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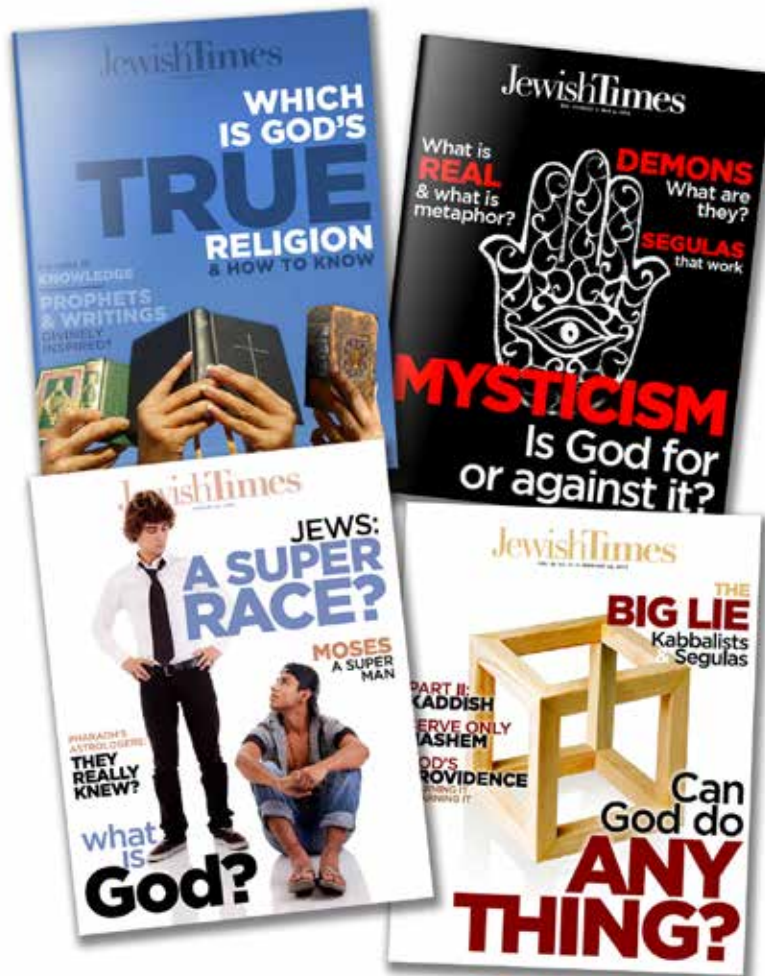


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LETTERS

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Kabbala's Delusion

Reader: Please offer your response to this quote:

"A person must not put on two articles of clothing at the same time since it is considered harmful for one's memory. There is a Kabbalistic explanation for this as mentioned by Rabbenu the Ari, z"l. A person's clothing are from a holy source, however, through a person's sins, the Qelipoth (a Kabbalistic concept of husks of a bad source that hold onto and cover a holier object) grab onto the person's clothes.

Clothes have an Ohr Maqif (surrounding light [which we are unable to see]), around them. This light pushes away the Qelipoth, because they do not have the power to hold onto this light. The problem we face if a person puts on two items of clothing together is, when the two items are put on, one against the other, there is no space between the two items for the

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Ohr Maqif to enter between the two articles of clothing. As such, the Qelipoth are not chased away from there. Memory issues are caused by the Qelipoth and that is why we must be particular not to put on two articles of clothing at the same time."

Rabbi: Let's review this quote from the Ari:

- Clothing is made from a holy source
- Sins create Qelipoth, "husks of a bad source" that attach to clothing
- Clothes have a surrounding light
- This light chases away Qelipoth
- Donning 2 garments simultaneously blocks the light and traps these Qelipoth near the person which harms memory

That's quite a theory!

Let's learn from God's actions to determine the truth here. God granted man senses. His will is clear: accept what your senses tell you is real, which by definition means God desires we reject what we don't perceive. Thus, God does not wish we imagine a bridge to be sitting before a high cliff, and that we continue driving to our death. God wishes instead, that we accept our senses, that there is no bridge, and that we drive in another direction. All 5 principles in the quote above violate God's will, as they ask us to blindly accept nonsensical ideas.

