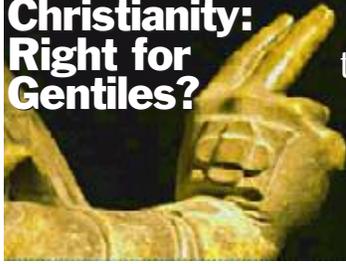


Christianity: Right for Gentiles?



Many Jews and Gentiles, but unfortunately, not the thinkers among them share this sentiment. Prior to Christianity, man's nature was no different than after. G-d overlooked nothing in man's nature which "new" religions need to address. Jews have 613 laws and Gentiles have 7. The advent of Christianity did not create a new "man" - a "Christian". Man has not changed, but new religions, by definition, deny this reality. Christianity denies G-d's will.

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AN OPEN LETTER TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY:
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Weekly Parsha

Korach

RABBI BERNARD FOX

"And Korach the son of Yitzhar the son of Kahat the son of Leyve separated himself, together with Datan and Aviram the sons of Ahaliav and Ohn the son of Pelet, the sons of Reuven." (BeMidbar 16:1)

Korach initiated a dispute with

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KORACH

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

Transcribed by student

The Torah devotes much attention to the dispute between Korach and Moses. However, an analysis of the text does not give us a good deal of insight into the real basis of their argument. From the verses it seems that Korach was simply complaining that Moses and Aaron had usurped too much power. However, this conclusion raises several bothersome questions. Firstly Moses retort to Korach seems inappropriate. Moses sarcastically questions Korach asking him if he also desires the priesthood. Furthermore, the famous Medrash quoted by Rashi when Korach assembles 250 of the congregation leaders and together they confront Moses seem irrelevant to the argument. Korach in the leader's presence questions Moses; "Does a garment which is totally blue require fringes?" Moses responds in the affirmative and is ridiculed by Korach since one fringe of blue obviates a four-cornered garment of fringes.

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Christianity vs Judaism

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Opposing
Religious
Beliefs...

...Only One
is G-d's
Word...



...How to Decide?

Last week we published an article, which focused on defending our Jewish children and students against Christian proselytizers. With tens of millions of Christian dollars financing missionaries to convert Jews, we cannot sit by idly, or imagine our children are exempt from

(continued on page 4)

KORACH

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

Transcribed by student

Korach also questions him on whether a house filled with Sefarim requires a Mezuzah. Moses again responded in the affirmative. Korach again ridicules him because the obvious purpose of Mezuzah is to raise a person's cognition of the creator; and surely an individual with a house filled with Sefarim has such an appreciation. This confrontation seems to be unnecessary and irrelevant if the basis of the argument was merely a power struggle.

In order to comprehend the basis of the argument it is necessary to analyze the cause of the conflict and the personalities of the combatants. The beginning of the Parsha states that "vayikach Korach", and Korach took, took being a transitive Verb. Rashi rightfully questions "whom did he take"? and quotes the Onkelos to demonstrate that the language of taking really connotes a conflict. It means, that he took himself aside and separates himself from the congregation. Generally an argument becomes vehement when it is enraged by passions and exacerbated by emotions. However, after the moment passes, the vehemence recedes and the conflict is short lived. The combatants then communicate, and their identification with one another smolders the flames of the dispute. However, the language of vayikach (he took), is teaching us a different idea. Korach's anger consumed his essence and he was incapable of identifying with others and thus separated himself from the congregation of Israel. This was not a typical altercation, but rather this dispute overwhelmed the man to the extent that it embroiled his very being.

This anger was characteristic of the anger that Korach's ancestor, Levi, possessed. Jacob's name is not mentioned when Korach's lineage is traced, because Jacob chastised Levi for expressing his anger when he destroyed the city of Shechem. Jacob specifically admonished Shimon and Levi, and warned that he does not want to be counted in their gatherings and he is therefore excluded with reference to Korach. Jacob had the foresight to appreciate human nature and recognized that a person's characteristics are either inherited or are a product of his environment. He thereby disassociates himself from Levi's combative temperament to show that Levi did not inherit nor learn such characteristics from him. This demonstrates that the anger, which obsessed Korach, was unique to him and not attributable to Jacob.

Rashi explains at the very outset of the parsha the factor that precipitated Korach's wrath. Korach was angered at the appointment of his cousin Elitzofon Ben Uziel as prince of the children of Kahas. Moses and Aaron took the kingship and priesthood for themselves. They were the children of Amram, the eldest of four brothers. Korach believed that the determining factor for leadership was by birthright and thereby reasoned that he should be appointed prince inasmuch as he was the son of Yitzhar, the second eldest of the four brothers. However, Moses pursuant to Hashem's instructions appointed Elitzofon, the son of the youngest of the four brothers. This enraged Korach as it thwarted his quest for power.

Korach realized that a legitimate revolution could not be based on his own personal agenda for power. Korach shrewdly recognized that an attack against the authority of Moses and Aaron would require great cunning. Korach also recognized that other people resented the power of Moses and Aaron and were hostile to what seemed to be an aristocracy of the children of Amram. Therefore, Korach embraced the principles of democracy, appealing to the masses' sentiments of equality. Korach mobilized the people by claiming that



Moses and Aaron were megalomaniacs who were merely interested in controlling the people. In truth, Korach himself was power hungry and personally endorsed the principles of aristocracy. He was an egomaniac and was originally very comfortable when his cousins, Moses and Aaron, were appointed leaders. After all, he felt important belonging to such an honorable family. It wasn't until he was denied the princship that, feeling slighted; he contested the authority of Moses and Aaron.

The Torah tells us that Korach therefore enlisted Dason and Avirom, renowned demagogues, as his first supporters in his protest against Moses and Aaron. He had seen countless times that they were the leading rabble-rousers amongst the children of Israel. Korach, a good judge of character, also recognized that his advancement of the democratic principles would have a special appeal to them. Specifically, earlier in the Torah we are told of Moses's first encounter with Dason and Avirom. Moses, upon observing the Egyptian taskmaster cruelly whipping a fellow Israelite, was propelled into action by his sense of Justice. He smote the Egyptian and buried him in the sand. Later, Dason and Avirom confronted him and complained, "Who placed you as a prince and Judge over us? Are you going to kill us as you killed the Egyptian?" At this very incipient stage of their exodus, Dason and Avirom exhibited their disdain for authority. They had emerged as the progenitors of Jewish liberalism. Moses had killed the brutal Egyptian that was unduly torturing a fellow Israelite but they were concerned that Moses unfairly killed the Egyptian. Korach recognized that Dason and Avirom would be the leading advocates of his ostensible quest for democracy.

