



How real is God's system to you, that by investing more time in Torah study and less time working, we will not forfeit our necessities?\* Or are you seeking more than your needs? What was Job's flaw?

\*Maimonides; Shmitta V'Yovale, last law. Duties of the Heart pg. 387 (Feldheim)

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

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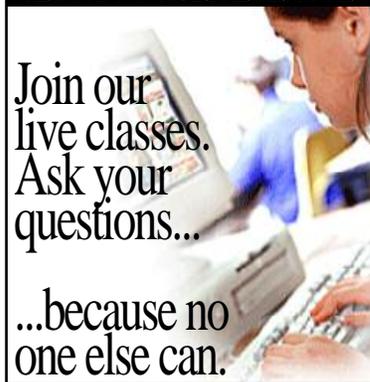
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**Weekly Parsha**

# Ekev

RABBI BERNARD FOX

“For the land that you are coming to occupy is not like the land of Egypt from which you left – that you sow it with your seed and you water it by yourself. The land that you pass over to occupy is a land of mountains and valleys. By the rain of the heaven it is irrigated. It is a land to which

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# the Book of Job

## MAIMONIDES

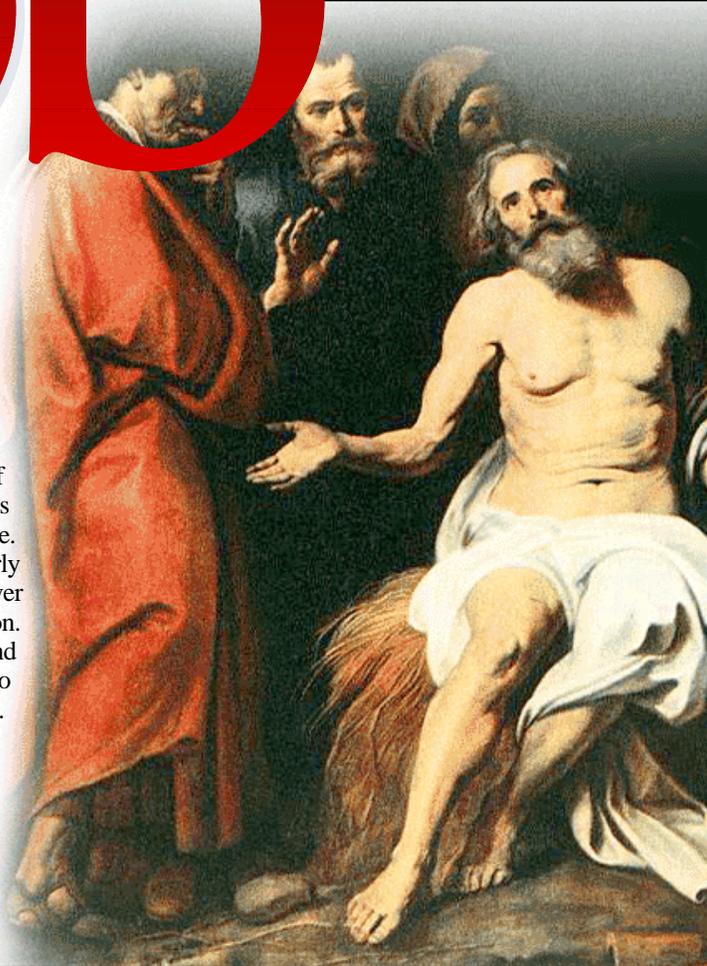
Commentary; R. Moshe Ben-Chaim

CHAPTERS I AND II OF JOB ARE REQUIRED READING FOR THIS ARTICLE. SEE PAGE 5

### Guide for the Perplexed [Book III, chap. XII]

The strange and wonderful Book of Job treats of the same subject as we are discussing: its basis is a fiction, conceived for the purpose of explaining the different opinions which people hold on Divine Providence. You know that some of our Sages clearly stated Job has never existed, and has never been created, and that he is a poetic fiction. Those who assume that he has existed, and that the book is historical, are unable to determine when and where Job lived. Some of our Sages say that he lived in the days of the Patriarchs: others hold that he was a contemporary of Moses: others place him in the days of David, and again others believe that he was one of those who returned from the Babylonian exile. This difference of opinion

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(continued from page 1)

## Job

supports the assumption that he has never existed in reality. But whether he has existed or not, that which is related of him is an experience of frequent occurrence, is a source of perplexity to all thinkers, and has suggested the above-mentioned opinions on God's Omniscience and Providence. This perplexity is caused by the account that a simple and perfect person, who is upright in his actions, and very anxious to abstain from sin, is afflicted by successive misfortunes, namely, by loss of property, by the death of his children, and by bodily disease, though he has not committed any sin. According to both theories, viz., the theory that Job did exist, and the theory that he did not exist, the introduction to the book is certainly a fiction; I mean the portion which relates to the words of the adversary, the words of God to the former, and the handing over of Job to him. This fiction, however, is in so far different from other fictions that it includes profound ideas and great mysteries, removes great doubts, and reveals the most important truths. I will discuss it as fully as possible: and I will also tell you the words of our Sages that suggested to me the explanation of this great poem.

First, consider the words: "There was a man in the land Uz." The term Uz has different meanings; it is used as a proper noun. Compare,

"Uz, his first-born" (Gen. xxii 21): it is also imperative of the verb Uz, "to take advice." Compare, uzu, "take counsel" (Isaiah viii. 10). The name Uz therefore expresses the exhortation to consider well this lesson, study it, grasp its ideas, and comprehend them, in order to see which is the right view.

"The sons of God then came to present themselves before the Lord, and the adversary came also among them and in their number." (chap. i 6, ii 1). It is not said: "And the sons of God and the adversary[1] came to present themselves before the Lord": this

sentence would have implied that the existence of all that came was of the same kind and rank. The words used are these: "And the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and the adversary came also among them." Such a phrase is only used in reference to one that comes without being expected or invited; he only comes among others whose coming has been sought. The adversary is then described as going to and fro on the earth, and walking up and down thereon. He is in no relation to the beings above, and has no place among them. For this reason it is said, "from going to and fro on the earth, and walking up and down on it," for his "going" and "walking" can only take place on the earth. [Job], the simple and righteous man, is given and handed over to the adversary; whatever evils and



## Commentary

[1] Maimonides says, had the verse read "And the sons of God and the adversary came..." it would imply that the adversary was of the same nature and existence as other existences, which "come before God". But as the verse only says later on in a separate referral, and only after mentioning "sons of God", "and the adversary came also among them", we learn that the adversary is of a different nature, not being subsumed under the "sons of God", or joined together with them in one referral. The adversary's "coming" was mentioned separately from the coming of other existences. Who or what were these other existences, and what is Maimonides' main point?

Maimonides offers us additional clues, as he says: "The adversary is then described as going to and fro on the earth, and walking up and down thereon. He is in no relation to the beings above, and has no place among them. For this reason it is said, 'from going to and fro on the earth, and walking up and down on it,' for his 'going' and 'walking' can only take place on the earth." The adversary, meaning Satan, or the instincts, is limited to Earth. Man's soul on the other hand, may achieve eternal life; not limited to a brief, Earthly existence. Thus, those who appear "before God", refers to man's intelligence, his soul, the faculty which is related to intelligence and thus, relates to God as Maimonides explains, "appears before God." We now learn that God's address of the adversary is in fact, God's address of the instincts. There is no real-life, intelligent being traversing the Earth called "Satan": Satan is a metaphor for the instinctual nature of man. There was no conversation between God and Satan.

Now, as the "sons of God" means man's intelligence, what is meant by "they came to present themselves before God"? This means that the "sons of God", or rather, man's intelligence "answers to God". The act of responding to a summons means "compliance". "They came to present themselves before God" means that part of man that complies with God's commands, man's intellect. The fact that Satan also came means that there is some role that Satan plays when man follows God's commands. This role is one of compelled deviation. As Maimonides further explains, "Satan" means to "turn one aside", as derived from the instance of Bilaam and his donkey. So we interpret this story of Job at this point as, "man complying with God, but being deterred in some manner by his instincts." Job is the man to which we refer. He is complying with God, as the book states that he never

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misfortunes befell Job as regards his property, children, and health, were all caused by this adversary. When this idea is sufficiently indicated, the author begins to reflect on it: one opinion Job is represented to hold, whilst his friends defend other opinions. I will further on expound these opinions, which formed the substance of the discussion on the misfortunes of Job, caused by the adversary alone.

Job, as well as his friends, was of opinion that God Himself was the direct agent of what happened, and that the adversary was not the intermediate cause. It is remarkable in this account that wisdom is not ascribed to Job. The text does not say he was an intelligent, wise, or clever man; but virtues and uprightness, especially in actions, are ascribed to him. If he were wise he would not have any doubt about the cause of his suffering<sup>[2]</sup>, as will be shown later on. Besides, his misfortunes are enumerated in the same order as they rank in man's estimation. There are some who are not perplexed or discouraged by loss of property, thinking little of it: but are terrified when they are threatened with the death of their children and are killed by their anxiety. There are others who bear without shock or fainting even the loss of their children, but no one endowed with sensation is able to bear bodily pain. We generally extol God in words, and praise Him as righteous and benevolent, when we prosper and are happy, or when the grief we have to bear is moderate. But [it is otherwise] when such troubles as are described in Job come over us. Some of us deny God, and

believe that there is no rule in the Universe, even if only their property is lost. Others retain their faith in the existence of justice and order, even when suffering from loss of property, whereas loss of children is too much affliction for them. Others remain firm in their faith, even with the loss of their children; but there is no one who can patiently bear the pain that reaches his own person: he then murmurs and complains of injustice either in his heart or with his tongue.

Now consider that the phrase, "to present themselves before the Lord", is used in reference to the sons of God, both the first and the second times, but in reference to the adversary, who appeared on either occasion among them and in their number, this phrase is not used the first time, whilst in his second appearance, "the adversary also came among them to present himself before the Lord". Consider this, and see how very extraordinary it is! These ideas presented themselves like an inspiration to me.<sup>[3]</sup> The phrase, "to present themselves before the Lord," implies that they are beings who are forced by God's command to do what He desires. This may be inferred from the words of the prophet Zechariah concerning the four chariots that came forth. He says: "And the angel answered and said to me, These four winds of the heavens come forth from presenting themselves before the Lord of the whole earth" (Zech. vi 5). It is clear that the relation of the sons of God to the Universe is not the same as that of the adversary. The relation of the sons of God is more constant and more permanent. The

adversary has also some relation to the Universe, but it is inferior to that of the sons of God. It is also remarkable in this account that in the description of the adversary's wandering about on the earth, and his performing certain actions, it is distinctly stated that he has no power over the soul: whilst power has been given to him over all earthly affairs, there is a partition between him and the soul; he has not received power over the soul. This is expressed in the words, "But keep away from his soul" (Job. ii. 6). I have already shown you the homonymous use of the term "soul" (nefesh) in Hebrew (Part L, chap. xli). It designates that element in man that survives him; it is this portion over which the adversary has no power<sup>[4]</sup>.