People are insecure. This belief provides some imaginary access to an "energy" that might protect a person in some manner. But God does not wish that man live in a fantasy world. For fantasies are of the same germ as idolatry, where a person imagines a power to exist, but without evidence. And again, God desires we base our lives on evidence. Our greatest teachers — Moses and Maimonides — stress that we trust our senses:

Moses said:

"Guard yourselves and guard your souls exceedingly, lest you forget the things your eyes saw...(Deut. 4:9)"

"All the signs and wonders which God has performed for you in Egypt as your eyes have seen (Deut. 4:34)."

"You have been demonstrated to know that

God is Elokim, there is no other besides Him (Deut. 4:35)."

"From the heavens He made heard His voice to prove you, and on land He showed you His great fire and His words you heard from amidst the fire (Deut. 4:36)."

Maimonides said:

"It is not proper for a man to accept as trustworthy anything other than one of these three things:

- 1) clear proof deriving from man's reasoning;*
- 2) what is perceived through one of the five senses;*
- 3) what is received from the prophets or from the righteous.*

Every reasonable man ought to distinguish in his mind and thought all the things that he accepts as trustworthy, and say: 'This I accept as trustworthy because of tradition, and this because of sense-perception, and this on grounds of reason.' Anyone who accepts as trustworthy anything that is not of these three species, of him it is said: 'The simple believes everything (Proverbs 14:15)'." Maimonides' "Letter to the Community of Marseille"

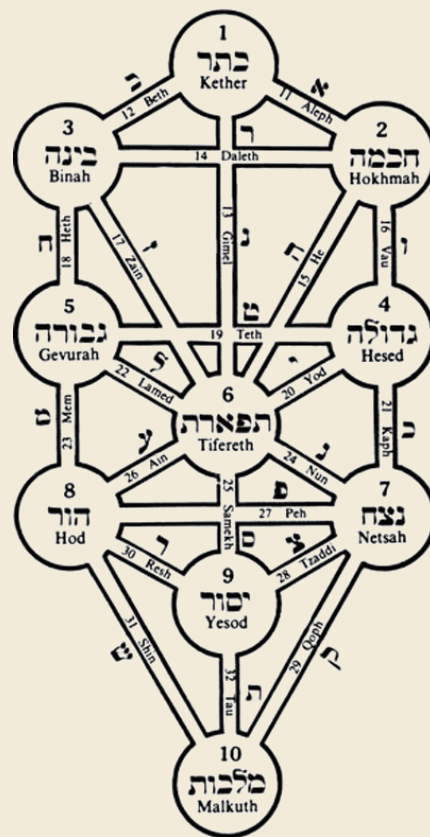
As Moses taught, Torah is the authoritative source of God's truth, and nowhere in Torah, Prophets or Writings are such delusional notions suggested. Moses stressed we are to trust our senses, and reject what we do not sense. We must reject what was stated above in the name of the Ari.

God is the only source of our fate...no other powers exist. This quote you provided suggests otherwise.

Reward and Punishment is a primary Torah fundamental. If we follow God's Torah, it is antithetical to His system of justice that we are harmed by such innocuous actions of donning 2 garments at once.

I wonder if people would believe that when eating 2 foods at once, a new power is generated, a new light, that mystically secures enormous wealth, and that we can leave our jobs. This would prove to any intelligent person that they truly do not believe such nonsense.