Korach's plan was slowly unfolding but he recognized that his movement required credibility which could not be gained by the endorsement of Dason and Avirom and it is here that Korach's ingenuity becomes apparent. In order

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Weekly Parsha

Letters

(Korach continued from previous page)

KORACH

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

Transcribed by student

for him to attack the leadership of Moses and Aaron, he had to assert that their appointment was not a directive from Hashem. He therefore argues that Moses was acting on his own initiative with respect to many issues. It is agreed upon that Moses had received the Torah, the written law, directly from Hashem. However, Korach questioned Moses' assertion that the oral law was also G-d given and argued that Moses had fabricated the oral tradition. Korach further argued that G-d was only concerned with the philosophy and spirit of the written Torah and that the oral law was merely subject to interpretation based upon the spirit of the written law. He rejected the notion of Halacha as a separate and unique body of knowledge that functions in its own orbit, irrespective of the philosophy of the Mitzvah and asserted that the oral tradition is based upon a person's common sense thereby attacking the authenticity of the oral tradition as being divinely inspired. With this in mind Korach assembled the leaders of the Sanhedrin and questioned Moses about the mezuzah and Fringes. Korach's questions were shrewdly phrased to appeal to man's common sense prompting the idea that G-d is only concerned with what man feels, just the basic philosophy of the Mitzvah, not the onerous details of halacha. Korach argued that it does not make sense that if someone has a home full of sefarim that a mezuzah should be required. A true halachist who appreciates the beauty of a G-d given halachic system, based upon the intellectual breadth and creativity of its principles which functions under its own guidelines, must recognize the absurdity of Korach's assertions. The argument, although nonsensical to a halachist who has the benefit of the tutelage of the great chain of scholars, our baalei mesora, was a cogent argument to many of Korach's contemporaries. Unfortunately we see the appeal of Korach's argument in our times. Many uneducated Jews today fall prey to the philosophy of Conservative and Reform Judaism, and they too are blind to the amazing intellectual depth and creative beauty of a divinely inspired halachic system. Rather they are concerned with the universal principles of justice espoused by Judaism. G-d, they claim, is only concerned with a good heart not, the burdensome and meticulous details of an antiquated halachic system. Korach's ingenuity is attested to by the success of this argument even in our day. By attacking the credibility of the Oral Tradition as G-d given, it also afforded him the opportunity to impeach Moses's and Aaron's appointment as merely personal discretionary exercises of power, not directives of G-d. Moses' response to Korach also attests to Moses' understanding of what really bothered Korach. Korach, upon making all these claims, advocating the principles of democracy and denying the authenticity of the Oral Tradition, impugned Moses' claim to power. Moses did not even address the substance of Korach's arguments, but simply responded, "do you also want the priesthood?" Moses recognized and attempted to demonstrate that Korach was merely interested in power and not an enlightened egalitarian espousing the concerns of the masses. Therefore the only possible response was a determination by G-d demonstrating that Moses and Aaron were the leaders of Israel and that their method of serving G-d was the only acceptable method.

Thus, Korach and his congregation were ultimately destroyed by G-d. The authenticity of halacha and the Oral Tradition was affirmed by G-d's actions. ■



Perfection

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Reader: If something "bad" occurs to someone, isn't it true that our Rabbi's have given the prescription for THAT person to perform: Prayer, charity and repentance. Since, we cannot change Hashem in anyway, is one to assume that the following actions will potentially lead to a change in the person, and therefore he/she may be able to raise themselves to a level where Hashem will change their situation?

Mesora: Yes, as one changes himself and perfects himself, his change entitles him to benefit from the already existing system of Providence – G-d does not change in such a case, yet man derives greater good.

Reader: If so, why is Talmud Torah not one of the three things prescribed? Since in Schachrit we say that Talmud Torah is "equal to all"?

Mesora: Talmud Torah is "equal to all" must be understood in a specific context: this statement refers to what the highest action is that man may perform. Learning is when one engages the mind to approach more knowledge about the Creator. Every halacha, parsha, or piece of gemara we learn affords us a greater appreciation of the Creator of the entire Torah system.

However, when discussing how one may perfect his flaws, here, Talmud Torah is not the prescription, but rather the one's you quoted:

- Prayer: weighing one's actions and requests,
- charity: divorcing oneself from the physical and expressing reliance on G-d's kindness to sustain us, and
- teshuvah: introspection, and the abandonment of destructive and prohibited actions and personality traits.

Reader: The second part of my question is: If prayer, charity and repentance work on the mechanism of changing the person performing them, and this change is the thing that allows Hashem to grant him/her a change in their situation...what is the mechanism that allows praying for another person to effect a change for that other person?

Mesora: In truth, the prayer for others is not the preferred action, as in such a case; the one being prayed for is not perfected in anyway, as he is not reflecting on his actions. Although this is so, G-d decides when he will listen to another's prayers for whatever reason.

When one is sick, the Torah demands that he review his actions to see what flaw caused his illness. When he contemplates his wrong, regrets it, and resigns not to repeat such behavior, then G-d will lift his illness, as it served its purpose. This is the message of the book of Job. Only once Job repented from his erroneous opinions, did G-d remove his plague, and return him to health, wealth, and increase his family. ■

their tactics. We reacted to the intolerable absence of education in our Jewish schools, urging parents, and teachers to immediately commence classes that examine religions like Christianity, and teach our children the falsehoods contained in these man-made religions. As our Rabbis have taught, we do not cower from any area in life. We approach any and all matters with a fearless zeal to first learn what the truth is, and then apply it in action. Moses taught the people, "When you come into the land that G-d your G-d gives you, do not learn to do as the abominations of those nations." (Deut., 18:9) Rashi, quoting Talmud Sanhedrin 65 states on this verse, "But, you shall 'learn to understand to teach'. Meaning, understand their ways, how destructive they are, and teach your children 'do not do such and such, for this is the way of the idolatrous nations". Rashi, our leading Rabbi, tells us when Moses instructed us not to learn from the ways of idolatrous people, it was a prohibition of committing idolatry - not a decree to put blinders on our eyes and ignore their practices. In fact, Rashi teaches we must learn their practices for the purpose of teaching our children what is falsehood, and what is destructive. Our entire Talmudic tractate "Idolatry" is based on the Rabbi's study of what is idolatrous. We must do as they did, examine destructive practices, and teach our children so as to guard them and ourselves from harm.

We do not play politics, distorting truth for any consideration. Any person, who would sidestep the truth distorts Judaism, and defames G-d's words. In Jewish life, "truth" guides our every action. Therefore we speak openly and honestly about Judaism's view on everything, including other religions, and Christianity: G-d abhors - more than all else - any form of idolatry. G-d's Torah is replete with prohibitions and devastating punishments for violators. Anyone who reads Exodus and Deuteronomy cannot deny this. If any Christian finds these words harsh, your first error is taking this matter personally, when you have not been singled out and attacked. Your second error is feeling defensive, when I have not yet begun to explain my view of "idolatry". Perhaps after I have done this, you will agree.

G-d warns against adding to His words or detracting from them. For this reason, we do not accept the Christian view that G-d is changing His laws given at Sinai, replacing them with Christianity. One cannot deny G-d's open declaration through Moses, (Deut. 13:1) "This entire thing which I command you (the Torah), it shall you guard to keep it, do not add on it, and do not detract from it." G-d does not change His mind. For if you will say He does, then nothing is consistent, not even a Christian interpretation. But more primarily, G-d does not change, as he knows all future considerations. Furthermore, change implies a "need" for that change, and G-d cannot have any needs nor does He change, "For I, G-d, do not change..." (Malachi, 3:6)

When we discuss the violations of the Torah, and religions like Christianity that partake of these

violations, we always address the flawed principle, and never attack individuals. We have made this clear so many times, in so many of our articles. Yet, time and time again, individual Christians read our words, and become up-in-arms against us, as if we are attacking them personally. I guess this will always be the case, as many people lack the objectivity to separate themselves from abstract beliefs. Until you can be objective, your emotions will blur your objectivity, and you won't be able to hear us. But for those who can separate themselves, there is much to be said. I would like to take this opportunity to address some of the reactions to our article from both our Jewish and Christian readers.

