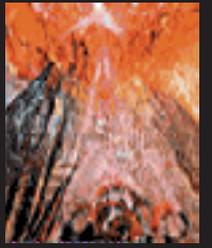


Deuteronomy, 5:19: "These matters (the Ten Commandments) God spoke to your entire assembly from amidst flames, cloud, and thick darkness, a great voice not to be repeated, and He wrote them on two tables of stone and gave them to me." God teaches that He will never repeat His revelation. He gave one religion to all of mankind for all generations. All other religions are discredited by God's own words.

Painting of Sinai (right): Rebecca Schweiger - www.rebeccarts.com



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Pharaoh's Intimidation

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Reader: When Moses appeared before Pharaoh why did not Pharaoh simply have him killed?

Mesora: A rabbi answered, the term "Elohim", (applied to Moshe, being made an Elohim by God over Pharaoh), meant that God made Moshe greatly revered in Pharaoh's eyes. As such, Pharaoh was greatly intimidated by Moshe, to the point that he would not threaten him. Outwardly, Pharaoh required the respect of his people, so he spoke harshly to Moshe. Inwardly, he feared Moshe.

The Faults of Christianity

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Gentile and Jew alike anticipate a certain false happiness in the Christmas holiday season; the lights and decorated trees, the gifts and parties that all indulge people in a smothered and imagined "holiday cheer". Of course, it is the media and those in search of this temporary seasonal happiness that additionally promote this seductive and simulated sense of happiness. Should we allow our lives to be permeated and guided by what is popular in our culture? Are we to simply follow along without questioning these "false" beliefs?

Our souls are at stake and, our limited time here in Earth demands that we take stock in our actions and beliefs. Are we living life properly and appropriately as our Creator continuously asks us? We must realize the false notions we harbor whether Jew or gentile. It is so imperative that we each question these popular notions and not blindly coast through life, losing what could be a marvelously inspiring and enlightening existence. What a tragic loss of God's gift of life to each of us if we do not engage our intelligence given to man, and no other creature. God desires that we use this intelligence in the most important of all areas - our belief in Him and His plan for mankind.

The purpose of this paper is to elucidate the basic flaws of Christianity, in order to benefit gentile and Jew alike who find baseless appeal in its false notions. I hope through the critique presented you come to appreciate my intention and increase your understanding of God's own words. His desire is for our good, and to show us what is contrary to the Torah system.

I. Essential Flaws in Christianity's Tenets

Christianity Claims God Spoke with Jesus

It is essential that you become fully aware of the historically proven event at Mount Sinai where God demonstrated His existence and selection of the Jews to adhere to His Torah. This event was witnessed by approximately 2.5 million people, a proof not duplicated in any other culture or religion, and recorded in Deuteronomy 4:9-15. It is impossible that history contain the account at



Fabrications about Jesus attempt to evoke sympathy to gain followers

Sinai where the Jews heard an intelligent voice emanating from the fiery mount Sinai, seeing no physical source, and that such a story be accepted by the world to the present - were it false. Had Sinai never occurred, it would not be accepted back then, nor would it survive through time. Had Moses lied, and attempted to convince individuals they saw such a miracle, they would view Moses as a fraud. Imagine someone telling you that you were at an event that you didn't attend, that there were 2.5 million others there, and that specific miracles occurred. You would view the person as bizarre, and he would have absolutely no success at convincing you or others that you witnessed that which you did not. The unanimous acceptance today of this event as history - not only accepted by Jews - confirms its truth. Concocted stories of a peoples' history are not unanimously accepted. Sinai occurred. God selected the Jews and no others, and He gave a law not ever to be altered. God selected the Jews through an awesome event to serve for the precise purpose of a proof. Judaism is not based on belief. No science is.

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The Faults of Christianity

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

(continued from page 1)

Not only does reason deny acceptance of all other religions, but God's very words attest to the fact that Judaism will be the one eternal and exclusive religion:

Deuteronomy, 4:33,34: "Has any people heard the voice of God speaking from amidst fire as you have heard, and lived? Or has God miraculously come to select one nation from others with miracles, signs and wonders, and with war, and a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with great awesome deeds, as all that Hashem your God did for you in Egypt in front of your eyes?"

Moses reminds the people here of the Jews' selection. God selected the Jews from all other nations. This was never performed for any other nation. Christianity does not accept God's selection of the Jewish nation. Christianity denies God's very words. They concoct stories of supposed miracles Jesus performed. But any individual can suggest God spoke to them, or that they performed miracles. There is no way to disprove such lies, but be mindful, nor is there any way to prove them. All religions are based on individual testimony, as this is something others cannot disprove. It is a safe position. Not Judaism. Judaism is based on a historical event witnessed by millions. Judaism is based on historically proven events.

Christianity Claims God became Physical

The notion of God becoming physical is an impossibility. That which created all existence, is the One Being not subject to those laws governing all physical matter. To suggest God can become physical and be subject to physical laws, means that He does not control the universe. A clear contradiction and impossibility.

