



yishTimes

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COMPLEMENT OR CONFLICT?

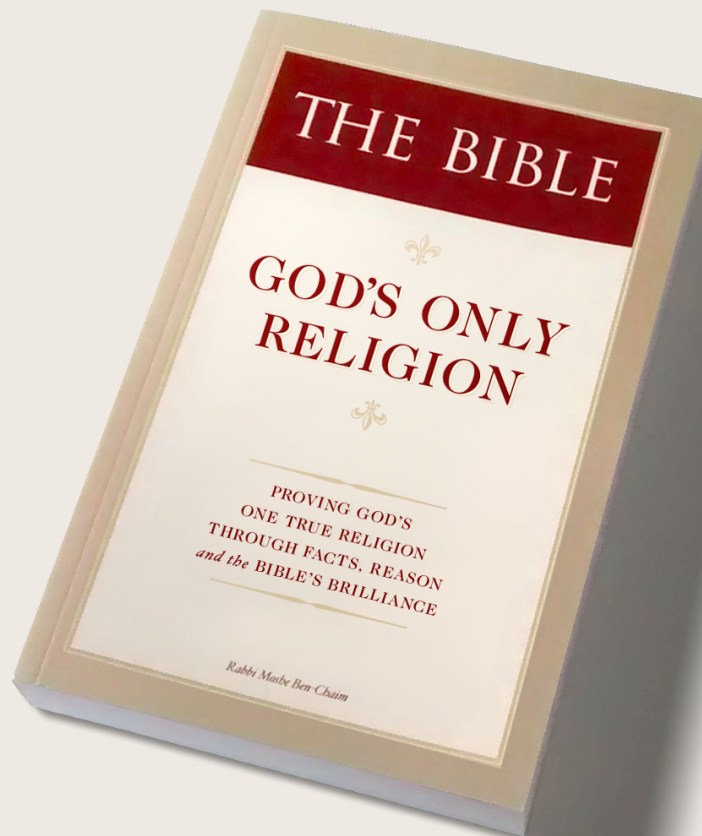
SCIENCE AND TORAH

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Religions conflict; they all can't be God's word. How do we choose which is God's true religion?

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LETTERS

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Science and Torah: Was Adam Truly the First Man?

Alberto: For a few years now, I've followed your publication and bought your book (Religion of Reason) and now I have a few questions about your understanding of science. Since you had said, "Torah and Reason cannot contradict each other and the same Creator that created everything is the same author of the Torah," I wonder:

We know today, thanks to fossils, research on geology, on DNA and many other discoveries, that our species has been on this planet for at least 200 million years. If God spoke to Adam around 6 thousand years ago, then during 199 million of years, He remained silent of our conditions. Beside the fact that there were back then, other human species besides our own. We found their fossils and studied their bodies. They were humans from a different kind, no doubt. Do you deny those

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discoveries? Because if you do, ok, you join the group of religious people who reject science. But if you don't deny these discoveries, how do you understand the "creation" theory, being of Adam or the planet itself, since we now have more than enough evidence teaching us that our planet is much older than 6 thousand years and there never was, really a first man and human, as suggested by almost all mythologies, Jewish included?

I never saw a religious person with a real understanding of science, brave enough to speak about its truth out loud. Many claim to have an understanding of a scientific subject, just to be put to shame when trying to explain scientific discoveries. I wonder why is this so?

Do you deny all the scientific discoveries? Or you selectively choose to talk about only those that do not compromise your view or theology? Or do you accept plainly what those evidences have shown us? And if you accept science and its discoveries, if you had a good scientific education, then how do you suggest we should understand the Adam and Chavah history?

Thank you for your attention,
Alberto

Rabbi: "From a false matter distance yourself (Exod. 23:7)." Torah is built on honesty first, followed by the accepting all evidence teamed with employing intelligence. Maimonides stated, "If, on the other hand, Aristotle had a proof for his theory [the eternity of the universe], the whole teaching of Scripture would be rejected, and we should be forced to other opinions (Guide, book II, chap. xxv)". Maimonides, our greatest medieval teacher, embodies the Torah's demand for truth, for without it, talk is useless. As Aristotle fails to provide proof, Maimonides supports the creation theory received through Torah transmission.



We accept the universe came into existence 13.82 billion years old, endorsing the Torah. Since then, 100 billion galaxies have been hurtling through space at various speeds and directions. Reversing their paths and calculating their speeds reveals a common point and date of origin known as the Big Bang.

Rabbi Chaim Ozer Chait offered another fine proof. We see the light of stars emanating from millions of light years away. This means the light of those stars traversed the heavens for millions of years, in order to reach us. This proves the universe is far older than 5777 years; the duration from God's completion of Adam (day 6 of Creation) until now. So, 5777 is not the date from the day 1, which was billions of years earlier. "Day," as in the six days of creation,

cannot be a 24-hour period, for the sun had not yet been created which determines 24-hour period, nor were the circuits of the planets organized. Thus, the six "days" were in fact 6 epochs, translating to billions of years. Even today we witness the very slow process of topographic erosion, river course changes, and mountain's shifting their heights, all taking thousands of years. How much more time is required to form entire planets, galaxies and animate life forms, and for galaxies to stretch out 91 billion lightyears? And that's only the observable universe.

