

them, a decent respect to the opinions of
 that all men are created equal, that they
 rights have been instituted among

Since all humans possess the same
 soul and the identical potential,
 God created only one religion.

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Houston	5:33	Phoenix	5:33
Jerusalem	4:47	Pittsburgh	5:10
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Miami	5:40	Toronto	5:00
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Weekly Parsha

Yitro

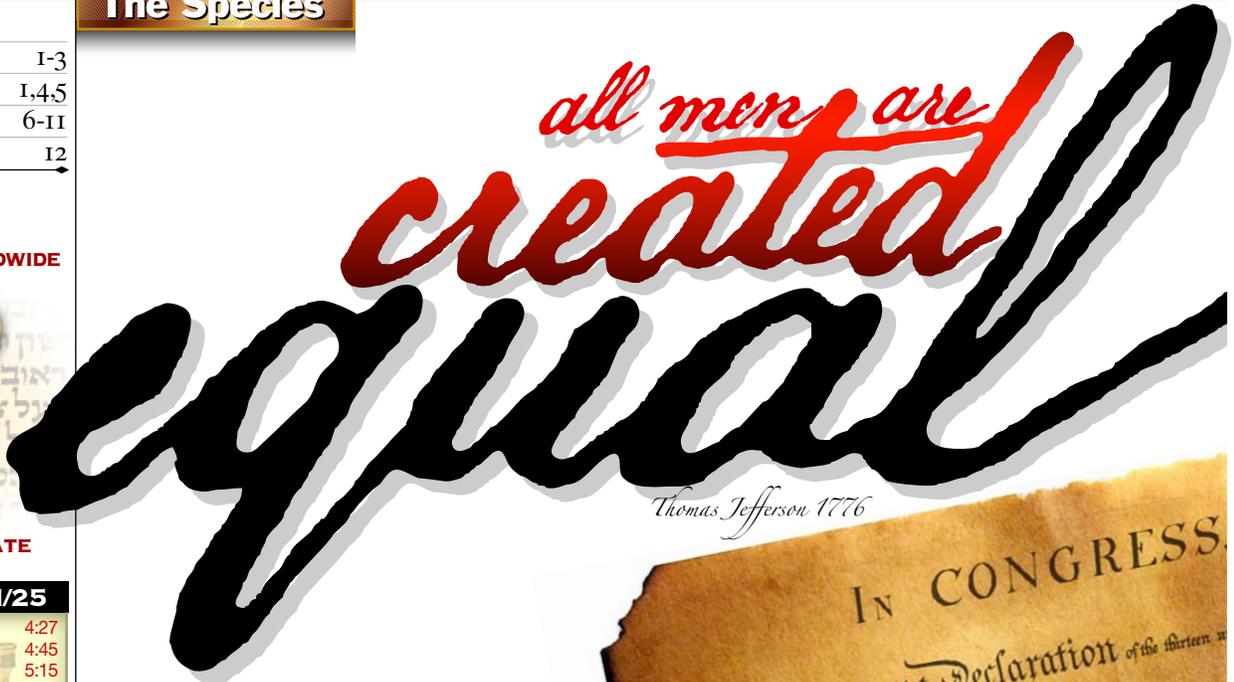
RABBI BERNIE FOX

"I am Hashem, your God, Who took you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." (Shemot 20:2)

This week's parasha includes the

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The Species

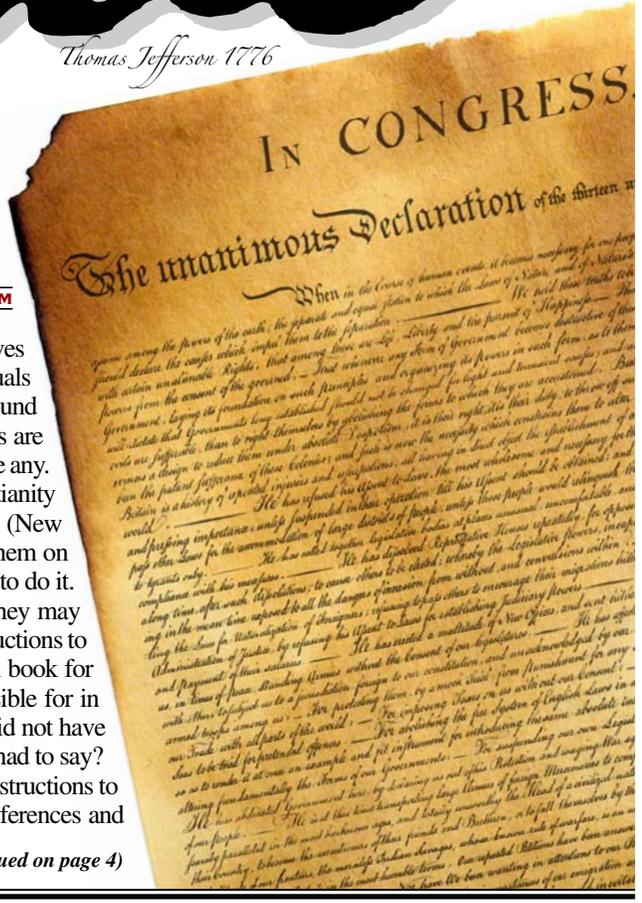


RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Reader: Ritual binds people together and gives cohesiveness. I have read many times that the rituals and prayers that every Jew is instructed in has bound them together for thousands of years. But Noahides are instructed to not create any rituals, and we don't have any. In my opinion, among the many reasons that Christianity has been successful is that it has a document (New Testament) that whether right or wrong, instructs them on who they are, what they should be doing, and how to do it. But the Noahides have nothing of this. Oh, sure, they may join in on the Jewish holidays, but there are no instructions to do so – it's just an option. Where is our instruction book for gentiles? To what has God held all people responsible for in times past when they could not read the Torah or did not have the Jewish people to tell them what the Oral Torah had to say?

When I as a gentile read the Torah, there are no instructions to me. Instead, I am left trying to figure out vague references and

(continued on page 4)



(Yitro cont. from pg. 1)

Weekly Parsha

JewishTimes

Weekly Journal on Jewish Thought



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Decalogue. The above passage is the first pasuk of the Decalogue. According to Sefer HaChinuch, this passage is the source of the commandment to accept that Hashem exists. He explains that this commandment requires that we respond to any inquiry regarding our convictions that we wholeheartedly accept the existence of Hashem. He adds that we are required to relinquish our lives for the sake of this conviction. In other words, we must affirm our conviction in the existence of Hashem and that there is no other is G-d. We are even required to sacrifice our lives in affirmation of this conviction.

Sefer HaChinuch adds that we should strive to establish clear proof of Hashem's existence. If we succeed in establishing such proof, then we have fulfilled the mitzvah at its highest level.[1] This is a troubling statement. It is understandable that complete fulfillment of the commandment requires basing our conviction on objective evidence. However, the implication of this statement is that even if we do not base our conviction on any evidence, the commandment has been fulfilled at least at a minimal standard.

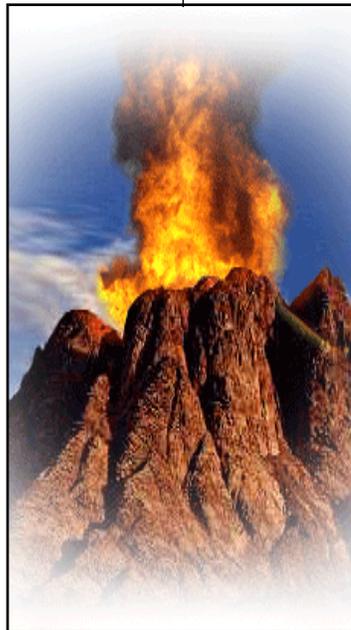
This implication presents two problems. First, Sefer HaChinuch acknowledges that conviction in the existence of G-d is the most fundamental element of Torah Judaism. All other elements of the Torah are based on this conviction.[2] If this conviction is not based upon evidence, then one's entire adherence to the Torah and one's observance of the commandments is based upon a solely subjective belief. Among the Torah's commandments are various mitzvot that presume that the Torah is true and that other faiths are not valid. For example, the Torah includes many commandments directed against idolatry. These commandments include directives to execute idolaters. If our conviction in the Torah is based upon a completely subjective set of beliefs, then these beliefs are no more credible than those of the idolater. The Torah describes Hashem as a just G-d. How can a just G-d command us to execute those whose beliefs – although different from ours – are every bit as credible?