Christianity Claims Jesus Died for Other Peoples' Sins

Deuteronomy, 24:16; "There will not be killed fathers for sons (sins, nor) are sons killed for father's (sins). Each man in his own sin will be killed."

This verse teaches that the theory of the death of Jesus on behalf of others' sins, is contrary to God's own words. God's system is just, only the one who sins pays the price, not another. God teaches us intellectually sound ideas that are reasonable and conform with our sense of justice.

Christianity Endorses a "Blind Faith" System

Belief can be used for any idea or religion. Belief seeks no support from reality. Christianity teaches what is not real. Contrary to Christianity's own goals, they teach that defectors finding other religions more emotionally appealing is proper. Christianity's tenet of "blind faith" would require them to allow Christians to follow another religion and deny Jesus, if they followed faith. How can they argue? They are not based on reason, so a system of faith other than Christianity cannot be argued as wrong. An incoherent and contradictory position. If however Christianity attempts to lodge reason to justify Christianity as the supreme religion, they thereby deny their principle of blind faith, as they have demonstrated an attempt to justify their religion via reason, and not faith.

Christianity Denies our Use of God-given Intelligence

In the most important of all areas - our belief in God's word - Christianity asks us to abandon reason. Sinai was orchestrated by God to achieve a proof of God's existence and His desired system for man. No other religion can make such a historically proven claim. God intended man to use his reason and arrive at the correct life. Christianity asks man to violate God's intent and abandon reason, living by faith.

Not Observing God's 7 Noachide Laws is a Sin Against God

Christianity's laws oppose God's will that all gentiles follow the 7 Noachide laws outlined in the Torah.

Religion of Love

A Rabbi once noted, the claim by Christianity to be a religion of love is an attempt to deny an underlying religion of hate. Jesus in effect murdered God, as Jesus existence replaced God's existence. Calling their religion one of love attempted to deny Christianity's true hateful and aggressive ideology displayed by the Crusades, Christianity's intolerance of other religions, and their creed of eternal damnation for those who deny Jesus.

II. Christianity's Primitive Nature and Mass Appeal

Deification of Man

Christianity affords mass appeal to its adherents through many false ideas. We already mentioned one, a guilt free existence because Jesus' dies for one's sins. Accordingly, man's sins can be absolved, and man takes no responsibility for his corrupt actions. This is quite enticing, although baseless and false. Another primary idea is the satisfaction of the emotional need for approval from man, i.e., the man Jesus is the central focus. Man develops an over attachment to his parents, projecting on them a supreme, authoritative status. A child seeks approval, and finds parental disappointment most devastating. Many individuals never grow out of this emotion and find satisfaction even in adult life, by idolizing human figures and creating heroes. Christianity satisfies this need through its portrayal of Jesus as superhuman, a clear display of man deifying man, not God. Conversely, Judaism teaches that man is simply flesh and blood, with no powers. God remains as the central focus of Judaism. Numerous laws prohibit man from seeking man's approval and the projection of superhuman qualities onto man. In contrast to Christianity's saints, Judaism's prophets shun the spotlight, as seen from Elisha who himself did not approach Naaman with God's instructions for healing, but Elisha sent his servant to give those instructions to cure Naaman's leprosy. Elisha wished God alone to maintain responsibility for the government of man and nature. Additionally, idolatry, warlocks, enchanters, and witches to name a few, are prohibited by Judaism. Each law is an example of Judaism's goal to extricate man from believing in any power outside of God. As Ibn Ezra and Maimonides state, all these practices are false. God created all matter and all laws governing them - He alone Who created these laws, controls them. Man, a creation himself cannot over power God. Man is the created, not the Creator.

Denial of the Sexual Drive - Holy People - Virgin Birth

As a permutation of the previous corruption, Christianity places nuns and priests on pedestals. Part of their aura is their deprivation of sex. Christianity seeks to create saints by praising those who abstain from areas in which man feels shame or guilt. Conversely, Judaism does not deny man's powerful urges, but asks man to channel those urges to the proper partner, and only at the appropriate times and circumstances. Judaism does not wish man to be steeped in desires, nor to deny his desires. Judaism directs man to the proper balance of satisfaction and abstention. Man is taught to guide his desires, not to follow them blindly. This practice redirects man's energies towards the higher goals of pursuing wisdom and justice. Man finds true satisfaction only when he engages his true self - his intelligence. Current accounts of priests sodomizing children demonstrate Judaism's accurate view on the need for sexual satisfaction, and the repercussions of those who deny real desires. Judaism teaches reality, Christianity teaches lies, in the most fundamental area. It may very well be that the "virgin birth" story was written to deny the sexual in connection with Jesus, from his "conception".

The contradiction of nuns and priests is that on the one hand, they claim their life's work to be God's will, i.e., their existence is a good. On the other hand, their abstinence does not allow new children to enter the world, who themselves could become nuns and priests. If they feel human existence is a good when one is a nun or priest, their very abstinence prevents other nuns and priests from being born and continuing their work.