Tolerance

One Jewish reader wrote in urging our tolerance of all religions and beliefs. I agree - we must be tolerant of other people and religions, as this also protects our own freedoms. More primary is the fact that G-d desires that each member of mankind be free to make his every decision based on his own free will. Judaism fully supports this principle - it is G-d's will. So what is this reader's concept of tolerance, over and above our position, that he needed to write us? Certainly, he does not mean "tolerance" in the extreme degree that I start to live by those other religions. His "tolerance" also must not require me to ask my children to live by another religious code. Does he mean that I do not interfere with those other religionists in their practice? Well, we do not suggest that one should interfere - that violates G-d's desire that man functions from his own free will. The only other possibility for his definition of "tolerance" I see, is that we do not condemn other religions. But here is the problem: his desire to be "tolerant", directly opposes G-d's desire. I will explain.

Tolerance is Cruelty to Christians

Judaism is concerned that ALL people have the truth - this is our goal as Jews, to offer the world G-d's Torah. To refrain from making G-d's Torah available to others is a direct violation of G-d's will. For the Bible itself records Moses addressing the Jews: (Deut. 4:6-8) "And guard them and do them (the commands) for they are your wisdom and your understanding in the eyes of the nations, who will hear these statutes, and they will say, 'What a wise and understanding people is this great nation'. For what great nation has G-d close to them, as G-d, our G-d, whenever we call to Him. And what great nation has statutes and righteous laws as this entire Torah, that I give to you today?"

How can Moses say our laws will enamor other nations, if we are not acting out these statutes in our daily lives, and in our teachings? It is only by our adherence to our positive and negative commands that other nations will come to learn of G-d's Torah. But if we do not practice and do not teach our people G-d's Bible, His Torah, then we not only violate G-d's law and hurt our own people, but we also hurt all other nations by violating G-d's will and keeping His laws hidden from their sight.

"Tolerance towards Christians and others is wrong, as this implies that there is some approach to G-d other than G-d's Torah. This is a lie, and it denies them the chance to learn the truth".

(Christianity vs Judaism continued from previous page)

Although misinterpreted in the opposite vein, the very fact that we openly discuss and identify a religion as violating G-d's Torah, is a demonstration of our adherence to G-d's will, and a concern for other people. So let us speak the truth and cease from the charade of playing politics to earn the love of others through phony "tolerance". G-d clearly denounces idolatry, He does not "tolerate" it, and does not desire that anyone – Jew or Gentile – be misled by false practices, even if followed by millions. Jewish causes often woo Christian groups for verbal or financial support. But if in doing so you conceal your real Jewish identity, then what you seek to support is no longer Judaism. You are also unfair to your Christian counterparts by keeping them in the dark regarding G-d's true position on following man-gods like Jesus. If you desire the good for yourselves and others, the only option is honesty.

Identifying Idolatry

So how do we identify true idolatry? Of course this is where the issue gets gray. But this is why G-d gave one law to clarify our misconceptions. As always, when desirous of learning G-d's Torah, we inquire of those to whom He entrusted His Torah – the Jews. This is historical fact. When referring to those Jews - our Rabbis and Talmudic Sages - we learn that idolatry is clearly defined as "the belief in anything other than G-d possessing power". The Egyptians believed in deities who dominated many aspects of the heavens and earth, each one possessing power over the Nile, the sun, the moon, fertility, rain, crops and so on. Christianity believes in a Trinity, something other than "One" G-d, and that G-d can become physical, although G-d Himself says, "To whom can you equate me?" Meaning, G-d can have no similitude to anything, including gross, physical entities. So the Christian notion that G-d became man is against G-d's word, and is plain stupid. Further, the very concept of a Trinity is not only absurd by definition, but it violates G-d's words, "Listen Israel, G-d is our G-d, G-d is One." (Deut. 6:4) Additionally, gods of silver and gold are severe violations. Belief in G-d being physical or associated to anything physical also violates our Bible, the Torah: "And guard your souls greatly, for you did not see any form on the day that G-d spoke to you in Horeb from amidst flames. Lest you act destructively, and make for yourself a statue, the form of any design, the form of male or female." (Deut., 4:15,16) Statues of Jesus clearly violate the very Bible that Christians retain. Let me repeat that verse, "Lest you act destructively, and make for yourself a statue, the form of any design, the form of male or female." Christianity violates G-d's words again and again. And the violations are in the most severe area – "what G-d is". To possess and teach the wrong idea of G-d is the greatest crime.

Christianity: Man is Central, and is Infallible – Judaism: G-d is Central and Man Sins

At the core of Christianity's beliefs, is the deification

of man. Jesus is never depicted as having sinned, which again, contradicts G-d's words (Ecclesiastes, 7:20) "For man is not righteous in the land who does good and never sins." Judaism focuses on the Creator alone, never hiding man's errors. Even Moses' sins are openly written. The man Jesus is also far less abstract than G-d, and more emotionally appealing. This explains Christianity's wildfire reach in so short a period from its inception.

Before Jesus, before Moses, before anything or anyone...there was One Cause of the entire universe. By definition, this Cause we call G-d has no need for anything. He is self-sufficient. G-d desires we have the truest possible concept of Him. He therefore clearly commands against the notions of Trinity, statues, deities and believing in anything except in Him alone. In Judaism, man is never raised to a saintly status. Christianity preaches a warped view of man that is a lie, and not corroborated by any Torah text. Judaism on the other hand exposes even our greatest prophets, as mortals who sin. Our Patriarchs viewed G-d alone as the One to worship and give any honor to. Our Patriarchs abhorred the idea that other members of mankind would worship them, and therefore commanded that they be not buried in Egypt. They were concerned that Egyptians should not deify their burial sites. Yet, Christianity does not follow Judaism's founding prophets, and they violate the teachings of Jacob by praying to a dead man.

Dying for Others

Other Christian fundamentals also violate G-d's very words, and G-d could not have said it any clearer, (Deut., 24:16) "There will not be killed fathers for sons (sins, nor) are sons killed for father's (sins). Each man in his own sin will be killed." This means that G-d does not kill someone unless they sinned. Accordingly, the concept that Jesus died by G-d's will for mankind's sins is a violation of the Bible. Christianity's fundamentals oppose G-d's words.

Christian Supporters Demanding Our Recognition

Are we to follow cowardly, Jewish and Christian groups who fear facing G-d's own words? Are we to sidestep G-d's truth, so we can muster political and religious allies among the Christians? G-d clearly warns against such practices. Even according to world history the Jews are the recipients of G-d's Torah. If we do not teach G-d's word, then His Torah will be lost. The people of the world will no longer have the opportunity to truly learn what G-d desires of them. How can we allow this to happen? How can you, those Jews who want to silence our talk of G-d's laws, hold such a position? You directly violate G-d's will. If G-d openly denounces idolatry as the worst crime, you directly violate G-d's word when you wish anyone to remain silent. This false sentiment of "tolerance" must not be followed. Yes, we will never interfere in someone's freedom. But as those commanded to uphold G-d's Bible, we must never conceal G-d's

"There will not be killed fathers for sons (sins, nor) are sons killed for father's (sins). Each man in his own sin is killed." G-d does not kill someone unless they sinned. Jesus dying for others denies G-d's words.

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(Christianity vs Judaism continued from previous page)

words for any consideration. We are tolerant of people's actions provided they do not harm us, but we are intolerant of ignorance, the spread of false ideas, and the spread of idolatry. We must be concerned to teach the truth and make it available through our actions and our teachings – for Jew and Gentile alike.