After these remarks of mine listen to the following useful instruction given by our Sages, who in truth deserve the title of "wise men": it makes clear that which appears doubtful, and reveals that which has been hidden, and discloses most of the mysteries of the Law. They said in the Talmud as follows: R. Simeon, son of Lakish, says: "The adversary (Satan) evil inclination (yezer ha-ra), and the angel of death, are one and the same being." Here we find all that has been mentioned by us in such a dear manner that no intelligent person will be in doubt about it. It has thus been shown to you these three different terms designate one and the same thing, and that actions ascribed to these three are in reality the actions of one and the same agent. Again, the ancient doctors of the Talmud said: "The adversary goes about and misleads, then he

### Commentary

committed any sin. So if Job is complying in action, wherein must his deviation lie? It can only refer to his thoughts. This too is supported by "Job did not sin with his lips" (2:10). Rashi states that with his lips he did not sin, but he did sin in his heart. What is a sin of the heart? It is an incorrect thought. We now come to the crux of the matter, i.e., Job's error and the true meaning of God's discussion with Satan, and His handing of Job over to Satan.

[2] Here, Maimonides directs our attention to Job's fault; he lacked knowledge. What was the knowledge Job possessed, and why was it flawed?

[3] Maimonides now contrasts the first and second appearance of Satan before God. The second time, Satan is now referred to as coming "together" with the others. According to our interpretation, this means that Satan, or rather, the instincts, are confronting God in some way. But the nature of Satan's first arrival was less related to the "sons of God", meaning, the instincts were less related to intelligence this first time. What is so amazing to Maimonides regarding this second arrival, that he says, "Consider this, and see how very extraordinary it is! These ideas presented themselves like an inspiration to me"? Maimonides feels this second referral that Satan came along with the "sons of God" is crucial. I will now explain.

Having clarified that this account is a metaphor; that Satan refers to man's instincts, and that the "sons of God" refer to man's soul or intelligence, we must now clarify God's "handing of Job over to Satan" and His discussion with Satan.

God is in fact not talking to Satan, since Satan is man's instincts. But we must ask, "whose instincts?" There can be only one answer: those belonging to Job. For it would be unjust that God punishes Job, had Job not been at fault. God only punishes he who sins, and he who will heed the punishment and repent: "For whomever God

loves He rebukes, like a father, the son in whom he delights." (Proverbs, 3:12) God does not do futile acts, and hence, He rebukes only those whom He loves, meaning, those who listen to rebuke as they wish self-improvement. We must now understand the conversation between God and Satan. (It is advisable that the reader knows these first two chapters in Job before continuing.)

God opens; admiring how good Job is; fearing evil and not sinning. Satan replies that Job is good, as long as his life is without pain and trouble. However, if troubles arise, Job would not continue his good path. This is Satan's position. God then allows Satan to afflict Job. Let us interpret this. Satan – Job's instincts – will allow Job to follow God, meaning, Job agrees to worship God, provided Job has the good in life. Job harbored an unexamined allegiance to God, as long as he experienced wealth, health and children. These words of Satan are really Job's own feelings, but personified in the character of Satan. But if the good life were to be taken away, Job felt he would not be so steadfast in worshipping God. That is what Satan said, in other words, "take these away, and Job won't be upright". This is what is meant by God allowing Satan to afflict Job. This means that God's system is one, wherein a person's false philosophy, as Job expressed, will remove him from God's providence, allowing all evils to befall him. (We are not concerning ourselves with the justice of Job's children, as this story is a metaphor) So once we are made aware of Job's corruption embodied in the metaphor of Satan, we are told that God allowed Satan to afflict Job. This means that God allowed "Job's instincts" to hurt him. Any man or woman, whose ideas are false and corrupt, will not be under God's providence. But in fact, this is God's overall system of justice for mankind in general, and not an independent system applying solely to Job. Perhaps, this story is written with the apparent injustice of God freely letting Satan loose on Job's life, to open our ears, and compel our investigation into such an important matter as God's justice.

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goes up and accuses, obtains permission, and takes the soul.” You have already been told that when David at the time of the plague was shown the angel “with the sword drawn in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem” (2 Sam. xxiv. 17), it was done for the purpose of conveying a certain idea to him. The same idea was also expressed in the vision concerning the sins of the sons of Joshua, the high priest, by the words, “And the adversary stood on his right hand to accuse him” (Zech. iii 1). The vision then reveals that [the adversary] is far from God, and continues thus: “The Lord will rebuke thee, O adversary, the Lord who hath chosen

Jerusalem will rebuke thee” (ibid. ver. 2). Balaam saw prophetically the same vision in his journey, addressing him with the words, “Behold I have come forth to be a hindrance to thee” (Num. xxii. 32). The Hebrew, Satan, is derived from the same root as seteh, “turn away” (Prov. iv. 15): it implies the notion of turning and moving away from a thing; he undoubtedly turns us away from the way of truth, and leads us astray in the way of error. The same idea is contained in the passage, “And the imagination of the heart of man is evil from his youth” (Gen. viii. 21). The theory of the good and the evil inclinations (yezer ha-tob, ve-yezer

ha-ra’) is frequently referred to in our religion. Our Sages also say, “Serve God with your good and your evil inclinations.” (B. T. Ber. 57a.) They also say that the evil inclination we receive at our birth: “for at the door sin croucheth” (Gen. iv. 7), as is distinctly said in the Law, “And the imagination of the heart of man is evil from his youth”(ibid. viii 21). The good inclination, however, comes when the mind is developed. In explaining the allegory representing the body of man and his different faculties, our Sages (B. T. Ned. 32b) said: “The evil inclination is called a great king, whilst the good inclination is a child, poor, though wise” (Eccles. ix. 14). All these sayings of our Sages are contained in their writings, and are well known. According to our Sages the evil inclination, the adversary (Satan), and the angel [of death], are undoubtedly identical; and the adversary being called “angel”, because he is among the sons of God, and the good inclination being in reality an angel, it is to the good and the evil inclinations that they refer in their well-known words, “Every person is accompanied by two angels, one being on his right side, one on his left.” In the Babylonian Gemara (Sabbath 119b), they say distinctly of the two angels that one is good and one bad. See what extraordinary ideas this passage discloses, and how many false ideas it removes.

I believe that I have fully explained the idea contained in the account of Job; but I will now show the character of the opinion attributed to Job, and of the opinions attributed to his friends, and support my statement by proofs gathered from the words of each of them. We need not take notice of the remaining passages which are only required for the context, as has been explained to you in the beginning of this treatise. ◻

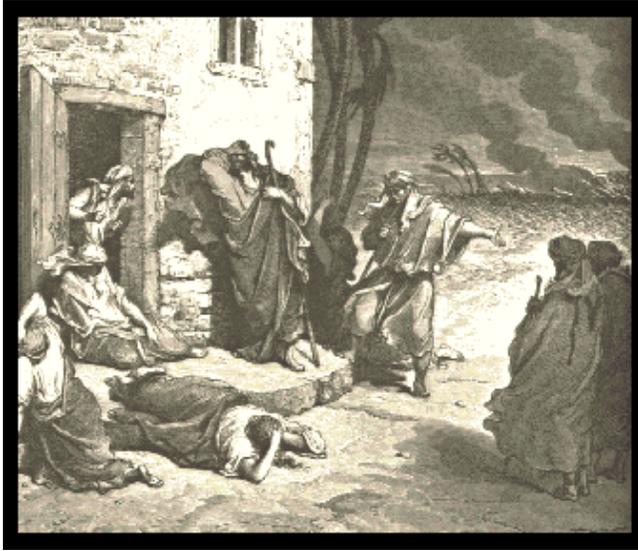
### Commentary

Returning to Maimonides’ “amazement” at the second time Satan appeared before God, this time together with the “sons of God”, we wonder what Maimonides saw. Once Job experienced these initial tragedies, he did what all righteous people do: he investigated his philosophy, and examined his instincts. This “examination of his instincts” might be what is referred to in the idea that “Satan came along with the sons of God”. Meaning, this time, after his initial tragedies, Job’s instincts were confronted by reality, or were subjected to scrutiny. “Satan coming before God” together with his intellect, means his instincts were no longer unexamined. Until Job received punishments, his instincts were distant from his intellect, they were not “before God”. However, this changed once Job experienced tragedy upon tragedy. Now, “Satan also came before God”. Now, Job’s instinctual philosophy that he would obey God as long as life is good, would now be subject to his intellectual probe.

We learn that the instincts are limited to our Earthly existence, and are even molded by our Earth-bound, physical desires. We become attached to what we emotionally feel is the ultimate good, i.e., health, wealth and children, and that our obedience to God is conditional on these. Left unexamined, we are subject to losing God’s divine intervention, we are “like animals” who have no individual providence. (Psalms, 49:13,21) The book of Job teaches us to examine our philosophy, detecting what false views we create from our subjective desires, and what evil may befall us if we live based on fantasy, and not God’s reality. We learn how kind God is in offering man opportunities to perfect himself, as we read here, and in the myriad of Biblical

instances where God perfected man and men. We learn that God wishes to relay information to us in a manner that does not stun and bewilder our minds with its stark contrast to our cherished beliefs. Rather, God writes subtle metaphors and books, allowing man to ability to come to ideas when his mind may consider them as possible, and as truths. Maimonides states this well in his letter to his student R. Joseph b. Judah: “I considered you fit to receive from me an exposition of the esoteric ideas contained in the prophetic books, that you might understand them as they are understood by men of culture. When I commenced by way of hints, I noticed that you desired additional explanation, urging me to expound some metaphysical problems; to teach you the system of the Mutakallemim; to tell you whether their arguments were based on logical proof; and if not, what their method was. I perceived that you had acquired some knowledge in those matters from others, and that you were perplexed and bewildered; yet you sought to find out a solution to your difficulty. I urged you to desist from this pursuit, and enjoined you to continue your studies systematically; for my object was that the truth should present itself in connected order, and that you should not hit upon it by mere chance.”