Christianity Teaches Fantasy in the Most Fundamental Area. Eating of Jesus' Body

Matthew 26:26-28 "26. Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is my body."

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The Faults of Christianity

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

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27. And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you; 28. for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

Christianity's practice of eating a wafer symbolizing Jesus' body, traces itself back to primitive, cultural rites. In one rite, members of a cult would drink the blood of animals, believing it to imbue them with that animal's characteristics. When we study a man-made religion, we will undoubtedly discover evidence of man's base, instinctual drives. Man-made religion is in truth a projection of man's instinctual desires that are repressed - their system will reflect man's instinctual nature. Again, Christianity succeeds at deviating completely from God's will. Unlike Judaism, this practice of eating the body of Jesus has no correlation to anything true, thereby reinforcing fallacy. It further embellishes the need for attachment to the physical, yet represses natural human desire and need.

Jesus' Resurrection

Belief in immortality and fortunetellers are just fabricated solutions to man's two basic fears; 1)death, and 2)security about his own Earthly fate. With the resurrection of Jesus - his "second coming" - Christianity gives false hope not only in Jesus' immortality, but in his followers' as well, as they too will share in the ultimate, eternal kingdom. Resurrection also attempts to validate Christianity; The second coming alludes to Christianity's unspoken doubt of Jesus' validity, as his first coming was not conclusive evidence.

III. Christianity Denies God's Own Words

False Prophets

The Torah teaches that we are not to follow a prophet who goes against God's word:

Deuteronomy, 18:19, 20. "And it will be the man who does not listen to My words, but who speaks in My name, I will inquire from him. However, a prophet who sinfully speaks a matter in My name which I did not command to speak and he speaks in the name of other gods, you must kill that prophet."

Jesus spoke against God's laws in God's name, attempting to change what God said. God's Torah teaches that this crime is so great, it deserves death.

Incomparability to Judaism

A further false proof of Christianity's claim of the supreme religion is the following: We might ask why God did not perform such an undeniably true event as Sinai, on behalf of Christianity. If God wishes something to have recognition as truth, Sinai teaches that He has the ability to create an undeniably true event, witnessed by millions. Why are all religions - including Christianity - bereft of such events? It is clear that God does not endorse Christianity or any religion. God endorsed Judaism alone, and He promised in the Torah that such an event will never be reproduced:

Deuteronomy, 5:19: "These matters (the Ten Commandments) God spoke to your entire assembly from amidst flames, cloud, and thick darkness, a great voice not to be repeated, and He wrote them on two tables of stone and gave them to me."

God clearly states that such a revelation at Sinai, such a selection of a people, and specifically a giving of a law, will never be repeated. Again, the giving of a law by God will never be repeated. These are God's words and Christianity denies them with their fabrication that God endorsed a new system of Christianity. Christianity's ideology is based on lies told to its followers, duping them into the belief that God has a new plan, even though God stated such a revelation will never be repeated. Christianity lies to its followers.

Christianity Violates God's Command not to Alter God's Torah

Deuteronomy, 4:2: "Do not add on to the matter which I command you, and do not detract from it, to observe the commandments of Hashem your God, which I command you."

God teaches us not to alter the Torah, yet Christianity does so in so many areas. Again denying God's words. Christianity suggests that God "changed His mind". This is absurd that a Perfect Being knowledgeable of all past and future history, would create a complete and perfect Torah system at one point, which includes a law not to alter it in any way, and then contradict His own words as Christianity suggests. An example is that Christianity abrogates divorce laws.

IV. A Corrupt Philosophy and Plagiarism

Christianity Portrays Jesus Reasoning to be Unjust:

Matthew 26:6-13: 6. "Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, 7. a woman came up to him with an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head, as he sat at table. 8. But when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste? 9. For this ointment might have been sold for a large sum, and given to the poor." 10. But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. 11. For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. 12. In pouring this ointment on my body she has done it to prepare me for burial. 13. Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."

Jesus is on record as preferring kindness to himself over the poor. His reasoning is that he will not always be around. Therefore one must prefer to share oil with Jesus than using the monetary value of that oil to support the needy.

Christianity Mimics the Torah to Earn Credibility

Compare to the Torah's words to Christianity's plagiarism:

The Torah says in Exodus, 4:19:

"God said to Moses in Midyan, go, return to Egypt, for there have died all the men that sought your life."

The New Testament says in Matthew 2:20:

"Rise, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead."

The Torah says in Exodus 1:16:

"And (the king of Egypt) said, "when the Hebrew women give birth, and look upon the stone, if it is a son, kill him, and if it is a daughter, let it live."

The New Testament says in Matthew 2:16:

"Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, was in a furious rage, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under..."

