning.

Until this point, we have referred to the abbreviated version. Let us now understand Maimonides' original formulation of his 10th Principle:

*"That G-d knows man's actions and does not remove His eye from them. His knowledge is not like someone who says G-d abandoned the land but rather like it says, "Great in council and mighty in deed, Your eyes are cognizant to all the ways of mankind". (Jer. 32) "And G-d saw, the evils of man were abundant on the land, and every inclination of his heart was only evil, all day." (Gen. 6) And it says, "And G-d said, 'the cry of Sodom and Amora is abundant, and for their sin is greatly heavy.'" (Ibid 18:20) And this demonstrates the 10th principle."*

Why must Maimonides open his principle by discounting a fallacy? He says, "His knowledge is not like someone who says G-d abandoned the land". Maimonides could have opened with his first quote! But in all fairness, this question also applies to his other principles. In order to attain "truth", all other possibilities are refuted. Admission of a fact, without the elimination of doubt of that fact, is not considered knowledge. As long as a person harbors doubt about G-d's being One, or the Only G-d, or His non-physical nature, etc., such a person has not yet acquired

true knowledge of G-d. This applies to all ideas. A friend showed me the Minchas Chinuch on this week's parsha, Yisro, concerning the command of knowing G-d. In that section, the author stresses three times that to fulfill this command (the first of the 10 Commandments) man must prove to himself beyond a shadow of a doubt, that G-d exists. This is not a matter of belief, but of rational conviction. To arrive at conviction the author stresses that all doubts must be removed.

Now that Maimonides teaches what is not considered G-d's knowledge of man, he goes on to tell us what is. But in doing so, why does he require three verses to make his point? Perhaps, each verse was not recorded to illustrate a new point (although by definition, a new verse must teach a new idea). Perhaps three verses teach the presence of a "theme". A triad of verses is regularly used in prayers to indicate that a Torah concept permeates the three parts of Scriptures: Torah, Prophets and Writings. Here too, perhaps, Maimonides' lesson is that G-d's knowledge of both, man's thoughts and actions, are known by G-d, and are a theme in Torah. It is a central idea. If you review the verses above, you will note that each one includes references to both, thoughts and actions.

Why does the abbreviated version of Maimonides' 13 Principles omit all supporting verses, except from in this principle? What is there in proving G-d's knowledge of man's actions, (this 10th Principle) that a verse would be more essential? One thought presents itself to me: the very definition of a "verse", a Torah verse, is that which G-d formulated to convey His knowledge to man. This is the purpose of G-d's concretization of His ideas, in the form of Torah verses. Following this explanation, we may suggest that a verse's very existence is proof of G-d's relationship with man. But G-d relates to man based on His knowledge of man's thoughts and actions, to refine the dross from his soul. It is only due to His knowledge of how and what man thinks and does, that His Torah verses exists. A "verse" is proof to G-d's desire that man obtain knowledge from G-d.

Our final question was why the compiler of this abbreviated form does not use Maimonides' own quoted verses, but uses another verse. I think we may now answer that the compiler is following Maimonides' lead. Maimonides desired to show that G-d possesses knowledge of all man's thoughts and actions. The compiler too quotes a verse that addresses both areas of man's life, i.e., man's thoughts (heart), and his actions. G-d is aware of both. Additionally, the compiler may have selected to use a fourth verse, as this strengthens the point that this theme exists in the Torah. With more verses quoted, a theme is more pronounced, and thus, the lesson is driven home all the more so. ■

(continued from page 1)

# THE FIRST COMMANDS

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

The word “Torah” refers to that inscribed “portion (commands) of thought”, while “Mitzvah” refers to the “portion (commands) of action”. The Ten Commandments may be divided into laws governing thought, and governing action. Sforno suggests this is the meaning behind G-d’s distinction of “Torah” and “Mitzvah.”

However, Ibn Ezra poses the most difficult explanation. As Sforno states, Ibn Ezra too suggests this verse teaches there was but one thing given to Moses at this point in time, i.e., the Tablets of Stone. But Ibn Ezra states that “Torah” refers to the first and fifth of the Ten Commandments, while “Mitzvah” refers to the remaining eight - an odd division. Ramban’s quote of this Ibn Ezra is slightly altered: he replaces the fifth with the second command. I would like to explain Ibn Ezra, but using Ramban’s quote. This means that Ibn Ezra says “Torah” refers to the commands of knowing G-d’s existence (Command I) and the prohibition against idolatry (Command II). “Mitzvah” refers to the last eight of the Ten Commands.

The question is this: Why when instructing Moses to ascend to receive the Ten Commandments, doesn’t G-d simply say, “...ascend to Me and I will give you the Tablets of Stone”? Instead, G-d says, “...and I will give you the Tablets of Stone, and the Torah, and the Mitzvah”. If in this verse, the words “Torah” and “Mitzvah” refer to commands inscribed in the already mentioned Tablets, then the words “Torah” and “Mitzvah” are somewhat redundant. What is G-d teaching Moses when He says come to Me to receive not just Tablets, but the Torah and Mitzvah that is written upon them? Moses knows that G-d is not giving him blank tablets. So what is Moses to learn from G-d’s words, “...and I will give you the Tablets of Stone, and the Torah, and the Mitzvah that I wrote...”?