How then do we address the discovery of human remains hundreds of thousands of years old, while Torah says Adam lived 5777 years ago? We can reinterpret the "Creation of Adam" as either an evolution from ancient man to Adam, spanning billions of years like the time spans of all other creations. Or, we can suggest when God created Adam, he was the first "intelligent" man, but ape-like men preceded Adam, just as did the dinosaurs. This explains God's silence during primal man's origins.

We don't know all of God's steps in creating His universe. But based on natural evidence—the wisdom God embedded in the universe to impress mankind—scientists calculate a universe that has aged billions of years. God desires truth, so He would not offer this evidence had it been false. It is shameful that certain Jewish groups suggest God created dinosaur fossils—not dinosaurs—and planted those fabricated remains in the Earth to test our belief in the Torah. Nothing could be further from the truth, for God gave us senses and intelligence to engage, and not ignore them following blind faith like other religions. This blind faith approach is inherently contradictory, for they trust their senses to see the fossils, but not other scientific evidence. Claiming God merely fabricated fossils also means God lied. Thus, such claims create more problems, and solve none. ■

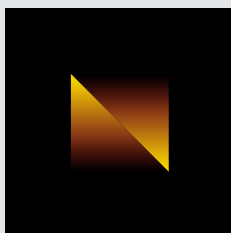
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**One of the two
sapphire Tablets of Testimony
bearing internally-formed commands**



SCIENCE & TORAH

MAIMONIDES: Astonishing Tablets of Testimony

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim

As Moses descended Mount Sinai with the two sapphire tablets bearing God's laws, he encountered the Jews worshipping the Gold Calf. He responded by breaking the Tablets. A wise Rabbi explained he did so, lest the Jews continue their sin, projecting their idolatrous expression onto these divinely inspired objects, just as they were doing regarding the Calf. Moses broke the Tablets to eliminate this possibility, to which, God agreed. We might think the service of the Gold Calf as more worthy of making the list of tragedies. But as my friend Howard suggested, sin is not a "loss", but a waste. A true "loss" is the removal of something of value or a failure to realize a gain. That loss was the Tablets. The removal of a positive element, not the engagement in the negative, is a loss: the latter being "harm." Similarly, we mourn the loss of the Temple, and not the idolatry or enmity between the Jews that precipitated those two losses, although the latter are evils for which we must repent.

But to truly comprehend the loss of the Tablets, we must understand: what they were and why God gave them to us. The indispensable need for the Tablets is derived from God's granting to Moses a second set of Tablets after

he smashed the first set. What I will suggest herein astonished me. Maimonides directs us to this discovery:

"And the tables were the work of God (Exod. xxxii. 16)," that is to say, they were the product of nature, not of art: for all natural things are called "the work of the Lord", e.g., "These see the works of the Lord (Psalms cvii. 24)" and the description of the several things in nature, as plants, animals, winds, rain, etc., is followed by the exclamation, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works (Psalms, civ. 24)!" Still more striking is the relation between God and His creatures, as expressed in the phrase, "The cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted (ib. 16):" the cedars being the product of nature, and not of art, are described as having been planted by the Lord. Similarly we explain, "And the writing was the writing of God (Exod. xxxii. 16):" the relation in which the writing stood to God has already been defined in the words "written with the finger of God (ibid xxxi. 18)," and the meaning of this phrase is the same as that of "the work of thy fingers

(Psalms viii. 4)," this being said of the heavens: of the latter it has been stated distinctly that they were made by a word, "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made (ibid xxxiii. 6)." Hence, you learn that in the Bible, the creation of a thing is figuratively expressed by terms denoting "word" and "speech." The same thing, which according to one passage has been made by the "word," is represented in another passage as made by the "finger of God." The phrase "written by the finger of God" is therefore identical with "written by the word of God," and if the latter phrase had been used, it would have been equal to "written by the will and desire of God."

Onkelos adopted in this place a strange explanation, and rendered the words literally, "written by the finger of the Lord." He thought that "the finger" was a certain thing ascribed to God; so that "the finger of the Lord" is to be interpreted in the same way as "the mountain of God (Exod. iii. 1)," "the rod of God (ib. iv. 20)," that is, as being an instrument created by Him, which by His will engraved the writing on the tables. I cannot see why Onkelos preferred this

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explanation. It would have been more reasonable to say, "written by the word of the Lord," in imitation of the verse "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made." Or was the creation of the writing on the tables more difficult than the creation of the stars in the spheres? As the latter were made by the direct will of God, not by means of an instrument, the writing may also have been produced by His direct will, not by means of an instrument. You know what the Mishnah says, "Ten things were created on Friday in the twilight of the evening," and "the writing" is one of the ten things. This shows how generally it was assumed by our forefathers that the writing of the tables was produced in the same manner as the rest of the creation, as we have shown in our Commentary on the Mishnah (Avos v.6) (The Guide for the Perplexed, book I, chap. lxxvi)."