Second, the implication that conviction in Hashem's existence based on subjective belief is adequate contradicts the position outlined by Sefer HaChinuch in his introduction to his work. There, the author explains that one of the unique elements of the Torah is the Sinai revelation described in this week's parasha. The Torah was revealed by Hashem to the entire nation. All of the people heard Hashem address

the nation. The objective of mass revelation was to establish a firm basis for future generations' acceptance of the authenticity of the Torah as a G-d-given creed.

The details of Sefer HaChinuch's argument are beyond the scope of this discussion, but it is sufficient for our purposes to summarize his thinking. Mass revelation endows the giving of the Torah with the standing of an objective historical event. In other words, the Torah's account of revelation as a mass event is so fantastic that the very acceptance of this claim indicates that it cannot be reasonably assumed to be a fabrication. No generation would have agreed to be the first to accept this fantastic claim were it not part of its historical record.

According to Sefer HaChinuch, the objective of the Sinai revelation was to create a firm, objective basis



for the authenticity of the Torah as a G-d-given truth. It is odd that, according to Sefer HaChinuch, Hashem gave the Torah through the Sinai revelation to provide an objective basis for our conviction in its authenticity – yet a subjective belief in Hashem's existence is acceptable!

Let us consider another issue. Conviction in the existence of G-d is, in itself, a meaningless requirement. Such a requirement lacks any description of the specifics of the required conviction. In other words, what is meant by "G-d"? Without a response to this question, the requirement is too vague to be meaningful. Sefer HaChinuch delineates three elements to the mitzvah: 1) We

are required to accept the existence of a G-d Who is the source of all that exists; 2) This G-d is eternal; 3) This G-d redeemed us from Egypt and gave us the Torah.[3] These elements provide the specific details that give meaning to the requirement to accept the existence of Hashem.

Generally, Sefer HaChinuch adopts the position of Maimonides. However, there seems to be a disagreement between these authorities regarding the specifics of the meaning of acceptance of Hashem. In his Sefer HaMitzvot, Maimonides defines the commandment to accept the existence of G-d as a requirement to acknowledge there is a G-d Who is the cause of all that exists. [4] He does not include within the mitzvah a requirement to acknowledge Hashem as the G-d Who redeemed us from Egypt and gave us the Torah.[5]

Rabbaynu Yehudah HaLeyve also deals with the requirement to accept that Hashem exists. His position is very different from that of Maimonides. He explains that we are required to accept the

(continued on next page)

existence of a G-d Who redeemed us from Egypt and gave us the Torah. He does not include within this basic requirement that we accept Hashem as the creator. He explains that while the Torah requires that we accept the existence of Hashem, this requirement does not include acknowledgement that He is the creator. There is a compelling reason for the requirement's exclusion of this element. Proof of a G-d Who is creator of the universe can only be attained through philosophical and scientific investigation and speculation. These investigations – and any proofs they provide of a creator – are subject to debate and criticism. According to Rabbaynu Yehudah HaLeyve, the Torah does not wish to base acceptance of Hashem upon speculations and investigations that can be debated and are not accessible to the average person. Instead, the Torah instructs us to base our acceptance of Hashem upon historically credible, public events and the Sinai revelation.[6]

It is important to note the Rabbaynu Yehudah HaLeyve does not intend to imply that acceptance of Hashem as creator is not a fundamental element of the Torah. This would be a rejection of the opening chapters of the Torah. The position of Rabbaynu Yehudah HaLeyve is explained by Rabbaynu Nissim Gerondi in his commentary on the Torah. He explains that acceptance of Hashem as the creator of the universe is an essential element of the Torah. However, this is a truth we know through revelation. The requirement to accept Hashem focuses on accepting Him as our redeemer from Egypt and the giver of the Torah. Once we accept the Torah as a revealed truth, it follows that we must accept the contents of this revealed truth. An essential element of this revealed doctrine is that Hashem is creator.[7]

Rabbaynu Yehudah HaLeyve seems to present a compelling argument for his position. Why does Maimonides insist that the essential element of the mitzvah to accept Hashem is the recognition that He is creator? In order to answer this question, we must address an astounding oddity in Maimonides' Mishne Torah. Maimonides' Mishne Torah is a codification of Torah law. However, the third and fourth chapters of this work can be described as a brief summary of physics and astrophysics. Why is this material included in this work of Torah law? Furthermore, as an introduction to each section of this work, Maimonides provides a list of the commandments that will be described and explained in the section. Presumably, the material in the section that follows is an elaboration on the details of these listed commandments. The first section of the Mishne Torah is preceded by such an introduction explaining that the section will deal with ten mitzvot. The list of these mitzvot includes acceptance of His existence and His unity. None of the mitzvot in this list seems to provide an imperative for instruction in and knowledge of physics or astrophysics. Under which of these commandments does Maimonides subsume his

discussion of physics and astrophysics?

Maimonides deals with this issue in the final passages of the fourth chapter. He explains that this discussion is relevant to those mitzvot that require we accept Hashem's existence and unity, and that we adore and hold Him in awe. How is Maimonides' discussion of scientific matters relevant to these mitzvot?

According to Maimonides, acceptance of the existence of Hashem, His unity, and our adoration and awe of Him must be predicated upon an understanding of our universe and His centrality to all existence. We must understand the universe and His role as the source of all existence. It is not adequate to merely accept this assertion as true. We are required to understand the nature of the relationship between Hashem and the universe.

An analogy will help us understand Maimonides' position. As I record these thoughts I am using my computer. I know that my computer is composed of a motherboard and various other circuitries. I have no idea how all these elements operate and work together. I know that these elements exist. I do not understand them nor do I have any appreciation of their operations. My acceptance of their existence is absolute; yet, my understanding of their nature and operation is negligible. Maimonides maintains that the requirement that we accept Hashem's existence cannot be fulfilled simply through acknowledging the fact He exists. This acceptance cannot be akin to my acceptance of the existence of a motherboard and circuitries in my computer. Instead, my acceptance of Hashem must be akin to the engineer's more fundamental comprehension of the computer. It must include an understanding and an appreciation of the nature of the universe and Hashem's role and relationship with reality.

This is the essential difference in the perspectives of Maimonides and Rabbaynu Yehudah HaLeyve. According to Rabbaynu Yehudah HaLeyve, we are required to accept as a revealed truth that Hashem is creator and that He sustains the universe. We are not required to understand or appreciate the full meaning of this assertion. Maimonides rejects this perspective. According to Maimonides, the mitzvah to accept Hashem requires our appreciation of His relationship to the universe and an understanding of His centrality to its existence. In other words, this commandment addresses our overall understanding of reality. We are required to unmask the nature of the universe and the reality in which we exist.

We are now prepared to understand Sefer HaChinuch's position. Sefer HaChinuch adopts a position that is a compromise between these two perspectives. He agrees with Rabbaynu Yehudah HaLeyve that the mitzvah to accept Hashem requires that we accept Him as our redeemer from Egypt and the giver of the Torah. He adopts this position for the reasons that he outlines in the introduction to his

work. The Torah must be based on objective evidence. It cannot be reduced to a set of subjective beliefs. Mass revelation and public miracles experienced by our ancestors provide us with the objective basis for our conviction in Hashem's existence. We do not need to resort of scientific proof and philosophical speculation in order to fulfill this most basic commandment.

However, Sefer HaChinuch is not willing to reject Maimonides' perspective. Our acceptance of Hashem is not complete without acknowledgement of His role as creator and sustainer of the universe. Our acceptance of Hashem must include this element to be meaningful. Nonetheless, Sefer HaChinuch does not completely agree with Maimonides' position. He asserts that although we should strive to achieve the level of understanding described by Maimonides, it is not essential to the minimal fulfillment of the mitzvah. However, an understanding of G-d in the manner explained by Maimonides is the highest fulfillment of the mitzvah.[8] ■

[1] Rav Aharon HaLeyve, Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 25.

[2] Rav Aharon HaLeyve, Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 25.

[3] Rav Aharon HaLeyve, Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 25.

