

"If bin Laden is a terrorist; if his mind is that of a terrorist; if he has facilitated terrorists when he directs and provisions those who kill the innocent in the World Trade Center, then

YASSERARAFAT AND HIS COHORTS ARE TERRORISTS WHEN THEY DIRECT AND PROVISION YOUNG PALESTINIANS TO KILL THE INNOCENT IN ISRAEL" - Alan Keyes

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Parashas Behar

RABBI BERNARD FOX

"And you shall proclaim with a shofar in the seventh month, on the tenth of the month. On Yom HaKippurim you shall proclaim with a shofar in all your land." (VaYikra 25:9)

Parshat Behar discusses the laws of Shemitah – the Sabbatical Year – and Yovel – the Jubilee Year. The Sabbatical Year occurs

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INDEPENDENCE DAY FESTIVAL Remarks by Ambassador Alan Keyes - Los Angeles, California

INTRO BY RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

I wish to express my sincere thanks to Ambassador Keyes for his continued, devoted, unflinching and determined work on behalf of world Jewry and Israel. I praise Don Feder for his Summit initiative taking place this weekend in D.C, where he, Dr. Keyes and other leaders will commence the initial steps to enforce issues vital to Israel, and dismantle notions, policies and actions opposing Israel.

Mesora will present Dr. Keyes with a special "Scroll of Thanks", documenting our OneNation tallies, (now over 10,000 votes) accomplished by the joint efforts of Mesora, the Declaration Alliance, our friends, and others. (www.Mesora.org/OneNation).

This scroll embodies the sentiment that our worldly actions are the essence, as our destiny is in God's 'hands' alone. To this end, we pay our debt of gratitude to Alan Keyes for his virtues and actions. Regardless of outcome, Dr. Keyes has defended what he sees as just in his mind, what he feels as just in his heart, his brother as himself-the Jewish people, Israel, and thereby the Torah given at Sinai and the Creator, Who we reflect. Dr. Keyes' work alerts mankind to the need to approach God through His Bible during our short stay. This is Alan's crowning achievement. Creating a safe

Hear Dr. Keyes live this weekend in Washington D.C. Email: amsoloway@aol.com

Israel, fighting terror, and standing up for our American rights are all prerequisites for mankind to arrive at our true goal - understanding and appreciating the Creator.

Our mark of distinction as man is our intelligence. God-given, it's use in study and teaching is to occupy the majority of our lives. This is clearly God's goal for man. Creating a safe Israel for the "People of the Book" - Dr. Keyes' devotion fosters this goal on a global level. My involvement in teaching Jew and Gentile alike is made possible by leaders such as Dr. Keyes. May he continue, and may he be exemplified by all others understanding his mission.

Moshe Ben-Chaim

AMBASSADOR ALAN KEYES

"I am often asked why it is that I am such a strong supporter of Israel. And I have to confess that when folks ask me that, it takes me aback a little bit, because it is not how I think of myself. Or, at least, it's not how I think of what I do. What I have been trying to do over the course of a couple of decades - I have a little more opportunity to do it right now on my television show - is as best I can simply to speak the truth as I understand it.

And I think that I try to do so, as I try to do everything in my public life, in a way that will reflect the deep sense of allegiance that I feel to this country, America, and to the principles that we are supposed to stand for in the world. That has been

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INDEPENDENCE DAY FESTIVAL

Remarks by Ambassador Alan Keyes - Los Angeles, California

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especially important to me, as it has to many Americans, I think, since September 11th. And I think that if we understand the real meaning of what happened on September 11th, then we ought to understand that whatever was the case before, whatever were the reasons, strategically, politically, economically; whatever were the reasons, emotionally and morally and spiritually, that led the United States to stand together with the state of Israel before September 11th, after September 11th it becomes not just a question of policy and philosophy. After September 11th, it becomes an absolute principle of survival, to take a stand against those who represent a willingness - cold-bloodedly, ruthlessly, and with malice aforethought - to bring war against the innocent in pursuit of naked and brutal ambition.

I'm not trying to tell you that I, or anybody else, could wave a magic wand tomorrow, and banish conflict and war from the Middle East. But I think what we must all realize, as human beings who hope for the progress of this planet, is that if someday we are to banish war, then certainly today we must absolutely banish those who would make war without principle, without rules, without decency, without conscience, without respect for the intrinsic worth of every innocent human life.