We can say quite certainly that G-d is teaching Moses that He is not simply giving him laws, but these laws belong to distinct categories, i.e., “Torah” refers to knowledge of G-d’s existence and the prohibition of idolatry, while “Mitzvah” refers to the other laws. But why must G-d – at this moment – categorize these laws for Moses? We must also explain why G-d says to Moses that he must ascend, and also “remain” on the mountain. What relevance has this with Moses’ acceptance of the Ten Commandments? What of the final statement, “instructing them” in these laws? Why must this be included in this verse? (We have a tradition that all elements in a given Torah verse must have a relationship.)

Talmud Moade Katan 9b records two students of Rabbi Shimone bar Yochai who correctly arrived at the Torah’s teaching that one must ‘weigh’ the commands, and select the greater command for himself, allowing others to perform lesser commands. The Torah’s commands do in fact have a hierarchy of importance. The Talmud concludes that Torah study outweighs all other commands. Regarding the Ten Commandments recorded in Exodus, Ibn Ezra cites Saadia Gaon, stating that the Ten Commandments are in two sets: the first five address laws between man and G-d, and the second set address laws between men. In both sets, from beginning to end, the commands successively decrease in importance. By definition, this places the

conviction of G-d’s existence (Command I) and the prohibition against idolatry (Command II) as the most important laws, as they are the first two. Saadia Gaon also states that these Ten Commandments are the head categories for the remaining 603 commands. This places even more importance on the first two of the Ten Commandments.

Maimonides wrote regarding the first two commands, that a prophet has no advantage over others, as their truths are arrived at by reason, which is equally available to all: (For brevity, you may skip to the bold text and then continue after the end quotes.)

*The Guide for the Perplexed, Book III, Chapter XXXIII:*

*“It is clear to me that what Moses experienced at the revelation on Mount Sinai was different from that which was experienced by all the other Israelites, for Moses alone was addressed by God, and for this reason the second person singular is used in the Ten Commandments; Moses then went down to the foot of the mount and told his fellow-men what he had heard. Compare, “I stood between the Lord and you at that time to tell you the word of the Lord” (Deut. v. 5). Again, “Moses spake, and God answered him with a loud voice” (Exod. xix. 19). In the Mechilta our Sages say distinctly that he brought to them every word as he had heard it. Furthermore, the words, “In order that the people hear when I speak with thee” (Exod. xix. 9), show that God spoke to Moses, and the people only heard the mighty sound, not distinct words. It is to the perception of this mighty sound that Scripture refers in the passage, “When ye hear the sound” (Deut. v. 20); again it is stated, “You heard a sound of words” (ibid. iv. 12), and it is not said, “You heard words”; and even where the hearing of the words is mentioned, only the perception of the sound is meant. It was only Moses that heard the words, and he reported them to the people. This is apparent from Scripture, and from the utterances of our Sages in general. There is, however, an opinion of our Sages frequently expressed in the Midrashim, and found also in the Talmud, to this effect: The Israelites heard the first and the second commandments from God, i.e., they learnt the truth of the principles contained in these two commandments in the same manner as Moses, and not through Moses. **For these two principles, the existence of God and His Unity, can be arrived at by means of reasoning, and whatever can be established by proof is known by the prophet in the same way as by any other person; he has no advantage in this respect. These two principles were not known through prophecy alone. Comp., “Thou hast been shown to know that,” etc. (Deut. iv. 34). But the rest of the commandments are of an ethical and authoritative character, and do not contain [truths] perceived by the intellect. Notwithstanding all that has been said by our Sages on this subject, we infer from Scripture as well as from the words of our Sages, that the Israelites heard on that occasion a certain sound which Moses understood to proclaim the first two commandments,***

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# THE FIRST COMMANDS

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

and through Moses all other Israelites learnt them when he in intelligible sounds repeated them to the people. Our Sages mention this view, and support it by the verse, "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this" (Ps. lxii.11). They state distinctly, in the beginning of Midrash Hazita, that the Israelites did not hear any other command directly from God; compare, "A loud voice, and it was not heard again" (Deut. v. 19). It was after this first sound was heard that the people were seized with the fear and terror described in Scripture, and that they said, "Behold the Lord our God has shown us, etc., and now why shall we die, etc. "Come thou near," etc. Then Moses, the most distinguished of all mankind, came the second time, received successively the other commandments, and came down to the foot of the mountain to proclaim them to the people, whilst the mighty phenomena continued; they saw the fire, they heard the sounds, which were those of thunder and lightning during a storm, and the loud sound of the shofar: and all that is said of the many sounds heard at that time, e.g., in the verse," and all the people perceived the sounds, "etc., refers to the sound of the shofar, thunder, and similar sounds. But the voice of the Lord, that is, the voice created for that purpose, which was understood to include the diverse commandments, was only heard once, as is declared in the Law, and has been clearly stated by our Sages in the places, which I have indicated to you. When the people heard this voice their soul left them; and in this voice they perceived the first two commandments. It must, however, be noticed that the people did not understand the voice in the same degree as Moses did. I will point out to you this important fact, and show you that it was a matter of tradition with the nation, and well known by our Sages. For, as a rule, Onkelos renders the word "va-yedabber" by "u-mallel" ("and God spake"): this is also the case with this word in the beginning of the twentieth chapter of Exodus, but the words *ve-al yedabber immanu elohim*, "let not God speak to us" (Exod. xx.19), addressed by the people to Moses, is rendered "*vela yitmallel immanu min kodam adonai*" ("Let not aught be spoken to us by the Lord"). Onkelos makes thus the same distinction, which we made. You know that according to the Talmud Onkelos received all these excellent interpretations directly from R. Eliezer and R. Joshua, the wisest men in Israel. Note it, and remember it, for it is impossible for any person to expound the revelation on Mount Sinai more fully than our Sages have done, since it is one of the secrets of the Law. It is very difficult to have a true conception of the events, for there has never been before, nor will there ever be again, anything like it. Note it."