[4] It appears that the instincts can cause man to be removed from God’s providence, availing him to bodily harm, but not that the flawed, instinctual views harbored in this life might warrant death. ◻



# Job: Chapters I and II

## Chapter I

1: There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God, and turned away from evil.

2: There were born to him seven sons and three daughters.

3: He had seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-asses, and very many servants; so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the east.

4: His sons used to go and hold a feast in the house of each on his day; and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them.

5: And when the days of the feast had run their course, Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all; for Job said, "It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts." Thus Job did continually.

6: Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.

7: The LORD said to Satan, "Whence have you come?" Satan answered the LORD, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it."

8: And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?"

9: Then Satan answered the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nought?"

10: Hast thou not put a hedge about him and

his house and all that he has, on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land.

11: But put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse thee to thy face."

12: And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power; only upon himself do not put forth your hand." So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.

13: Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house;

14: and there came a messenger to Job, and said, "The oxen were plowing and the asses feeding beside them;

15: and the Sabe'ans fell upon them and took them, and slew the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you."

16: While he was yet speaking, there came another, and said, "The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them; and I alone have escaped to tell you."

17: While he was yet speaking, there came another, and said, "The Chalde'ans formed three companies, and made a raid upon the camels and took them, and slew the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you."

18: While he was yet speaking, there came another, and said, "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house;

19: and behold, a great wind came across the wilderness, and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead; and I alone have escaped to tell you."

20: Then Job arose, and rent his robe, and shaved his head, and fell upon the ground, and worshiped.

21: And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return; the LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."

22: In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.

## Chapter II

1: Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the LORD.

2: And the LORD said to Satan, "Whence have you come?" Satan answered the LORD, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it."

3: And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still holds fast his integrity, although you moved me against him, to destroy him without cause."

4: Then Satan answered the LORD, "Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life.

5: But put forth thy hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face."

6: And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your power; only spare his life."

7: So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD, and afflicted Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.

8: And he took a potsherd with which to scrape himself, and sat among the ashes.

9: Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God, and die."

10: But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

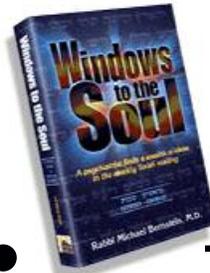
11: Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that had come upon him, they came each from his own place, Eli'phaz the Te'manite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Na'amathite. They made an appointment together to come to condole with him and comfort him.

12: And when they saw him from afar, they did not recognize him; and they raised their voices and wept; and they rent their robes and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven.

13: And they sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great. ■

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*Taken from "Windows to the Soul"*

# Hypothetical Error # Two

**RABBI MICHAEL BERNSTEIN**

Moses did not want the Jewish people to get swelled heads when they conquered Canaan; he did not want them to think they deserved all the miracles God was about to perform for them in driving out the indigenous peoples. Standing on the threshold of the Holy Land, he warned them against smugness and complacency (9:4-5).

"Do not say in your heart when God dislodges [the nations] before you, saying, 'By virtue of my righteousness did God bring me to take possession of this land,' and because of the nations' wickedness did God drive them away before you. It is neither your righteousness nor the uprightness of your heart that enables you to come and take possession of their land. Rather, by virtue of the wickedness of these nations, God drives them away before you, and in order to uphold the word God swore to your forefathers<sup>3/4</sup> to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."

Moses begins by presenting a hypothetical error the Jewish people might make, an erroneous statement that he warns them "not to say in their hearts." There are two parts to their hypothetical statement<sup>3/4</sup> that their own righteousness entitles them to the land and that the wickedness of the nations causes them to be driven out. The verse suggests that both of these statements should not be "said in their hearts." In other words, they are both wrong.

This is extremely puzzling, for in the very next verse Moses tells them that the wickedness of the nations will indeed cause them to be driven out. Apparently, there was only one error, the attribution of the conquest to their own righteousness rather than the righteousness of their forefathers. Why then does the Torah give the impression that the entire hypothetical statement is erroneous?

In actuality, there is an important difference

between the hypothetical explanation for the fate of the nations and the correct view Moses presented. In the hypothetical statement, the Jews mention their own virtue first and only then the wickedness of the nations as the reason for their ejection. The impression is that the Jewish people gain the right to the land by virtue of their relatively superior righteousness.

The implication here is that the fate of the nations depends on the relative Jewish position. If God finds the Jews lacking in righteousness, the nations are to remain in place. But if God finds them more righteous, He will give them the land and drive out the nations.

Not so, declares Moses, and he reverses the order. First, he mentions the wickedness of the nations and only afterward does he mention the supposed righteousness of the Jews. The point is clear. The banishment of the nations from the land is entirely independent of the Jewish people's relative righteousness and their ability to conquer the land. God consecrates the land with His presence and providence; in the land, His justice is manifest. The land is too holy to tolerate the indefinite presence of the corrupt Canaanite nations. Regardless of whether or not the Jews earn the right to enter, God will drive out the iniquitous nations. This was hypothetical error number one. Interestingly, before the large influx of Jews over the past century, the land of Israel had lain barren and denuded for two millennia, depopulated of iniquitous nations that could lay false claim to it.

Hypothetical error number two relates to the Jewish people's right to the land. It is not by virtue of their own righteousness, Moses tells them, but in the merit of their forefathers to whom God had promised the land. □

## Students

Yosef's  
Column  
YOSEF ROTH



## HIDING THE 2ND Luchos IN THE ARK...WHY?

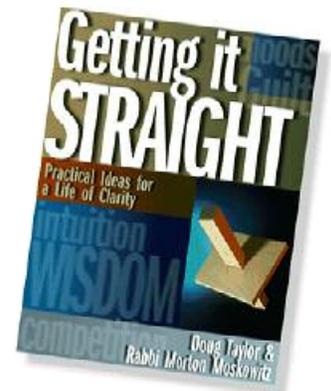
In this weeks parsha God tells to Moshe "carve two stones like the first ones and come up the mountain to me and make a wooden ark for yourself and I shall inscribe the words on the stone that were on the stones you smashed and you shall put them in the ark."

Why is it that by the first luchos, God did not command Moshe to put the luchos in the ark, but by the second, God did?

The reason the luchos were put in the ark was so people wouldn't think there is something special about the stones, but rather, they should think about the ideas that are written on them. That is the reason Moshe was not commanded to put the luchos in the Ark the first time. But after the Gold Calf, God saw that they could start to believe that there was something special about the stones themselves, just like the Gold Calf, so He commanded Moshe to put the luchos in an ark, to display that they needed to be hid. □

Taken from "Getting it Straight"

# Evolution



**DOUG TAYLOR & RABBI MORTON MOSKOWITZ**

"OK. I'm really ready this time. Give me a test."

I was confident. I had been practicing rational thinking for weeks now, asking questions, analyzing situations, and doing my best to work on what I'd learned. I was sure I was up to whatever my friend, the King of Rational Thought, could dish out. He smiled across the restaurant table.

"You really want to do this?" he said as our salads arrived.

"Yeah, I'm sure. Give me your best shot."

"Okay," he said with a gleam in his eye. "Picture this. Darwin, explaining his theory of evolution. He's saying that man evolved over time through survival of the fittest. Only the strong survive. The weak die off. The need to continue his physical existence is what has shaped man into who he is today. All of man's capabilities came about through an evolutionary process aimed solely at survival. Got the picture?"

"Sure," I said. "Besides, I'm familiar with Darwin's teaching."

"Okay," he said. "Now tell me. What's wrong with that picture?"

I had just taken a bite of salad, so I had a moment to think. It didn't help.

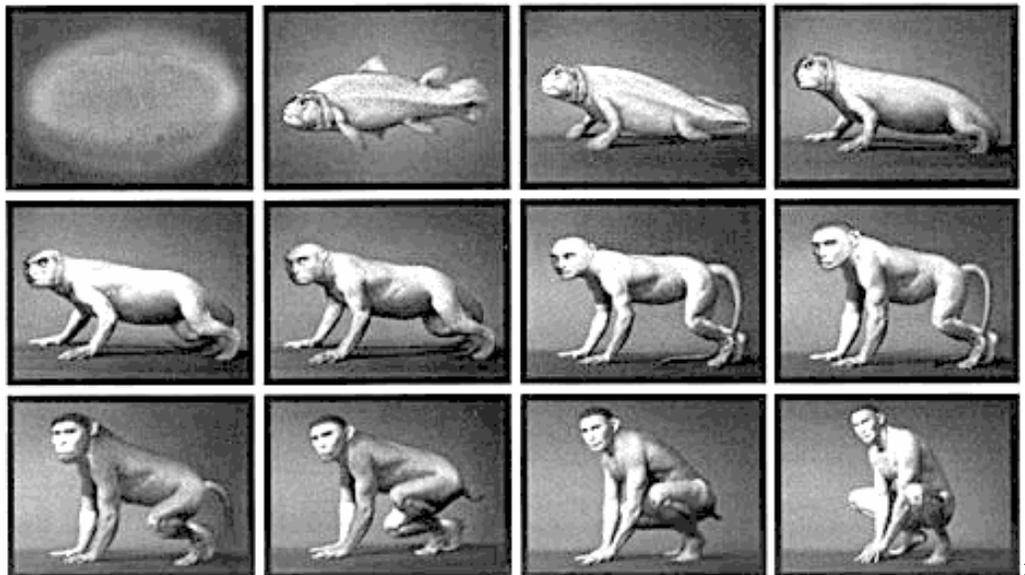
"What do you mean, what's wrong with it?" I tried.

"What is rationally wrong with that picture?"

I quickly took another bite of salad, but even roquefort dressing wasn't stimulating enough. I didn't have a clue.

"I'll give you a hint," he said. "Here's another picture. Bertrand Russell, the well-known philosopher, commenting that Einstein's theory of relativity is an abstract concept and that primitive man, since he evolved based on survival of the fittest, didn't think about the theory of relativity because it had nothing to do with survival. You with me?"

I nodded.



"That's a hint?" I complained.

"The same thing is wrong with both pictures," he replied.

After five minutes I gave up, frustrated. "I don't know," I said.