And this means I must, here and now, part company with those who believe that when suicide bombers bring down the Twin Towers, and kill thousands of Americans, we are right to stand before the world and declare that there is no neutrality with terrorism, there is no negotiating with terrorism - and then demand neutrality and negotiation with those terrorists targeting Israel. I will stand against those who see terrorism when Americans die, but who see suicide bombers who kill

Israelis, and believe that that is just part of the negotiating process.

If bin Laden is a terrorist; if his mind is that of a terrorist; if he has facilitated terrorists when he directs and provisions those who kill the innocent in the World Trade Center, then Yasser Arafat and his cohorts are terrorists when they direct and provision young Palestinians to kill the innocent in Israel.

Throughout my career, I have stood for peace in the region, as solidly and firmly anybody could. Long before the Bush Administration thought to do it, I declared that there was in fact a need to satisfy the national aspirations of the Palestinian people. There is no doubt about this.

But mark my words: It does no good for the Palestinian people to keep themselves in the clutches of a blood-thirsty leadership that is willing to inculcate such hatred that they sacrifice their own children for the sake of destruction. It is not just for Israel that we stand together today. And it is not just for America. It is for every decent minded human being who hopes someday that all of us will be able live together in peace. It is for every decent minded human being who hopes someday that we will banish mindless hatred from the hearts of our children.

Step number one is to reject, absolutely, all those leaders everywhere in the world who would turn their children into suicide bombers, who would cynically exploit their own young peoples' trust and innocence for the sake of death, in evil advancement of the raw and ruthless political power they seek.

And I believe that as we come together here today in order to commemorate the Independence of Israel, we must stand together, each and every one of us, solidly on the grounds of our common opposition to that terrorist menace which threatens the independence, the

morality, and the decent conscience not just of Israel, but of every human being anywhere on this globe.

The President was right: in the war against terror, there can be no neutrality. Every state that facilitates and encourages that menace must stand accountable before the civilized world. And as an accounting of those terror states must include Iran, and Iraq, and North Korea, **SO IT MUST INCLUDE SAUDI ARABIA, AND ALL OF THOSE WHO ARE WILLING, AS THEY HIDE BEHIND THE LABEL OF PHONY "MODERATION" TO SPONSOR TERRORISM AND DEATH!**

I have had to come a long way today, for the sake of sharing these few thoughts with you. But I'll tell you something. The reason I thought it was worth it, is very simple. Some people think that what is at stake in the Middle East is the survival of Israel. I deeply believe that in present circumstances, the survival of Israel is at stake. But if we learned anything on September 11th, then we should have learned that what is finally at stake in this confrontation is the survival of us all.

Already we are seeing that confusion about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, confusion and a false moral equivalency in understanding that conflict, is undermining the clarity of America's policy on terrorism. Don't think that that is not a serious problem. It indicates the connection that we must all understand. We must be CLEAR in dealing with the challenge of this region, for it is the challenge to every human heart to stand against those who would deny the right and better destiny not just of Israelis, but of all decent human beings.

There is a solution, but it is not going to come in a negotiating process that embraces a terrorist

mentality, that rewards terrorist violence. It will come when all of us are willing, without exception, to make it clear that every leader, and every regime, and every movement, and every organization that steps across the line to terrorism, must be banished from the discourse of civilized human life. They have made it clear, as inhuman terrorists enacting inhuman violence against the innocent, that they are not a part of our common human destiny. In their embrace of terror, they are denizens and practitioners of a barbarous culture of death. And we must be steadfast in our determination of their pariah status among the nations of the civilized world.

When we are willing to stand firm and unequivocal in that judgment, we will not only make the world safer for a discussion of peace in the Middle East. We will make it safer for the survival of the Jewish State of Israel. We will make it safer for a true fulfillment of the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people for responsible self-government. We will make it safer for the continued progress of our own people here in the United States. We will make the world safer by standing united and unyielding - standing on principle, no exceptions, no excuses - against terrorism.