## The Significance of the Two Commands

With this information, we now understand that the first two commands have an elevated status in contrast to the remaining eight. What is their significance? Again, Maimonides states, "For these two principles, the existence of God and His Unity, can be arrived at by

means of reasoning, and whatever can be established by proof is known by the prophet in the same way as by any other person; he has no advantage in this respect. These two principles were not known through prophecy alone. Compare, "Thou hast been shown to know that," etc. (Deut. iv. 34). But the rest of the commandments are of an ethical and authoritative character, and do not contain [truths] perceived by the intellect."

On the two Tablets of Stone, the Ten Commandments, G-d teaches Moses an important lesson; there are two branches of knowledge: 1) intellectual truths, arrived at by reason, and 2) ethical and authoritative laws. According to Ibn Ezra, G-d teaches Moses this idea by saying "I will give you Tables of Stones, and the Torah and the Mitzvah..." G-d desires to make this clear to Moses. There are two branches of knowledge, intellectual truths, and ethical and authoritative laws. But the first category is deemed more important, as we stated. What is its importance?

The answer is that acknowledgement of "truths" forms the core of mankind's Earthly objective. The most important of commands, (derived from Saadi Gaaon's explanation of their order) are those demanding our recognition of what is absolute and real, they are: Command I: Knowing G-d Exists, and Command II: Denying Idolatry. These are examples of "absolute truths". Unlike ethical laws, which govern man's societal relations, "absolute truths" are not of a subjective nature, in the respect that they are to serve societal needs. Of course even G-d's ethics and authoritative laws reflect His infinite wisdom. But the very nature of a "truth" is that which is not relative to man's existence. Ethical and authoritative laws - by definition - are not absolute, i.e., without mankind, they have no reality. However, the idea that G-d is the Creator, and that He is One, and that there are no other gods, are "absolute truths". They are not relative.

The reality of absolute truths means, by definition, that they embody ideas, "which cannot be otherwise". In contrast, laws of society are truths, but only once societies exist.

There is another subtle point here: not only did G-d make Moses aware of these ideas' significance but He did so 'before' He gave the Tablets. I believe this was done, as there is a priority of importance G-d wished to convey through this act: man must order his studies. Moses had to be taught that learning has an "order". G-d first taught Moses the concept of "absolute truths" before giving him the body of knowledge contained in the Tablets. In other words, G-d was indicating that essential to one's studies, is to study what is primary first. G-d tells Moses that He is giving him "Torah" and "Mitzvah", as one is more primary to successful study.

## Why is knowledge of G-d essential to all other knowledge?

The answer is that all knowledge, if it does not eventuate in an appreciation for the Source of this knowledge, is academic. Scientists may ponder the greatest formulations and laws of the universe. However, if they do not recognize the Creator, their years of study fail

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# THE FIRST COMMANDS

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

to have a drop of meaning. In their minds, they marvel at the cosmos, but to them these billions of galaxies are not the work of a Designer. What they have is mere aesthetic appreciation, but no concept of G-d. Their lives were a waste.

If we appreciate the design of a tree, but fail to realize G-d, the Designer of that tree, then we have no real knowledge of the tree. We fail to arrive at the underlying truth of the existence of this tree, and it's purpose: to feed man, that man may sustain his body, so he may be free to use his mind and discover G-d's wisdom in all of creation. This is where all knowledge must find its end, if we are to acquire true knowledge. Knowledge of G-d must exist, if we are to have any knowledge. It is primary. This is the lesson.

## Fundamentals: Available to All

G-d wished to teach Moses and ultimately all mankind, that knowledge is not only the priority in life, but within knowledge itself, there are concepts, which are most primary. This must be realized. Without knowledge and conviction of the Creator, to the exclusion of any other imagined god, all of man's knowledge, and his life, is a complete waste. If man does not recognize G-d, his sole purpose in his existence, he has failed to realize his objective as a human being.

These two first commands are so crucial, that they are not limited to a prophet, but each member of mankind has the ability to know them. This is Maimonides' point.

Our objective is to arrive at a realization of, and a conviction in, what is "real". This is the function of the intellect, and why Moses had no advantage over others regarding this knowledge, qualitatively. Of course Moses excelled light years beyond all mankind. But Maimonides teaches that the apprehension of G-d, i.e., His exclusive role as Creator; and the denial of any other force or god, are two absolute truths that all members of mankind equally possess the ability to attain.