Understanding Maimonides

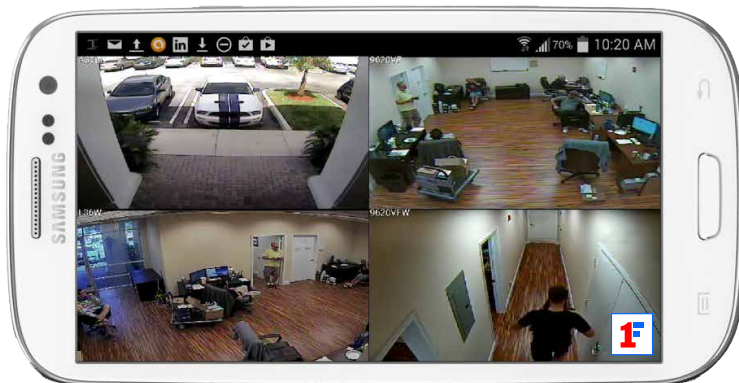
We must pay attention to Maimonides' words. He opens with "And the tables were the work of God." His intent is to first discuss the Tablets—not their writing. He first explains how the Tablets are made via "nature," meaning by God. They are not "works" or "art." By definition, if natural objects are used in human construction, such as woodworking or painting, we call this "carpentry" and "art" respectively. But if something is formed undisturbed by external influence, as leaves are formed with veins and trees with bark, this we call "nature" and not art. Therefore, when addressing the Tablets, Maimonides writes, "they were the product of nature, not of art: for all natural things are called 'the work of the Lord'." This means that the Tablets formed naturally. That is quite amazing. We will get back to what this means. But they were not works of carpentry or art. Remain mindful of this distinction.

Maimonides then addresses the Tablets' writing: "And the writing was the writing of God." He argues that although the Torah says the writing was "written by the finger of the Lord," this writing was no less natural than the Tablets themselves, or God's natural creation of the heavens. He disputes Onkelos' suggestion that a tool was used to form these letters, and insists that those letters were created without a tool, just as God created the heavens, by His will alone.

But focus your attention on Maimonides' insistence that the writing was "natural," and not an act of carpentry or art. What does he mean by this? You must know that Maimonides bases himself on the verse that references both, the Tablets and the writings: "And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God (Exod. xxxii. 16)." Maimonides teaches that this verse is not redundant, but with it, God intentionally directs us to realize that not only were the Tablets a natural phenomenon, but so too was the writing. This is essential to our discussion. We must understand the distinction between writing that is natural, and writing that is art. How are they different?

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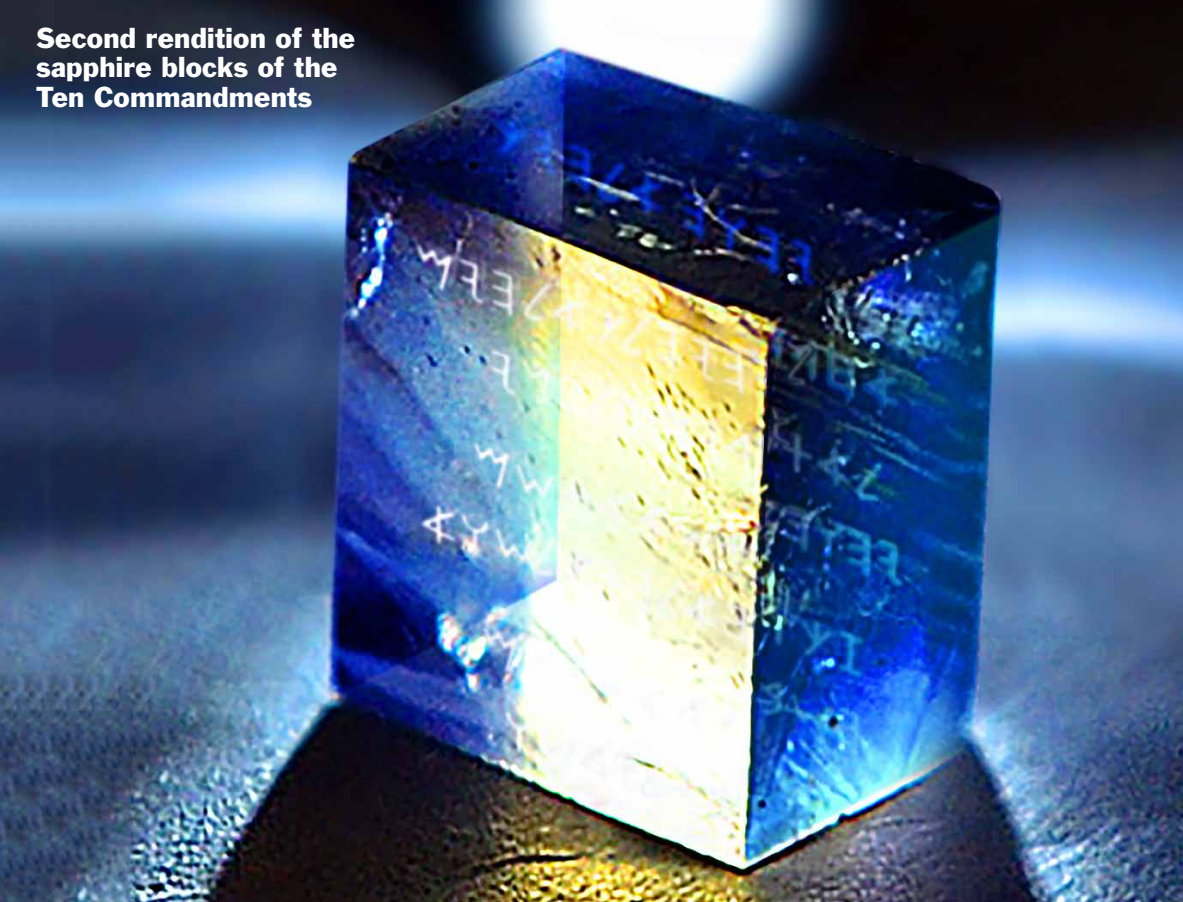