[4] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Sefer HaMitzvot, Mitzvat Aseh 1

[5] Maimonides also does not include in this description of the mitzvah acceptance of Hashem as eternal. However, in the first chapter of his Mishne Torah, Maimonides elaborates on this mitzvah. There he explains that we are required to accept that Hashem is the cause of all that exists and that His existence is unique. His existence is more "absolute". This is apparently a reference to the eternity of His existence. In other words, it appears that according to Maimonides, this commandment requires us to accept that only Hashem's existence is "absolute" or necessary existence. All other things exist as a consequence of His existence and will.

[6] Rabbaynu Yehudah HaLeyve, Kuzari, part I, sections 11-25.

[7] Rabbaynu Nissim ben Reuven Gerondi (Ran), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 1:1.

[8] It should be noted that none of these authorities ascribe to the position that acceptance of Hashem and the Torah can be founded upon blind faith. To my knowledge, this popular position has no basis or antecedents in the writings of the classical authorities. These authorities were unwilling to equate the Torah to other religions that are based upon personal belief and subjective conviction. Instead, the introduction of blind faith as a basis for acceptance of the Torah seems to be a relatively modern development. Perhaps, this more modern perspective is influenced by modern, conventional theology and existential philosophy.

comments made to other gentiles in times past and am left wondering if that was an instruction to them, or just something they did because they chose to do it. Then I get to the section where God reveals and tells the people of Israel, sometimes in detail, what He wants them to be doing and how. But for the gentile – not much. There are no scriptures that direct the Noahide in what to do. I understand that the Torah is for all people (parts of it), but there is nothing that is for "us" – the Gentile God-fearers.

As a Christian, I had the New Testament which gave me instructions and something to hang on to. It gave me identity, ritual and a feeling of connection not only to God, but to the people around me that bore the same name. What opened my eyes was questioning the authority of the NT. Now that I do not recognize it as an authority and guide to my life – what do I replace it with? The Torah? But it does not instruct me directly, only in a vague manner. There is a quote from the book "The Hobbit" in which the main character (Bilbo) is lost in a mountain and states in a moment of despair, "I have lost my dwarves, my wizard, and my way" – that is how I feel. I have lost my guides, what I viewed as authority in my life, and my way. I find myself now with no real anchor and nothing to hang on to. No instruction book that I can say is for me and my people (gentiles). Not even a book in the bible that I can point to and say, "that is instruction for us and how we are to do things".

I have even read recently that there are those that believe Noahism should be a political movement and not a religion...great!!! Now I've got no religion as well. How do I have a relationship or follow what God wants me to do? Read the Torah? But there are no direct instructions to me or my people. No synagogues close by me; and even if there were, there would be little guarantee that there would be a Rabbi that would be willing to help...or knowledgeable enough! There have been times recently when I wish I had never questioned a thing, but stayed in my world of Christianity – at least I had something to hold on to, something I could read that was "to me" and gave me instructions and guidance.

Any advice??? Yes this may seem like rambling, but this is very important to me. I have read "The Rainbow Covenant" and "The Noahide Code", and though very helpful, I cannot consider them scripture. What can I as a gentile read that tells me what to do and how to meet with others and what we should be about? Is Noahism a religion or a political movement? When there are

precious few Rabbis around, what do I use to guide my family – what do I instruct my children in, what do I give them as instructions, how do I tell them to have a relationship with God with no rituals, no direct instructions, no structure and nothing to call their own? —Thank you

equal

Mesora: I empathize with you fully. But in a few moments, I feel you will find what you have been searching for. I say this with such conviction, since this past year, a number of Noahides and myself have been studying the various Noahide laws, as well as the philosophy behind the entire Noahide status, and God's relationship to both Noahide and Jew. But allow me to first address a number of your points.

Binding Rituality

I appreciate you need to have some anchor, or identity, we all do. This will come. But do not seek it in falsehoods. The false category of a "religion" is not proper to admire, as you do. You still value the cohesiveness of the Christians, as if that is a good in itself. It is not. The reason being, that all other religions are false. And admiring anything about a false notion, must itself be false.

The correct path is not to admire religions, as if they all possess some good. But you must change that view to "admiring a mankind that follows God". Don't subcategorize people into false groupings, based on fabricated religions. This gives those religions credence in your mind. In truth, there is only one group: "mankind". God desires all mankind to follow His one religion. And the prophets describe this as a future event. If you clearly realize the fallacy of other religions, your admiration of their cohesiveness will lose its grip on you.

Pre-Torah Responsibility

You asked, "To what has God held all people responsible for in times past?" You are aware of the Noahide Laws. In the beginning of time, God gave man very few laws, since He equipped us with intellect. It was God's plan that man receive a law or two to express the relationship between God and man...that being "Master" and "servant". Once this relationship was expressed by God giving us His laws, we were to then use our intellects and continuously ponder the universe for the remainder of our lives and discover new

truths based on creation, and God's interaction with man. God held (and holds) man accountable – not only for observing those few laws – but for following his and her intellect. But man's corruption created a need to change this plan, and a Flood was necessary, as were many new laws. Much of the Torah aims to remove man's idolatrous beliefs and tendencies. It was only due to these sins that Torah law addresses them. Had Egyptian and Canaanite man not become idolatrous and superstitious, no Torah law could say, "In their statutes [those idolaters] do not follow".

Torah Portions for Gentiles?

The means of "anchoring" yourself must be through interacting with like minded people – be they Noahide or Jew is of no consequence. The strongest bond a person can have with others, is created when people share lives led by truths, Torah study, and Torah morality. The Rabbis teach that the love of King David and Jonathan was the greatest love. It doesn't apply to these two individuals alone, but to any two or more people who live as they did, where Torah and truth is the greatest passion and value. You do not need to be part of a large group to gain a feeling of "being part" of something. Rather, seek to be part of "truth", not large groups of people. You will eventually find the greatest anchor with just a few people who share a love for God, truth and Torah. The intellect is more powerful than the emotions. It gives man his deepest sense of what is real. And when he reaches this level, where his sense of reality is dictated by reality, he then has no need for groups of people who do not share his passion. This is identical for any two human beings.

It is the human insecurity that we all have, which we must overcome. Yes, people need people, but not at the cost of abandoning truth. However, many people seek the company of many fools, assuming masses to always possess true beliefs. But we know this is false based on world religions where masses follow baseless stories. So instead of assuming falsely that there's truth in numbers of believers, we must stay true to what our minds tell us is true. It should also bother the intelligent person, if his beliefs don't rhyme with reason. But when our beliefs are proven, we will find that sensibility to be the greatest anchor, as this will please our minds, offering us the greatest sense of stability.

The portion for the Gentile is the same portion as the Jew. Rabbi Israel Chait recently lectured on Moses' murder of the Egyptian who had beaten the Jew. (Exod. 2:12) Jonathan ben Uzziel states,

(continued on next page)

"Moses looked to see whether this Egyptian's offspring might convert to Judaism, or repent" before he killed him. Rabbi Chait stated a marvelous point. The fact is that a Noahide isn't required to convert. Nonetheless, before killing him, Moses prophetically sought to learn if any offspring would convert from this Egyptian. Why would Moses seek this knowledge, if Gentiles need not convert?

Rabbi Chait explained this teaches that Judaism is truly the preferred state for every Noahide...for everyone. Noahides are not required to convert. Yet, possessing a soul literally equal to a Jew and any other person, we must say one who forfeits conversion, thereby forfeits a perfected life. So as a Jew, I am required to make Torah available to you. It is my obligation to concern myself with the welfare of every other human being. And if the tables were turned and I was a Noahide, you would be required to make Torah available to me. In truth, the Jew is in service of the Noahide, just like he is in service of a fellow Jew.

This week's Torah reading describes the event of Revelation at Sinai. Why did the Jews merit to receive the Torah? It was based on the merit of their Noahide patriarchs and matriarchs. Before Torah was given, these few, perfected Noahides, namely Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, earned God's attention, love, and Divine providence. They surpassed the level of their millions of "Jewish" children. And as all humankind stems from Adam and Eve, all humankind is equal. It is the ignorant and egotistical Jew who feels otherwise. In a past article, we addressed this point fully, completely dismissing all foolish claims that Jews possess superior souls. See it reprinted in this JewishTimes issue, entitled "Perfection". Talmud Avodah Zara (2b) teaches that God offered the Torah to all nations, thereby teaching that all nations have the capacity to observe Torah just like the Jew. All men are created equal.