"It's like this," he began. "If man evolved based only on survival of the fittest, and if man developed his capabilities only as a means to survive, then how could Darwin talk about the idea of evolution or Russell talk about the idea of relativity? Those ideas have nothing to do with survival. If Darwin is correct, man would only develop capabilities needed for survival. The ability to think about an abstract idea like evolution or relativity isn't needed for survival. In fact, it could even get in the way. Darwin's very contemplation of the idea of evolution disproves his own theory. Ditto for Russell talking about relativity.

"You see," he went on, "one of the man's greatest strengths is his ability to think abstractly, to think about his own existence. That isn't an

have developed based on survival of the fittest."

I stabbed a cherry tomato. "But how could those guys have missed that?" I asked. "It seems obvious once you explain it."

"A good question. I can't speak for Darwin, but Russell is normally pretty sharp. It's amazing to me that he missed that point."

"So do you have a theory as to how man did develop?" I asked.

He smiled. "That," he said, "is another subject."

A waitress walked by carrying a large chocolate mousse. "Hmmm," I said, recovering my composure, "I think I have a question for you."

"What's that?"

"Do you see the chocolate mousse that waitress is delivering two tables over?"

"Yes."

"What's wrong with that mousse?" I asked.

He looked at me suspiciously and finally said, "I'll bite. What's wrong with it?"

"I don't know," I said. "I think I'll order one and find out." ▣

(Ekev continued from page 1)

**Hashem you G-d attends. His eyes are upon it constantly – from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.”** (Devarim 11:10-12)

Bnai Yisrael will soon enter the land of Israel. Moshe contrasts this land with the land of Egypt. He explains that Egypt is watered by a man-made irrigation system. The water is drawn from the Nile and conveyed to the fields through this system of canals and irrigation channels. This system is used for two reasons. First, Egypt is an arid country. The Nile is the only reliable source of water. Second, the Nile valley is relatively flat. This makes it possible to irrigate the fields through a system of artificial waterways.

In contrast, the terrain of the land of Israel is irregular. Fields are situated on hills and in valleys. As it is impractical to transport water uphill, an extensive irrigation system is not feasible. However, the land is blessed with adequate precipitation. In short, Egypt must be watered through the water of Nile. The land of Israel relies on rain.

What is Moshe’s message? Certainly, in the middle of his final address to the nation, he is not giving lessons in agriculture! The commentaries offer different interpretations of Moshe’s words.

According to Rashi, Moshe’s primary objective was to praise the land of Israel. His intention was not merely to contrast the land of Israel to Egypt. He wished to emphasize the superiority of the land of Israel. Bnai Yisrael viewed Egypt as a fertile bountiful land. Moshe assured the people that the land they will enter is even more blessed. In Egypt it is necessary to draw water from the Nile. In Israel the fields will be moistened by the rain. Without any personal effort the fields will be watered.[1] Furthermore, the uneven terrain is also a blessing. Consider two lands with similar borders. One land is flat the other – like Israel – is of a more uneven terrain. The country with the uneven terrain will have more land within its borders.[2]

Nachmanides offers a different interpretation of our passages. After quoting Rashi’s interpretation, Nachmanides explains that this interpretation does not represent the simple meaning of the passages. He contends that Moshe was not positing that the land of Israel is better than Egypt. Instead, his point was that the fertility and bounty of the land of Israel cannot be taken for granted. The land’s prosperity is uncertain. The land is completely dependant upon rain. Unlike Egypt, it cannot be artificially irrigated. Therefore, the Almighty’s goodwill is crucial. He must provide the rain essential for survival.

This dependency makes is necessary to scrupulously observe the Torah. Bnai Yisrael cannot survive in the land through their own ingenuity. Artificial irrigation is not practical. Rain is essential. The Almighty will only provide His



blessing to an obedient nation. Disloyalty to the Torah will result in drought and famine.[3]

In other words, the land of Israel is innately inferior to the land of Egypt. It is not innately fertile or rich. But this apparent defect is actually a source of perfection. This material “defect” is a source of motivation for observance of the Torah. This material “defect” is a source of spiritual perfection!

**“So that you will extend your days on the land that Hashem promised to your forefathers – to give to them and their descendants. It is a land flowing with milk and honey.”** (Devarim 11:9)

To some extent this dispute reflects two alternative outlooks on the context of the passages that compare the land of Israel to Egypt. The Torah generally characterizes the land of Israel positively. For example, earlier in the parasha, Moshe characterizes the land of Israel and a land of abundant water and remarkable fertility.[4] The passage above immediately precedes our passage. In the above pasuk, Moshe admonished the people to observe the Torah so that they will retain possession of this wonderful land. According to Rashi, the comparison of the land of Israel to Egypt is consistent with this context and the Torah’s general characterization of the land of Israel. In comparing the land of Israel to Egypt Moshe admonished the people to devote themselves to the observance of the Torah. Strict observance of the mitzvot will be the key to retaining this invaluable legacy. In other words, according to Rashi, Moshe expounded on the wonders and richness of the land of Israel in order to motivate Bnai Yisrael to carefully observe the Torah. He promised then a wonderful reward in exchange for their

commitment. In this context, Moshe’s intention was to stress the perfection of the land and its superiority over Egypt.

**“And if you will be obedient to my commandments that I command to you this day, and you will love Hashem your G-d and serve Him with all your heart and soul, then I will provide rain in its proper time – in the beginning and the end of the season – and you will gather your grain, oil and wine.”** (Devarim 11:13-14)

In contrast, Nachmanides, understands the comparison to the land of Egypt as an introduction to the above passages. These passages are the opening pesukim of the second paragraph of the Kriyat Shema. This paragraph explains that the security and wellbeing of the nation in the land of Israel is directly related to their observance of the Torah. If the Torah is observed carefully, then Hashem will provide the rain that is essential to the land of Israel. The land will be fertile and provide for the nation in abundance. However, if the nation neglects the Torah, then Hashem will withhold rain and the land will be sterile. Famine will ensue and Bnai Yisrael will be driven from the land.

The comparison to the land of Egypt is an appropriate introduction to this paragraph. Unlike Egypt, the land of Israel is not supported by a reliable source of water. It is completely dependant upon irregular rains. The fertility of the land cannot be taken for granted. The prosperity of the land of Israel is uniquely dependant upon Hashem’s providence. Therefore, the nation must be very careful to secure Hashem’s support through scrupulous observance of the mitzvot. In this context, it was not Moshe’s intention to praise the

(continued on next page)

land of Israel. On the contrary, his intention was to stress that the land is materially inferior to Egypt. But its very defect is designed to ensure to spiritual perfection of Bnai Yisrael.

In short, Rashi relates the comparison to the land of Egypt to the preceding passages in which Moshe motivates Bnai Yisrael to observe the Torah. He tells the nation that they will be rewarded for their devotion through receiving and retaining the land of Israel in all of its abundance. Nachmanides relates the comparison to the following passages. Moshe is warning the people that they cannot survive in the land of Israel without Hashem's constant support. The fertility and abundance of the land cannot be taken for granted. Only Hashem's constant providence can assure the survival of the nation in the land of Israel.

This dispute between Rashi and Nachmanides is perhaps expressed in a parallel dispute in halacha. The mishna in Tractate Berachot explains that we are required to recite a blessing of thanks when the rain falls.[5] The mishna does not identify the circumstances under which the blessing is recited. Bait Yosef contends that this blessing of thanksgiving is recited in response to the first substantial rainfall after a period of drought.[6] Mishne Berurah accepts the ruling of the Bait Yosef but adds that there is an exception. He explains that in the land of Israel the blessing is recited with the first annual rainfall. In other words, even if there is no preceding drought the blessing is recited. He explains that rainfall in the land of Israel is unpredictable and cannot be depended upon. Therefore, each year the blessing must be recited with the first rain. However, Mishne Berurah acknowledges that there are other opinions. According to P'ri Megadim, there is no distinction between the land of Israel and other lands. In all cases, the blessing is only recited with the first substantial rainfall that comes after a drought.[7]

It is possible to explain the dispute between Mishne Berurah and P'ri Megadim on a superficial level. Both agree that the blessing is only recited in response to the alleviation of some form of affliction. According to P'ri Megadim, the affliction must exist in the actual physical environment. However, according to Mishne Berurah relief from an affliction of psychological anxiety is adequate to require a blessing of thanksgiving. Therefore, according to P'ri Megadim, even in the land of Israel the blessing is only recited when a drought comes to an end. Some affliction in the actual environment – in this case a drought – must be alleviated in order for the blessing to be recited. But according to Mishne Berurah, relief from anxiety alone is adequate to require a blessing of thanksgiving. In the land of Israel, anxiety over the uncertainty of rain is common. When this anxiety is relieved by the first substantial rains of the season, the blessing is

recited.

However, the dispute described above between Rashi and Nachmanides may offer an alternative interpretation of this debate between P'ri Megadim and Mishne Berurah. According to Nachmanides, Moshe intended to tell the people that they cannot assume that the rain will fall. They must recognize that the land of Israel is uniquely dependant upon Hashem's providence. They should be anxious regarding rainfall and this anxiety should motivate scrupulous observance of the Torah. This is consistent with Mishne Berurah's position. According to Mishne Berurah, in the land of Israel we are required to recite the blessing over the rain every year. In reciting this blessing we acknowledge Moshe's message. We do not take the rain for granted. We recognize it as an expression of Hashem's providence and give thanks for this providence.

In contrast, P'ri Megadim's position corresponds with Rashi's interpretation of Moshe's message. The Torah consistently characterizes the land of Israel as a rich and fertile land. Moshe was reiterating this characterization. This characterization is fundamental to Moshe's message. He was motivating Bnai Yisrael to observe the Torah by promising a wonderful reward – the remarkable land of Israel. In this context, Moshe made every effort to reinforce the image of the land of Israel as a land blessed with abundance. Any reference to a defect in the land is inconsistent with this message. According to this interpretation, Mishne Berurah's position is untenable. It would be inconsistent with this message for the Sages to create a blessing predicated on a material defect of the land of Israel. In other words, Moshe is stressing that we must always appreciate the perfection of the land of Israel. It would be inappropriate for the Sages to establish a blessing that requires that we freely engage in anxiety over the land. According to Nachmanides, the position of P'ri Megadim is much more reasonable. The land of Israel does not have a special status in regards to the blessing over the rain. As in other lands the blessing is only recited after a drought. ■

[1] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Devarim 11:10.

[2] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Devarim 11:11.

[3] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Devarim 11:10.

[4] Sefer Devarim 8:7-8.

[5] Mesechet Berachot 9:2.