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Second rendition of the sapphire blocks of the Ten Commandments



God communicated 10 Commandments, shortly afterwards they would be committed to the Sefer Torah Moses would write. Therefore, for what purpose did God create the Tablets with the same record of this communication? Is this not a redundancy?

Let's briefly recount the history. God orchestrated Revelation at Sinai. The nation heard great sounds. Moses ascends Mount Sinai, he remains in commune with God for 40 days and nights and then he receives the Tablets from God. While still on Sinai, God informs Moses that the Jews sinned with the Gold Calf and that He will destroy the nation. Moses prays and God refrains from destroying the Jews. Before Moses descends the mountain we read these words, "And Moses turned and descended from the mountain, and the two Tablets of Testimony were in his hands; Tablets written from both sides[1], from this side and that were they written. And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, were they, explained on the Tablets (Exod. 32:15,16)." Why is Moses' descent interrupted with this detailed description of the Tablets? Why was this description of the Tablets not included earlier (31:18) where we

read, "And God gave to Moses—when He concluded to speak with him on Mount Sinai—two Tablets of testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God." This division of the Tablets' details into two Torah portions requires explanation, as does the term "Tablets of testimony:" testimony to what exactly? And we wonder why "two" tablets are needed. Could not a larger tablet contain all the words; could not smaller letters accomplish the same message on a single tablet?

Maimonides also cited the Mishna in Avos, "Ten things were created on [the first] Friday in the twilight of the evening." The writing is one of the ten things. Maimonides wishes to draw our attention to the necessity for God to have created the Tablets and their writing, at the end of the six days of Creation, just before God ceased His Creation. What is his message?

In Exodus 34:1, God instructs Moses to hew a second set of Tablets, and He says He will write on them the matters that "were" on the first tablets. Why doesn't God say He will write on them the matters that "He wrote" on the first Tablets? He uses a less descriptive term. I also wonder if there was more to Moses' breaking of the Tablets than already explained.

Revelation

Revelation on Sinai was intended to remove all doubt that a Supreme Intelligence created all, sustains all, and communicates with man. However, God desired this message not end at Sinai's closure. My friend Avraham suggested that the Tablets were intended to be an everlasting "testament" (Tablets of Testimony). This explains why upon God's completion of His communication with Moses atop Sinai, we read, "And God gave to Moses—when He concluded to speak with him on Mount Sinai—two Tablets of testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God." That is, once God concluded His Revelation to the people and to Moses, He desired an everlasting testimony of this Revelation, to serve as enduring and conclusive evidence that He alone created and sustains the universe. Thus, "testimony" appears in this verse, and not later in the second description of the Tablets. In order that this testimony is everlasting, the words are embedded in a permanent object—stone. So, "stone" is also in this verse. But can't anyone write words in stone? Of what proof are these Tablets?

The testimony God intended is to

the truth that He alone is the source of the universe. We read that these Tablets were "written with the finger of God." Maimonides said this was a "natural" phenomenon. Here now is the amazing idea and how these Tablets "testified."

Astonishing Tablets

These miraculous Tablets contained something not found elsewhere in nature: naturally formed letters, sentences and commandments! Imagine a tree, where its branches formed of words, or if lightning patterns did so too. That is how astonishing these Tablets were.

As God formed these Tablets over time at the end of Creation, so too, He formed the "writing" simultaneously, and naturally. The commands were not subsequently carved into the Tablets, but they literally grew with the stones as the stones formed naturally: "And the writing was the writing of God," as Maimonides said above, means a natural phenomenon. This explains why God tells Moses that He will write on the second Tablets the matters that "were" on the first set, and not matters that He "wrote" the first set. For God did not do an act of "writing" on the first Tablets. Yes, the words appeared "written" as the verse states[2] but not through an act of one thing acting on another resulting in writing. Again, the verse does not say, "I wrote" on the first Tablets, but rather, "were" on the first Tablets. The letters in the first Tablets formed simultaneously with the Tablets themselves. This is an amazing idea, and a phenomenon not seen elsewhere in nature. Perhaps for this reason, Maimonides includes in this chapter his critique of Onkelos' suggestion that the stone Tablets were carved through an instrument.

The Need

What consideration demanded that God create such a phenomenon? Although the exact words appearing on the Tablets were duplicated in the Torah scroll, it was not the words per se that demanded the Tablets' existence, but the "manner" of existence of these words. This natural

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formation of letters is God's clear message that He is behind the natural world, and Torah. Both form one unit. This is needed, for many people view nature devoid of God's creation and rule. Man becomes accustomed to matters by his very nature. The sun rises and sets, plants and animals grow, and species beget their own kind. We take all for granted, thinking all occurs due the nature itself, and not God. But with the existence of naturally formed words and commandments in natural objects, we can no longer maintain a view of an unguided world. Nature is finally understood to be the expression of an intelligent being: God. How can one ignore a natural object that has words naturally imprinted and not the work of art? This was the lesson of Sinai, and the sustained lesson of the Tablets.