This quote is harmful, for it rejects God's will that we adhere to natural design, it opens the door to idolatrous thought, and it rejects God's system of justice. ■

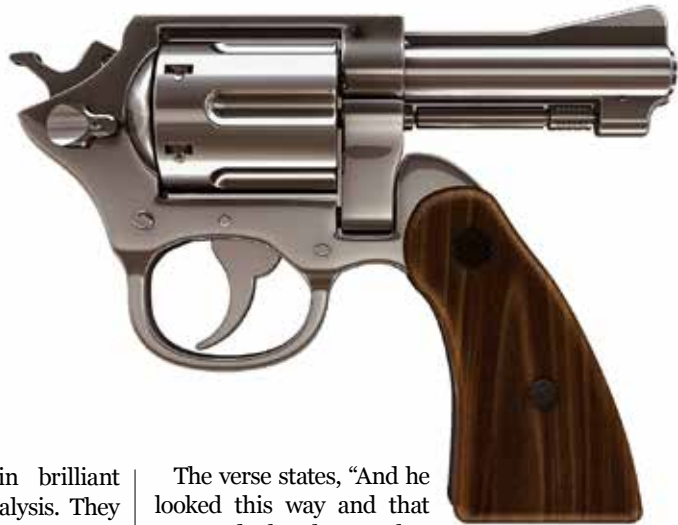


"Jewish" Mysticism

Mysticism refers to 1) the notion of causal relationships, or 2) the imagined existence of things, when in either case, there is no supporting evidence, nor does reason comply with the claim. Thus, Judaism — a religion synonymous with reason and proof, and not founded on belief or faith like all others — truly contains no mysticism. Whatever today is called "Jewish mysticism" is in fact alien cultural influence adopted by "Jews," but in no way is mysticism part of "Judaism" — it is not found in the Bible, Prophets or Writings, or Talmud, our fundamentals sources. If you search Mesora.org (www.mesora.org/search) you can locate explanations of such Biblical stories, like Bilam and the donkey that spoke, Saul and the witch, Rava creating a man, and other metaphors that the Rabbis scripted as riddles and subtle lessons. ■

Self-inflicted

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM



The Rabbis' writings contain brilliant insights, but they require analysis. They didn't write in simple terms, or on the surface. Let's take Rashi's commentary on the following Biblical verses.

"And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown up, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens; and he saw an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew, one of his brethren. And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he smote the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand. And he went out the second day, and, behold, two men of the Hebrews were striving together; and he said to him that did the wrong, 'Why do you hit your fellow?' And he said, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? Do you think to kill me, as you killed the Egyptian?' And Moses feared, and said, 'Surely the thing is known' (Exod. 2:11-14)."

The plain explanation of "Surely the thing is known" refers to Moses concern that his killing of the Egyptian is known. Rashi provides an interesting alternative interpretation of Moses' sentiment (ibid 2:14):

"The matter is now known to me that I always wondered: What is the sin of Israel from all the 70 nations that they are subjugated to backbreaking servitude? But now I understand that they are fit for this."

The verse states, "And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he smote the Egyptian." How then did Dassan and Aviram learn that Moses killed the Egyptian? A wise Rabbi once said the only explanation is that the Jew Moses saved had informed on him. Amazing! A man has his life saved, and he rats-out his savior? What generates such behavior?

According to Rashi, upon his learning that the Jew whom he saved had informed on him, Moses understood why the Jews were enslaved 150 years prior to this event. But how does this event explain the initiation of the Jews' servitude to the Egyptians 150 years earlier?

Let's understand the informant. Despite being beaten, he still viewed the abusive Egyptian as the "authority." This ill-placed respect is none other than a need for approval. Ego is a base drive in us all. And at times, man sacrifices truth and real concerns, and opts instead for this approval, but his priorities are misconstrued. Nonetheless, we understand what motivated this Jewish informant, however skewed were his priorities.