So let us today reaffirm our commitment to respect the sacredness of innocent life. Upholding that moral principle, we will, in fact, win the war against terror, and prevail in our determination to secure for all people the better destiny of freedom and self-government that is the birthright of our humanity." **□**

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Parashas Behar

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in the land of Israel every seven years. During the Shemita year, the land may not be worked. The produce that grows spontaneously is shared by all the inhabitants of the land. Every fiftieth year is a Yovel year. In other words, the Yovel marks the culmination of seven Sabbatical years. The Yovel shares many of the laws of the Sabbatical year. Accordingly, during the Jubilee the land may not be farmed.

Our pasuk explains that the Yovel must be declared by the sounding of the shofar. This is done on Yom Kippur of the Yovel year. Maimonides explains that the sounding of the shofar for Yovel is done in the same manner as the sounding for Rosh HaShannah. The same notes are required on both occasions and the sounds are accompanied with the same blessings.[1]

Why is the shofar sounded to declare the Yovel? Maimonides explains that the sounding of the shofar declares that all Jewish slaves are to be set free. He distinguishes between this mitzvah and the blowing of shofar on Rosh HaShannah. On Rosh HaShannah the shofar is sounded as an act of prayer. The shofar of Yovel is a declaration of freedom.[2]

Other commentaries object to Maimonides' explanation of the shofar of Yovel. First, if the Yovel shofar is merely a declaration of freedom, why are the Rosh HaShannah notes sounded? Second, on Rosh HaShannah the shofar blasts are accompanied by specific blessings of the Amidah. These blessings clearly incorporate an element of prayer into the mitzvah of shofar. According to Maimonides, these blessings should not be required for the shofar of Yovel. Yet, Maimonides acknowledges that these blessings accompany the shofar blasts even on Yovel!

Gershonides suggests that the shofar of Yovel is not merely a declaration of freedom. He notes

that the sounding of the shofar is typically associated with repentance. Maimonides explains that the shofar of Rosh HaShannah is intended to alert us to perform teshuvah[3] The shofar is also sounded on the occasion of a tragedy or affliction confronting the community. On these occasions the shofar is accompanied with trumpets. Maimonides indicates that these blasts are designed to urge the community to consider its behavior and repent.[4] Gershonides assumes that Yovel shofar is also associated with repentance.

This raises an obvious question. We can certainly appreciate the relationship between Yom Kippur and repentance. However, the Torah does not require that we sound the shofar on every Yom Kippur. We only sound the shofar on the Yom Kippur of Yovel. Why does this Yom Kippur require the special emphasis on teshuvah communicated through the shofar?

Gershonides answers this question through abstracting two basic elements of symbolism from Yovel and Shemita. First, these occasions represent a period of rest following a period of labor. Second, this rest period is associated with repentance through the sounding of the shofar on Yom Kippur of the Yovel.

Gershonides explains that this period of rest symbolizes the maturity and wisdom associated with the last portion of our lives. In other words, each human being after "laboring" through the first sixth sevenths of life reaches personal Sabbath or Jubilee. What is the significance of this personal sabbatical? Gershonides explains that in youth we labor to overcome our fantasies and material desires. If we live a Torah life, then with age and maturity we become less dominated by our material drives. We attain the potential to be more objective and spiritual. The fantasies and intense desires associated with youth have

subsided and turbulence is replaced by calmness. We then have the opportunity to achieve a level of spiritual perfection that was all but unattainable in youth. This opportunity demands that we intensify our ongoing efforts to repent and return to Hashem.

We can now understand the sounding of the shofar on Yom Kippur of Yovel. These blasts, like those of Rosh HaShannah and times of trouble, are designed to urge us to perform teshuvah. The Yom Kippur of Yovel symbolizes a special time in life. The sounding of the shofar reminds us to take full advantage of our personal sabbatical when it arrives.[5]

“And the land will give forth its fruit and you will eat and be satiated. And you will dwell securely upon it (the land).” (VaYikra 25:19)

In addition to the Shemita year, the nation must also observe the Yovel. The Yovel is the Jubilee year. It is observed every fifty years or after seven Shemita years. During the Jubilee year, the land may not be cultivated. This means that after every forty-eight years the land is left fallow for two consecutive years. The forty-ninth year is the Sabbatical year. The fiftieth is the Jubilee.

We would expect that this practice to lead to famine and widespread hunger. The Torah directly discusses the problem presented by these two consecutive years. What will the nation eat during these years? The Torah responds that the Almighty will direct His blessing to the land during the forty-eighth year. This blessing will result in an abundant harvest. The produce of the forty-eighth year will suffice for the following three years.[6]

Our pasuk also assures Bnai Yisrael that the observance of the mitzvot of Shemita and Yovel will lead to wealth and security. What is the purpose of this assurance?