If you study the Talmudic portions addressing Noahides, you will be busy for years. You will also learn that there is much more than 7 Noahide laws. And each additional area, like witchcraft prohibitions, contain many beautiful lessons. You will find that if you remain a Noahide, God talks to you through the Torah, Prophets, Writings and Talmud. You are far from a shepherdless flock. Noahide life is formally structured. You simply need to consult the correct sources. There is a wealth of knowledge in Avodah Zara and in Talmud Sanhedrin. Rabbi Chait spent years lecturing and recording a series of audible classes available under our Audio link. And we have recorded dozens of classes on Noahide law and philosophy this past year and a half, including many articles also under the Noahide Philosophy

headings in our Philosophy and Audio links. This will greatly help you if you remain in your locale without personal contact with teachers. And your continued communication with us is welcomed. For even more study, Doug Taylor and Rabbi Morton Moskowitz offer weekly classes. And all of this is free. There is nothing preventing you from immersing yourself. Be in touch, and I will provide you, and any other person with more information.

In conclusion, Noahism is not a political movement. It is also not a religion, as if something separate from Judaism. Noahism may be defined as the minimum amount of Judaism necessary for any person to retain a right to life. For when man abandoned these few laws, God abandoned man, and flooded the Earth. But it is also not a system of perfection, as Rabbi Chait explained. We are all equal. We cannot explain why one person is born into a Jewish household, while another is born into a Gentile household...nor does it matter. Neither child is any better off in life simply based on who his parents are. Many Jewish children abandon or never receive Jewish education, while many Gentiles become the world's greatest leaders, as we see in Jewish history. Our greatest kings descended from Ruth the convert, as will the Messiah. God has no favorites. Whom does He favor? It is he or she who lives by His word, His one word given for all mankind. ■



*Warmest wishes
to my dear
friends
Shaya and
Naomi Mann
on the birth
of a boy!
Mazel Tov to
the grandparents
Rabbi Reuven
and Linda
Mann!*

-Marshall

*Shaya, 3 more boys and
you tie my parents!
Naomi, just kidding...
breathe!!!*



TORAH from SINAI

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

Introduction

Judaism, as seen through the eyes of the scholars of the Talmud, has its own unique religious orientation. While basing itself on a cataclysmic event - revelation, it does not look to miracles as the source of its intimate relationship with God. God's revelation at Sinai was a one-time occurrence never to be repeated. This is expressed in Deuteronomy 5:19, "a great voice which was not heard again." (1) In the mind of the Talmudic scholar God continuously

reveals himself not through miracles but through the wisdom of his laws. (2) These laws manifest themselves in Torah - the written and the oral law - and in nature.

The Psalmist expresses this view most clearly. He speaks freely of the wonders of nature and the awe-inspiring universe as in Psalm 8:4, "When I look at the heavens, the work of Your fingers; the moon and stars which you have established". Psalm 104, dedicated to the wonders of nature, climaxes with

the exclamation, "How many are Your works, O Lord! You have made them all with wisdom." Regarding the sheer intellectual joy one derives from studying Torah, he states, "The Torah of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul, the testimony of the Lord is trustworthy, making wise the simple person. The precepts of the Lord are upright, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is lucid, enlightening the eye. The statutes of the Torah are true; they are all in total harmony. They are more to be desired than gold, even fine gold, and they are sweeter than honey and the honeycomb."

When speaking of man's search for God the Psalmist states, "The Lord, from heaven, looked down upon the children of man, to see if there were any man of understanding searching for God (14:2)." Man discovers God only through understanding. Accordingly, the righteous are depicted as being constantly involved in this process of searching for and discovering God. "But only in the Torah of the Lord is his desire, and in His Torah he mediates day and night" (Psalms 1:2). Maimonides sharply criticizes those who consider themselves religious and search for God through the miraculous. "Say to a person who believes himself to be of the wise men of Israel that the Almighty sends His angel to enter the womb of a woman and to form there the foetus [sic], he will be satisfied with the account; he will believe it and even find in it a description of the greatness of God's might and wisdom; although he believes that the angel consists of burning fire and is as big as a third part of the Universe, yet he considers it possible as a divine miracle. But tell him that God gave the seed a formative power which produces and shapes the limbs and he will turn away because he cannot comprehend the true greatness and power of bringing into existence forces active in a thing that cannot be perceived by the senses." (3)

While Judaism is based on a supernatural event, it is not oriented toward the supernatural. The essence of Judaism is not realized through religious fervor over the miraculous but through an appreciation of God's wisdom as revealed both in Torah and the natural world. A miracle, being a breach of God's law, does not contribute to this appreciation. This distinction is crucial since it gives Judaism its metaphysical uniqueness.

I

The foundation of our faith is the belief that God revealed himself to the people of Israel a little over three thousand years ago. The revelation consisted

(continued on next page)

of certain visual and audible phenomena. The elements of fire, clouds, smoke pillars, and the sound of the shofar were present. God produced an audible voice of immense proportion that He used to speak to Moses and then to the people. The voice conveyed intelligible Laws of great philosophic and halachic import. The event left no doubt in the minds of those present that they had witnessed an act of God. The Torah describes the details of the event in two places, first in Exodus 19 and then in Deuteronomy 4, where Moses recounts the event to the people before his passing. What was the objective of the event? In both places the Torah very clearly tells us the purpose of the revelation. The statement that God made to Moses immediately before the event reads as follows:

"I will come to you in a thick cloud, so that all the people will hear when I speak to you. They will also then believe in you forever." (Exodus 19:9)

When Moses recounts the event to the people he says,

"Teach your children and your children's children about the day you stood before God your Lord at Horeb. It was then that God said to me, "Congregate the people for Me, and I will let them hear my words. This will teach them to be in awe of Me as long as they live on earth, and they will also teach their children." (Deuteronomy 4:9-10)

God clearly intended the event to be a demonstration that would serve the present and all future generations. Nachmanides and others consider it one of the 613 commandments to teach the demonstration of the event at Sinai to every generation. We are therefore obliged to understand the nature of this demonstration and how it was to be valid for future generations. An understanding of the foundations of a system offers insight into the character and philosophical milieu of that system. Comprehension of Torah from Sinai provides the most rudimentary approaches to the entire Weltanschauung of Torah.

II

The very concept of a proof or evidence for the occurrence of the event at Sinai presupposes certain premises. It sets the system of Torah apart from the ordinary religious creed. The true religionist is in need of no evidence for his belief. His belief stems from something deep within himself. Indeed, he even senses in the idea of evidence for his belief a mixed blessing, as it were, a kind of alien ally. He

does not enjoy making recourse to reality. Judaism, on the other hand, doesn't just permit evidence; it demands it. If one were to say he believed in Torah from Sinai and does not need any evidence, he would not be in conformity with the Torah. The Torah demands that our conviction that it was given to us by God be based on the specific formula of the demonstration He created for us. Nachmanides states further that were it not for the event at Sinai we would not know that we should reject a false prophet who performs miracles and tells us to abandon any of the laws or ways of the Torah. It is written in Deuteronomy 18:20 that we should not follow such a prophet. But, says Nachmanides, were it not for the demonstration at Sinai we would be totally in a quandary, unable to know whether we should follow the Torah based on miracles that occurred in Egypt or follow the false prophet based on his miracles. (4) The event at Sinai resolves this dilemma. After the event at Sinai the Jew remains unimpressed even by miracles that would lead an ordinary person to conclude that the words of the false prophet are true. We shall return to this point later.

Clearly then, the basis on which one's religious convictions are built differ in the cases of the strict religionist and the man of Torah. The difference might be stated in the following manner: The religionist believes first in God and then in his mind and senses, while the man of Torah, who bases himself on evidence, accepts his mind and his senses and then proceeds to recognize God and His Torah by means of these tools. Only the man of Torah perceives God as a reality as his ideas concerning God register on the same part of his mind that all ideas concerning reality do. (5)

Let us proceed to the demonstration that took place at Sinai. We must understand not only how this event would serve as proof for those immediately witnessing it but for future generations as well, as it is stated in Deuteronomy, "and they will also teach their children." We must define at the outset what we mean by proof. The term proof as it is commonly used has a subjective meaning. We mean proof to the satisfaction of a given individual. As such it is subject to a wide range of definitions and criteria. There are those for whom even the world of sense perception is doubtful. In order not to get lost in the sea of epistemology let us state that the Torah accepts a framework similar to the one a scientist employs. It accepts the world of sense perception and the human mind. The events that occurred at Sinai are according to Torah valid evidence from which a rational person would conclude that a) There exists a deity, b) This deity is concerned with man, and c) This deity entrusted

Moses with the task of conveying his system of laws to the people. To anyone who maintains that even if he were at Sinai he would remain unconvinced, the Torah has little to say.