The informant possessed the identical psychological makeup shared by all mankind. Moses readily associated to the Jews' initial subjugation to Egypt 150 years earlier. What was Moses' association? Moses must have discovered a

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similar scenario where the Jews as a nation acted as this informant. What significant event occurred 150 years earlier that could have precipitated the enslavement? Joseph. The Torah (Bible) teaches it was only after Joseph and his brothers died (Exod. 1) that Egypt subjugated the Jews. The prophet teaches servitude was a punishment for the Jews' acceptance of idolatry...but why did they accept it? Perhaps this was due to the need for Egyptian approval. The Jews sensed the resentment Pharaoh and Egypt had for Joseph, a Hebrew prisoner attaining viceroy status. The Jews were then resented. Even Joseph, in his later years as viceroy, no longer had a direct channel to Pharaoh (Gen. 50:4). The Jews then adopted idolatry as a means to gain Egyptian acceptance. Moses understood this psychological phenomenon — the need for approval — displayed by the informant, was also the cause of the Jews' acceptance of idolatry.

In the end, it is not a "Jewish" phenomenon that caused the enslavement, but a human one that merely grew into national appeal within the Jewish mindset. Those circumstances may have very well expressed themselves throughout history where 2 other nations of opposing cultural values lived side by side. But the sin of idolatry is uniquely inexcusable, warranting the Jew's subjugation. Additionally, the nation of Israel already had a course chartered to lead the world back to Abraham's monotheism. God's plan of subjugating the Jew in the refining pot of Egypt perfected the Jews into a nation fit to accept God's Torah 210 years later.

When Moses said, "I now see why the Jew is fit for this punishment," he did not mean the Jew possesses some genetic distinction. For as Moses ridiculed such behavior — himself a Jew — he did not possess this trait. Rather, Moses pondered what "sin" — not trait — lead to their enslavement, as Rashi stated clearly.

It may also be true that when one culture strives to placate another, the latter senses superiority and engages it in the form of subjugation. A word to the wise regarding Israel's attempts to appease the PA. ■

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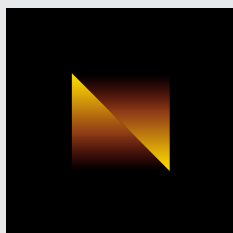
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PROPHETS

Justice: The Right of the Creator

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim

Unlike all other books and religions, those learned in Torah (Bible) have discovered that these divine texts (The Five Books, Prophets and Writings) are written in a specific and perfect style. Nothing is extraneous; all is measured and communicated directly by God. Each word is carefully chosen and revealing. The sequence of verses and Torah sections are intentional lessons, which we must uncover through analysis. A portion of last weeks Haftorah “Nachamu” follows:

“Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the Earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?

Who hath meted out the spirit of the Lord? Or who was His counsellor that he might instruct Him? With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of justice, and taught Him knowledge, and made Him to know the way of discernment (Isaiah 40:12-14)?”

We notice 2 distinct categories are discussed: 1) creation, 2) God’s knowledge and justice. The fact that 2 follows 1, suggests that as God alone is the 1) Creator, this grants Him 2) the exclusive

right to define justice. Meaning, as no one else determined the creation of the universe (seas, sands or mountains) no one else can define knowledge, or what us just. But how does this follow logically? The first step is understood: God created everything, so He possesses ultimate and perfect knowledge of everything. A creator knows his creation. This is clear. What is not so apparent, is how His role as Creator also reserves for Him alone the role of Judge.

We must first define justice. This refers to providing for an animate existence in accord with its needs and it’s deeds. I say animate, since there is no injustice in creating a tree, and then not supplying it with water. In this case, there is no sentient being undergoing pain. This is similar to creating a brick, and then pulverizing it into dust. No injustice is found in such a case.

But regarding animate life, we recognize a claim: God afflicting pain on animals is unjust. Thus, He designed the appropriate instincts in each species in order that it is attracted only to its fit diet; He places that species in a suitable climate (mammals on land, fish in seas), and He designed each species so its method of locomotion works; mammals have legs and fish have fins. Thus, God’s justice here is that animate life is provided with its necessary food and

environment.

God’s role as Creator means he knows each creation perfectly; He knows what it needs. The continued existence of the species reveals God’s justice, as He has provided all that’s necessary to sustain the species.

What about mankind? Other than nourishment and a suitable environment, God holds man responsible for breaking His will. Is man correct in complaining, “I didn’t ask to be created, and therefore God, You are unjust in imposing Your Torah laws and punishments on me”?