One Christian wrote in with disdain for our position. She complained how we could disagree with Christian theology, while so many Christians support Israel. She asked to be removed from our email list, and we complied. But such a view is nonsense. She suggests if a group does a good for another, then the recipient must lie to show thanks. Since Christians support Israel, am I to lie and say I don't think they violate G-d's word, when in fact I do? Aren't I doing a greater good by putting feelings aside, and advising them about their error? And let's be truthful, she certainly does not agree with Judaism, as she certainly feels I will burn in hell for rejecting Jesus. By her withholding her feelings from me, in her framework, she keeps the "good" from me. She cares less that I will burn in hell according to Christian theology, as she does not try to teach me. Isn't she the one who is doing the harm to me, and not vice versa? A true friend will risk the friendship if he feels the other needs counseling. Even though he will hurt the other, he will tell him his error, because he loves him. That is a true love.

Therefore, we do not 'take the bribe' and remain silent. Our goal is to teach our Jewish children what G-d's Torah says. Our obligation is also to make the Torah available to all others, so we are not allowed to conceal it by lying that we "tolerate" Christianity. Yes, we tolerate practitioners, this is an American right, but we do not tolerate your principles. They are idolatrous and violate G-d's word.

Why isn't Freedom of Religion a Two-Way Street?

Why don't Christians denounce those Christian missionary groups if they love Jews so much? I've never heard one Christian leader ever do so. Where is Christianity protecting our rights to practice Judaism? Why don't Christians speak out against missionary groups telling them to cease from converting Jewish children? Where is Christianity's support of American Jews' "freedom of religion"? You don't see any Jews out to proselytize Christians. Although we denounce Christian theology, we don't interfere with your right to freedom of religion. We adhere to freedom of speech, and do not violate or cross that line. I would like to see a courageous Christian defend our rights of freedom of religion, and denounce all Christian missionary activity to convert Jews.

Conditional Love of Judaism

One Christian writer prayed for my conversion. I think this displays a desire of many Christians that Jews ultimately convert. There is no denying the Christian belief that those who do not believe in Jesus will burn in hell. If this is the case, how can any Christian truly accept Judaism? Again, honesty is called for, if both

Jew and Christian will talk honestly about their beliefs and arrive at which is true. But I fear the more powerful emotion of maintaining friendships (for ulterior motives) will win out. Neither party cares enough for the other to openly discuss with the sincere and genuine objectivity, what G-d's true will is for mankind. Only a truly concerned minister, preacher, nun, father, pope, or rabbi will end the silence, and caringly converse with other religious leaders. And consider that; wouldn't such a religious discussion, where truth reigned supreme, yield the most precious outcome? I honestly hope the opening has been made with this article. I hope that Jews and Christians can end that silence, and discuss, not what we did to each other, but what the differences are between the two religions, and arrive at a conclusion as to which one is G-d's word. Neither party wins here by remaining silent, and neither party "wins", when both finally decide what G-d's word is. Meaning, it cannot be about "winning", but about an objective search for truth, regardless if that truth demands you abandon your religion.

We are both on equal footing in G-d's eyes, as human beings obligated to follow G-d's words. Fear of being "wrong", and a desire to be "right" must not enter the picture. The "person" is not the issue, but the "principles". If both parties sit down to debate religion, with the agenda of trying to prove their side, then such a meeting is useless.

Pro Religious Teaching

One writer commented as follows: "Although I have read many things addressing this issue, this is the first to clearly address the flaws in our education. It is indeed imperative that we educate Jews - especially our children about the flaws, the negatives of other religions, and not only extol the positives of ours. Even in a panel I attended for Jewish professional educators directed by Jews for Judaism, this challenge was rejected! I truly felt alone in my conviction that our children as well as we ourselves must be informed clearly about the flaws in the rationality of other religions."

Judaism's bottom line is that G-d desires each man and woman to use their G-d-given free will to make their choices. This applies to every member of mankind. Unlike other religions, Judaism does not ascribe to, or believe in proselytizing others, or using physical force to make a person do something or live a certain lifestyle. Man's actions must stem from his own choices to earn reward, or deserve punishment. Therefore, we will never interfere with how anyone else desires to live, be you a Jew, a Christian, or any other religion. We will only interfere for our self-defense, when you endanger our freedom or our lives. But here in America, our freedom of religion is cherished, and we support such a haven for free, religious expression. However since part of "free, religious expression" allows the institution of Christian proselytizers to flourish, we must protect our own with our American right of free speech. We will teach our

G-d said, "Man cannot know Me while alive." This was said to Moses. Therefore, if the greatest man cannot fathom G-d at all, then suggesting things about G-d is impossible. Saying He "became human" is blasphemy.

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(Christianity vs Judaism continued from previous page)

children and students without compromising our tone, lest we mislead them that we are not passionate. We will not compromise our content, for fear that a Christian or “politically correct” Jew will have their feathers ruffled. But we will speak the truth, citing G-d’s Torah as our source. In doing so, we will make it clear what Judaism believes as true. By doing so, our Christian brothers and sisters will no longer be misled by Jews with ulterior motives, who hide their true tenets from those Christians out of ulterior motives. But they will see what exactly G-d’s Torah says and means, all based on G-d’s original recipients, the Rabbis and Sages.

Moving Forward - Courageous Honesty

Let honesty have her day, and allow the curtains of “agenda” to be shed: Christians desire Judaism no more than Jews desire to live Christian. This charade of mutual support for multiple religions is dishonest. A Christian’s very selection of Jesus and Christianity over Judaism proves this, as so does a Jew’s denial of Jesus. A Jew does not shy from any question - rationale and proof is at the core of Judaism. No blind faith here. So I invite our true Christian friends, not to hold your tongue, and I urge our Jewish friends, not to conceal Judaism from the Christians. Engage in honest, unbridled religious discussion. Both of you agree that both Judaism and Christianity cannot be simultaneously “G-d’s Chosen religion.” Reason will dictate which are G-d’s proven words, and which makes sense. Don’t fear a conclusive proof. One must be wrong. I praise the person who can yield his cherished beliefs, to the proven truth.

To our Jewish and non-Jewish readers I ask, “Are you adhering to a religion simply because you raised in it?” If so, you are both in error. G-d gave you each a mind to arrive at your beliefs based on reason. You must stop parroting and realize that “being raised in a religion” is in no argument for the truth of that religion. Nor do you possess any merit by acting in such a fashion. The only way to arrive at a conviction that your religion is truth is by using your own mind. So do so. Inquire. Your first realization is that Judaism and Christianity cannot both be G-d’s choice. Admit that one is wrong. Now, how do you arrive at this knowledge of which is wrong? The answer is simple; follow reason to prove which one is right. Look for historical proof of G-d giving a system to mankind, a proof that is irrefutable. Then, examine G-d’s words with honesty, and be objective, do not let your upbringing and emotional tendencies blur what you might see as true. Then inquire of those who safeguarded G-d’s words, deriving from them alone G-d’s laws and intent.

I will give you an analogy: Henry Ford created the first “Ford Automobile”. It is absurd to say that before Henry Ford was alive, there existed a “Ford”. This is plain and simple. History conclusively denies this claim. It is similarly absurd if even after Ford’s first auto, someone claim he possessed the “authentic” Ford. Such a claim would be laughed at. How could a copier tell the originator, “I possess the authentic”? It would

be as if a son told his father, “I’m really the father.”