There are two, essential ideas here: 1) these first two (of the Ten) Commandments are equally attainable by all men, as they are not dependent on an authority's demand, but on reason alone, and 2) precisely why they are equally attainable – is that they are self evident, "absolute truths". Knowledge has as its primary focus those ideas that are "absolute truths". Knowing what is real and true is man's objective as a creature designed with an intellect. To function in the most profoundly happy state, man must be involved in this pursuit of knowing what is true. Only in this pursuit will man find true happiness. Only when man is using his intelligence and reason, is his entire being absorbed in a completely satisfying area of endless inquiry. Only in G-d's wisdom can man never reach the "end", and continue to be excited at new findings.

## A Relationship with G-d

Additionally, man's relationship with his Creator plays a role in his studies. G-d said, "ascend to Me to the mountain, and remain there". In other words, man must approach G-d, "ascend to Me", and he must

tarry his stay, "remain there". For Moses to receive the Tablets of Stone, he must approach G-d, and he must be of a nature, that he wishes to remain with G-d, to remain in his studies, with little interest in other matters. We all have the ability to derive tremendous enjoyment from Torah study, but this cannot come overnight. We must initially endure a bit of frustration, i.e., studying the language, memorizing new words, and training our minds. But then we suddenly see a new idea, a new insight presents itself, and we start reaping the rewards. Any student of Talmud or Torah will confirm this. G-d told Moses to remain there, and this truly is the means to optimally enjoy our lives. Minimizing our work, maximizing our studies as Ethics teaches, is the correct path, and the only method for becoming proficient in the science of Torah. When one immerses his self completely in any area, he will succeed. This is the one area each of us has no option to delay immersion. It is an obligation, and it is the source of true happiness. All else is futile.

## The Availability of Knowledge

Are absolute truths, by their very definition, observable by man's mind? What prevents a true idea from being unavailable to man's mind? I do not know a reason why it could not be so. But the very fact that absolute truths, these precious and enjoyable ideas, are things we can perceive indicates that G-d desires it to be this way. G-d desires that the knowledge He embedded in this universe is available for man's perception. It is G-d's will that His knowledge fill the entire universe, so wherever man turns, he cannot escape the reflection of G-d's wisdom.

These absolute truths predate Torah. Meaning, they were attainable by an Abraham. With his mind alone, Abraham extricated himself from the fallacy of idolatry, and recognized the absolute truth that a Creator exists, He is one, and there are no other causes for the universe. From Adam through Moses, no member of mankind was left without the tools required to ponder and be convinced of these ideas, and countless others. Absolute truths, then, is the category of knowledge that seamlessly weaves together man's entire history. Man was never withheld from acquiring knowledge of these absolute truths. Although man distorted his life quite well with his man-gods, and deities, but as Abraham proved, man has a divine gift that enables his successful mission as a seeker of truth. Man possesses intelligence, and the sharper his mind becomes, the more curtains of fallacy he may shred, exposing greater truths.

Man is to be confronted by G-d's wisdom at every turn, throughout his entire life. We recite "last in action first in deed", regarding the Sabbath. It was last in creation, but primary in G-d's plan for mankind. The Sabbath is a day bereft of physical labor, dedicated to pondering ideas. □

*As follow up to this article, read "The Sabbath" reprinted in this issue. It commences where we leave off here.*

(continued from page 1)

# MISHPATIM

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 RABBI BERNARD FOX
 

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treatment of this mitzvah provides a simple, straightforward response. Maimonides discusses this prohibition in his codification of the laws governing the courts.[1] He does not explicitly state a reason for this restriction. However, his general treatment of the law indicates his position. In the prior chapter of his codification Maimonides states that we are obligated to respect judges and others appointed to positions of authority within the community.[2] He then outlines some of the specific behavior engendered by this obligation. Maimonides juxtaposes this discussion with the restriction against cursing a judge. It seems from Maimonides' presentation of these laws that he regards cursing a judge as an extreme form of disrespect. In other words, the restriction against cursing a judge is engendered by the obligation to respect judges. This is a reasonable position and the most obvious explanation of the restriction.

Sforno takes a completely different and quite novel approach to explaining the prohibition against cursing judges. He begins by asserting the commandment includes the special case in which the court has found against a litigant. The prohibition admonishes the disappointed litigant to not express anger through cursing the judge. Sforno continues and explains that it is natural for a person to believe in the justice of one's own cause. Therefore, the disappointed litigant may feel deeply wronged. The litigant will feel that the judges decided the case unfairly. They deserve to be cursed! These judges have miscarried justice! The Torah admonishes the irate litigant to exercise restraint. One must recognize the influence of one's own personal bias. True, in the litigant's view a miscarriage of justice has occurred. However, one must recognize that the court is in a position to be more objective concerning the validity of one's own claim.[3]

Sforno's interpretation of the passage requires careful consideration. Why does Sforno insist on focusing on a specific case – the disappointed litigant? We are obligated to respect judges. Of course, this duty applies even when we do not agree with the judges' conclusion!