Therefore, the Torah scroll's account of God's communicated commands sufficed for the 'content' of His words, but not for an everlasting "testament" which was revealed through natural stones containing intelligent words. And perhaps to remove all doubt that this occurred without God's intent, there were two stones, not one. A freakish natural incident can possibly be dismissed if it occurs once, but not twice.

We can no longer separate nature, from God. His very words are embedded in these stones in truly natural manner.

Why didn't God give the Tablets to Adam the First? Perhaps Adam had no need for them. God's original plan was that man use intellect to discover God. The beauty and precision of natural law is sufficient for a person following a life of wisdom.

However, at this era in mankind's development, these Tablets were intended to offer mankind a new leap in our wisdom of God. The ability for nature to produce such a phenomenon would offer us tremendous appreciation for the Creator of this nature. They were to be viewed and not placed in an Ark.

But as these Tablets were being delivered, the Jews sinned with the Gold Calf. The extraordinary lesson of the Tablets would not be realized with those Jews. These first Tablets required destruction. However, a lesson was required: the nation must now have a reminder of what they lost. God instructed Moses to hew a new

set...their tablet form would not come about naturally, but by human craft. God also "wrote" the matters on this second set; again, no longer a natural phenomenon of words that were part of their natural design. A gap now existed between the Jews and God. The intended, intimate relationship that could have been, was now lost. To emphasize this break from God, these Tablets must be stored out of sight; in the Ark. Perhaps this explains why King Solomon hid the Ark and no other vessel. He reiterated this message of "distance" between God and the nation through digging caverns to eventually hide the Tablets and the Ark.

"Ten things were created on [the first] Friday in the twilight of the evening"

As natural law needed to tolerate these unique Tablets, it had to be planned with the creation of the substance of sapphire. This could not be created later, for the very blueprint of how sapphire forms must contain natural laws that would generate stones with embedded communication. As this would be a "property" of sapphire's substance, it must be set at the time that God endowed sapphire with its formative properties, during Creation.

"And Moses turned and descended from the mountain, and the two Tablets of Testimony were in his hands; Tablets written from both sides, from this side and that were they written. And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, were they, explained on the Tablets."

Why is Moses' descent interrupted with this detailed description of the Tablets? Why was this description of the Tablets not included earlier (31:18) where we read, "And God gave to Moses"... "two Tablets of testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God?"

The first account expresses the "purpose" of the Tablets—testimony. Thus, we learn that the testament is in

endurable stone, and that the testament is a unique phenomenon. But when Moses is about to descend to the sinful Jews, we are told of the Tablet's nature that conflicts with their idolatry: the Tablets were "God's work," intended precisely to fend off idolatry. This aspect is relevant in connection with the idolatrous Jews, and therefore not mentioned until its relevance surfaces.

Now we understand the loss of the Tablets: our knowledge of God has been impaired. This is the ultimate tragedy. What an amazing sight they must have been. Perhaps in the future, this will be the means by which God will make His name fill the Earth. For we do not know if the Tablets were the only natural elements in which God embedded natural communication. And as this was God's will at Sinai, perhaps in the messianic era He will unveil this again to a more fitting generation. ■

[1] Ibn Ezra rejects the notion that the letters Mem Sofit and Samech (O-shaped letters) had miraculous center pieces floating. The letters were not hollowed from one side completely through to the other. They were simply written on the two faces of the stones, as the stones were thick. Alternatively, I suggest the letters were internal facets in the translucent sapphire, that could be seen on "both sides", like a crack can be seen from any side of a diamond. Furthermore, God does not perform impossibilities, so to have legible writing passing through a stone, with the exact wording seen on the opposite side, is not possible. God can do miracles, but not impossibilities. Similarly, God cannot create a circle that is a square.