By definition, the original was always the first. Similarly, we arrive at the conclusive evidence – even accepted by Christians – that G-d in fact gave the Jews a Bible, the Torah, on Mount Sinai. The Jews never disputed the understanding of G-d’s words. This Torah was to last forever - unchanged. Only centuries later, Christians who were not the inheritors of the Torah, who lacked the essential Torah derivation principles for unlocking G-d’s profound truths, got their hands on a copy. They in turn approached the Jews and attempted to teach us how to learn the book that we gave them, which we have studied for thousands of years! No one tells Ford “I reinvented the authentic Ford”. So too, no one tells the Jews “We have the correct understanding of the Bible”. Then, to make the crime greater, the Christians added to the Torah, violating G-d’s command not to do so. What compounds such a crime further is the lack of knowledge possessed by Christians who would make this claim. They have not mastered Talmudic thought, nor studied the volumes of Talmud and Rabbis writings, in decades of diligent study under Talmudic Sages, the only possessors of G-d’s Oral Law. Such a lack of Talmudic study officially locks out anyone from attaining any semblance of Torah authority. Yet, they suddenly feel more authoritative than the Jews, those from who they received this Torah! It is absurd and the height of arrogance to tell the Jews, the original recipients of G-d’s Bible, that we have it all wrong. Tell the world that you just created the authentic Ford. See how the world responds.

But let G-d’s Bible speak for itself: “When you inquire of the first days that were before you, from the day that G-d created man on the Earth, from one end of the heavens to the other, was there a thing as great as this? Or was anything like it ever heard? That a nation heard G-d’s voice speaking from amidst flames, as you have heard...and lived? Or had G-d miraculously revealed Himself, when He selected one nation from others, with signs and wonders and with war and with a strong hand and an outstretched arm and with awesome wonders, as all G-d had done for you in Egypt in front of your eyes?” (Deut., 4:32-34)

Moses reminds the people of G-d’s miracles performed forty years earlier. Moses could not have made them recall, that which never happened. The fact that the Jews followed Moses displays the truth of what Moses recalled. That’s number one. Number two, and the primary focus, is that Moses reminds them that G-d never did such miracles as He did in Egypt, nor did He ever select one nation from others where mankind heard G-d speaking from a fiery mountain, as He did with the Jews on Sinai. Moses impresses upon the Jews that G-d’s selection of the Jews from all other nations is undeniable. Moses teaches that G-d’s selection is quite clear – He desires the Jews.

I ask you as you finish reading, to consider the words of the Bible quoted herein. If you have a response, let us hear it. If you don’t, then let G-d’s words direct your actions. ■

G-d knows the future, and need not 'update' His Torah with "new covenants". This would imply that at Sinai, G-d was ignorant of the future.

G-d also said not to alter His Torah.

Christianity violates both.

Taken from "Getting It Straight", Practical Ideas for a Life of Clarity

Overcoming Anger

DOUG TAYLOR AND RABBI MORTON MOSKOWITZ

Dear Mr. Taylor: I read your article about anger last month. So what's the secret? How do you "rationally" deal with anger when you're feeling it? --- Bill D., Mukilteo

Dear Bill: Thanks for writing. I wasn't sure how to answer your question, so I posed it to my friend, the King of Rational Thought, during a walk last week. His response was not what I expected.

"Why do people get angry?" he asked, after I read your letter to him.

"Well---" I hesitated, groping for an answer. "Because somebody made them mad?" Just then, a young boy whizzed unsteadily by on a skateboard. Out of balance, he tried to recover, but crashed instead, almost impaling himself on a fire hydrant. Even from our 10 yard vantage point, we knew his body wasn't seriously hurt. But his pride was a different story. Grabbing his skateboard from nearby bushes, the boy viciously kicked the fire hydrant, swore at it, threw his skateboard on the ground, and took off.

"There's your answer," the King of Rational Thought said as we continued our walk.

"Huh?" I said dumbly, still caught up in the skateboard incident and not even remembering what we were talking about.

"The answer to why people get angry," he said.

I was lost. And I hate being lost.

"I don't follow you," I said.

"You just saw a perfect example of why people get mad," he said.

"Because of fire hydrants?" I asked, still mentally struggling to catch up.

"Look," he said, "why did that boy kick the fire hydrant?"

I started to reply, then stopped and actually thought about his question. All I could come up with was, "Because he ran into it."

"Why should that make him mad?" he asked.

"Because it's not what he wanted," I said, exasperated. This felt like a circular game of twenty questions.

"You're right," he replied. "He was mad because he didn't get what he wanted. But why take it out on the fire hydrant?"

Fortunately, this time he answered his own question before I had time to worry about a suitable response.

"When we get mad," he explained, "it's usually because we don't get what we want. In other words, we're not happy with reality. We stomp our



feet and demand that reality be different. In this case, the boy was mad because there was a fire hydrant where he tried to skateboard. Notice that he didn't blame himself for not anticipating the fire hydrant's presence. He blamed the fire hydrant - an inanimate object - for being there."

"We get angry," he concluded, "because we are unwilling to simply accept reality and deal with it."

I was reeling all this in, trying to make the pieces fit. I thought I saw his point, but...

"But how do you change that?" I asked.

"By going over this idea, in many different situations, until it becomes clear to your mind," he replied. "Real behavior change only takes place when something is clear to your mind. Once you see this idea clearly, you won't get mad like you did before. You'll learn to just deal with reality."

I took his point to heart and began applying it to petty annoyances, like drivers who cut in front of me, or business people who promise on their voice mail to return my phone call and almost never do. But my greatest challenge in accepting reality is coming up this weekend.

I have to do my income tax. □

Parshas Korach

RABBI BERNARD FOX

Moshe regarding the leadership of Bnai Yisrael. Rashi explains that Korach was motivated by personal ambitions. Moshe had appointed Elisafan the son of Uziel as prince of the family of Kahat. Korach believed that he should have received this honor.[1] Datan, Aviram and Ohn were not involved in this issue. They did not have this personal motivation to join the dispute. Why did they become involved?

Bnai Yisrael camped in the wilderness in accordance with a specific order. The Shevet – tribe – of Reuven camped adjacent to the family of Kahat. This proximity encouraged close relations between these neighbors. Korach developed a following among members of the Shevet of Reuven. Rashi summarizes this phenomenon with the statement, “Woe to the evil doer and woe to his neighbor”.[2]

Rashi seems to maintain that the members of Shevet Reuven were not, by nature, evil. They were influenced by the attitudes of their neighbors. It is interesting that the good qualities of Shevet Reuven did not have a positive influence upon Korach and his followers among the family of Kahat.

Furthermore, the Shevet of Reuven was adjacent to the family of Kahat on one side. On other sides the Shevet was next to tribes that were not inclined to join Korach’s rebellion. Yet, the positive role models among their other neighbors did not guide these members of Shevet Reuven.

It seems that Rashi maintains that the power of evil to corrupt is greater than the influence of the good to motivate righteous behavior. Every person must struggle to achieve human perfection. Although material instincts pull us toward evil, we can overcome this influence. However, we can never completely eradicate the instinctual component of our personality. We can never assume we are beyond the desire to sin. We can only hope to control our tendency towards evil. The desire remains deep within our personality. The desire to do good is apparently more tentative. It requires the conquest of the intellectual and spiritual over the more basic instinctual. This process is a lifelong struggle. Even in a righteous individual some level of conflict remains.