Apparently, it is not intended to relieve any anxiety caused by the prohibitions against working the land. This issue is dealt with separately, as indicated above. Instead, our passage seems to represent a more general pledge. Hashem will reward the nation for observing the commandments of Shemita and Yovel. Our passage explains that the recompense is security upon the land and abundant harvests.

We can assume that this reward somehow corresponds with the mitzvah. To an extent, the connection is apparent. Through respecting the laws governing the use of the land, we secure possession of the land. Through observing the laws regulating the working of the land, we assure that the land will produce an abundant harvest. However, there is another connection between the observance of Shemita and Yovel and prosperity and security. This connection is discussed by Rashi. In order to understand his comments, an introduction is needed.

The laws of Shemita and Yovel communicate many important messages. Both Shemita and Yovel are related to cycles of seven. The Shemita is the seventh year. The Yovel occurs after seven Shemita years. These cycles of seven recall the creation. Creation occurred in seven days. Like Shabbat, Yovel and Shemita remind us that Hashem is the Creator. He is the master of all He created. Therefore, He has the right to command us to desist from cultivating the land. Our suspension of cultivation demonstrates recognition of the Almighty's authority.[7]

Shemita and Yovel teach another important lesson. Rashi explains this lesson in his commentary on the Navi Yermiyah. The Navi states, “Hashem says, ‘Cursed is the person that relies on man and depends on flesh. And his heart

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leaves Hashem.”[8] Rashi discusses the cursed person described in the passage. He explains that this person is one who cultivates the land during the Sabbatical year. This person believes that these activities as needed for sustenance. This person departs from Hashem. The Almighty has commanded us not to work the land during the Shemithah. Instead, He will sustain us. He will direct His blessing upon the land during the sixth year. The person who cultivates the land has chosen to rely on human endeavors rather than the Almighty’s blessing.[9]

According to Rashi, Shemithah and Yovel communicate an important lesson regarding prosperity. We assume that success and prosperity are a result of our own personal efforts and endeavors. The corollary is that without these personal activities, success is virtually impossible. Our underlying premise is that the universe is guided by unalterable physical laws. We must work within these laws in order to achieve success. It follows that any activity that contradicts these natural laws is doomed to failure. If we adopt a practice of disregarding natural law, we will encounter failure and defeat.

From this perspective, it makes no sense to observe Shemithah and Yovel. How can prosperity be achieved through not working and cultivating the land? Abandoning the land should result in disaster! The Navi Yermiyah tells us that this reasoning is flawed. The universe is governed by a higher law. The Almighty reveals to us that prosperity will result from obeying Him. Shemithah and Yovel produce prosperity and security. The very behaviors that should result in disaster produce success. This is because these observances correspond to the will of the Almighty.

We can now understand our

passage. The passage is describing the reward for observing Shemithah and Yovel. We are rewarded with prosperity and security. Now we can understand this reward more deeply. There is a profound relationship between these rewards and these observances. These commandments demonstrate our reliance on a higher law. We acknowledge that this higher law supercedes the physical laws. Through observing Shemithah and Yovel, we abandon the material path to prosperity. We acknowledge that success depends on adherence to the Divine law. The reward for this affirmation is the prosperity and security we seek.

“Do not take from him advance interest or accrued interest. And you should fear your G-d. And sustain your brother with you.” (VaYikra 25:36)

The Torah prohibits the lending of funds with interest. Violation of this injunction has serious consequences. The Talmud, in Tractate Sanhedrin, lists individuals who are disqualified from providing testimony. Generally, the individuals listed in the mishna have violated a serious mitzvah. Among those disqualified is a person who lends with interest.[10]

How does a person recover his kashrut – his ability to serve as a witness? The Talmud discusses this issue. A person who lends with interest must completely abandon this practice. He must not even charge a non-Jew interest.[11] This is a very strange requirement. Lending with interest to a Jew is prohibited. It is completely permitted to charge a non-Jew interest![12] Why must the lender abandon a permitted activity?