[6] Rav Yosef Karo, Bait Yosef Commentary on Tur, Orach Chayim 221.

[7] Rav Yisrael Meir Kagan, Mishne Berurah, 221:1.

## Baseless Condemnation

Dear friends, I am writing to present a problem I have with an article appearing in the past (Aug 19, 2005) issue of the Jewish Times - "Jewish Terror Fiend Killed by Mob Justice," written by 'Winter.' While I agree with the overall conclusion the author reaches - namely, that the Arab and world press greatly distort the truth in their efforts to slander a particular group (the Jews) - I take issue with how the author portrayed the subject of the article: the unfortunate death (and preceding actions) of Eden Natan-Zada.

Throughout the article, Natan-Zada is referred to as "mentally disturbed," "stupid," and "sick"; a man who went on a "murder binge" in "defiance of the planned pull out of Gaza." Such treatment of Natan-Zada's actions and death - which we know very little about, despite the numerous reports from the world press "claiming" otherwise - is, I feel, unwarranted and unbecoming of individuals who care deeply for the dignity of another human being, and for the truth. While virtually all reports were quick to paint Natan-Zada as a terrorist, an extremist, a psychopath - the truth is that we don't know even the most basic facts of what happened on that sad day. All we know is that five individuals wound up dead. How they died is a mystery; how can we jump to the conclusion that the act was premeditated, murderous, or even politically motivated? With Natan-Zada lynched by a mob, dead and unable to defend himself - and with his name, and his family's name, being dragged through the mud by a press which is so eager to vilify the Jews - how can we not act like *menschen* to a fellow Jew, and give him the benefit of the doubt? For all we know, the act was entirely in self-defense; certainly, no facts have been brought to light, which openly contradict this view of Natan-Zada's actions. For a clearer look at our ignorance as to what actually happened on that sad, sad day, I refer you to the following article which appeared on the Arutz-7 news site, by Jared Israel: <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/article.php3?id=5430>

It is my hope that we may treat the actions of those who are now dead with care and consideration, and not give ourselves over to hasty judgments and unwarranted conclusions - and thereby bring no shame to ourselves.

B'Ahavas Yisrael,  
Gil Kobrin

# TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE

RABBI DANIEL MYERS

**Q.** Mr. Yaakov Gross: Rav Soloveichik ZT"L maintained that regarding territorial compromise, the people, rabbis included, must defer to the judgment of the authorities. Why then do many laymen and rabbis alike, who consider themselves Talmidim of the Rav, reject and protest the disengagement plan?

**A.** The Halachic Sugya of disengagement is quite a complicated one. It includes, but is not limited to, the Machloket Rambam-Ramban regarding Kivush Haaretz, (see Ramban's list of Mitzvot Asai in his Pairush on the Rambam's Saifer Hamitzvot) an analysis and application of the Minchat Chinuch's commentary on the Mitzvah of destroying the seven nations, (Parshat V'etchanan Mitzvah 425) and a thorough investigation into the military and political ramifications of territorial exchange. Such a study is beyond the scope of this essay. (One point can be made, and that is that the Rav did not agree with Rav Goren and others who held that the integrity of the Land of Israel is more important than Pikuach Nefesh, saving lives.) However, we will address the specific question raised here: Although already enacted, we ask on the ideas: Must one who follows the P'sak Halacha of the Rav accept the decree of the government to disengage from Gaza, or is he entitled to disagree with their decision and even actively protest against the Hitnakut, disengagement plan?

Obviously, only the Rav could state definitively what he would hold regarding the Hitnakut. However, I still think that it is fair to point out certain phenomena which may lead one to differentiate between one's attitude towards the government in 1967 and 2005: (Also see Q&A 228 for more related information)

-Outgoing IDF Chief of Staff Moshe Yaalon testified in the Knesset on June 28th that IDF intelligence was not consulted before the decision to proceed with the disengagement was made.

-Yaalon and key security/military experts have warned that implementation could lead to a wave of terror attacks.

-The Center for Near East Policy Research stated the following: (The Jerusalem Post 19/7/05)

-The Knesset has never conducted a proper intelligence inquiry as to whether disengagement would provide any benefit to Israel.

-The Knesset has yet to conduct any inquiry into allegations that avoidance of criminal prosecution played a role in decisions regarding disengagement.

Regarding the last claim, I do not assume that one of our greatest and most courageous war heroes and leaders has intentionally endangered his people in order to salvage his reputation. In my opinion, Mr. Sharon is convinced that the only way for Israel to survive is within the international community, which means continued American financial and military assistance, support from our allies (read ally) in the United Nations, continued trade with the countries that are not boycotting us, and with some level of legitimacy to exist in the world's eyes-as a non-racist, 'non-occupying' country. The Prime Minister maintains that in order to achieve this goal, we must disengage from the Paletinians and give them their own sovereignty.

Despite this great attempt at "Dan Lukaf Zechut," judge your prime minister favorably, and despite the fact that I think that the Mr. Sharon may be one of the best tacticians that Israel has ever seen, still, I think that the people-both Rabbis and laymen alike-have a write to assess the situation and decide whether this plan truly has the support of the military and security experts or not. One may conclude that, at best, there is a disagreement among the experts and that, in a state of doubt, one may opt for the approach of Shaiv V'al Taaseh Adif, better be passive then take action, such as relinquishing land, with possibly critical outcomes. Therefore, regarding the Hitnakut, one is not bound by the consensus of the experts, as the Rav maintained in 1967, simply because there is no consensus! (Another issue to examine is whether the government lost its credibility as a military and political analyst after the Oslo catastrophe.)

## Postscript

It is interesting to note that Rav Aharon Lichtenstien Shlita, the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Har Ezion, and the son-in-law of the Rav, uses similar logic-that we are in doubt regarding the outcome of the disengagement plan- with regard to a different point, namely whether a soldier could refuse disengagement orders. He writes:

"One can refuse orders when they are clearly in violation of Torah Law, as the Rabbis say: 'The master's word and the servant's word-the master's words takes precedence.' (Maimonides, Laws of Kings, 3:9) With regard to disengagement, the government contends that the plan will in the long term and in the broad perspective bolster our diplomatic and security strength, and will reduce the chances of war. In other words, the government believes that its plan will have the effect of saving human life-a Halakhic argument of the first rank. And because this is the case, its defenders will claim, Halakhically speaking, to obey its orders. It could be claimed that the government's predictions should not be taken seriously, and it is simply wishful thinking. Clearly, no one can speak of guaranteed success; however, predictions of guaranteed failure are also erroneous. In the final analysis, we-the government, the army, and it goes without saying the citizens and their spiritual leadership-face a hazy reality. I will say that to my best understanding, there are no guarantees that the plan, if executed, will succeed, and I am not convinced it will achieve its objectives. I understand the doubts and fears that not only will the security situation not improve, but it will, heaven forbid, be aggravated." According to the Rosh Yeshiva, although one can refuse orders when they are clearly in violation of Torah Law, one can not do so when there is no blatant violation; here, the defenders of the plan claim that not only is there no Biblical violation but, on the contrary, they are helping save lives, fulfilling a great Mitzvah, at least in the long run.

We certainly do not know where things are headed since we see the situation through mortal eyes, which offer limited vision. We hope and pray that Hashem will help us manage this crisis and bring us to better days ahead. ■

# CRISIS MANAGEMENT & GROWTH

RABBI DANIEL MYERS

These days it would seem appropriate and normal to be quite depressed about the state of our Divine State, when we reflect upon what has transpired recently:

- Nine thousand of our finest and most dedicated brothers faced eviction from their homes which they have legally built with so much love and Mesirut Nefesh.

-The head of the Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency) confirmed last week that Israel presently receives some 60 intelligence warnings of potential Palestinian terror attacks every day, while Chamas claims that their attacks have forced us to retreat. (The Jerusalem Post 25/7/05)

-Mr. Netanyahu said that if the IDF would leave the Philadelphia corridor-a move which Israel is considering-it would open up a window of opportunity for terrorists, and that the Palestinians would be able to smuggle in arms that can threaten Israel's cities. (ibid.)

- Shin Bet chief Yuval Diskin reported to the Knesset that Palestinians who obtained Israeli residency under family reunification laws had a dramatic weight in the Intifada terror attacks, being involved in 16 suicide bombings. In other words, it is not only the people who claim to be living in subhuman, non-livable conditions that are attacking us, but even those who are living in Israel proper! (ibid. 20/705)

-Diskin most recently reported that Israel could face an Al Qaeda attack in the near future, since it is clear that there is a connection on some level between Hamas and al Qaeda. (Hamodia 27/7/05)

-The ever optimistic and loving Rosh yeshiva of Ateret Kohanim, Rav Shlomo Aviner, Shlita, who truly embodies the ideology of "Ohav Et Habriyot Umikarvan Latorah" blamed the prime minister for being inhuman, throwing people out of their homes mercilessly. (B'hava Ubemuna Parshat Chukat 5765)

It is true that these are sad times, and one should be in a state of sorrow and mourning with our brothers who are being 'transferred,' and with the nation as a whole, because of the possible danger that lies ahead of us. (See Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 575:4, M"B 575:11, Shaar Hazion 575:8 and Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Daiah 387:1) Nevertheless,

at the same time we may comfort ourselves with some consolation for several reasons:

1) With all the tragedies around us, many of us have missed a beautiful statistic; according to The Jewish People Policy Planning Institute Israel will surge past the United States next year and have the largest Jewish population in the world for the first time since the Second Commonwealth. (The Jerusalem Post 14/7/05) The Institute reported that Israel will be the only country to have a major growth in Jewish Population in the near future-to 6.2 million by 2020! This is a clear fulfillment of the Pasuk (Devarim 30:5) "Hashem will bring back your captivity and have mercy upon you, and will gather you in from all the peoples to which Hashem has scattered you." This was reported on the same day that Israel 'permanently' sealed off the Gaza Strip. At times, there are Divine messages of Nechama-sometimes during our dark hours-placed right in front of our eyes.