It seems that according to Sforno, this commandment is not merely an admonishment against acting disrespectfully towards the court. This mitzvah should not be viewed as one of the many commandments regulating the conduct and authority of the courts. Instead, the mitzvah regulates our personal character – midot. It

admonishes us against compromising our objectivity. We are not permitted to assume that we are completely objective about ourselves. We must recognize that the court's position is every bit as legitimate as our own. In abstract, it is easy to agree to this assertion. The challenge is to recognize this truth even at the moment of anger and frustration. Even at that moment, we must recognize our own personal bias and not overreact. In short, the passage commands us to accept the validity of an objective analysis of our own position – even when the conclusions of this analysis differ sharply from our own.

**“Do not take a bribe. For the bribe blinds those with sight and perverts the words of the righteous.”** (Shemot 23:8)

The Torah prohibits the judge from accepting a gift from a litigant. Even the legitimate compensation received by the judge is influenced by this consideration. In general, both litigants must contribute equally to the compensation.

Rashi explains that the Torah, through other commandments, prohibits the judge from favoring a litigant or perverting justice. This prohibition against accepting bribes is not a repetition of these injunctions. This commandment adds a new element to the laws governing jurisprudence. The judge may not even accept an unconditional payment from a litigant. In other words, consider a litigant offering to compensate a judge for his efforts. The litigant asks for no special treatment. He instructs the judge to decide the case fairly and without favoritism. The judge must not accept this payment.[4]

It is clear that the Torah assumes that, in this case, the impartiality of the judge has been impugned. He can no longer trust his own objectivity. He may unconsciously favor the litigant making the payment. Alternatively, he may feel a need to overcompensate for possible favoritism and unfairly favor the other litigant. It is not feasible for the judge to insulate himself from these motives.

Rav Elchanan Wasserman ztl explained that this lesson is not limited to judges. In everyday life we make judgments and must be aware of “bribes” which may influence us. One of the areas in which we are easily bribed is in our relationship with the Almighty. Rav Wasserman explained that the evidence of the Creator's existence is not hidden. We live in a universe that contains many testimonies to the existence of an omnipotent designer. Why do

so many reject this sublime evidence of the Creator?

Rav Wasserman responds that we are all bribed. The human is an instinctual creature. We resist restrictions. The acceptance of a Creator and a design implies that life has meaning and that humanity has a mission. We are not free to pursue instinctual pleasure without restraint. We must inquire into the meaning of creation and the mission of humanity.

These considerations bias our judgment and act as a bribe. Therefore, we cannot be influenced by the attitude of many intelligent individuals towards the evidence of a Creator. The negative reaction of many of these individuals can be understood as the expression of an innate prejudice.[5]

In many areas in life it is impossible to be completely objective. How do we ever know that our decisions are not the outcome of some innate bias? There is no absolute guarantee of objectivity. However, there is a means by which we can somewhat limit the influence of our prejudices. A prejudice is most harmful when it is not recognized. A prejudice of which we are unaware influences us without our knowledge. Once we identify our biases we can protect ourselves, to some extent, from their influence. In reviewing the decision process, we now know where to look for the effect of the prejudice and can hope to identify its influence.

**“And the appearance of the glory of Hashem was as a burning fire at the summit of the mountain to the eyes of Bnai Yisrael.”** (Shemot 24:17)

Most of the parasha is devoted to describing a number of the laws given at Sinai. The end of the parasha continues the discussion of the events of Revelation. The Torah explains that Mount Sinai was covered in a thick cloud. The influence of the Divine Presence was expressed through an intense flame at the summit of the mountain.

Rabbaynu Avraham ben HaRambam explains that this imagery can be understood in both a literal and figurative sense. From a literal perspective, these pesukim describe the visual impressions of the people. What is the figurative meaning?

Sinai was a revelation. The commandments of the Torah were revealed to humanity. There was a second aspect to Revelation. The Almighty, in some sense, revealed Himself to humankind. The figure in these passages tells us something of the nature of this second aspect of Revelation. We must carefully consider the image, in the Chumash, in order to understand this second aspect of Revelation.

The Almighty cannot be perceived by the material senses. Only through our spiritual soul can we approach an understanding of Hashem. This understanding is not easily attained. Our material nature prevents us from clearly comprehending Hashem's exalted essence. As Hashem later explained to Moshe, no living creature can achieve

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# MISHPATIM

RABBI BERNARD FOX

absolute knowledge of Hashem. However, we can achieve some lower level of understanding. The degree to which we can attain this knowledge depends upon our own spiritual perfection. There is a direct relationship between the spiritual perfection of the individual and the ability to approach an understanding of the Almighty.

The image in the pesukim describes our material nature as a dense cloud that blocks our vision of the Creator. Contemplation of Hashem requires that we look through this cloud and gaze upon the intense flame in its midst.

A very bright light can damage the eyes. Consider a person looking directly at the sun. Such a person might damage his or her sight. Once such damage occurs the eyes may never again see properly. Instead, even the familiar will be distorted.

In a similar sense, there are dangers in considering the Almighty's nature. The student who wishes to enter into this area must be carefully and fully prepared. Without this preparation, the student will fail to comprehend. Rather than finding truth, the unprepared student will become confused. Truth will be replaced by distortion and falsehood. The Talmud explains that even great scholars were harmed as a result of their consideration of this area.