In order to answer this question, we must carefully consider the requirement for reestablishing kashrut. Let us analyze the law regarding another individual disqualified from offering testimony. A gambler is also disqualified.[13] The Talmud

discusses the means by which this person reestablishes kashrut. The gambler must shatter his dice. He must also completely abandon the practice of dice playing. He must no longer play this game of chance even without a wager.[14] Again, the question arises. Playing dice does not involve any wrongdoing. Only gambling is prohibited. Why must even a permitted activity be abandoned?

It seems that the recovery of kashrut requires more than mere repentance. Repentance involves complete abandonment of the sin.[15] A greater commitment is needed to re-qualify a person as a witness. He must establish barriers against his return to the prohibited practice. This requires identifying the behaviors that can lead him back to the prohibited activity. Permitted activities, which may undermine the person’s repentance, must be cast aside.

This explains the statements of the Talmud. The gambler must desist from all dice playing. Even playing without a monetary stake must be abandoned. This activity is permitted. But, for the reformed

gambler, this activity poses a danger. It can reawaken his desire to gamble. In order to reestablish kashrut this precaution is necessary.

We can now understand the requirement regarding the lender. In this case, as well, repentance is not adequate for the re-establishment of kashrut. The principle outlined above applies. Activities that may lead the lender back to his former practices must be abandoned. Lending with interest to a non-Jew must be forsaken. This is a permitted activity. However, the sinner is required to initiate precautions against backsliding to his former behavior.

As noted, it is generally permitted to charge a non-Jew interest. This should not be construed as a slight to the non-Jew. The prohibition against charging interest is an expression of the communal responsibility shared by all Jews. We are brethren. It is inappropriate to lend with interest within this religious community. The non-Jew is not part of the religious community.

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Therefore, the prohibition does not apply to the non-Jew.

This concept has additional implications. Just as it is prohibited to charge interest, one is not allowed to pay interest. This restriction does not apply to funds borrowed from the non-Jew. A Jew may pay interest to a non-Jew. This is understandable, based on the above. Within the religious community, interest is prohibited. A Jew borrowing outside of this community is not subject to the restriction against paying interest.

"Do not dominate him to so as to break his spirit. And you should fear your G-d." (VaYikra 25:43)

The Torah allows a Jew to sell himself into bondage under specific circumstances. He may only sell himself to a fellow Jew. The Torah strictly regulates the relationship between the servant and the master. These regulations determine the type of service that may be required. The general treatment of the servant is also carefully defined.

One might easily assume that these regulations are based solely upon humanitarian considerations. Certainly, these considerations play a role. However, the Torah provides an additional reason for limiting the authority of the master. The Chumash explains that all Jews are servants of Hashem.[16]

Sforno explains that although a person has the authority to sell himself into bondage, this right is limited. The servant's primary duty is to serve the Almighty.[17]

The comments of Sforno contain an astute observation regarding human nature. We are obligated to serve Hashem. We are His servants. He is our master. To the extent that we accept upon ourselves human masters, the position of Hashem is diminished. The material master assumes a position of authority over the actions and behaviors of the servant. This dominance extends to the psyche of the servant. In the psychological reality of the servant, the master is vested with a unique supremacy. This inevitably conflicts with the servant's primary servitude to the Almighty.

The Torah is determined to prevent

the material master from usurping the role of Hashem, in the mind of the servant. How was this accomplished? The Torah restricts the master's dominance over the servant. These restrictions have two effects. First, the master's authority is not absolute. This limits the impact upon the servant's perceptions. The servant will not perceive the master as an all-powerful individual. Second, the servant will realize that the master is restricted by a greater authority. These restrictions remind the servant that ultimately a greater master controls both material master and servant. □

[1] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Shemitah VeYovel 10:10-11. [2] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Sefer HaMitzvot, Mitzvat Aseh 137. [3] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah 3:4. [4] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Ta'anit 1:1-2. [5] Rabbaynu Levi ben Gershon (Ralbag / Gershonides), Commentary on Sefer VaYikra, (Mosad HaRav Kook, 1997), pp. 358 and 368. [6] Sefer VaYikra 25:20-21. [7] Rav Ahron HaLeyve, Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 84. [8] Sefer Yermiyah 17:5. [9] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Yermiyah 17:5. [10] Mesechet Sanhedrin 24b. [11] Mesechet Sanhedrin 25a. [12] Mesechet Baba Metzia 70b. [13] Mesechet Sanhedrin 24b. [14] Mesechet Sanhedrin 25a. [15] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Introduction to Hilchot Teshuva, 2:1-2. [16] Sefer VaYikra, 25:42. [17] Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno, Commentary on Sefer VaYikra, 25:42.