The problem with this statement is very subtle, but also quite fundamental...

When man complains about “his” condition, he is saying 2 things: 1) he rejects his current state, but 2) he desires life. When one says “I” don’t like such and such, he is saying he wants to retain the “I” – he wants his life, his existence, the “I”, but not in his present condition. However, by wanting the “I”, he is saying he agrees with God’s act of creating him. But, as Creator, God monopolizes all rights to determine under what conditions His creations will endure. God gave man life and conditions for continued existence, and these conditions are His Biblical laws.

This is Isaiah’s message. As man cannot tell God how to create the seas, sands and mountains, he also cannot tell God what is just.

Furthermore, man cannot have it both ways; complaining about one aspect of God’s creations (obligatory Biblical law) while accepting the other (his life). In other words, man contradicts himself by both desiring and rejecting God’s creations; he desires life but rejects the Bible.

It is the most humbling realization, but true. Modern civilization and Westernized cultures promote a focus on self-glorification, fame, hedonism and wealth. But in reality, this is not why God created man. Isaiah is teaching us that our purpose is to strive towards a life subjugated to our Creator’s will. And this in no way is unpleasant, but in fact serves to actualize the most pleasurable life. If we can for a moment break loose of the lie of fame and fortune, and examine the lives of men and women who pursued God’s wisdom, if we study King Solomon’s masterpiece Ecclesiastes (Koheles) where he experimented on

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himself to seek happiness...we will learn that God's will is the most enriching life. We will find it pleasant to subjugate ourselves to God who knows what is best for us. Subjugation is only distasteful on the surface, as we have been groomed by society to focus on the self, subjugating others. But do not blindly accept your nurtured beliefs.

Let it sink in...we are God's creations. We are but clay in the potter's hands. We have a temporary physical existence, but an eternal existence if we follow God's will. If we rise above our instinctual drive for unrestricted freedom, and grasp the idea that our Creator has gifted us with a guide for the best life — His Bible — and if we take the second step to indulge its study, we will find a better life than imagined, or what's chased by Western cultures.

God Determines Justice

A wise Rabbi taught that no new ideas are found in Prophets and Writings: the Five Books contain all Torah principles while Prophets and Writings are reiterations or elaborations of the Five Books. Where then in Torah do we find Isaiah's prophetic concept that as Creator, God determines what is just? Deuteronomy 30:19 is where Moses speaks to the nation saying, "I call heaven and Earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before thee life and death, the blessing and the curse..." Here, Moses joins heavens and Earth to life and death, i.e., "justice." Heaven and Earth are inanimate; they cannot testify. But in a manner of speaking, their prominence as the 2 realms containing all creation strikes man with an awe of their Creator. Moses then ties creation together with the justice the Jews will receive based on their actions. Isaiah, then, is an elaboration of Moses' raw and slightly hidden message.

Application to Today

Appreciating God as the sole arbiter of justice and morality, we will find it easier to accept His prohibitions of homosexuality, saving enemies' lives, abortion, and the gamut of debated issues. If however we study God's laws, we can arrive at their perfect reasoning.

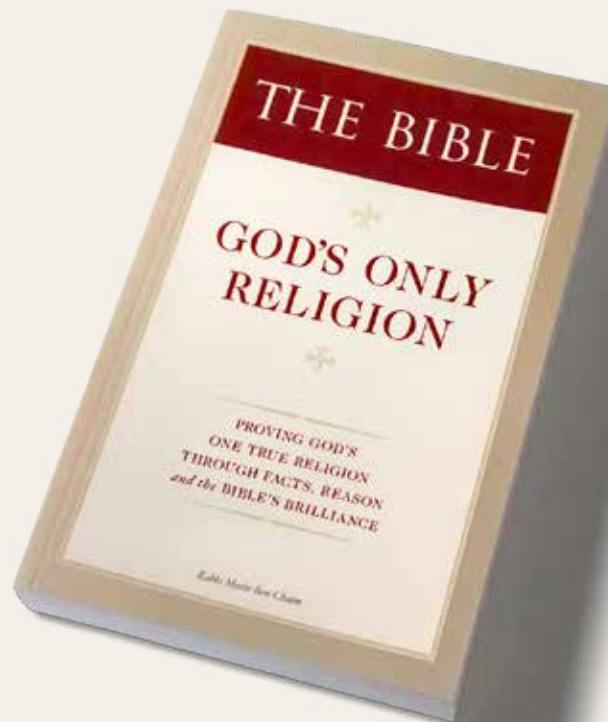
God is the Creator. He determines the rules. ■