The Torah addresses itself to a rational mind. It must be remembered that every epistemological system that is defensible from a logical standpoint is not necessarily rational. Rationality demands more than logical consistency; it requires clear intellectual intuition. One may argue, for instance, that we possess no real knowledge of the atom. One might contend that all electrons and protons conspired to act in a certain way when they were being observed. It may be difficult to disprove such a hypothesis, but it is easy to see that it does not appeal innately to the human mind. (6) Our intuitive intellect rejects it. (7)

III

Let us now proceed to the question of how the events at Sinai, which occurred over three thousand years ago, were to serve as evidence for all succeeding generations. We may begin by asking what kind of event, if any, could possibly be performed that would qualify as evidence long after such an event has transpired? What criteria could we set forth that would satisfy such a requirement? Let us analyze how we as human beings gain knowledge. What methods are available to us? It would seem that there are two methods we use to obtain knowledge. The first is by direct observation. This course seems simple enough and for our purpose requires little analysis. Very little of our knowledge, however, is obtained through direct observation. We would know little or nothing of world history if we limited ourselves to direct observation. Even in science little or no progress could be made if one were limited to direct observation. We could not rely on textbooks or information given to us by others. Instead, each scientific observer would have to perform or witness all experimental evidence of the past firsthand. Knowledge in our personal lives would be equally restricted. When we place ourselves on the operating table for surgery we have very little firsthand knowledge about our physical condition or even whether the practitioner is indeed a physician. We put our very lives on the line with almost no firsthand, directly observed evidence.

Why do we do this? Are there any criteria we use that can rationally justify our actions? Here we come to the second class of knowledge available to us - secondhand knowledge. Secondhand knowledge seems to us quite reasonable provided certain

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criteria are met. When secondhand knowledge comes to our attention we are immediately faced with the question: Is this piece of information true or false? We cannot directly know whether or not it is true since we have not witnessed it directly; we can, however, know if it is true by way of inference. If we can remove all causes of falsehood we can infer that it is true. How can we remove all causes of falsehood? The rationale is simple. If the information that others convey to us is false, it is so for one of two reasons. Either the informer is ignorant and mistaken in what he tells us, or his statement is a fabrication. If we can rule out these two possibilities, there remains no cause for the information to be false. We then consider it to be true.

How can we eliminate these two possibilities? For the first one, ignorance, we only need to determine whether the individual conveying the information to us is intellectually capable of apprehending it. We deal here with a direct relationship. If the information is simple we may trust an average person. If it is complex or profound we would only trust someone capable of understanding such matters. The more complex the matter, the more qualified a person is required to be; the more simple the matter, the less qualified an individual needs to be. If an ordinary person would tell us it was raining we would be inclined on the basis of the first consideration to believe him. If he would tell us about complex weather patterns we would doubt his information. If, however, an eminent meteorologist would describe such patterns to us, we would believe him. The day President Kennedy was assassinated word spread almost instantly that he was shot. This report remained accurate although it passed through many hands. The details about how or where he was shot were confused. The shooting was a simple item of news capable of being communicated properly even by many simple people. The details of how and where were too complex for ordinary people to transmit properly.

Sometimes our criteria are fulfilled in concert with each other. We may believe a layperson's testimony that another individual is a well-qualified physician and then take the physician's advice. In another case we may accept a layperson's assertion that a text is the work of notable scientists. We would then proceed to accept as true ideas stated in this text even though they seem strange to us. We would not accept these very same ideas from the original simple person. Our acceptance of the information found in textbooks is always based on this process.

Now we come to the consideration of fabrication. Here again we operate through inference. We may

rule out fabrication when we trust the individual or think he has no motive to lie. If we do not know the individual we work with a second criterion. We accept the information if many people convey it, and we doubt it when its source is only one individual. The rationale is based on the assumption that one individual may have a motive to lie, but it is unlikely that a group of people would have a collective motivation to lie. If we met someone who told us that the 8:30 train to Montreal derailed we might at first be doubtful, but if several passengers gave us the same report we would accept it. We deem it unreasonable to assume a universal conspiracy. Our acceptance of the authorship of books by those named on the covers is based on this assumption. The moment we hear information our minds automatically turn to these two factors. We ask ourselves if the informant is capable of apprehending the information he is conveying and if there is any reason to assume fabrication. If we can answer in the affirmative to the first question and in the negative to the second question, we accept the information as true.

These are the criteria, which guide our lives. They determine the choices we make in both our most trivial and most serious decisions. With this modus operandi we conclude that so and so is a highly qualified physician. If we suspect his integrity or his capabilities we consult a second physician or even a third. If all of them agree we would submit to even a serious operation on the grounds that a universal conspiracy is absurd.

Our acceptance of all historical data is based on the previous considerations. We are satisfied with the verisimilitude of certain historical events and unsatisfied with others depending on whether or not our criteria for reliability have been met. We are quite sure of simple well-known facts. For example, no one would dispute the claim that World War I occurred. Again, we are quite certain that George Washington existed, but we are not so sure of what size shoe Washington wore. A simple fact readily observable by many individuals we accept as true. Details we doubt. For these and for complex information we require qualified individuals. By ruling out fabrication we accept their communications as true. Because of our system we often arrive at gray areas when our criteria have not been adequately fulfilled. To the degree that they are not satisfied we are infused with doubt.

We are now in a position to determine what event could be performed that would retain its validity for future generations. Since future generations cannot observe the event directly, it would have to be an event that rules out in its process of communication

the causes of doubt due to the ignorance of the communicators and due to fabrication. A simple event grasped easily by the senses that occurs before a mass of people who later attest to its occurrence would fulfill the requirements. Such an event would have all the credibility of the most accepted historical fact. If we doubt either a simple event attested to by masses of people or a complex event attested to by qualified individuals, we would ipso facto have to doubt almost all the knowledge we have acquired in all the sciences, all the humanities, and in all the different disciplines existing today. Moreover we would have to desist from consulting with physicians, dentists, lawyers, mechanics, plumbers, electricians, or specialists in any field who work from an accepted body of knowledge.

The event at Sinai fulfills the above requirements. The events witnessed as described were of a simple perceptual nature so that ordinary people could apprehend them. The event at Sinai was structured with the same built-in ingredients that cause us to accept any historical fact or any kind of secondhand knowledge. Moses himself points this out (Deuteronomy 4:9-13,32-36). Moses notes that those events that transpired before the entire nation were clearly perceived. He states,

"You are the ones who have been shown, so that you will know that God is the Supreme Being and there is none besides Him. From the heavens, He let you hear His voice admonishing you, and on earth He showed you His great fire, so that you heard His words from the fire."

Someone may ask how we know that these events were as described in the Torah, clearly visible, and that they transpired before the entire nation. Perhaps this itself is a fabrication? The answer to this question is obvious. We accept a simple fact attested to by numerous observers because we consider mass conspiracy absurd. For the very same reason no public event can be fabricated, for we would have to assume a mass conspiracy of silence with regard to the occurrence of that event. If someone were to tell us that an atomic bomb was detonated over New York City fifty years ago, we would not accept it as true because we would assume that we would have certainly heard about it, had it actually occurred. The very factors, which compel us to accept as true, an account of an event of public proportion safeguards us against fabrication of such an event. (8) Were this not so all of history could have been fabricated. Had the event at Sinai not actually occurred anyone fabricating it at any point in time would have met with the stiff refutation of the people, "had a mass event of that proportion

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ever occurred we surely would have heard of it." Fabrication of an event of public proportion is not within the realm of credibility.

History corroborates this point. In spite of the strong religious instinct in man, no modern religion in over two thousand years has been able to base itself on public revelation. A modern religion demands some kind of verifiable occurrence in order to be accepted. For this reason the two major Western religions, Christianity and Islam, make recourse to the revelation at Sinai. Were it not for this need and the impossibility of manufacturing such evidence, they certainly would not have based their religions on another religion's revelation.

IV

We now face one question. One may argue that we are to accept Torah much as one would accept any major historical event, and we may put our lives on the line based on no stronger evidence, but doesn't religion demand certitude of a different nature? Here we are not looking for certitude based on some formula, which we are forced to employ in our daily lives but certitude, which gives us conviction of an absolute and ultimate nature.