2) Uri Dan recently wrote an article entitled 'The Jewish Spring,' demonstrating how Israel resembles a kind of spring, sometimes compressing, but always expanding with vigor, depending on the circumstances. He proves this to be the case in 1948, 1956, 1967, 1973, 1977 and 1982. He concludes his essay with the following message: "The secret of the nation's ability to act as a spring lies in the special oil that protects it against fashionable, post-Zionist, anti-Semitic and defeatist corrosion: the oil of the Jewish belief in its total right to a state in Israel. Once this standard was borne even by the Leftists in Mapam. Now it has passed to the settlers, in particular those belonging to Religious Zionism. The Jewish heart has also withstood the tremendous pressure applied to it by the unceasing war of terrorism waged by suicide bombers. Israel, when acting as a Jewish spring, is not only stronger than all of its temporary leaders but, more importantly, is stronger than all of its permanent enemies. When Israel stupidly participates in the joy of their enemies at the spectacle of the planned destruction of the flourishing settlements in the Gaza Strip during the ongoing war, the Jewish spring may well be compressed and appear to be about to break. However, those familiar with Israel's history know that it will once again expand, proving wrong all the

predictions of destruction." (The Jerusalem Post 25/7/05) Of course, the centrality of Torah is a crucial factor as well in determining the expansiveness of the spring)

Every Religious Zionist who has seen the Geula progressing over the last two centuries, knows and feels the truth of Mr. Dan's analysis. As the Iyun Tefila writes in his commentary on Tefila (Ozar Hatefilot-Pairush on the Bracha 'Et Zemach David') writes: "Zechariah (6:12) teaches us that Mesiach's name will be Zemach, literally, the sprouting or flourishing of a plant. This indicates that the normal process of redemption is like the barely noticeable daily growth of a plant." Sometimes we move forward in leaps and bounds, at other times we progress ever so slowly and, at times, we may even regress a bit, only to regroup and spring forward again.

3) For almost thirty years, the NRP has put supporting the settlers of Yesha at the top of its agenda. Mr. Zevulun Orlev, recently elected as the chairman of the NRP, says that the party line on supporting the settlers and diplomatic issues will not change under his leadership; nevertheless, the NRP will start talking more about education, social affairs and religion. (The Jerusalem Post 22/7/05) In my opinion, this is a very welcome development, since the NRP must be vigilant in its focus on religion while it also looks after the Am and the Medina.

4) Despite the horrible and indecent suffering that our 9000 brothers are sustaining, I am confident that they are strong, resilient and that they will regroup. Not only that, I am optimistic that not only will they survive, but will once again thrive; furthermore, they will bring all of their boundless love and energy for Torat Yisrael, Am Yisrael and Eretz Yisrael to their new neighbors and towns. I pray that their passion will influence and affect the Am in a most dramatic and profound manner. Until now, we could admire our holy brothers from a distance, now Im Yirzeh Hashem, we will be close enough to them to become enkindled from their fire, warmth and exuberance.

May Hashem bless them and the rest of the Am with vigor, fortitude and love to deal with our upcoming hurdles, regroup and blossom once again! ■

## Politically Correct Anti-Semitism

RABBI SHEA HECHT

The articles were in the Christian Science Monitor and the New York Times. They were titled, "Churches Raise Pressure on Firms in Israel" and "Threat to Divest is Church Tool in Israeli Fight." They tell a story of main line Protestant denominations with close ties to Israel taking steps to try and influence the Israeli-Palestinian peace process by divesting funds from companies that do business with Israel.

The church committee named four companies that they claim contribute to the constant struggle in the Middle East through support for the Israeli settlements, construction of the protective barrier on the West Bank or facilitation of violent acts against civilians.

These companies include ITT industries and United Technologies, which supply communication equipment and helicopters to the Israeli military; Caterpillar, whose equipment is used in the building of the settlements; Motorola, which provides military wireless communications and invests in Israeli cell phone firms.

In an attempt to be even handed the committee also named CitiGroup, for providing money transfer services to charities that were accused of being fronts for terrorist groups. CitiGroup, of course, calls the charge against their company 'an outrage'.

The Presbyterian Church seems to be using politically correct economic empowerment to cover its non-politically correct anti-Semitism.

There are other nominations of the Protestant church that are toying with divestment as a means to control the politics in the Middle East, but the language the Presbyterian church uses to discuss divestment is especially ugly. They place the blame for all the violence in the Middle East on Israel because of their presence in the land that the Palestinians demand. This stand is immoral. It makes Israel's self defense an evil surpassing terrorism and will ultimately bring an end to the Jewish State.

The timing is questionable, too. At a time when Israel is pulling out of Gaza, why would the Presbyterian Church put sanctions on Israel? If they are simply concerned that all should be well for the Palestinians, the Presbyterians should be applauding Israel's effort for moving in the 'right direction.'

According to the articles the Presbyterians can feel for the Palestinian suffering because many Palestinians can't get help in the church run hospitals in Israel. What an absurd accusation! Israeli hospitals treat anyone that comes to them for help. Perhaps the Presbyterians should consider the fact that the Palestinians can't go to the Presbyterian hospitals in the Muslim countries surrounding Israel because there are none. The Muslim countries of the Middle East don't allow people to practice any other religion - including Christianity - and they don't allow their good Samaritans in to do their 'good work' either.

Maybe the 'divestment of funds tactic' should be used with the Muslim countries that deny their people access to the help the church offers around the world.

The Church believes that the Bible, which says very clearly that the Holy Land was given to the Jewish people, is a living document. Over the years when the support came from the church they used the Bible as a reason for supporting Israel's survival - what happened now? Are the Presbyterians ready to say that part of the Bible is G-d given and the rest is up to human interpretation?

The Presbyterian Church is using its success of diversity of funds to change the political climate in South Africa where the white minority ruled over the black majority, as a blue print for their actions in the Middle East. Is there a comparison between the South African apartheid and the situation in Israel? The Jews have biblical ownership of the land of Israel and have lived in the land for thousands of years. How can that be equated to the white man's claim of ownership of Africa?

Even if the members of the Presbyterian Church feel that regardless of historical ownership of the land there is injustice that must be addressed, why is the church silent when these same "injustices" occur in other countries?

The Presbyterians say they have a problem with the Israelis building a security fence to protect themselves from attack. There is a long list of countries that built a security barrier between their own country and an enemy. Most notable is the USA which has a wall on the border it shares with Mexico to keep out illegal aliens - not suicide bombers; India is building a fence along the majority of its 1,800 mile border it shares with Pakistan to keep terrorists from crossing the border; Saudi Arabia has begun building a separation barrier along its border with Yemen to stop terrorists and smugglers from flowing into the border region; a land dispute led to the construction of a barbed wire fence by Uzbekistan on the border it shares with Kyrgyzstan; there's an electric fence between Botswana and Zimbabwe and the list goes on and on. The church is notably quiet about the construction of barriers in these countries. Is it because there is a double standard when an issue concerns Jews? Or is it because they jumped on the bandwagon of those against the security fence in Israel?

Bulldozers are a problem? Cell phones? Should we go back to the Middle Ages? Dig by hand? Use landlines? Maybe the church wants to penalize the companies that make refrigerators for Israel? How about the companies, which sell Israeli's mattresses?

The Presbyterian divestment scheme smacks of anti-Semitism. The church should simply stay out of the fray and out of Middle Eastern politics altogether and do its charity work with the poor Muslims in their own countries - if they will let the Christians in. By using politically correct economic empowerment to cover politically incorrect anti-Semitism directed against Israel which has hosted the church for so many years, the Church is practicing nothing less than "throwing stones into the well that they drink from." ■

## New Heresies: Tzimtzum

*By way of introduction, certain people believe God needed to "constrict" or "contract" Himself so as to "provide room" for His created universe. This reader wrote in with some thoughts.*

**Reader:** I had a chat with my favorite Rabbi, a truly great scholar, and a Lubavitcher. He corrected the following misconceptions that I had, and you still have, regarding Chassidus and Tzim-Tzum. In a sentence, what I have learnt so far is: Tzim-Tzum (or at least Tzim-Tzum as Chassidim interpret it is the following): "God transcends space, He doesn't occupy space, His presence fills space, and He constricted His light, not Himself." This clearly does not contradict the Rambam's statement about apportioning God.

**Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim:** You write: "God transcends space." That is fine, if meant that God has nothing at all to do with the physical world, including taking up space. You write: "He doesn't occupy space." Same as above. I fail to see anything new in these words. You write: "His presence fills space." This must be clarified. For if "His presence" means that evidence of His existence may be seen in the world, then this has already been said by God "Milo Kol Haaretz Kivodo", "The entire world is filled with His honor." That being said, this explanation of "Tzim-Tzum" adds nothing to what God said. You write: "He constricted His light, not Himself." What is His "light"? One cannot make a statement like this without explaining what "light" means here. For since God is not physical, and "light" is physical, it is heresy to say that "light" is part of God. A second heresy is to suggest God has one element (light) that might be referred to, "aside" from His metaphysical, unknowable essence.

The Rabbis teach that God is one in all ways, and this means that a person cannot speak of parts of God, like "light" being something He might constrict. Additionally, the idea of "constricting" is also relegated to the physical world alone, and cannot be predicated of God. Only physical objects have physical features, and anything predicated of the physical, like weariness, aging, division, and constriction, do not apply to God. He created in the physical world and their laws, so these laws cannot govern Him.

A wise Rabbi commented that any suggestion implying a relationship between God and anything physical is impossible. Hence, God "constricting" Himself for the needs of the physical world is false, as it assumes that God has some spatial relationship to what He created, and He needs to contract Himself to allow space for the world. It further assumes there are "parts" to God that can be constricted. And as we said, "constriction" or "contraction" are predicated of the physical alone, and cannot be spoken of in relation to God, just as we cannot say God has color or size.

Your Rabbi has not answered anything, but conversely, he has created problems. Please bring these issues to his attention. ■

# Refuting Reincarnation

BORIS G. YUABOV

Dear Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim, Thank you very much for very interesting discussions. I always felt very lonely in my belief that reincarnation is not supported by Tanach, Talmud, and Midrashim, as well as Gaonic tradition, Rashi and Rambam and others. Thank you for speaking out loud about it. I have noticed that you quote Rav Saadia primarily with extrapolation from Sforno on Sefer Devarim. I'd like to add many other sources that directly or indirectly refute reincarnation.

1. Reincarnation is not mentioned anywhere in Tanach, Talmud, or Midrashim where as numerous other ideas about afterlife are discussed. The only one who sees evidence of gilgul (reincarnation) in Tanach, Talmud, or Midrashim is strong BELIEVER of that idea. But that is similar to Christian philosopher who sees idea of trinity in pasuk Shema Yisrael. (Green glasses will easily make entire world green in observer's eyes). The only gilgul that is discussed in Talmud is gilgul shevua (when person makes additional swearing in bet din).