[2] Exod. 32:15

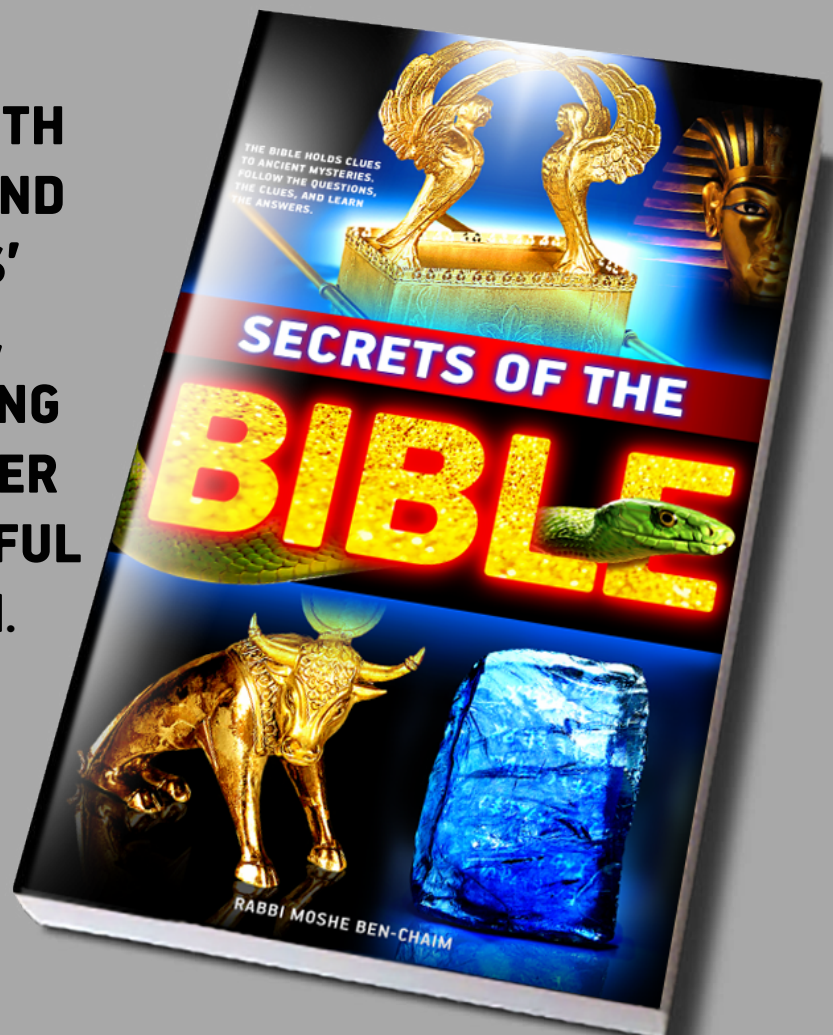
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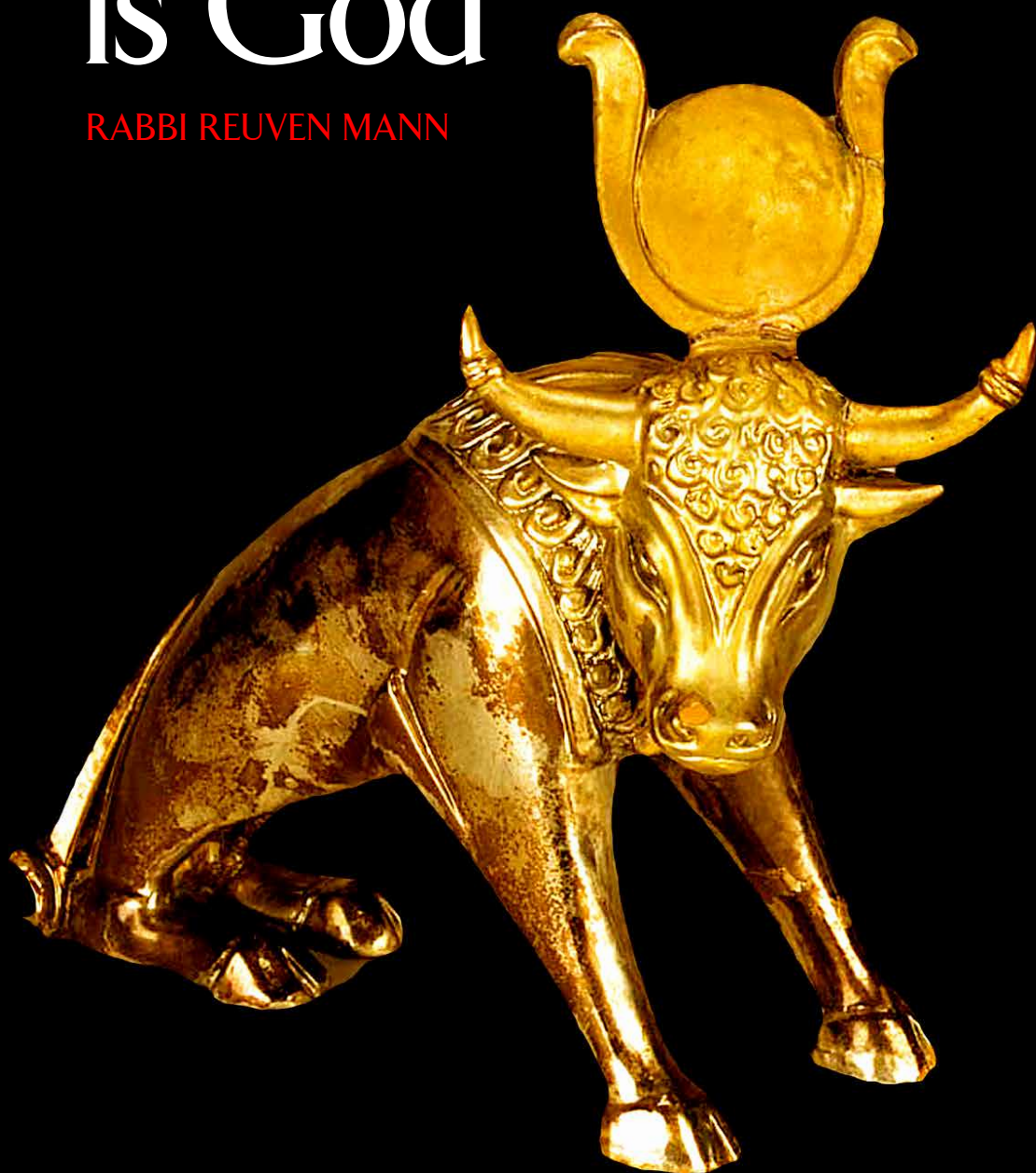
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PARSHA

The Answer is God

RABBI REUVEN MANN



This week's parsha, Ki Tisa, describes the most egregious transgression in Jewish history, the Golden Calf. It is difficult for us to understand how the Jews could slip so quickly and so easily into violation of Hashem's most fundamental commandment: "Thou shall have no other gods beside me."