In both statements above Christianity attempts to equate Jesus to Moses by distorting the truth and provoking the emotion of pity. Christianity continuously portrays Jesus as the victim to foster identification and more adherents. Just like Moses was threatened by Pharaoh, the story constructed in the New Testament makes Jesus the victim of King Herod. Coincidentally, the events at the time of Jesus' birth were conveniently fabricated to mimic a similar threat, which had taken place during the time of Moses' birth. The reader of the New Testament feels pity and compassion for Jesus in the name of plagiarism. The goal of the New Testament is to equate the statures of Jesus and Moses, which is absolutely impossible. In so many statements contained the New Testament, if read carefully, one will find authentic Torah accounts plagiarized with slight changes, replacing true Torah personalities with Jesus.

Plagiarism is also seen clearly in the first quote; just as Moses was threatened and then afterwards informed to return as all those seeking his life are dead, the New Testament again attempts to plagiarize a known story of Moses and transpose it onto Jesus. For the very goal of engendering pity as a tool for identification with Jesus, Christianity adopted the symbol of the Cross. The Cross' unanimous acceptance as a central icon of their religion displays how correct the developers of Christianity were that pity is a sure-fire lure to attract adherents.

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The Faults of Christianity

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

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A most obvious plagiarism describes the sale of Jesus by one of the 12 disciples for 30 pieces of silver. It is almost identical to the sale of Joseph by one of his 12 brothers for 20 pieces of silver in the Torah. Compare:

Genesis 37:25:

"And there passed by Midianite men, traders, and they drew him and lifted him (Joseph) out of the pit and they sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for 20 pieces of silver and they brought Joseph to Egypt."

Matthew 26:14-15:

"14. Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests 15. and said, "What will you give me if I deliver him to you?" And they paid him thirty pieces of silver."

Christianity uses another statement from the Torah and distorts it in order to evoke empathy and identification with Jesus who is again being portrayed as the "victim." Yet, the goal of Christianity is to raise Jesus to a leadership role. The downtrodden Jesus becomes a great leader as Joseph, who was sold by his brothers would eventually become a great leader. Christianity found many ways to distort the Divine Word of God in order to gain mass acceptance and many followers.

In summary, Christianity lies to its people, it contradicts God's own words, it is a religion where reason is second to belief, and deceit is the means of attracting to-be proselytes. Do not feel compelled to adhere to Christianity due to its popularity, or its leaders' reputations. Many people are drawn in by the impressive structures of churches, ancient paintings depicting Jesus, the Church's long history, and the sense of piety associated with nun's and priests' garb. Do not be impressed, for previous idolaters also made great structures, wore ornate clothing, and were widespread, yet, we comprehend their false ideas based on using reason alone. Reason teaches us that what is false cannot become true because we adorn and decorate it. King Solomon taught, "A gold ring in the snout of a pig, (so too is) a beautiful woman with a deviant personality." (Proverbs 11:22) Radak's last statement on Zephania, 1:8 teaches that God punished certain Jews who dressed in clothing more impressive than their brother Jews, only to project a false piety. External dress is frowned upon by God, as this has no bearing on one's perfection, yet it does destroy social harmony. So too we are not to be impressed by Christianity's adornment of their clergy, nor of their beautiful structures or moving, choric hymns. What is false cannot be made true no matter how much they adorn themselves, no matter how effective they are at mimicking Judaism and no matter how much pity they evoke for their fabricated man-god.

God's Torah requires one to use one's mind and to seek proof for one's actions. It contains those proofs so man may function in accordance with intelligence, leading a life which is pleasing and reasonable. Man, being so impressed with the sensibility of the tenets of Judaism, is encouraged to derive much benefit not only in actions that are good for oneself and society, but as one engages one's mind, one discovers new insights which offer the most satisfying life. Intelligence is the one faculty God gave man and no other being. God desires that mankind enjoy life, and use only intelligence to study reality and perceive wisdom which affords a person the greatest existence.

Intelligent inquiry is the sole tool enabling our appreciation of all sciences, and of Judaism. God created sciences and Judaism to reflect His wisdom. Through our minds, we see beauty in the Torah system, we find solid proofs and reasons for God's laws and ideals, we become enamored with the depth and structures of Torah laws, and we continually grow towards God's goal for man - a being appreciative of, and attached to what is real and true.

God's perfect Torah system applies to both gentile and Jew. There is no other God-given system. There is no other good for mankind. ■

Fake Monotheism

RIVKA OLENICK

The majority of the world assumes that Islam is based on true monotheism, Judaism does not. Islam attempts to be recognized as believers in one god even though Mohammed, the initiator of Islam was a navi sheker (false prophet).

The world is quite aware that God chose His Jewish nation to represent the truth to mankind. Unfortunately, this truth the world cannot tolerate. We await the Messiah who will prove to the world that the purpose of God's nation is to bring about ultimate truth. This will be accomplished through the building of the third Temple, bringing all Jews back to Torah and to live in the land that was given to them by God, the One God, the God of Israel.