To answer this question we must proceed with an examination of the tenets involved in the institution of Torah from Sinai, to which the rest of this paper is dedicated. Maimonides states that the nation of Israel did not believe in Moses because of the miracles he performed. (9) Moses performed these miracles out of simple necessity. They needed to escape from Egypt, so he split the sea, they needed food, so he brought forth manna. The only reason the people believed in Moses and hence God and Torah was because of the event at Sinai where they heard a voice that God produced speaking to Moses and instructing him to teach the people. But we may ask, weren't the miracles in Egypt enough to convince the people of Moses' authenticity? Didn't they follow him out of Egypt based on what they observed of God's miracles? And doesn't the Torah itself state at the splitting of the sea (Exodus 14:31),

"The Israelites saw the great power that God had unleashed against Egypt, and the people were in awe of God. They believed in God and his servant Moses."

But Maimonides is thoroughly supported by the Bible itself since after this very statement, after the splitting of the sea, God says to Moses (Exodus 19:9),

"I will come to you in a thick cloud, so that all the

people will hear when I speak to you. They will then also believe in you forever."

It is clear, as Maimonides concludes, that there was something lacking in the previous belief for if it were complete the very motive for the Revelation, as stated clearly in the Torah, would be lacking.

A belief instilled by miracles, even miracles of cataclysmic proportion forecasted in advance and occurring exactly when needed is lacking according to Maimonides. They do not effectuate total human conviction. It is, in the words of Maimonides, "a belief which has after it contemplation and afterthought." It may cause one to act on it because of the profound improbability of coincidence but it is not intellectually satisfying. The mind keeps returning to the event and continues to ponder it. God wished Torah to be founded on evidence that totally satisfies the human mind - Tzelem Elokim - which He created. He wished Judaism to be based on a sound foundation of knowledge, which would satisfy man's intellect completely. Miracles may point to something. We may be convinced that coincidence is improbable but such conclusions are haunted by afterthoughts. When the voice produced by God was heard from the heavens there was no further need for afterthought. It was a matter of direct evidence. Only then could it be said that the people knew there is a God and that Moses was His trusted servant. The requirements for knowledge were complete.

Maimonides concludes, "Hence it follows that every prophet that arises after Moses our teacher, we do not believe in him because of the sign he gives so that we might say we will pay heed to whatever he says, but rather because of the commandment that Moses gave in the Torah and stated, 'If he gives you a sign you shall pay heed to him,' just as he commanded us to adjudicate on the basis of the testimony of two witnesses even though we don't know in an absolute sense if they testified truthfully or falsely. So too is it a commandment to listen to this prophet even though we don't know if the sign is true. Therefore if a prophet arose and performed great wonders and sought to repudiate the prophecy of our teacher Moses we do not pay heed to him. To what is this similar? To two witnesses who testified to someone about something he saw with his own eyes denying it was as he saw it; he doesn't listen to them but knows for certain that they are false witnesses. Therefore the Torah states that if the sign or wonder comes to pass do not pay heed to the words of this prophet because this (person) came to you with a sign and wonder to repudiate that which you saw with your own eyes and since we do not believe in signs but only in the

commandments that Moses gave how can we accept by way of a sign this (person) who came to repudiate the prophecy of Moses that we saw and heard." (10) The Jew is thus tied completely and exclusively to the event at Sinai which was formulated to totally satisfy the human mind. (11)

This explains the main idea of the chapter of the false prophet given by the Torah in Deuteronomy 13:2-6.

"If there arise among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder of which he spoke to you comes to pass, and he says, 'Let us go after other gods which you have not known and let us serve them.'"

"Do not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. God your lord is testing you to see if you are truly able to love God your Lord with all your heart and all your soul."

What is this test? The test is to see if your love (12) of God is based on true knowledge, which He has taught you to follow and embrace, or if you are to fall prey to the unsound primitive emotions of the moment that well up from the instinctual source of man's nature. The faith of the Jew can never be shaken by dreamers or miracle workers. We pay no attention to them. Based on the rationally satisfying demonstration of Sinai we remain faithful to God through His wisdom and knowledge. (13) Our creed is that of His eternal and infinite law. When we perfect ourselves in this manner we can say that we truly love God with all our hearts and with all our soul. We then serve God through the highest part of our nature, the Divine element He placed in our soul.

V

We have so far dealt with the actuality of the event at Sinai and with the nature of this event. We must now concern ourselves with the purpose of this event. When the Jews received the Torah at Sinai they uttered two words, *naaseh v'nishma*, "we will do and we will hear", the latter meaning we will learn, understand, and comprehend. The commitment was not just one of action or performance but was one of pursuit of knowledge of the Torah. Rabbi Jonah of Gerundi asks, (14) how can one do if he doesn't understand? A performance of a rational person requires as a prerequisite knowledge of that performance. Rabbi Jonah answers: The event at Sinai served as a verification of the truth of Torah. The Torah set up a system of scholarship to which its ideas are entrusted. "We will do" means we will accept the authority of the scholars of Torah

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concerning proper religious performance until we can understand ourselves by way of knowledge why these performances are correct. The commitment of naaseh (action) is preliminary until we reach the nishma, (hearing) our own understanding. Our ultimate objective is the full understanding of this corpus of knowledge known as Torah. We gain knowledge of Torah by applying our intellects to its study and investigation. The study of Torah and the understanding of its principles is a purely rational and cognitive process. All halachic decisions are based on human reason alone.

Until rather recently the greatest minds of our people devoted themselves to Torah study. Since the tradition of our people has lost popularity, the great intellectual resources of our people have been directed to science, mathematics, psychology, and other secular areas from which eminent thinkers emerged. In former years our intellectual resources produced great Torah intellects like Maimonides, Rabbeinu Tam, and Nachmanides. In modern times these same resources produced eminent secular giants like Albert Einstein, Niels Bohr, and Sigmund Freud. I mention this so that the layman may have some understanding of the intellectual level of our scholars, for just as it is impossible to appreciate the intellect of an Einstein unless one has great knowledge of physics, it is impossible to appreciate the great minds of Torah unless one has attained a high level of Torah knowledge.

The greatest thinkers of science all share a common experience of profound intellectual humility. Isaac Newton said that he felt like a small boy playing by the sea while the "whole ocean of truth" rolled on before him. Albert Einstein said, "One thing I have learned in a long life: that all our science measured against reality is primitive and childlike - and yet it is the most precious thing we have." The human mind cannot only ascertain what it knows; it can appreciate the extent and enormity of what it does not know. A great mind can sense the depth of that into which it is delving. In Torah one can find the same experience. The greatest Torah minds throughout the centuries have all had the realization that they are only scratching the surface of a vast and infinite body of knowledge. As the universe is to the physicist, Torah is to the Talmudist. Just as the physicist when formulating his equations can sense their crudeness against the vast reality he is attempting to penetrate, so too the Talmudist in formulating his abstractions comes in sight of the infinite world of halachic thought. As the Midrash states, "It is far greater than the earth and wider than the sea, and it increases infinitely." The reason for both experiences is the same. They both derive from God's infinite knowledge.

Let me elaborate further on this point. When the scientist ponders the phenomena of nature and proceeds to unravel them, he finds that with the resolution of each problem new worlds open up for him. The questions and seeming contradictions he observes in nature are gateways that guide him to greater understanding, forcing him to establish new theories, which, if correct, shed light on an even wider range of phenomena. New scientific truths are discovered. The joy of success is, however, short-lived, as new problems, often of even greater immensity, emerge on the horizon of investigation. He is not dissuaded by this situation because he considers his new insight invaluable and looks forward with even greater anticipation to future gains in knowledge. The scientist is propelled by his faith that nature is not at odds with itself, that the world makes sense, and that all problems, no matter how formidable in appearance, must eventually yield to an underlying intelligible system, one that is capable of being grasped by the human mind. His faith is amply rewarded as each success brings forth new and even more amazing discoveries. He proceeds in his infinite task.

When studying man-made systems, such as United States Constitutional Law or British Common Law, this is not the case. The investigator here is not involved in an infinite pursuit. He either reaches the end of his investigation or he comes upon problems that do not lend themselves to further analysis; they are attributable to the shortcomings of the designers of the system. The man-made systems exhibit no depth beyond the intellect of their designers. Unlike science, real problems in these systems do not serve as points of departure for new theoretical insights but lead instead to dead ends.