Rashi’s analysis can now be more fully understood. When evil confronts good it is easier for the evil to exert influence over the good. The evildoer has less conflict. The righteous individual lives with conflict. The evil person encourages a return to the instinctual desires. The righteous person is now confronted with a growing internal battle. Sometimes he or she succumbs to the evil desires.

Rashi urges us to choose our neighbors well. We should not assume they will not influence us. Instead we should adopt the premise that we will be influenced and choose neighbors whose influence will be positive.

“And Moshe became very angry. He said to Hashem, ‘Do not accept their offering. I did not take a single donkey from them! I did not do harm to any of them.’” (BeMidbar 16:15)

Moshe continues to attempt to make peace with Korach and his followers. He sends a messenger to Datan and Aviram. These are two of the leaders of the rebellion. He wishes to meet with them. Datan and Aviram refuse the offer. Instead, they lash-out at Moshe. They raise new issues. Moshe has failed to fulfill his promise to take them to a land flowing with milk and honey. The generation that Moshe brought out from Egypt has been condemned to die in the wilderness. Furthermore, Moshe has made himself ruler over the nation.

Our pasuk describes Moshe’s reaction. Moshe becomes angry. He prays to Hashem. He asks Hashem not to accept the offerings of Korach and his followers. Finally, he declares that he has not deprived anyone of his property. He has not wronged anyone.

There are two problems with Moshe’s comments. First, Moshe seems to be defending himself. He seems to feel that he needs to prove that he has not been despotic. Why is Moshe defending his integrity? Second, Moshe begins his defense by observing that he has not deprived anyone of personal property. This seems to be an odd defense. Moshe seems to be defending himself by asserting that he is not a thief! This does not prove he has not assumed

unwarranted authority.

In order to understand Moshe’s comments, some background is needed. In fact, Moshe did have the status of a king. He was the temporal ruler of Bnai Yisrael.[3] As king, Moshe did have the right to confiscate private property for his own use.[4] Now, we can begin to understand Moshe’s comments. He was not asserting that he was not a thief. He was declaring that he had not exercised his rights as king. He had not practiced his right of confiscation.

Why did Moshe feel compelled to defend the beneficence of his leadership? Datan and Aviram had challenged Moshe’s leadership. Moshe realized that there were two possible causes for this rebellion. The first possibility was that Datan and Aviram could not accept anyone’s leadership. They were simply unwilling to submit to any leader. The second possibility was that his own behavior had evoked their response. Perhaps, unintentionally, he had been overbearing.

Moshe decided to test the issue. He humbled himself before Datan and Aviram. He attempted to appease them. If Datan and Aviram rejected this overture, Moshe would know that his actions had not produced this dispute. Such a reaction would indicate that even the most unobtrusive leadership would not be tolerated.

Datan and Aviram immediately rejected Moshe’s appeal. Now, Moshe knew with certainty that he had not caused this rebellion. This is the meaning of Moshe’s comments. Moshe is asserting that he has been not been an overbearing leader. He has not even exercised the rights of a king. Therefore, he is not responsible for this rebellion. Korach, Datan and Aviram will not accept any leader.

“This is what you should do. Take for yourself fire-plates – Korach and his assembly.” (BeMidbar 16:6)

What was the issue raised by Korach and his followers? As we have explained, they disputed Moshe’s right to make appointments to the priesthood. However, at a deeper level Korach and his followers questioned the entire institution of priesthood. Korach argued that the entire nation was sacred. The priesthood

(continued on next page)

Parshas Korach

RABBI BERNARD FOX

should not be bestowed upon a single family. Instead, it should be distributed more evenly within Bnai Yisrael. Moshe rejected this argument. He insisted that the priesthood belongs exclusively to Ahron and his descendants.

What was wrong with Korach's argument? Why does Bnai Yisrael have Kohanim? Why cannot any individual assume the role of Kohen? Rashi deals with this issue. He explains that there is a fundamental difference between the Torah and heathen religions. The heathens have many alternative practices. They have various priests. They worship in numerous temples. In contrast, the Torah insists upon a single law. There is one Mikdash – Temple. There is a single Kohen Gadol.[5]

Rashi's response requires further explanation. Rashi identifies a fundamental difference between the Torah and heathen practices. However, he does not explain the reason for this difference. Why does the Torah insist on a single Mikdash and one Kohen Gadol? Why does the Torah not allow for the diversity accommodated by other religions?

The answer is that the Torah proposes a unique approach to Divine service. Heathen religion is essentially an expression of the worshipper. The mode of service is derived from the personal needs of the worshipper. The worshipper designs the service in a

manner that is personally meaningful. This results in remarkable diversity. Different cultures produce their own religious expressions and modes of worship. This is because each culture is unique and seeks to express religious feelings in an individual manner.

The Torah does not treat worship as an expression of the needs of the worshiper. Instead, Torah worship involves submission to the will of the Almighty. Worship is not designed to respond to the needs of the worshiper. It is a response to the will of Hashem.

The Torah approach implies that there must be unity of worship. Diversity in Divine service is inappropriate. All Jews submit to a single G-d. This Deity has a single will. Therefore, all Jews must worship in a single manner. There cannot be multiple Temples expressing various versions of worship. Neither can there be various High Priests each proposing his own form of worship. There is a single Torah, one Mikdash and one Kohen Gadol.

“And it was on the following day and Moshe entered the Tent of Testimony. And it was that Ahron's staff representing the house of Leyve had blossomed. And it had brought forth blossoms and then unripe fruit and then almonds.” (BeMidbar 17:23)

Hashem commanded Moshe to collect a staff

from the prince of each tribe. Ahron's staff represented the Shevet of Leyve. These staffs were then placed in the Mishcan. The following day Ahron's staff blossomed and bore fruit. This miracle indicated that Ahron was truly the Kohen appointed by the Almighty.

Korach's rebellion had already ended. He and his followers had been destroyed through a series of miracles. Why was further proof of Ahron's authenticity needed?

One explanation is that there were two elements in Korach's rebellion. First, Korach and his followers rebelled against Moshe's authority. The manner in which they protested the appointment of the Kohanim – the priests – was inappropriate. They did not question Moshe in a respectful manner. They denied his authority and encouraged anarchy. Second, they had questioned the concept of priesthood. The destruction of Korach and his followers indicated that their approach had been sinful. However the question of the legitimacy of the priesthood had not been dealt with fully. The people could mistakenly assume that Korach and his camp were punished for their rebellious attitude. There would remain doubts regarding the position of the Kohanim.

The miracle of Ahron's staff responded to this possible doubt. Through this sign, Hashem confirmed the legitimacy of Ahron and the Kohanim. □

Gershon M. Pincus D.D.S.

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[1] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer BeMidbar 16:1.

[2] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer BeMidbar 16:1.

[3] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Shemot 30:13; Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno, Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 36:31; Rabbaynu Avraham ibn Ezra, Commentary on Sefer Devarim 33:5.

[4] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Melachim 4:1.

[5] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer BeMidbar 16:1.

Does Good Mitigate Evil?

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Following is a letter received from a reverend. I wish to share it with you, and offer my response, already sent to him:

Reverend: Hello! I was very disturbed by the article "Conversion claims more Jews", and statements such as "...Christianity, is the epitome of what God abhors". "Christian proselytizers are funded with millions".