According to the Rambam, when the Jewish people became a monotheistic nation, all the polytheistic (those believing in many gods) nations realized that their beliefs were being challenged. So they joined forces with the goal to destroy Israel and the Jews, to undermine true monotheism which is Judaism, and replace it with their false monotheism Islam, through their false prophet Mohammed. For hundreds of years, every attempt was made and is still made to kill and oppress Jews. These attempts were/are to convince the Jews that their beliefs are futile and untrue and that the land of Israel was given to them through Ishmael. As it states in the Chumash that the covenant was made with Isaac specifically and not Ishmael. Historically, not only did the Jews not convert under great pressure, they held more steadfast to Judaism.

Much of man-kind recognized the superiority of Israel, but not in practical terms regarding Jewish law. Great efforts continued to undermine the Torah and destroy Israel. "And this is a remarkable plot which is used by the very evil man attempting to kill his enemy; and when this fails, he tries to kill himself together with his enemy" (From the Rambam's Igeret Teiman, Chapter 1 – Letters to Teiman). We clearly see that the Rambam described the evil, perverted "suicide bomber." In order to find an intellectual way to continue to undermine the monotheistic beliefs of the Jews, Islam was formed to pose as monotheism: fake monotheism. Their aim was to prove that the Torah of Israel was untrue and that monotheism according to Torah ideals and beliefs was untrue. Judaism preceded Islam. The Torah makes no mention of Islam or the Koran. The Koran (Islam's bible) states that the Jews corrupted the authentic scriptures. To the contrary, Islam warped and corrupted our sacred scriptures in order to validate their own distorted religious beliefs. Islam created an artificial combination of laws that were structured in a superficial way by man. Once again in order to undermine the Jewish religion, Islam's attempt was to counterfeit the Torah. However, Judaism is the only authentic and true religion. The entire system of commandments and beliefs are all tied to and work together with the creation and perfection of mankind. God, in His great wisdom willed it to exist this way. No nation has been able to, or will be able to sever the covenant between God and the Jewish people.

Koran 2:47: "Remember how WE delivered you from Pharaoh's people who had oppressed you cruelly, slaying your sons and sparing only your daughter's. Surely that was a great trial from your Lord. We parted the sea for you, taking you to safety and drowned Pharaoh's men before your very eyes. WE made a tryst with Moses for the fortieth night, and in his absence you took up the calf and thus committed evil. Yet after that WE pardoned you, so that you might give thanks." The above statements as WE all know are absolutely false! It was only God who brought US out of Egypt, parted the sea, drowned our enemies and brought us to safety. It is HE WHO WE bless every day through prayer for taking us out of Egypt, as stated in the Shemonah Esrei. It is HE WHO commanded us to partake in the Festival of Matzos, Passover which is celebrated and dedicated to transmitting these truths to our children and our children's children. "And Israel saw the Great Hand which God used upon the Egyptians, then the people feared God and trusted in God and in Moses, His servant." Exodus 14:31

It is God's plan that all other nations believe in true, authentic monotheism, ONE GOD - that all people believe in the absolute truth of Torah and recognize the Jewish people as the teachers of truth. That all people acknowledge the land of Israel as the land designated to the Jewish people by God. We are His nation, the recipients of His covenant and we wait with joy for Him to send us The Messiah "And the entire world will be filled with the knowledge of God." Isaiah 11:9 ■

Parshas Shemos

RABBI BERNARD FOX

"These are the names of the Bnai Yisrael that came to Egypt with Yaakov, each man and his household." (Shemot 1:1)

This pasuk introduces Sefer Shemot. Nachmanides, in his introduction to Sefer Shemot discusses the theme of Sefer Beresheit and this Sefer. He explains that the theme of Sefer Beresheit is creation. He acknowledges that this assertion raises a question. It is true that Parshat Beresheit describes the creation of the universe. Parshat Noach is a continuation of this discussion. Hashem destroyed the world through the Deluge and then reconstructed it. At the end of Parshat Noach the Dispersion is discussed. This event was crucial in forming the various peoples and societies. However, beginning from the end of Parshat Noach the theme seems to change. Avraham is introduced. From that point forward, the Sefer deals with the forefathers. In short, only a small portion of the Sefer seems to deal with creation. How can this be reconciled the Nachmanides claim that the entire Sefer is an account of creation?

Nachmanides explains that the account of the lives of the Avot – the forefathers – is also a description of creation. These events tell of the creation of Bnai Yisrael. The theme is still creation. In other words, first the Sefer begins with the creation of the universe. Then, it continues with the description of the formation of the Jewish people. Nachmanides seems to imply that these two aspects of creation are related. The implication is that the creation of a nation that will receive the Torah is central to the purpose of the universe. The revelation of the Torah is essential to the completion of the universe. Nachmanides further elaborates on Sefer Beresheit's discussion of the formation of Bnai Yisrael. He explains that the account of the lives of the Avot provides many illusions to the events that would occur to their descendants. In other words, many of the experiences of the Avot were harbingers of Bnai Yisrael's future. According to this assertion, the Avot were not merely the ancestors of the Jewish people. Their lives presaged the experiences of their descendants. In a sense, their lives and experiences formed the future of Bnai Yisrael.