2. Statements by proponents of reincarnation that it was hidden and unknown subject are historically false. (Many nations had that belief for thousands of years and many authors - Greek and others - had written about it explicitly) yet Chazal never cared to mention it even once. Making old Platonic, Egyptian, Hindu, or Buddhist belief into Jewish belief is not called revelation of secrets, but philosophical plagiarism.

3. In the text of prayer, Chazal never state reincarnation as form of punishment. All mentions of gilgul in prayers are later additions by anonymous editors. For example compare text of Yom Kippur prayer in Mishna Torah, Old Taimani text, or text of Rav Amram Gaon with today's Sephardic text. Pay careful attention to "al chet shechatanu lefaneicha." It goes in alphabetical order, from alef to tav, and back.

Each letter has one corresponding statement. Letter Gimel however, has two statements assigned to it, one of which is gilgul statement. Anyone can see that this is a later addition to the prayer. For why would original author break his own rule and assign two statements to letter Gimel, while shortchanging all other letters.

4. In sefer Hakuzari, the wise man openly states to the king that any descriptions about afterlife are not discussed by Chazal, but found in other religions, and are nothing but a human fantasy.

5. Chazal instructed us to say every morning "Elokai neshama shenatata bi tehora hi." That statement of Chazal excludes ideas of reincarnation, but openly speaks of resurrection. From that statement it becomes clear that a soul is created out of nothing (barata) for individual use, and not for multiple recycling.

6. Proponents of reincarnation feel that concept of gilgul is essential in understanding the idea "Tzadik ve ra lo" (evil that happens to the righteous) as well as suffering of innocent children. But Chazal tell us quite opposite that "Tzadik ve ra lo" implies that Tzadik has inner deficiency that needs to be addressed and that suffering in fact is not just form of punishment but an opportunity to reveal to him his own defects (see book of Job with commentaries, see also More Nevuchim and Taniya) and that children suffer for sins of their parents until age of 12-13. Once again there is no smell of reincarnation in words of Chazal. I am aware of the statement of Zohar about gilgul, but that in my opinion is yet another one of numerous, strong arguments that Zohar is of very controversial origin and unlikely to be work of Chazal.

7. Some suggest that statement "Pinchas hu Eliyahu" refers to idea of reincarnation. But that is at least naive. Chazal mention "Pinchas hu



Eliyahu" from the possibility of Eliyahu being a cohen (see Gemara or Midrash were Rabbis ask Eliyahu "are not the master a Cohen" see Rashi there) I don't know of any proponent of gilgul that would suggest that kehuna can be transmitted by gilgul.

8. Rashi to sefer Bereshit 2:6 clearly states that animals are not subject to divine judgment, as suggested by proponents of reincarnation of a human soul into the animal.

9. Chazal openly rejected opinion of Tzedukim that Shore HaNiskal (the stoned bull) is a "punishment to the bull"; rather it is a punishment to the owner who will now lose his property. Proponents of reincarnation however, are clearly favoring opinion of Tzedukim.

10. Rambam, in his Eight Chapters, makes a clear and unequivocal statement that soul of the human being and soul of the animal are totally different spiritual entities, by quality and quantity. He also warns against equating the human or animal soul in any way, stating that this led many to serious philosophical errors. How strange to the Jewish eye are the ancient Egyptian or Greek pictures of humanized animals or animalized humans. How strange to a Jewish mind are these ideas. (Review Bereshit with commentators to "Naase adam betzalmeinu kidmuteinu.")

(continued on next page)

(continued from page 13)

## Letters

11. Ramban mentions the possibility of gilgul in explanation to the book of Job. He explains the words of Elihu as referring to reincarnation that can happen only 2-3 times. Chazal however state openly that words of Elihu refer to gravely ill, but not a dead patient that recovers.

12. Sefer Hayekarim (Rabbi Yosef Albo) who was aware of the statements in the Zohar, nevertheless rejects the opinion of reincarnation by means of logical argument, and even points out to the thought that made some thinkers accept the idea of reincarnation.

13. Rav Poalim (Rabbi Itzhak ben Latif) page 9 sentence 21 states, "every soul that comes to the world is brand new and even if it's similar to another soul it's still different from it and idea of gilgul is already refuted."

14. Some feel that only reincarnation can truly explain mitzvah of yibum. However, this is so only if you believe in reincarnation. If you don't, this mitzvah makes perfect sense without idea of reincarnation (see Moreh Nevuchim regarding mitzvah of yibum).

15. See the opinion of recent authorities such as Hegyonei Uziel [HaRav Ben Zion Uziel] Vol. 1 pg. 371 and Rav Yosef Kapach (pirush on Emunot va deot)

These are only a few points out of many that prove that reincarnation is not from Chazal but a medieval novelty adapted ether from Plato and Pythagoras (most likely together with many other "kabalistic" ideas) or from Hindu or Buddhist sources. The rise of Neo-Platonism in Western Europe of 13-15 century affected very deeply, not only the Jewish, but also the gentile world. And even though some Rabbis don't find it conflicting with the fundamentals of Judaism and they embrace it, there is no mitzvah or chiyuv to believe in it, because it's not from Chazal. Moreover one that rejects the belief in this idea is clearly in no violation of Torah; on the contrary, such a person can be called a strong follower of authentic tradition of Chazal with all honors that come with it.

My fellow Jews, brothers and sisters, Torah prohibits us to speak lashon hara even if it's true, even with the best intentions, even if it's a praise. The best and in my opinion only way to accomplish that is not to discuss a person, group of people or other particulars, but to discuss ideas. Ideas can and should be discussed, criticized, rejected, accepted, and scrutinized. This is what our Talmud is all about. This, at no point, is diminishing the person or group of people that expresses this idea. As an example,

99.9% of Halachic and philosophical opinions of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai are rejected by Talmud; however they constantly refer to him as one of the greatest Sages. We should never allow ourselves to mix discussions of ideas, with discussions of personalities. Naming authors of statements can help only on the level of belief and trust, but on the level of understanding, naming authors has absolutely no bearing. Having said that, I'd like to state that any names of the Rabbis and books mentioned above are there for quick reference of ideas and for indication that idea of gilgul is not universally accepted.

If anyone chooses to accept the concept of reincarnation because of its acceptance by many, relatively late Jewish scholars, he/she is on the level of trust and belief, and his/her arguments are useless on the level of understanding truth. At the same time, any logical statements are useless for pure believer. It's important to note that classical Judaism limits our beliefs to words of prophets and tradition of Chazal. All other ideas are not obligatory. Dear readers, if you can, count how many beliefs Torah prohibits, and how little it leaves for realm of belief. See how Torah encourages knowledge and understanding. This in fact is one of the key differences between Judaism and other religions. May God bless us with understanding to differentiate between truth and its opposite.

Thank you,

*Boris G. Yuabov*



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# Response Reincarnation

Hazuk v. Baruch on your recent articles regarding the proliferation of kabbala and mystic readings guided toward the masses. In my shul, I continually come across many unlearned individuals whose sole reading material primarily concerns itself with the "ein sof" of, Tikkun, Tzimzum, and of course, that maschiach is among us. Of far more concern, however, are the Rabbis who publish this stuff. They at least know, or should know better. Moreover, should I ever seek to make a rational or intellectual argument that counters the fluff they have been indoctrinated with, their sole response is to quickly respond with the cry of "apikoris." Jewish education is, I dare say, in a very sad state of affairs because views like yours, where one is encouraged to actually think, are a dwindling minority.

Please tell Rabbi Myers I said hello. You are very lucky to have him. A wonderful man and true chacham.

Shabbat Shalom,

*Nativ Winiarsky*

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# MIXED SEATING REVISITED

CHANANYA WEISSMAN

I have a friend who lives in a bad neighborhood with lots of crime. He hasn't been a direct victim of crime, but he's been exposed to enough crime and heard enough about it to become very cautious – overly so.

You see, this friend of mine has equipped his front door with numerous locks and other safety devices. Still worried, he decided that he would no longer admit anyone into his home; for fear that it might really be a burglar. In fact, he won't even let his own mother into his home, because of the remote possibility that the person on the other side of the door claiming to be his mother is really someone else, despite all indications to the contrary. And even if he can somehow prove that it's really his mother, maybe she has become desperate for cash and decided to rob him.

My friend is really afraid of this. After all, he says, things like this have happened. He's right, too; things like this really have happened, and consequently my attempts to convince him that his paranoia is misplaced have thus far been dismissed.

I should also mention that my friend does not have any locks on his back door. As a result of this, a burglar still has easy access into his home, while his mother will still be turned away. My friend has achieved a slight degree of increased safety at a disproportionately excessive cost, yet has still failed to insure protection from that which he fears.

My "friend" in the preceding story is many thousands of observant Jews all over the world who would agree that the main character in this allegory is acting in an irrational and self-destructive fashion.

It's true that we all live in a bad neighborhood with lots of crime. We have all been exposed to spiritual dangers and are not far removed from those who have succumbed at least in part or temporarily to these dangers. Perhaps we need look no further than the mirror. As a result, we have decided, through noble intentions, to keep these dangers far away from us. This is exactly what the Torah would expect of us.

Unfortunately, many of my friends, in a desperate attempt to protect themselves and their loved ones, have gone too far. They have created such an ironclad separation of the sexes that interactions which should occur, which would naturally lead to healthy relationships and holy marriages, have become nearly impossible, fraught with all sorts of man-made complications. In some cases they have forbidden young adults from even speaking with a member of the opposite sex, the penalty for which is expulsion from yeshiva and ostracism from the community. There is hardly a harsher punishment that could be administered – and this for something that is not even a crime!

More commonly, sincere religious singles who have been given the benefit of a lifetime of Jewish education are prevented from eating dinner together at the wedding of mutual friends. Presumably they were allowed to eat together in mixed company they would be overpowered with temptation and crash through all fences!

These friends of mine argue impassionedly that this separation is a necessary protection against improper interactions, which may lead to severe violations of the Torah. This is true in the sense that every fence provides a

certain measure of safety, just as every lock on a door makes it more difficult for a burglar to enter.

On the other hand, fences placed haphazardly can destroy one's property without even accomplishing the goal of safety, and additional security measures place an added strain on permitted guests and behaviors as well.

A Rebbetzin in Miami recently informed me that my articles on the subject of shidduchim have made a profound influence, and that "we know of at least one "frum" couple who made their wedding mixed seating as a result of your article in the Jewish Press. Three matches that I know of came out of that simcha (the couple are doing great too). The family took a lot of flack from the local Rabbinical community as you can well imagine..."