Those who are familiar with the study of Torah know that the Talmudist encounters the same situation as the scientific investigator. Here difficulties do not lead to dead ends; on the contrary, with careful analysis apparent contradictions give way to new insights, opening up new highways of intellectual thought. Wider ranges of halachic phenomena become unified while new problems come to light. The process is infinite. The greatest human minds have had this experience when pondering the Talmud; indeed, the greater the mind, the greater the experience. We are dealing with a corpus of knowledge far beyond the ultimate grasp of mortal man. It is this experience, this firsthand knowledge of Torah that has been the most intimate source of faith for Torah scholars throughout the ages.

The ultimate conviction that Torah is the word of God derives from an intrinsic source, the knowledge of Torah itself. Of course this source of conviction

is only available to the Torah scholar. But God wants us all to be scholars. This is only possible if we do the nishma, the ultimate purpose of the giving of the Torah at Sinai.

The revelation at Sinai, while carefully structured by the Creator to appeal to man's rational principle to move him only by his Tzelem Elokim, is only a prelude to the ultimate direct and personal realization of the Torah as being the work of the Almighty. The revelation at Sinai was necessary to create the naaseh, which is the bridge to the nishma where anyone can gain firsthand knowledge of Torah and the truth it contains. As Rabbi Soloveitchick once said, the study of Torah is a "rendezvous with the Almighty". When we begin to comprehend the philosophy of Torah we may also begin to appreciate how the revelation at Sinai was structured by God in the only way possible to achieve the goals of the Torah - to create a religion, forever secure, by means of which man worships God through the highest element in his nature.

Postscript

A statement of Nachmanides warrants inclusion here. Nachmanides says that we can infer the truth of the Torah from the principle that a person would not bequeath a falsehood to his children. At first sight this seems inexplicable. Idolatry could also avail itself of the same argument. We must obviously say that the principle, it may be true, must be amended to read a person would not transmit intentionally a falsehood to his children. How then does this show Judaism is true? All religious people believe their religion is true and that they are bestowing the greatest blessing on their children by conveying to them their most cherished beliefs.

The words of Nachmanides become clear when we realize that his inference is based on a certain level of Torah knowledge. Either the emotions or the intellect generates a belief. But Torah is a vast system of knowledge with concepts, postulates, and axioms. If such a system were fabricated it would have to be done so intentionally. Nachmanides therefore states his proposition that a person does not bequeath a falsehood to his children.

For the purpose of Nachmanides' inference, one would have to attain at least a basic familiarity with Torah. The ultimate recognition of Torah as a science would of necessity require a higher degree of knowledge. Nachmanides' proof is partially intrinsic, whereas the demonstration of Torah from Sinai is totally extrinsic. There are then three levels of knowledge of Torah from Sinai: the demonstration, the intrinsic verification through knowledge, and that of Nachmanides.

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Epilogue

Torah completely satisfies the needs of the Tzelem Elokim in man's nature. Every human mind craves Torah. Man was created for it (see tractate Sanhedrin 99b). Following the example of Maimonides, who said "Listen to the truth from whomever said it (Introduction to Avos)," and his son Reb Avraham, who endorsed the study of Aristotle in the areas in which he does not disagree with Torah, (15) I take the liberty to quote Bertrand Russell: "The world has need of a philosophy or a religion which will promote life. But in order to promote life it is necessary to value something other than mere life. Life devoted only to life is animal, without any real human value, incapable of preserving men permanently from weariness and the feeling that all is vanity. If life is to be fully human it must serve some end, which seems, in some sense, outside human life, some end which is impersonal and above mankind, such as God or truth or beauty. Those who best promote life do not have life for their purpose. They aim rather at what seems like a gradual incarnation, a bringing into our human existence of something eternal, something that appears to the imagination to live in a heaven remote from strife and failure and the devouring jaws of time. Contact with the eternal world - even if it be only a world of our imagining - brings a strength and a fundamental peace which cannot be wholly destroyed by the struggles and apparent failures of our temporal life." (16)

Torah makes our lives worthwhile. It gives us contact with the eternal world of God, truth, and the beauty of His ideas. Unlike Russell the agnostic, we do not have to satisfy ourselves with a world of "our imagining" but with the world of reality - God's creation. How fortunate we are and how meaningful are the words we recite each day, "for they [the Torah and mitzvos] are our lives and the length of our days." ■

End Notes

1. See Rashi, Rashbam, and Ibn Ezra on this verse.
2. In his description of the Torah scholar, Rav Soloveitchik states, "He does not search out transcendental, ecstatic paroxysms or frenzied experiences that whisper intonations of another world into his ears. He does not require any miracles or wonder in order to understand the Torah. He approaches the world of halacha with his mind and intellect just as cognitive man approaches the natural realm. And since he relies upon his intellect, he places his faith in it and does not suppress any of his psychic faculties in order to merge into some supernal existence. His own personal understanding can resolve the most difficult and complex problems. He pays no heed to any murmurings of [emotional] intuition or other types of mysterious

presentiments." Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man*. (Philadelphia: 1983, Jewish Publication Society of America) p.79.

3. Maimonides, Moses. *The Guide for the Perplexed*. Trans. by M. Friedlander. (London: 1951 Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd) p. 161.

4. From both Maimonides and Nachmanides who concur on this point, as well as from the plain meaning of the Bible itself with regard to the objective of Revelation, it is clear that Judaism does not give credence to the existence of an authentic inner religious voice. Were this the case, there would be no need for the demonstration at Sinai in order to discredit the false prophet (Deuteronomy 8:2-6). On the contrary, this would be the exact test spoken of, to see if one will be faithful to this inner voice. For Judaism this inner voice is no different from the subjective inner feelings all people have for their religious and other unwarranted beliefs. It stems from the primitive side of man's nature and is in fact the source of idolatry. This is clearly stated in Deuteronomy 29:17, 18:

"Today, there must not be among you any man, woman, family or tribe, whose heart strays from God, and who goes and worships the gods of those nations. When [such a person] hears the words of this dread curse, he may rationalize and say, 'I will have peace, even if I do as I see fit.'"

Why does the Torah here as in no other place present to us the rationalization of the sinner? The Torah is describing the strong sense of security these primitive inner feelings often bestow on their hosts and is warning of the tragic consequences that will follow if they are not uprooted.

5. It is imperative that the reader examines the passages in the Torah relevant to this notion. These include Exodus 19:4, Deuteronomy 4:3,9,34,35, and 36.

6. As a classic example, metaphysical solipsism may be logically irrefutable but is to the human mind absurd.

7. We may even be able to discover why we reject it, let us say, due to Occam's razor, the maxim that assumptions introduced to explain a thing must be as few as possible, but our rejection is not due to a knowledge of Occam's razor but rather Occam's razor is based on our rejection. It is part of the innate rationale of our mental system. Occam's razor, a rather marvelous formula, does not rely on deductive logic. It shows that the natural world somehow conforms to our mental world. The simplest idea is the most appealing to the human mind and is usually the most correct one. The world is in conformity with the mind. In the words of Albert Einstein, "The most incomprehensible thing about the world is that it is comprehensible."

8. It should be understood that the mere claim that an event was a public one and its acceptance by

people does not qualify the event as fulfilling our requirements; it is only if the people who accept the information are in a position to reject it that their acceptance is of value. If a person from Africa claims to people of Sardinia that a public event transpired in Africa, the acceptance by the Sardinians is no indication of reliability as they are not in a position to confirm or deny the event. It is only if the claim is made to the same people who were in a position to observe the event that acceptance is of value. Claims made by early Christians about public miracles of the Nazarene do not qualify, as the masses of Jews before whom they were supposedly performed did not attest to them. The same is true of claims made by other faiths (though, as we will see, after Sinai miracles have no credibility value).

9. See Maimonides, Code of Law, Chapter VIII, Laws Concerning the Foundations of Torah.

10. Ibid. Chapter VIII.

11. This point is crucial. It contradicts popular opinion. The Jew remains at all times unimpressed by miracles. They do not form the essence of his faith, and they do not enter the mental framework of his creed. Though the most righteous prophet may perform them, they instill no belief. His credence harks back to only one source - Sinai.