This thesis appears to be somewhat mystical. However, it does not need to be explained as a mystical concept. Perhaps, Nachmanides maintains that the Almighty used the lives of the Avot to provide guidance to Bnai Yisrael. An example will clarify this concept. Avraham went to Egypt in order to escape famine in Canaan. In Egypt, Sara was taken by Paroh. Hashem punished Paroh. Paroh released Sara. Avraham and Sara returned to Canaan. Nachmanides explains, based on the Midrash, that these events served as a precursor to the experiences of Bnai Yisrael. Avraham's descendants would also be confronted with famine. At Yosef's behest, they would descend to Egypt. They too would be persecuted by Paroh. However, eventually Paroh and the Egyptians would be severely punished. Bnai Yisrael would be redeemed. The nation would return to the Land of Israel. What is the function of this precursor? Avraham's experiences offered hope to Bnai Yisrael. The nation knew that their forefather Avraham had also

suffered at the hands of the Egyptians. He too was in an apparently hopeless situation. However, the Almighty miraculously saved Avraham and redeemed him from his suffering. Avraham's experiences offered hope to the Jewish people. The redemption of Avraham proved that they too could depend on the salvation of Hashem. Based on this example, we can explain Nachmanides' thesis.

The Almighty provides counsel and hope to Bnai Yisrael through the experiences of the Avot. Through the lives of the forefathers, Hashem instructs Bnai Yisrael. The people can study the experiences of their ancestors. These events offer hope and guidance to the nation. According to Nachmanides, the theme of Sefer Shemot is redemption. The Sefer begins with the redemption of the Jewish nation from Egypt. However, this rescue from persecution was not a complete redemption. The Sefer discusses the receiving of the Torah and the building of the Tabernacle. Nachmanides explains that these events were part of the process of redemption. The redemption was not complete until the Tabernacle was constructed and the Divine Presence rested among Bnai Yisrael. These comments seem to contradict Nachmanides' position on the importance of the Land of Israel. Nachmanides maintains that the Torah is fundamentally designed to be observed as a comprehensive system. It governs individual action and also national behavior. The Torah only realizes this design when the nation is in the Land of Israel. In other words, the Torah is designed for observance in the Land of Israel. Clearly, Nachmanides maintains that the Land of Israel is central to the observance of the Torah. Therefore, it would seem that the redemption was not complete until the nation entered and captured the Land of Israel. Yet, Nachmanides asserts that the redemption was completed in the wilderness! The presence of the Almighty in the camp of Bnai Yisrael completed the redemption.

It seems that Nachmanides maintains that there are two aspects to redemption. Redemption is both a personal and a national experience. On a personal level, redemption occurs through establishing an intimate relationship with the Almighty. This relationship can occur in the Land of Israel and also in exile. The nation that left Egypt was able to achieve this intimacy with Hashem while still in the wilderness. They attained personal redemption. However, national redemption cannot be achieved in the wilderness. National redemption requires the complete implementation of the Torah. This only occurs with the possession of the Land of Israel. This resolves the contradiction in Nachmanides. Sefer Shemot tells the story of the redemption. The generation of the wilderness achieved complete personal redemption when the Divine Presence descended within the camp. However, Nachmanides maintains that, as a nation, the redemption process was only completed with the occupation of the Land of Israel and the complete implementation of the Torah.

"And take this staff in your hand. You will perform with it the signs." (Shemot 4:17)

Hashem tells Moshe to return to Egypt. He is to take his staff with him. With the staff, he will perform wonders. What was the purpose of the staff? Moshe performed miracles through the Almighty's intervention into nature. Hashem does not need Moshe's staff! This

staff did not have magical powers. Rav Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin (Netziv) suggests a simple interpretation of the staff. He maintains that the staff is a symbol of authority. Moshe would turn water into blood, cover Egypt in darkness and even split the sea. Moshe, through Hashem, would alter the natural order. Hashem had accorded Moshe power and authority over nature. Moshe was to be nature's ruler. The staff symbolized this authority over natural law.

"And Moshe returned to Hashem and he said, 'G-d, why have you mistreated this nation? Why have you sent me?'" (Shemot 5:22)

Moshe goes to Paroh. He tells Paroh that the Almighty has commanded Bnai Yisrael to go out to the wilderness. There, they are to worship Hashem. Paroh refuses to allow Bnai Yisrael to travel into the wilderness or worship the Almighty. Furthermore, Paroh increases the burden of Bnai Yisrael. He demands more labor from the Jewish people. Moshe is troubled by this outcome. In our pasuk Moshe addresses the Almighty. He recounts that Hashem told him that the Jewish people would be redeemed. G-d sent him to Paroh to demand their freedom. Moshe had dutifully followed Hashem's directions. However, he had failed to achieve any positive result. Instead, Moshe's actions had increased the suffering of the nation! How can this outcome be reconciled with Hashem's promise to redeem His nation? The commentaries are troubled by Moshe's question. The Almighty had revealed to Moshe that Paroh would not acquiesce to his request. Paroh would only relent as a result of overpowering plagues. Moshe should not have been surprised by Paroh's response. The required plagues had not yet begun!