Nonetheless, the sun can be observed. Careful preparation is needed. The observer will not be able to see the sun clearly and in detail. The light is too bright. Yet, some image is obtained by the observer. So too, with proper spiritual preparation the Almighty's nature can be considered. Moshe was properly prepared. He was able to enter into the cloud and penetrate it. He gazed upon the flame. Even for Moshe the light was too bright for a perfect view. However, Moshe did achieve the highest level of understanding possible for a material being.[6] □

[1] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Sanhedrin 26:1.

[2] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Sanhedrin 25.

[3] Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno, Commentary on Sefer Shemot 22:27.

[4] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Shemot 23:8.

[5] Rav Elchanan Wasserman, Kobetz Ma'amarim, Essay on Conviction.

[6] Rabbaynu Avraham ben HaRambam, Commentary on Sefer Shemot 24.

## DEICIDE

JOSEPH S. HERSH

As I was thinking about Mel Gibson's "The Passion of Christ," the word "deicide" came to mind. Deicide is the act of killing a god. Many Christians accuse Jews of deicide. Oddly, even the Arabs are getting into the act of accusing the Jews.

I have read the following quotes and cannot comprehend how the deicide of which the Jews are accused ever occurred:

*"Our understanding, which is enlightened by the Spirit of truth, should receive with purity and freedom of heart the glory of the cross as it shines in heaven and on earth. It should see with inner vision the meaning of the Lord's words when he spoke of the imminence of his passion: The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Afterward he said: Now my soul is troubled, and what am I to say? Father, save me from this hour. But it was for this I came to this hour. Father, glorify your Son. When the voice of the Father came from heaven, saying, I have glorified him, and will glorify him again, Jesus said in reply to those around him: It was not for me that this voice spoke, but for you. Now is the judgment of the world, now will the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself." - From a sermon by Leo the Great, 5th century*

*"For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." - John 3:16*

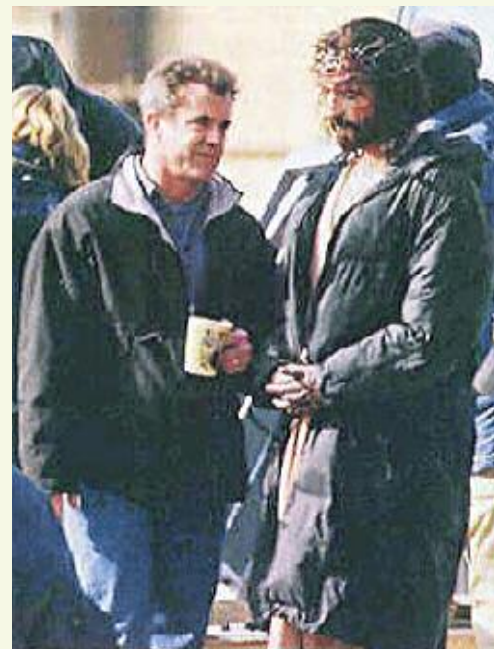
*"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing." - LK 23:34*

*"Eli, Eli, lama sabackthani?" which means "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" - Mt 27:46, MK 15:34*

Question 1: How can people claim that the father was killed if the son (Jesus) is speaking to his father (God)? How can the term deicide be justified?

Question 2: Assuming that some Jews instigated the Romans to punish Jesus, it was the Romans who crucified Him. Why is it that the Romans and their descendants are not accused, as are the Jews - in fact, even more so? And where is the Christian "forgiveness?" Or is it only the Jews who should forgive the Germans for the Holocaust, as I have personally been told?

Question 3: In the brief glimpses I saw of Gibson's film, Jesus is covered all over with marks from the lashes of the whip. How come none of the pictures or the statues that I have seen shown evidence of these marks? Is Gibson purposely trying to inflame hatred against Jews? Any physical damage caused to the body of Jesus was caused by the Romans. The logic, besides instigating hatred, is beyond me. □



**Editor's Notes:** The very concept of a god subject to death is contrary to greatness assumed of that "god". The concept of deicide displays the foolishness of those entertaining such an idea. Rational people recognize that there is only One Cause for the universe. All existences require creation. This means that this Cause is the sole Creator of all existences, and all laws that exists. The very laws He willed into existence therefore cannot bind him. Laws of death cannot apply to G-d. He does not beget children, as suggested by Jesus' status as His child.

G-d did not abrogate the system of Torah He gave in front of millions of witnesses, ironically attested to by Christians and Catholics. G-d knew all future events, and nonetheless, He gave one Torah system, including His commands, "Do not add", and "Do not subtract" from this Torah. Knowing all future events did not prevent G-d from clearly stating that the Torah is to remain eternally unchanged. Therefore, the argument that Jesus is speaking G-d's word is fallacy, as he contradicts G-d's Torah.

G-d is quite capable of creating a mass event that is undeniably true, that event of Sinai. In contrast, Jesus lacks such credibility and validity, and his followers deny G-d's Torah. Jesus did not fulfill any messianic requirement. The Israelites' reception of Torah during G-d's revelation at Sinai was the only event of masses witnessing G-d. All other religions are based solely on the belief in one man's words. In contrast, that which is proven rationally is bereft of one man's words, and of belief. Instead, masses and proof are required - both are present at Sinai.