Psychoanalyzing Our Founders

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Reader: Im taking another look at Sara laughing when being told of the birth of Isaac in one year's time. There is a Rashi 17:17. Avraham believed and was happy. Sara didn't believe and made fun. And that's what Hashem "hikpid" (stringent) on Sara and not on Avraham. I'm a little confused. I'd like some clarification about not psychoanalyzing our patriarchs and matriarchs. I originally thought that it's not safe to do that unless one of the commentators do it. That is to say, I can't deduce from the text that a mistake was made. However, I can rely on a (reliable) commentator who points to a mistake. Rashi seems to interpret that Sara was denying. was my mistake in psychoanalyzing her denial? Trying to explain why she denied? Is the most we can say that she was wrong to deny, but we can't understand why she denied? Thanks.

Mesora: A Rabbi once addressed this issue: His point is that we have no grounds to assume that the patriarchs and matriarchs functioned as we do

regarding psychology. We have to claim ignorance when understanding the "why's" of their actions, unless as you pointed out, we are taught some reason by Chazal, the Rabbis. But for us to assess their psyche, is an inherently flawed undertaking. It will be based - at best - on our own, greatly inferior understanding of human psychology, coupled with an ignorance of their great perfection.

They were selected by God to act as examples for all mankind. Their level of perfection is therefore God's choice - an astonishing testimony to their achievements, based on their internal perfections. As their inferiors, not fathoming their motivations and levels of knowledge of God, we cannot attribute our subjective explanations for their motives, which are based on a corrupt philosophy, inherited from those lower than them, and further corrupted by our decayed society. □

9/11 & the Jewish People

RABBI REUVEN MANN

It is difficult to believe that a year has passed since the numbers 9 and 11 became indelibly etched in the annals of infamy. We cannot come to grips with the sadistic character of the horror we witnessed with our own eyes. What evil movement would consign thousands of innocents who had no connection to its "grievance" to a sudden and horrible death?

We generally underestimate the full extent of human sadism. We naively imagine that all people, especially those, who profess to act in the name of G-d, have some element of "compassion." The primary cause of the horrible explosions was the religious zeal of the terrorists. On the surface, this is impossible to comprehend. Most people associate religion with peace, restraint and compassion. Moslem theologians continuously insist that the term Islam means submission to the will of their deity. How can people who hold that faith act with such complete cruelty and contempt for human life and the most cherished institutions of advanced civilization? In my opinion, we are very naïve about the real nature of "religion."

Throughout history people have had intense "religious experiences." The danger of confusing one's personal "vision" with the will of the Creator is very great. Most of the wars of history were fought by competing religions seeking to impose their theological falsehoods. Man made religion can be very dangerous. You can tell that a

religion is a human invention by the behavior of its adherents. Their psychological insecurity about the truth of their system compels them to act ruthlessly against non-believers. Skeptics are a threat who must be forcefully converted or eliminated. The freedom to inquire and live by reason is the greatest danger to religion because if the real origin of the doctrines were discovered, the claim of divinity would be seriously compromised. Make no mistake about it; the 9/11 criminals were not men of true religion. They were cruel people in pursuit of personal glory in an imaginary paradise whose souls were purged of any element of pity for human beings. Let us recognize the fact that false religion can lead to the worst horrors. Much crime has been committed by those who arrogantly claim to speak in G-d's name. 9/11 ranks with the most heinous abuses of religion in history! There is certainly much evil in the world. None is worse than that which rationalizes itself in the form of misbegotten "theologies."

Judaism stands apart from the religions of man. It is based on submission to the will of G-d as He has revealed it to us, not as we would like it to be. In Judaism, we strive to approach G-d through recognition and appreciation of His Infinite Wisdom, which is revealed in the world of nature, and in the ideas of His Torah. This produces a certain humility and a sense of compassion for all of His creatures. Judaism, unlike other religions, does not proselytize. We do not seek to impose our views on others. Yet, the question arises: If we regard the Torah as G-d's instruction to mankind, do we not have the obligation to disseminate this knowledge? I believe that there is no greater compassion than to educate people in the proper "way of life." However, we cannot assume the role of missionaries. Our national goal is expressed in the words, "And I shall be sanctified in the midst of the children of Israel." Our wisdom, behavior, kindness and commitment to justice in all situations, in our personal and national dealings serve to sanctify the name of G-d and draw mankind closer to His service.