I am a Christian clergyman who serves as a "Peace" representative. We have many programs, one is 'fighting Anti Semitism, another is feeding immigrants and poor Jewish people in Jerusalem [we give out almost 3 tons of food a day] We also go into seniors homes and repair whatever needs to be done, without absolutely NO agenda to PROSELYTIZE whatsoever. We also try to teach the Christian Church, who accuse us of being Old Testament Christians, about the Jewish roots of 'Christianity'. We hold the so called 'Messianic groups at arms length. We feel we owe the Jewish people a lot because they gave us the Bible. We have love for Israel and send out teaching letters to those who sign up - all in support of the Jewish community. We stand with Israel.

So-called Christianity has a bad record of Anti Semitism and we endeavor to build a bridge between the Jewish Community and the Christian Community. We have no hidden agendas.

Rabbis come to our conferences and share wonderful messages. Please do not lump all 'Christians' together.

I personally take groups of people to Synagogues to experience the wonderful services. So your article really alarmed me and I did

unsubscribe from Mesora. It hurt a lot because I have many, many, many Jewish friends who trust me. And I trust them.

Thank you for allowing me to sound off. You are still loved regardless of your views. Not every Christian is the same. Not every Christian has a hidden agenda. I have told Jewish young people that they should be going to the synagogue.

Blessings and Shalom!
Rev. xxxxxxxxx

Mesora: Reverend, if you do not partake in the missionary work, then you are correct, our criticism does not apply to you. But, I would also like to see you denounce missionaries, not just "keep them at arm's length." However, when we use Jewish criteria to determine what is "idolatrous", please do not counter with the good you do. Although you do much good, and this is praiseworthy, this in no way mitigates whether a certain doctrine or Christian practice violates G-d's Biblical commands, such as making statues of man: "And guard your souls greatly, for you did not see any form on the day that G-d spoke to you in Horeb from amidst flames. Lest you act destructively, and make for yourself a statue, the form of any design, the form of male or female." (Deut., 4:15,16) There are so many statues of Jesus, a direct violation. G-d also said, "Listen Israel, G-d is our G-d, G-d is One." (Deut. 6:4) yet, Christianity somehow turns One, into a Trinity.

Rabbi Reuven Mann taught me, in Deuteronomy 10:17 we read, "For G-d your G-d He is the G-d of all judges, and the master of all masters, the G-d who is great, powerful, and awesome,

that does not recognize faces, and does not take bribes." The commentator Sforno writes, "He does not take bribes: (this means) He does not remove at all the punishment for a sin because of the merit of a positive command performed by the sinner, as the Rabbis said, 'a good deed does not extinguish a sin'. And all this teaches that you shall not trust - having done a sin - that you will be saved by any merit, from any punishment...except by complete repentance."

Our Rabbis teach that G-d does not take our good actions as a ransom for our wrong. Man cannot cover up his evil, with a subsequent good. The only solution is that man recognizes his shortcomings, regrets them, and removes himself from such practices...forever. This is true repentance, the only way that G-d forgives evil.

You do much good, and that is applauded, but issues must remain separate, and all deifications of man, statue creation/worship, and false doctrines will be taught to our readers as the violations they are, as per G-d's Torah.

We don't believe in Jesus and we completely deny all of the godly qualities Christianity suggests of him. We deem him a false prophet. I am sure this violates your doctrines, and you teach this grave "error" of ours to your congregants. Well, we are doing the same, so I am confused why it is permissible for a Christian to expose Jewish error, but not for us to expose the fallacy in Christian doctrines.

Why are you up-in-arms against our teachings, when you do the same? ▣

-Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim



G-d Becoming Man?

The Result of Imagination & Religion Combined without Intelligence

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

G-d becoming man in the body of Jesus is one of the most idolatrous and absurd doctrines fabricated by the Christians. For it suggests that G-d, the Creator of everything, Who controls everything, suddenly becomes the “created” - the Omnipotent One becomes frail, flesh and blood, subject to the very laws He created.

Such a concept is blasphemy at the highest degree, for with such words, man haughtily ignores his fear of G-d commanded in the Torah, and severely cripples his estimation He who is exalted above all else. It is man, speaking about that which he has no knowledge at all – the unknowable G-d. This is an outright denial of what G-d told Moses, “You can not know me while you live.” G-d told Moses that you cannot possess any possible concept of Me. Man is inherently limited in this respect. Man perceives G-d, as much as a blind person perceives light. But this foolish Christian doctrine does not agree with G-d, and suggest that man can in fact know what G-d is, so much so, that the Christians perpetrate a lie that G-d corporified Himself, and formed Himself into a Man Jesus. But we must contemplate G-d’s own words: G-d said that even the greatest prophet, Moses, could not know Him. Therefore, any doctrine such as this, which criticizes G-d, denies G-d’s own words, and assumes things about G-d, is false.

This is man at his lowest. It is man projecting his infantile, idolatrous fantasies onto reality, forcing the unknowable Creator into some tangible form for man’s weak emotions to attach to. Discussing this Christian doctrine that G-d became man, Rabbi Reuven Mann directed me to this following source: the Prophet Isaiah says, (40:25) “And unto who shall you equate Me that I will be similar, says G-d.” G-d says that it is impossible to equate Him to anything. Therefore, Christianity’s crime, suggesting G-d is in anyway equated to anything, i.e., man, and more so that He could even possibility BE man, is such a tragic flaw, and an outright denial of G-d’s words.

Rabbi Mann also referred me to the following quote of Maimonides “Guide for the Perplexed”, Book III, Chap. XV:

“That which is impossible has a permanent and constant property, which is not the result of some agent, and cannot in any way change, and consequently we do not ascribe to God the power of doing what is impossible. No thinking man denies the truth of this maxim; none ignore it”

“Likewise it is impossible that God should produce a being like Himself, or annihilate, corporify, (make Himself physical) or change Himself. The power of God is not assumed to extend to any of these impossibilities.”

“...there are things which are impossible, whose existence cannot be admitted, and whose creation is excluded from the power of God, and the assumption that God does not change their nature does not imply weakness in God, or a limit to His power.”

We see that G-d, and His true servants, Isaiah and Maimonides, attest to the fact that G-d cannot “do all” as children imagine. However, this Christian doctrine seems to follow a child’s “superman” emotion, and not logic. They feel all that may be imagined (viz., G-d becoming man) is possible.

This is the lesson: do not live in the world of imagination, but in G-d’s world of reality, where all ideas are pleasant, sensible, and appeal to our minds. We need not force faulty interpretations into G-d’s words, like when He says He is One, and Christianity says He is a Trinity. Such an approach, where G-d’s words are distorted to offer imagined support for Christian doctrine is not the result of objective study or clear thinking.

G-d becoming man is but another of man’s fantasies leading him, when the opposite is what G-d demands, that we deny any reality to our fantasies, and follow reality alone. ■

DEIFICATION OF MAN

READER'S RESPONSE

DAVID FISCHBEIN

The main point Saadia Gaon is making below is that the sole purpose of miracles is to make sure that G-d's message to man is authenticated. He brings in the fact that prophets are normal people to show that G-d insured that the world would know the source of the miracles, and not attribute them to anything else. I quoted from the following passage because I thought it would be an appropriate support on your last week's article dealing with people performing miracles. (If prophets cannot perform miracles on their own, how much more so can this be applied to the rabbis of our times.) I didn't add in any of my own commentary, because I do not think there's much to be added.