Rabbaynu Avraham ibn Ezra offers an interesting response. The final redemption would be the exodus from Egypt. Moshe understood that this ultimate step would require overwhelming force. Moshe did not question the delay in this final stage of rescue. However, Moshe expected some immediate improvement in the condition of Bnai Yisrael. In other words, he assumed that redemption would be a process. The final step would only be secured through the plagues. But the process would begin immediately. Therefore, Moshe was shocked by the deterioration in Bnai Yisrael's condition. Nachmanides explains Moshe's question differently. Moshe understood that Paroh would only respond to force. He was not surprised that Paroh increased his torment of the Jewish people. But he was shocked that the Almighty did not respond and punish Paroh. Moshe expected the plagues to begin immediately. Instead, the Almighty was silent. Moshe was puzzled. If the time had come for redemption, let the process begin. If the moment of redemption had not yet arrived, why had he been sent to Egypt? Moshe had spoken to the people of their salvation but not produced any positive results. This could only undermine Moshe's credibility. □

Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Shemot Introduction. Sefer Beresheit 12:10-20. Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 12:10. Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Shemot Introduction. Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Devarim 11:18. Rav Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin (Netziv), Commentary Hamek Davar on Sefer BeMidbar Introduction. Sefer Shemot 3:20. Rabbaynu Avraham ibn Ezra, Commentary on Sefer Shemot, 5:22-23. Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Shemot 5:22.

Pharaoh's Astrologers

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

When reading Shemos, we come across a Rashi (Exod. 1:22) which states the day Moses was born, Pharaoh's astrologers told him that the Jewish messiah had been born, but they weren't sure as to whether this messiah was born of the Jews or of the Egyptians.

Later, Rashi (Exod. 2:3) states that the reason why Moses' mother Yocheved couldn't hide him anymore, was because the Egyptians counted the months from when Yocheved and her husband remarried to determine when a new baby would be born, in order to slay him. Since Moses was born three months premature, his mother was able to hide him that length of time. But at the ninth month, she knew that the Egyptians would be visiting to take her child.

A number of questions surface:

1) Did the Egyptians know when Moses was born or not? From the first Rashi, they seemed to know based on astrology, but from the second Rashi, we learn they miscalculated by three months, as they did not include premature births in their calculations. If they felt Moses' true birthday was the day the messiah was born, they should have searched Yocheved's home as well. Additionally, they should have ceased killing males from that day forward, satisfied in their knowledge that they killed the messiah on that day. The fact that they continued to kill males even after their calculated day of the messiah's birth demonstrated their own doubt in their prediction. 2) How can humans know something outside of their sense perception? Is astrology fact or fiction?

3) Why were these astrologers only certain about one aspect (that he was born) but they were ignorant of his nationality?

On the one hand, one could side with the Egyptians and state that when they predicted Moses' birth, it was indeed his birthday. But since he was born three months premature, they didn't bother searching his mother's tent, as they assumed whoever was born, was born at nine months. This still shows ignorance.

On the other hand however, one would seem more correct to state that the Egyptians really didn't know anything, and when they stated that the messiah was born, it was a guess, perhaps to maintain their position. Previously, they suggested that Pharaoh's dreams of the 7 cows represented 7 daughters who would be born and die. They were wrong here, and in many other cases. But it wasn't objectively proven that their theory was impossible, so they remained at their posts.

A Rabbi suggested that this may not have been the first time the Egyptian astrologers predicted the birth of a messiah. The astrologers, as in the past, had to produce information to make themselves credulous, and to keep their positions. If they never inform Pharaoh of news, Pharaoh might dismiss, or even kill them. Thus, they were always under pressure to provide information to Pharaoh. They also had to be sure that any information couldn't be proved 100% wrong, so when they would state matters, they would do so either in generalities, or in areas that one can never prove impossible. Alternatively, the astrologers saw that Pharaoh was now subjugating the Jews, as the Jews were more numerous, and possibly could pose a threat to the Egyptians. The astrologers surmised the possibility of an uprising, and

weren't sure whether it would be spearheaded by a Jew or an Egyptian sympathizer. They therefore used rational deduction in their forecast to Pharaoh and told him that it could be either a Jew or Egyptian savior.

The fact that the astrologers couldn't determine Moses' nationality, and that the second Rashi implies miscalculation, uncovers their ignorance, and removes any credibility of their astrology.

Perhaps this is why Rashi recorded these two stories, to teach that their astrology is a farce. Just as people today cannot read palms, or foretell events with any accuracy, so too was the case in Egypt. Pharaoh had his astrologers as a source of security for areas where he was in doubt. All that was needed was that Pharaoh believed them. Objective reality was not a concern of Pharaoh. Emotional security was.

The Radak, as well as all the Rabbis, dismiss any truth to the baales ov (the female conjurer) in Samuel I, 28:7-19. They unanimously deny any reality to this story, and call it all "futility, void, lies, and mockery".