There is only one God, the Creator of the universe who eternally exists and is beyond human comprehension. The God of reality who, alone, we are permitted to worship is one whom we cannot know or envision.

We are convinced that He exists but cannot imagine what He is like. All we know about Him are the actions that He "performs." They reveal that He is "righteous in all His ways" and treats His creatures with the most perfect justice and compassion.

Our knowledge of His "ways," revealed to us in His Torah, should engender in us a certain sense of trust and confidence. Yet anxiety is one of the most pervasive problems that haunt our pathway. In spite of all our material and scientific advances, which have greatly increased our control over our environment, we are not tranquil nor at peace.

The most prevalent emotion weighing us down is insecurity. We can readily understand that this feeling was appropriate in previous times, when man was at the mercy of the natural forces and couldn't do much about them.

Today we have cures and treatments for nearly all maladies and are constantly increasing man's lifespan, but it doesn't help. There are, simply, too many things to be afraid of. A short list of these would include failure, finances, rejection, crippling illness...it's a long list. Why are we so insecure?

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I believe it is because we have reason to be. In the words of Rav Soloveitchik, "Man is vulnerable." True, our existential condition has greatly improved because of scientific progress. But that is not enough to calm our fears. Too many things can go wrong. We need a protector who has the power to guarantee our wellbeing. Does such a being exist? The answer is God.

And herein lies the conundrum which might help us understand the *eigel* (Golden Calf). People are drawn to God because of their need for protection. While this is a positive thing, it also contains the seeds of idolatry.

Man is a creature of knowledge and emotion, and the two often conflict. Sometimes fears are so intense that they are not amenable to reason. Often a person will resist advice he knows to be true, because it goes against his feelings.

A scared person needs an emotional fix, and this prompts him to act irrationally, which is only appealing because it addresses the crisis of the moment.

The emotions of weakness and insecurity that draw a person to God are not assuaged by an unknowable Deity that has no place in our imagination. In idolatry, man creates his own deities and invests them with the qualities he wants them to have, because worshipping such a being makes him feel good about himself. Even though the "god" is a product of fantasy.

Judaism demands that we abandon the god of our imagination and serve the God of reality. We need to cultivate a sense of certainty about His existence and

faithfulness. When we attain unshakable trust in Hashem's righteousness we secure liberation from the many anxieties and worries that afflict us.

The Jews had not attained this degree of *bitachon* (trust) when Moshe left them to ascend the mountain. They had not fully apprehended the meaning of all the miracles that Hashem had performed on their behalf. Instead, their faith was connected to the person of Moshe. His absolute belief and confidence in the word of Hashem greatly inspired and energized them. Thus, in the war against Amalek, when they gazed at him with his hands held up to heaven, they were infused with a powerful sense of the Al-mighty and battled victoriously.

Their *emunah* (faith) had not been fully internalized, but was dependent on that of Moshe. Thus, when he was late in returning, and fear gripped them, they reverted to a primitive approach to the divine that was rooted in the creation of deities.

The Rambam says that the purpose of the entire Torah is to utterly uproot idolatry. We need to constantly be on guard against any and all vestiges of alien worship, implicit and explicit. By being committed to the authentic notion of God, we can cultivate an unshakable sense of *bitachon* in the Creator of the universe.

This is the basis of the courage and confidence that enables us to overcome fear and face with equanimity the vicissitudes that life holds for us. May we merit to achieve it.

Shabbat shalom. ■



THE GOLD CALF

Sin and Punishment

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim & Dani Roth



Those who worshipped the Gold Calf could no longer remain part of the Jewish nation, which follows the one God. Violators were killed in one of three manners. If the worshipper was forewarned and had witnesses, death was by the sword. If there were witnesses but no warning, a lesser crime, one died by a plague. And if one was not warned against worship, nor was he or she witnessed worshipping, the method of death was by drinking a mixture of the pulverized Gold Calf and water.[1] Those who sinned would die through this drink; those who did not sin were unharmed.

The Torah does not communicate it, but apparently, Moses knew God wished to reveal the Gold Calf worshippers through this drink. But is this not a strange method? Additionally, why did Moses melt the Gold Calf before grinding it? He could have immediately ground it, as

we see his ultimate intention was to have the Jews drink the gold-dust/water mixture. My close friend and Torah study partner (chavrusa) Dani Roth asked as follows: If Moses sought to expose the Gold Calf as a powerless idol, won't the punishment of death coming through drinking particles of the Calf actually make it appear that the Calf has powers? A great question indeed. Dani and I arrived at the following conclusions.