12. See the concept of love of God as described by Maimonides Code, Laws of the Foundations of Torah Chapter II 1,2, and our elaboration on this theme in "Why one should learn Torah."

13. When visiting the Rockefeller Medical Institute, Albert Einstein met with Dr. Alexis Carrel, whose extracurricular interests were spiritualism and extrasensory perception. Observing that, Einstein was unimpressed. Carrel said, "But Doctor what would you say if you observed this phenomenon yourself?" To which Einstein replied, "I still would not believe it." (Clark, Ronald W. Einstein: The Life and Times. (New York: 1971, Avon Books) p. 642). Why would the great scientist not capitulate even to evidence? It is a matter of one's total framework. The true man of science who sees knowledge permeating the entire universe from the smallest particle to the largest galaxies will not be shaken from his view by a few paltry facts even though he may not be able to explain them. Only the ignorant are moved by such "evidence." In a similar manner miracles do not affect a man of Torah who is rooted in Sinai and God's infinite wisdom. His credo is his cogito.

14. Rebbeinu Yonah Avos III 9.

15. Concerning books that are proscribed, this follows the precedent of the Talmud [Sanhedrin 110b], *mili mealyesah deis baih darshinon* - those true things that are contained in them we do study.

16. Schlipp, Paul R. *The Philosophy of Bertrand Russell*. (LaSalle: 1989, Open Court Publishing). p.533.

Perfection:

Human Accomplishment – Not a Jewish Birthright

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Too often we hear the term “Jewish soul” expressing baseless, Jewish arrogance. Others accept the heretical belief that God literally blew a “piece” of Himself into man: “And He breathed into his nostrils a living soul” (Gen. 2:7) and, “And God created man in His image; in the form of God He create him [man]...” (ibid, 1:27) Certainly, if Maimonides, Ramban, Rashi, Unkelos and literally all other Rabbis rendered such anthropomorphisms as false and heretical, we must fully understand why these genius minds reinterpreted these verses, and then adopt these truths.

Maimonides teaches that since God is not physical, He possesses no physical qualities or accidents, such as “division”. (13 Principles; Principle III; Yesodei HaTorah 1:7) All Rabbis agree; God has no “parts”; thus, metaphors like the “Tzelem Elokim” (“Form of God”) placed in man, must be understood differently: simply indicating the “higher status” which humans possess over all other creations. As a Rabbi taught, God called our soul Tzelem “Elokim” – including His name – to underscore the great potential of our souls. For only with our souls, can we learn about God. But in no way can God have parts, and therefore, man’s attempt to abandon responsibility by feeling God is “inside” him, is a fallacy. (This pantheistic view led Jews to believe that God existed even inside sin, and other absurdities.)

Ironically, these arrogant Jews contradict themselves, basing their view of a Jewish “superior” soul, on those verses above...which address the “gentile” Adam the First. Continuing with the Torah’s lessons, God’s selection of the convert Ruth as the forerunner of our future Messiah, and Kings David and Solomon, clearly teaches that God finds no favorite in the Jew. In fact, God created man only once, and all humans are direct descendants of that first gentile couple. God never re-created man or the soul, giving the Jew a “new and improved model”. We all share the exact same design and potential. It was only due to mankind’s idolatrous sins and Abraham’s monotheistic lifestyle, that God selected Abraham and his children to receive and guard the Torah...for “all” mankind. God’s plan was, and remains, that “All sons of flesh call His name”. (Alenu Prayer) Furthermore, since God planned to



give His Torah to descendants of gentiles, this means that gentiles are fully capable of practicing Judaism and obtaining Torah perfection. The born Jew has no advantage.

It is not the “receipt” of Torah that perfects humans, but our adherence to the commands...and this applies to Jew and gentile alike. Human perfection is not a Jewish birthright, but an accomplishment, available to all God’s creatures. And if a gentile is wise, he will love the Torah as does a knowledgeable Jew, and he will take on more than his mere seven Noachide laws. He will see that God’s commands perfect a human, and he will wish to share in that lot. Gentile converts throughout history showed themselves as the wisest members of their cultures – and ours – many becoming great, Jewish leaders.

Those seven commands are not a “limit” for the gentile, or as some say, “their” system. A Rabbi once taught: the Noachide laws are the bare essentials that entitle a human to retain his right to life. It is not “his” system, or a perfection system. Rather, Noachide laws are a starting point – not an exalted destination. Since the gentile is no different than the Jew, he too benefits equally by adhering to the Torah’s commands, as the Torah teaches: “One Torah and one statute you shall have for yourselves, and the convert who dwells among you.” (Numb. 15:16) This proves all humans share the identical design and potential.

The foolish view that converts always had some Jewish “spark” is equally arrogant, and baseless. For all the Talmud means by “future Jews and converts stood at Sinai” (Shavuot 39a) is that any person, who sees the truth of Torah, is “as if” he or she witnessed Revelation, which proves Torah beyond all doubt. Just as witnessing Sinai removed all doubt of God’s existence and the Divine nature of Judaism, those today who realize this truth are viewed “as if” they stood at Sinai. Equally true: a Jew today who abandons Torah is “as if” he wasn’t at Sinai.

Abraham was no more Jewish than Sodom’s sinful inhabitants annihilated by God. But Abraham’s difference was in his use of his Tzelem Elokim, extricating himself through reason alone from an idolatrous youth, and discovering and

teaching monotheism to his fellow man. He viewed all humans as equal expressions of God’s will. All men are created equal.

Abraham was a prophet, and more perfected than anyone alive today: Jews and Rabbis included. He was not Jewish, yet God loved him. Talmud Sanhedrin 59a states: “A gentile who studies Torah is akin to a High Priest.” And the prophet Isaiah 2:2 teaches that in messianic times, gentiles will literally stream to Jerusalem to learn Torah. But gentiles cannot simply wake up one day and desire Torah, and thus, Moshiah cannot arrive...if Jews hide the Torah from gentiles by voicing acceptance of other religions. No, that deludes them into believing that we view their religions on par with Torah. However, the Torah teaches, “From a false matter distance yourself.” (Exod. 23:7) Hence, we must be honest and clear: Judaism views all other religions as imposters, since no other religion was God given. This explains why others preach faith, and not proof, as does Judaism. Our core tenet is that Judaism alone is Divine, proven by the mass witnesses at Sinai...the same manner in which all history is proven. Such a mass revelation is absent in literally all other religions, and why we do not accept their baseless claims. Furthermore, if we recognize any other religion, we violate God’s words: “Do not add to it [Torah] and do not subtract from it.” (Deut. 13:1) All other religions defy this fundamental directive of God in their addition to, or subtraction of Torah law. Again, God said, “One Torah...for yourselves, and the convert.” This means no other laws are acceptable, for any people.

One other popular misquotation is from Job 31:1,2: “A treaty have I made with my eyes; for what shall I gaze at a virgin? And what portion of God above shall I have, and an inheritance of God on high?” Job rightfully defends himself, claiming that he never gazed at a woman for any other reason than examining her qualities, to determine if she was a fit bride for his sons. For by gazing longer, it would be out of lust, and he would forfeit his share of God’s reward. But many Jews and a popular, chassidic work misquote this verse, illiterately isolating the words “portion of God above” (“chelek Elokim mimaal”) to mean that God placed a part of Himself into man: truly an inexcusable corruption of Torah. This is also an outright denial of our greatest Rabbis who state such beliefs forfeit our Olam Haba, our afterlife. And this is all in the name of feeling that as Jews, we are better? Since when does illiteracy and denial of God’s Torah and Rabbis elevate one’s soul over the gentile?

In truth, the arrogance of these Jews, is the exact opposite trait which Ruth the convert expressed, and earned her great status, and the role as ancestor to Messiah and our great kings. God did not create gentile and Jew; rather, He simply created “man and woman”. ■

Think:

The sapphire tablets
– the 10 Commandments –
which God gave Moses and
the Jews on Mount Sinai
3319 years ago

Judaism: the only religion based on proof – not blind faith. The only religion where masses witnessed God’s revelation and transmitted those miraculous events. Had Revelation at Sinai never occurred, the Jews would not have transmitted it as their history, in place of truth. They would not have accepted a Moses seeking to convince them, of what they had not experienced. But the Jews did transmit this event. Sinai took place. We possess God’s word. **How fortunate we are.**

Teach others who don’t know.
It’s not just a good idea...it’s the Mitzvah.