Imagine that. A young couple had the courage to withstand misplaced communal pressure to remove just one unnecessary proverbial padlock. As a result of this, three more shidduchim occurred, shidduchim that otherwise might have never occurred, or might have only occurred many years later with great heavenly machinations. Last year I wrote in the Five Towns Jewish Times, "every Jewish wedding of reasonable size could and should directly lead to another shidduch between single guests at the wedding." Three shidduchim was beyond even my expectations!

Despite all that individuals and the community do to complicate shidduchim from occurring, thousands of weddings are made every year. These weddings are attended by many single relatives and friends of the chosson and kalla. Imagine how these singles feel as they witness the pure joy of the new couple as they begin a new life together. Sure, the singles are genuinely happy for them – but they are also filled with a terrible pain, a longing, a yearning. Perhaps a dozen people walk by and absently say "Soon by you too," a well-meant wish that only pours hot tears into the inner void felt by the single. The local Rebbetzin or shidduch-group-wannabe, suddenly inspired, promises to set them up, most likely with someone from left field.

When all the smoke clears they sit down for a meal. The single men sit with the single men and the single women sit with the single women. Perhaps they can even see each other, if they are not at opposite ends of the room or separated by a partition. But there is no chance that they will meet one another. After all, there is a remote fear that if they were allowed to share dinner together they might decide to act inappropriately, and then the entire community would fall apart. So instead we also prevent the possibility of them acting completely appropriately, developing a liking for one another, and beginning a relationship that will lead to another holy marriage. All while the community is falling apart.

We fool ourselves. We claim that there are many ways for singles to meet, all of which are "supervised by a married adult" or "endorsed by a Rabbi". We offer the segregated singles mystical crumbs like Challa, blessings, and chapters of Tehillim. What we don't offer them is ways to meet, without unnecessary "supervision" or "endorsement". Further, we take away whatever opportunities naturally exist.

Then we wonder why there are so many thousands of singles just waiting for the phone to ring. Maybe they are all too picky. Maybe they are all afraid of commitment. Maybe

they have personality problems (as if all married people are so well-adjusted). Maybe they need to consult with mentoring mentors or therapists to figure out what their problem is.

Or maybe we need to just leave them alone and let them meet people. And maybe we need to start doing this before exhausting all other "supervised" avenues of meeting.

I have a fine proposal to make my friends with too many locks where they don't belong. The next time you have a say in the matter, make sure there is mixed seating at a simcha. Imagine if all the singles at all the thousands of weddings that are made every year shared dinner in mixed company. Just imagine how many shidduchim would naturally result from this, at no additional cost or effort to anyone. My friends in Florida took this small step, and three new couples found one another as a result, easily, painlessly, no segulos, supervision, or shadchanim required.

I further request that those with influence in the community speak out about it. If every Rabbi in the community would devote one Shabbos morning sermon to this, what a powerful impact that would make! I know from personal experience that many Rabbis do not take kindly even to respectful and well-intended suggestions (I'm not sure why), but the awesome implications compel me to speak out. What will those Rabbis in Miami say to the Heavenly Court when questioned about their attempt to force separate seating at this wedding, and thereby sabotage three shidduchim? Who wants to have to answer these questions? Not me.

There are many catering halls that will refuse to provide generously paid services to those who have mixed seating. These catering halls need to be informed by potential customers that this is going to cost them some business. If necessary, we will make weddings in our backyards, but we will not perpetuate a man-made shidduch crisis.

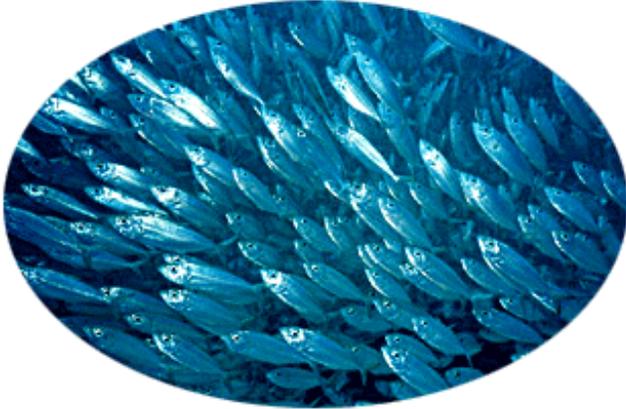
The culture of Judaism today is to be machmir for even a remote fear. I am very machmir as well. I am against separating singles at weddings and in other socially conducive settings, lest they lose an opportunity to get married and build a new Jewish home.

I am also machmir about inappropriate behavior, and therefore strongly discourage immodest dress and speech, mixed dancing, and licentious environments. That said, the greater problem facing religious Jewry today is not in these areas. We need to swing the pendulum back a bit.

Three couples met one another at a single wedding. Can anyone sleep at night knowing that they might have prevented the same thing from happening due to trivial social considerations or undue religious paranoia? We need to reconsider if we've locked our doors just a little too tightly and paid for slightly increased spiritual security by sacrificing tens of thousands of fine religious singles who may never get married. ■

*Chananya Weissman is the founder of EndTheMadness (www.endthemandness.org), a comprehensive campaign to rehabilitate the culture of shidduchim. He can be reached at admin@endthemandness.org.*

**Editor's Note: In Igros Moshe, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein zt"l offered halachik support for mixed seating: the Paschal offering must be eaten in a single group, and may be composed of both sexes. However, Rav Ginsburg who was close to Rav Moshe, informed me of a Bais Shmuel which says at Sheva Brachos, mixed seating is not allowed, since there cannot be gladness when the instincts are aroused. But for the sake of shidduchim, Rav Ginsburg stated that mixed seating is permitted. Moshe Ben-Chaim**



# Creation & Intelligence

**RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM**

*Discussing some ideas last week, my friend and I touched on the subject of creation, intelligence, and if we can truly feel convinced in the existence of a Creator. I thought our discussion might benefit others, so I jotted down our words.*

It is always best to start from what we know is 100% true, and draw all conclusions, inductions and deductions from that truth. In this way, we build a foundation of arguments, which are most accurate.

What is certain? We know the universe exists. We know it could not have created itself...nothing can create itself. For if X already existed, there was nothing left for it to do, regarding bringing about its existence, as it is already here. And if, on the other hand, X does not yet exist, then nothing can perform the act of creation. Hence, in either case, X cannot create itself. So too, the universe could not create itself: something other than this physical world we see, must exist, and this Creator cannot be physical, nor is He governed by the very laws He created, evident in the universe. We say the Creator is not physical. What is the proof? As we said, all things physical require something "else" to create them. That which is other than the physical must not be physical, by definition.

We arrive at the reality that God exists, the source of all we see, and what we see is truly mind-boggling. As thinkers often submit: throw ink as many times as you wish at paper, but it will never organize into letters, words, rows of sentences...let alone a novel. Now, a novel, any novel, compares little to the math, science and myriads of systems of laws evident in the universe and all created beings and things. Hence, the universe is no chance event, like ink thrown randomly on paper. Another argument is the impossibility of rewriting history, or fabricating events witnessed by masses. As we would never suggest that Caesar was not the emperor of Rome, we would not oppose any historical accounts, certainly, if those other accounts were attended by larger numbers of witnesses. Compound this argument with the

unrivaled accounts of miracles recorded and transmitted in the Torah, and we cannot deny the existence of a Creator who continues to controls the universe.

Revelation at Sinai, its miracles, the Exodus, the brilliance of Torah wisdom and its parallel to scientific knowledge all teach that God is responsible for both: Torah and the universe. He created man. Why? We cannot answer, other than Maimonides' words, "It was His will." ("Motive" is human, and cannot be imputed to God) God graciously and generously benefits a new creature, "mankind", with intelligence, so we may find amazement and appreciation in His wisdom. Nothing else on Earth but man partakes of wisdom; not animal, not plant life, or other matter. Beasts are as dumb today as at anytime in recorded history. Man alone has been granted speech and intelligence via a separate apparatus not evidenced in any other being. As the philosophers also concluded, but as we know from God's words and from reason, human beings must possess a non-physical element, enabling us to perceive wisdom. This is not to be confused with the animalistic ability to recognize, mimic, and manipulate, all of which are rooted in the instincts, and not intelligence, or the "soul".

The human soul is often confused with the instincts – our animalistic element. But these are two distinct faculties. Had animals possessed intelligence, we would certainly witness in the species of beasts more than mere parroting of human activity. Dolphins jumping through hoops with such precision appear more "intelligent" than other animals. In truth, they are merely more "trainable" than others. Dolphins may be regarded as the "dogs of the sea." Just as dogs are easily trained for man's needs, and this may very well be God's design, dolphins too are quick to adapt. But that is all it is, "adaptation". You will never see dolphins pondering its sins and perfection, formulating mathematical equations, composing poems, writing, or learning languages. Some also argue that animals are not as complex as humans, but are no different in terms of their faculties. They bring support from the design of bird's nests, beehives, and the "problem solving" of monkeys. However, instincts alone explain these activities. Birds and bees have no abstract "blueprint" in their minds, since they do not have minds, only physical brains which control motor activity. Monkeys and apes appear to "figure out" how to obtain food, using sticks and the like, but this too is mere instinct, just as when an animal darts away from a predator, or when we quickly recoil our hand after leaning on something we did not know was hot. Animals are akin to programmed robots, evidenced in the exact behaviors duplicated in all species, never changing, over thousands of years. Had animals any intelligence, we would witness in them, at the very least, the same deviations found among members of the human race. But each beast, insect, and bird acts exactly like all others in its class, as schools of fish suddenly change course with such unison.

Animals' unchanging natures and absence of any sign of intelligence is a clear display that man alone possesses a soul, in addition to instincts. We do not assume differently, simply because animals are similar in shape and action to humans. Just as we do not suggest plant life to be intelligent, we should not suggest this to be so of animals, even though we see commonalities.

We realize that God created all we see, and this idea is so important, that God commanded us in the Sabbath as a weekly reminder and testament. Through His very act of creating, teaching and maintaining us, we learn that God desires man alone to possess intelligence, for which we should feel grateful. He desires that we use our instincts and intelligence in His service, which is synonymous with a life seeking wisdom, governed by justice and morality. God desires man to have the good. As a Rabbi once stated, serving God, is, in truth, serving ourselves.

Ideas like these may be basic, but even basic truths, at times, deserve repeating, just as Sabbath laws confirm. ■