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CAN WE ACCEPT REBUKE?

*Moses'
Address*

RABBI REUVEN MANN

In this week's parsha, Eikev, Moshe proceeds with his final testaments to the Jewish people. Although he stood on death's doorstep, he did not use the occasion for personal reminiscences. His focus was on the needs of the people and the challenges they would face in conquering and settling the land. Ultimately, the key to success would be their faithful adherence to the laws and teachings of Torah.

Moshe elucidated the unique existential condition of the Jews. They are unlike all other peoples, whose fate is governed exclusively by the forces of nature. Any country that has an intelligent political order and conducts its affairs rationally will tend to be successful. Its fate will not be determined by its citizens' level of sanctity.

Not so the Jews. Moshe warns them never to be complacent or to indulge the feeling that "My power and the strength of my hands has made all this wealth." Of course, we cannot "rely

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on miracles,” and our actions must conform to the laws of nature. However, we must also be mindful of the special relationship that exists between us and the Creator. The ultimate outcome of our best endeavors depends on His will. The fate of the Jewish people is governed by Divine Providence.

Moshe's character as a great leader is revealed in these final discourses. Unlike contemporary rulers, he did not partake of political correctness. He addressed some of the most deeply ingrained prejudices of the Jews as, for example, Why did Hashem choose us from all the nations?

Let's face it; many Jews believe it is because we are, somehow, better. While we don't voice this sentiment publicly, it is there, and it influences our behavior. We must be cognizant of and guard

against this notion, because it can have negative consequences. Moreover, we need to reject any feeling of superiority, because it is not based on reality.

Moshe is very clear that we were not chosen by Hashem because of our moral uniqueness. He makes this point in very harsh, blunt terms. “You shall know that it is not because of your righteousness that Hashem your G-d gives you this goodly land to inherit, for you are a stiff-necked nation.” To support this point, he instructs us to “Remember how you angered Hashem your G-d in the wilderness; from the day that you left Egypt until you have arrived at this place, you have been rebellious against Hashem.”

Any leader who spoke this way today would be condemned as an anti-Semite. A contempo-

rary rabbi who utters honest but tough criticism of his congregants knows that he faces possible termination. Moshe Rabbeinu was the most humble of men and had no desire for the approval of people. Therefore he could speak the absolute truth without fear of repercussions. He was answerable only to Hashem.

Moshe's exhortations were not directed only at the people he spoke to. They were intended for all Jews at all times. His words speak to us and have relevance to our current matzav (situation). To be worthy of Geula (redemption), we must correct our historical sins.

That cannot be accomplished as long as we stubbornly believe that we are righteous. Even if we are religiously observant, that is not enough. We must fulfill not only the letter of the

Law, but its spirit and philosophy as well.

Hashem gave us Moshe Rabbeinu, who did not believe in sugarcoating his critique. We must respond to his teachings by removing the defenses and barriers that prevent his message from getting through to us. Moshe commands us, “And you shall circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and your neck will no longer be stiff.”

This is of paramount importance. Constructive rebuke is absolutely essential to fulfilling our mission of becoming a holy People. The verse states, “For, whom Hashem loves, does He rebuke.” In this season of Nachamu (consolation), we must train ourselves to accept rebuke in a spirit of love and determination to rise to a higher level in our service of Hashem.

Shabbat shalom. ■



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