G-d said, "A great voice, not to continue." This means G-d will never recreate such an event, as Sinai contains absolute proof of which religion G-d truly gave, to the exclusion of all others. Additionally, no "updating" or alteration of His Torah is tenable, certainly by a mortal.

-Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim

# THE SABBATH

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Abstaining from labor on the Sabbath, the Jew reiterates the truth of creation, proclaiming of the existence of the Creator. Mimicking what G-d did - resting on the 7th day - we announce G-d's presence to the other nations through our cessation from labor. As they ask us why we rest, we respond explaining the historical truth of creation by G-d. We publicize the Creator's Existence in the world. (Maimonides)

On the Sabbath, one is involved in pursuits of wisdom, and we do not labor for our material needs. The "Licha Dodi" which we sing each Friday evening in temple states, "sof maaseh, b'machshava techila", "[Sabbath is] last in creation, [but] first in His thought". Meaning, although the Sabbath came last in creation, its place in creation's order does not reflect its level of importance. What does this mean? It means that the physical world was created for a reason - the Sabbath.

The physical world's purpose is only to serve as a means in the pursuit of wisdom. As King Solomon stated in his commencement of Ecclesiastes (Koheles), "all is futile" referring to the created world. The rabbis ask, "how can Solomon say that the world is futile, when G-d said, "and behold, it is very good?" What King Solomon meant to teach is that one who seeks the physical world as an 'ends', is missing the purpose of the world. It was only created so that mankind have the ability to procure his material needs - to the point that he facilitates a life of wisdom. Without a home and food, one cannot involve his mind in learning. He must feel that his needs are met prior to engaging in loftier pursuits. Therefore, the Sabbath is the goal of creation, as its prohibition from labor directs man to study, without distractions for concerns with his with material needs.

What is interesting, is although we focus on the stupendous marvels of creation from nothingness (creation ex nihilo) Licha Dodi teaches us that our real focus must shift from the 6 days of universal creation - to the Sabbath. The physical world, in all its splendor, and against popular opinion, was not created for itself! It was created only to enable man to contemplate his Creator and be involved in a discovery process during his short stay on Earth. This concept is quite intriguing. G-d created the elements of each day, but they were truly unrealized in their purpose until man and the Sabbath appeared on the horizon. Only then did the physical world have purpose in its creation.

Today, scientists marvel at Creation, and with good reason, it is awesome. But we are not to be scientists alone in this life. We are to be Torah-

adhering individuals. This means that we don't gaze star struck at matters attractive to our senses, but we seek G-d's instruction for where we should direct our attention. If G-d focuses His Torah more on Sabbath than on creation, we must seek out primary ideas behind the Sabbath laws, if we are to truly understand creation, and Torah. We must study what is more significant about G-d's rest, than His creation. G-d created the physical universe, but then He "rested." His "rest" was not an unnecessary lesson to man.

Shabbos is not merely the abstention of G-d's creative process. We read in the Torah something which seems redundant, "G-d completed His work,.....G-d rested". I wonder, doesn't the first statement that "G-d completed His work" teach that He rested? If so, for what reason do we need the additional phrase "G-d rested?" I believe this is to teach that G-d's Sabbath was not merely an abstention from creation. That is passive. G-d wanted to teach that His Sabbath is actually a "positive institution", the intentional withdrawal from the physical and not just the mere cessation from labor. Shabbos has a positive, real quality and status as a day whose definition is not just a break from work, but primarily "a day dedicated to the involvement in the metaphysical". A day devoted to study and awe of the Creator. But this is only derived by the additional word of "rested".

Our inactivity on Shabbos also demonstrates our true belief in the ability for G-d to sustain us, as we do not work according to His word, and thereby, we do not feel we will suffer monetary loss. This explains why we do not make request for material needs in the prayers on Shabbos. This also ties in with the concept that the manna in the desert did not fall on Shabbos, to teach the Jews that they should have complete confidence in G-d's word that he would sustain them. During the 6 weekdays, the manna fell each day just enough for that day. Anything left for the following day by a Jew, demonstrated his disbelief that it would again fall tomorrow, as G-d promised. Leftover manna would become wormy and rot for the purpose of forcing the Jews to comply with a belief in G-d's word. But on Friday, the Jews were commanded to gather enough for that day, and that they may leave over for the Sabbath. When they did so, they found when they measured the manna in their homes, it miraculously doubled in size, to sustain them on Shabbos as well (Exod. 16:5 -Rashi). This miracle was enacted by G-d to engender the Jews' faith in His word, that G-d would and will sustain them. Similarly, our abstinence from labor on the sabbath

demonstrates this concept today.

We are even commanded by the prophet Isaiah (58:13-14) not to talk about our business on Shabbos. Meaning, our involvement in concerns for our material needs should not exist on the Sabbath. One who truly abandons discussions concerning work, and involves himself in Torah study and appreciation of the creation, is one who lives in line with G-d's plan that man have true faith in G-d's word. (See Rashi on Talmud Sotah, page 48a, Rashi heading: "Men of faith" - "Anshey emunah"). Isaiah states that the one who doesn't just refrain his speech and actions from business but rather idealizes the Sabbath as a true enjoyment (involvement in wisdom), this person will be given all his physical needs, "If you abstain from going in your way, seeking your (physical) desires and don't talk about these matters, then will you rejoice in G-d and He will ride you on the high places of the Earth and feed you the inheritance of Jacob". It is counter intuitive, but true, that he who follows G-d's laws of abandoning business matters on the Sabbath will actually have his physical needs addressed by G-d.