King Saul had visited the baales ov to bring up Samuel from the dead. The story on the surface says she did, and that King Saul talked with Samuel. The Radak however quotes the Rabbis and states, "the Rabbis said three things in regards to conjurers, 1) the one who brings up the dead sees but doesn't hear the dead person, 2) the one who is in need hears, but sees not the dead, and 3) the ones who do not care either way neither see nor hear anything. Such was the case with King Saul, he was in need, so he heard Samuel talking, the baales ov saw, but didn't hear, and the two who Saul traveled with, Avner and Amasa, neither saw nor heard a thing."

What does this prove? That King Saul's discussion with Samuel was a daydream, a fantasy, or an illusion. Just as sometimes we think we hear someone talking to us or calling our name, all but to turn and see nobody there, so also according to Radak and all the Rabbis was this case with King Saul and the baales ov. He was in such need, that he thought he heard Samuel. His two men didn't care, so they heard nothing. And the baales ov needed to keep her status, so she feigned seeing him.

As Jews, a rational people, we do not believe knowledge emanates from sorcerers. They are all false. Knowledge emanates from G-d, and there are specific ways of uncovering this knowledge - careful analysis, and rational thinking. Just as the study of physics and all other sciences which are based on principles embedded in the tangible universe require methodology to arrive at concepts, so much more so, the abstract world of ideas disclosed to us through the Torah requires a refined, rational approach.

It is relatively easy to detect when something is an accurate science. If it follows rational principles, it can be a science. If however, we hear statements such as, "this crease in your palm is long, therefore you will live long", we should see no connection between an accidental fold in our flesh, and the avoidance of disastrous situations which will lead to our death. This type of statement should be immediately identified as outside the rational sphere.

Taking what we hear on the surface as truth, and believing it, is not the way to learn. Even when reading a Rashi, we should look into it, and see if it is as clear as rational ideas should be. If not, perhaps he is teaching us something beyond the surface. #

A reader responded to this article as follows:

Reader: You seem to say that Pharaoh's astrologers were incorrect, in essence guessing, and that Saul did not

really hear Samuel. If so, first of all, why were these episodes recorded in Tanach?

Mesora: See the Radak on the incident concerning Saul and the Baales Ov, the female conjurer. The Radak states that Samuel did not rise from the ground as a cursory reading would suggest. Radak states that it was all a projection on Saul's part. A fantasy of his mind. The Torah is designed to teach man about the law, which is aimed to benefit man's soul, his mind, and his drives. As such, the reason the Torah records such stories is to teach us how man operates psychologically, whether it be when man operates positively, or even negatively, as with Saul, and Pharaoh's astrologers. Seeing how Saul and Pharaoh's astrologers made mistakes teaches the reader about incorrect notions, so we learn more about our nature as humans, and that we may also identify that from which we should distance ourselves.

Reader: Also, if the astrologers were guessing, why would Pharaoh be willing to kill the thousands of Egyptian boys who would have been born that day?

Mesora: The astrologers were in positions of counsel due to Pharaoh's need for advice. They counseled Pharaoh with general statements, such as those where they could not be proved wrong, i.e., "you will have 7 daughters, and you will bury 7 daughters". If Pharaoh approached them and said, "where are my 7 daughters?", they could respond, "you will have them yet". Similarly, they stated that "a savior of the Jews is to be born". Pharaoh was superstitious, and out of a fear of an uprising of a savior, he, like any other power hungry leader, might resort to following the only prospect for success, that being the astrologers' advice of slaying even Egyptian males.

Reader: And if they were guessing, how did they get the date right?

Mesora: Who said this was the only day they told Pharaoh that a savior could be born? Perhaps they said this on many occasions, and chance had it that they also said it on Moshe's birthday. Keep in mind that the astrologers previously stated that a savior is to be born. The first time they said this, they were unsure about his date of birth, and they were unsure about his origin, whether it was Egyptian or Hebrew. They were feigning knowledge of future events, as Pharaoh was looking to them for direction. They couldn't say "we don't know". They would either lose their positions, or be killed. They therefore made general statements that had possibility of coming true, based on current events.

Reader: Similarly, how did Saul hear from his dream of Samuel correct information about his and his son's death in the coming war? And why would he have imagined hearing his teacher telling him he would die?

Mesora: Saul stated that he was grieved by the Phillistines' oppression, and that G-d had removed Himself from him. This shows that Saul was in a worried state. When one is in such a mind set, his dreams may follow his fears. This also applies to daydreams, which the Rabbis state Saul was experiencing. Why he actually was killed with his son was due to his mind set. One not at ease with tremendous worry will falter in his decisions, and Saul's decisions here were in war. His death, and his son's death were not foretold, rather, they were results of his fears distorting his clear thinking. Many times, what one fears is brought out in a nightmare as a method of dealing with the fear. This means that to move past the fear, one may construct a nightmare where he faces the fear, for the longer-term goal of not having to face that fear anymore. ■