Melting disfigures the Calf into an amorphous lump of metal. Moses did this first, as he wished to expose the deified Calf as nothing more than a material substance all would agree is unworthy of worship, as it possesses no powers. Forming a calf from a clearly powerless lump of gold cannot grant it powers. Moses' reducing the calf back to a mere lump of metal teaches this lesson. The Jews who worshipped the Calf, did so due

to its form; they projected imagined powers onto the gold once it was formed into the god of Egypt, a calf. However, the Gold Calf was unveiled as a lie, for it could not defend itself against Moses' melting. Moses' intent was to help the Jews see past their projections, and abandon their belief before they would be punished with death. This way they died as one who repented. This explains why Moses first melted the Calf before grinding it.

Moses had ground the Calf into gold dust, mixed it with water, and demanded the Jews drink the mixture.[2] This does not validate the Gold Calf as possessing any power: God was the one who killed the sinners. Rashi teaches that Moses intended to test the Jews for whom there were no witnesses of their suspected idol worship. If affected by the mixture, this exposed them as idolaters. Apparently, Moses felt

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many Jews attempted to conceal their idol worship. Rashi teaches that Moses was testing the Jews, just as the waters test the suspected wife (the Sotah). What is this parallel? If a wife was warned by her husband not to be with another man, and she violated his warning, but does not confess her sin, the husband may have the priest give the wife a special drink. If she did not confess her sin, the drink would kill her. But let us focus on why the wife would not confess. This is because she feels she could keep hidden from her husband the illicit relationship with the other man. The drink would unveil reality, and that she cannot keep this hidden from God. In connection with the Gold Calf too, the Jews are similarly unfaithful: in this case, unfaithful to God. The Jews did not wish to confess their Gold Calf worship unseen by Moses while he was atop Mt. Sinai. Moses therefore forced the Jews to drink, teaching them that what is on their “insides” (their sinful defection from God) cannot be hidden from God. The mixture entering their bodies is a metaphor for an “inner” truth becoming revealed. It ends up there were 2 sins: 1) worshipping the Calf, and 2) denying God’s knowledge of their sin. Just as the waters enter the insides of man’s body, God “enters” the insides of man’s thoughts.

Denying their sin, the Jews wished to maintain their attachment to the Calf. Not admitting a sin is due to the sinner’s failure to view his error: he wishes to remain with his sinful belief. This means he believes the Calf to be a valid object of worship.

Moses desired to help the Jews repent by forcing them to realize that only God knows man’s thoughts; not a golden idol. The distinction between those who died from the drink from those who did not, was a clear proof that something other than the Gold Calf controls nature, and more, this Being knows man’s thoughts.

In the end, the Gold Calf could not defend itself from being melted, it was exposed as simply metal, and worshipping it met with death, not success. The Jews’ esteem for the Calf was a grave error. They ultimately had to answer to the one true Power, the only Being man is to worship, since God alone is the only being who knows man’s thoughts, and can answer our prayers. The Jews drank a mixture that distinguished a sinner from an innocent person, teaching this sublime lesson of one Deity that lives, and possesses knowledge of man; enabling Him to reward man or to punish him. ■

[1] Rashi, Exod. 32:20

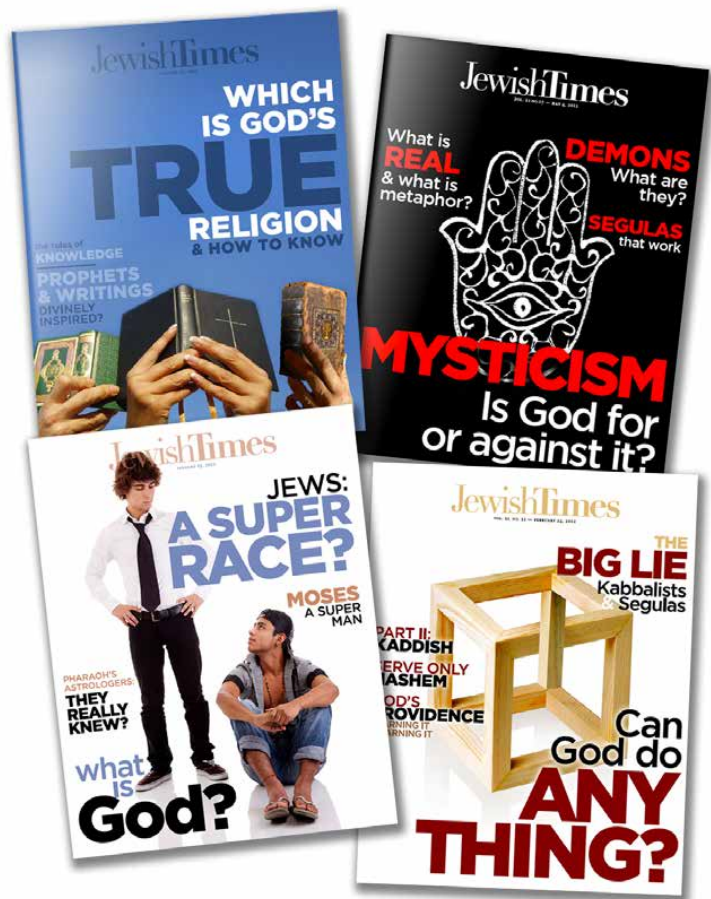
[2] Exod. 32:20

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