The Sabbath teaches; 1) the world has a Creator, 2)that G-d prefers our pursuit of wisdom over material gain, and 3)it affirms our complete trust in G-d's ability to provide.

G-d created the universe, but let this not steal the show. Yes, the universe is truly a display of G-d's might and existence. But without Torah, man misses the point: G-d "rested". G-d created the institution of a day - the Sabbath - where man's creative activity must come to a halt. Man must be given at least one day a week, where he is not involved in physical labor, or concerns for his Earthly security. On this Sabbath day, man must actualize his true purpose: a life of wisdom.

We were given intelligence so that we may engage it. G-d teaches this by devoting a day to absolute cessation from creation. Although creation was complete, and G-d does not tire as man, G-d still desired that it be known that He "rested". He did not rest for Himself, but as a quintessential example of what is the true focus of creation; that the universe is a "means", not an "ends". Our study of the Creator starts with the universe, but it must culminate in our higher study of G-d's wisdom.

The physical universe, in all its glory, is here to supply our human needs. Our true purposes is to indulge in G-d's wisdom encapsulated in creation and the Torah. This is the lesson of G-d's "rest" on the Sabbath. ■

# Israel: EXPELLING JEWS

DOV GILOR

When the Jews living in the Gaza Strip are forcibly evicted from their homes, what should be done with the houses? How much compensation is each Jew entitled to when the Israeli government expels him? These questions are part of the debate that is beginning to rage in the Israel political system.

Prime Minister Sharon recently shocked his own supporters as well as Jews around the world when he declared that he would unilaterally force all Jews to leave their homes, if they live in any of the 17 Jewish communities located in the Gaza Strip. The Arabs are dancing with joy over the very positive results of their terror attacks that will continue because they now firmly believe that terror will eventually drive all Jews out of the Middle East.

There have been no negotiations, no give and take, no compromise, just unilateral capitulation by a Prime Minister weakened by age, by the police investigations into charges of bribery and corruption against him and his sons and by pressure from the United States and Europe. He seems to be hoping that this dramatic (and dangerous) action will reduce the pressure from the police and from the United States Government. He has forgotten all of his previous declarations about not rewarding terrorism. He has forgotten that he is the leader of a strong Jewish State. He is old, he is tired and he is afraid.

Few people can imagine how disheartening it must be for the Jews of Netzarim, Kfar Darom, Neve Dekalim, Gush Katif and the other communities. They can see their Arab enemies eyeing their homes and just waiting for the Jews to be expelled. How tragic that it is a Jewish Prime Minister who will force Jews to flee from their homes. How traumatized will the Jews and their families be by this humiliation and degradation. The first right-wing Prime Minister, Menachem Begin, expelled the Jews of the Sinai city of Yamit, in return for a "promised" peace with Egypt that never fully materialized. Now Arik Sharon is following in his footsteps and doing the same thing to the Jewish communities of Gaza, but he is getting absolutely nothing in return.

Achmed Tibi, an Arab Knesset member, has called for Israel to just walk away from the infrastructure built in Gaza and let the Arab refugees move into the

former Jewish homes. The Arabs, declared Tibi, will not compensate the Jews because the homes are located on conquered territory. We are happy to again be reminded where the loyalties of this Knesset member lie.

Sharon is reportedly also planning to evacuate several Jewish communities of Judea and Samaria. He is reported to be planning to move the security fence so that the communities such as Kedumim, Karnei Shomron and Emanuel will be outside of the security fence. Is this just a prelude to the abandonment of these Jewish communities as well?

Once the 7,000 Jews of the Gaza communities are forced to flee their homes, control of the region will revert to the Arab fanatics. Israel will no longer be able to carry out massive ground action nor will it be able to reach and neutralize the terrorist leaders. It is hard to understand why America is pressuring Sharon to follow this course of action. Even Yossie Beilin and his leftist cronies are against this unilateral capitulation and have been vocally condemning Sharon for it.

The commanding general of the IDF has asked his senior officers not to express their dismay at Sharon's unilateral capitulation. Many officers are shocked by this action but have been silenced. They believe that the Arabs will view the forced removal of Jewish communities as another decisive victory of terrorism over Israel, and the officers believe that this capitulation will be a serious mistake. The Jews were forced to flee Lebanon in the year 2000 and they will be forced to flee the Gaza Strip in 2004. The Arab has a lot of patience and we are proving to him that terrorism pays handsome dividends.

The Hamas and Islamic Jihad forces will happily occupy the entire Gaza Strip and will be in a much better position to threaten many Southern Israeli communities. This capitulation will simply encourage the Arab fanatics to further intensify their terror operations. Even if every formerly Jewish home will be razed to the ground, the territory will then be taken over by the terrorists and no good will result from it. What are Sharon's real motives? ■

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