Saadia Gaon, Emonos Vedaos (pp 149-150, Rosenblatt edition)

"I say also, that it was for this reason that G-d made the prophets equal to all other human beings so far as death was concerned, lest men get the idea that just as these prophets were capable of living forever, in contradistinction to them, so were they also able to perform marvels in contradistinction to them. For this reason, too, G-d did not nourish them without food and drink, nor restrain them from marriage lest any doubt arise in regard to the significance of their miracles. For men might have thought that such nourishment [without food and drink] was natural with them and that, just as that was possible for them, so too was it possible for them to perform miracles.

Thus, also, did G-d not guarantee to the prophets perpetual health of body or great wealth or posterity or protection from the violence of the violent, whether that violence consist of flogging or insults or murder. For if he had done that, men might have ascribed this fact to some peculiarity in the constitution of the prophets wherein they deviated from the rules applying to all other men. They would have said that, just as the prophets necessarily deviated [from the character of the rest of humanity] in

this respect, so too was it a foregone conclusion that they be able to do what we cannot.

I say, therefore - but of course G-d's wisdom is above aught that might be said - that G-d's purpose in letting the prophets remain in every respect like all other human beings, while singling them out from the totality of them by enabling them to do what was impossible to do for the whole of mankind, was to authenticate His sign and to confirm his message. I declare, moreover, that on this account, too, did G-d not allow the prophets to perform miracles at all times nor permit them always to know the secrets of the future, lest the uneducated masses think that they were possessed of some peculiarity which brought that about as a matter of course. He rather permitted them to perform these miracles at certain stated occasions and to obtain that knowledge at certain times, so that it might thereby become clear that all this was conferred upon them by the Creator and that it was not brought about by themselves. Praise be, then, unto the All-Wise, and sanctified be He!

Now what impelled me to note down these points here is the fact that I have seen people whose preconceived notions caused them to reject the assertions made above. One of them, for example, says: "I deny that the prophet dies like all other human beings." Another refuses to believe that he experiences hunger and thirst. Another rejects the idea that the prophet cohabits and begets offspring. Another denies that violence and injustice can have effect on him. Still another denies that anything in the world can be hidden from the prophet. However, I find all their allegations to be wrong, false, and unjust. On the contrary, it became certain to me that the wisdom manifested in what the Creator had done in the case of his messengers was of an order similar to that inherent in the rest of His works, as it is expressed in the statement of Scripture: "For the word of the Lord is upright; and all His work is done in faithfulness." (Ps. 33:4). Scripture likewise says: "But they know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither understand they His counsel." (Mic. 4:12) ■

Aaron Seizes the Angel of Death

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

In Parshas Korach, (Numbers, 17:13) Rashi states an amazing story of how Aaron "seized the 'Angel of Death' against its will." In order to understand this metaphor, we must first understand the events immediately prior.

G-d had wiped out Korach and his rebellion. On the morrow, the Jewish people said the following (Numbers, 17:6) , "you (Moses and Aaron) have killed the people of G-d", referring to Korach and his assembly. Evidently, the Jews could not make such a statement the same day as G-d's destruction of the Korach assembly, perhaps because the Jews were too frightened at the moment. But as their terror waned, they mustered the courage to speak their true feelings on the next day.

What they said were actually two accusations, 1) You, Moses and Aaron are murderers, and 2) those murdered are G-d's people. The Jews made two errors, and G-d addressed both.

The method G-d used to correct their second error was to demonstrate through miracle (a detached rod had blossomed almonds) that Aaron in fact was following G-d, and Korach's people were not. By Aaron's rod blossoming, this showed who G-d favored, and to whom He related - even via a miracle. Now the Jew's opinion that Korach was following G-d was corrected, as it was Aaron's staff which G-d selected, and not Korach's.

But how did Moses correct the people's false opinion, that he and Aaron were murderers? How did the incense, which Moses instructed Aaron to bring, correct the problem, and stay off the plague, which G-d sent to kill the Jews? What Moses commanded Aaron to do was to take the incense, and stand between the living and the dead during the plague, which only temporarily stopped the plague. It was not until Aaron returned back to Moses that G-d completely halted the plague. So what does Aaron standing there accomplish, that it stopped the plague temporarily? Additionally, what does his return to Moses and G-d at the Tent of Meeting do? This is where the Rashi comes in.

Rashi reads as follows, "Aaron seized the angel (of death) against its will. The angel said, 'leave me to do my mission'. Aaron said, 'Moses commanded me to prevent you'. The angel said, 'I am the messenger of G-d, and you are (only) the messenger of Moses'. Aaron said, 'Moses says nothing on his own accord, rather, (he says matters only) through G-d. If you do not believe me, behold Moses and G-d are at the Tent of Meeting, come with me and ask'.

What this means, I believe, is the following: Moses knew that the people accused him and Aaron of being murderers. The Jews saw Moses and G-d as two opposing sides, i.e., Moses was not working in sync with G-d. The statement, "you have killed the people of G-d" displays the people's belief that G-d was correct to follow, but Moses

opposed G-d's will. Moses now attempted to correct the Jews, and show that in fact, he and Aaron were not murderers opposing G-d. Moses sent Aaron to make atonement for the Jews. What was this atonement, and how did it entitle the Jews to be saved from G-d's wrath? The Jews saw Aaron with this incense offering, standing at the place where the last Jew dropped down in death, (they must have been falling like dominoes or similarly). And the Jews further saw that no more Jews were dropping down dead. They were now perplexed, as they viewed Aaron as a messenger of Moses, but Aaron was now healing, and not killing as they previously assumed as seen through their accusation. This perplexity is what the Rashi described metaphorically as "Aaron seizing the Angel of Death". Aaron was now correcting the opinion of the people, which made them deserving of death. As they were now questioning, but not completely abandoning this false view of Aaron and Moses, the plague stopped. So we may interpret Aaron as "seizing the angel of death" as "halting the cause of the plague". Aaron was correcting the false notions the Jews maintained that Moses and Aaron were murderers of Korachian revolutionaries.

But the people were still bothered, and rightly so: Aaron is Moses' messenger, but the plague was clearly from G-d. So, how could Aaron and Moses out-power G-d? This is what Rashi means by "I am the messenger of G-d, and you are (only) the messenger of Moses". The Angel in this metaphor personifies the opinions of the people, which causes the angel of Death (i.e., death) to have any claim. But with a corrected opinion, G-d will not kill. So the Angel talking in this metaphor, really represents the Jewish people's corrupt opinion - which in fact causes death. (Sometimes, false views can be so wrong that the follower of such a view deserves death.)

Returning to the Rashi, "Moses says nothing on his own accord, rather, (he says matters only) through G-d. If you do not believe me, behold Moses and G-d are at the Tent of Meeting, come with me and ask". At this point, the plague was temporarily stopped, as the Jews were entertaining the idea that Moses and Aaron were not murderers, as Aaron was atoning, trying to keep them alive. Their perplexity about whether Aaron and Moses were following G-d had to be removed if they were to live permanently. This is what is meant that when Aaron returned to the tent of meeting (Numbers , 17:15) the plague was terminated. As the Jews witnessed Aaron, Moses, and G-d "together", they now understood that Moses and Aaron were in fact followers of G-d.

The metaphor depicts Aaron as 'seizing' the corrupt views of the people which demanded their death, allegorized by seizing an "Angel of Death". ■