Some have said that 9/11 gave religion a bad name. I say, it gave false religion a very bad name. We must, in every area, use of our G-d given intelligence to differentiate between the true and the false, between darkness and light. Our task is to reflect the wisdom and beauty of our religion of truth. Let us at this time renew our appreciation of our eternal Torah heritage and rededicate ourselves to our national mission of Kiddush Hashem, the sanctification of G-d's name. □

The Torah Personality A Non-Believer

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

Joseph Campbell the famous mythologist tells of a meeting he once had with a priest while on vacation. The priest, recognizing the famous professor, asked Campbell if he believed in God, to which Campbell replied, "no." "Well, would you believe in Him if I could prove Him to you?" asked the priest. "Yes," replied Campbell, "but then how would I have faith?" The priest conceded defeat.

This anecdote typifies the idea of Christian faith. The virtue of faith is only possible where the mind does not convince us that something is so. Indeed, some have gone so far as to say that the ideal of Christian faith is to believe in something the mind dictates as absurd. As Tertullian said, "credo quia absurdum," (I believe that which is absurd). Søren Kierkegaard went even further and said that the very absurdity of the Christian claim makes it worthy of belief. This type of thinking has its source in the New Testament in 1 Corinthians 1& 2.

There is nothing mysterious about why religion demands belief. Religion is not a result of knowledge and investigation. It is basically man's projections of an inner world onto what we call the real world. Such a system by definition demands belief. Its very existence is dependent on the denial of a weltanschauung that bases itself on reasoning alone. Such a system would spell doomsday for the religion. Other modes of cognition must be sanctified so that the religion may survive. These modes are dubbed "spiritual."

In order to protect itself further, religion maintains that these modes of cognition are superior to reason. The challenge of religion then becomes to rely exclusively on the "spiritual" type thinking. This becomes the mark of virtue, so much so that if one were to know something by reason there would be no religious challenge and hence no virtue. This was Campbell's response to the priest.

What does Torah have to say about this? Torah teaches the exact opposite of what all man-made religions teach. We usually characterize religious people as believers because they accept as true things which cannot be proven through reason. We call non-religious individuals non-believers because they demand proof for their convictions and therefore reject religious notions. In the eyes of the Torah both the religious and non-religious people are believers while the Torah personality

is not a believer. Sound strange? Let us examine the matter more closely.

The Christian idea of faith leads to insoluble problems when we approach Torah. If having faith is the highest level of religiosity then Moses, the greatest figure in the Torah would be the least religious. Since he knew God via direct prophecy, "face to face," there would be no need for him to have any faith. He would thus be devoid of the most important religious virtue, faith. Similarly, the Patriarchs who had knowledge of God via prophecy would have no need for faith. Moreover, all Israel who witnessed God's revelation at Sinai would have no need for faith. The Torah then is a book of the faithless. Indeed, Torah encourages faithlessness. God tells Moses, "Behold I will come to you in the thickness of the cloud in order that the nation shall hear when I speak with you and in you too will they believe forever, (Exodus 19:9)." God expects the people to believe in Him and the fact that Moses is His loyal servant only after the spectacular event at Sinai. God never tells Moses to tell the people to simply have faith. Moses repeats the formula at great length in Deuteronomy 4:9-15, and 32-36, 5:2-5 and 19-24. It is quite clear through all of this that the only reason the people were expected to believe in God and Torah was because they witnessed the event at Sinai with their own eyes, as it stated, "You have been shown so that you may know that Hashem, He is God...", (Ibid. 4:35), "Face to face, God spoke to you, (Ibid. 5:4)", "You have seen that from the heavens I have spoken to you, (Exodus 20:19)." There is not one word in God's Torah that suggests that we suspend our critical faculty and indulge in what Christians call faith.

The Torah actually cautions against such a practice. In Deuteronomy 13, the Torah warns us not to follow any prophet who deviates from any of the teachings of the Torah even if his predictions of signs and wonders come true. Predictions, signs and wonders evoke the mysterious element in man's nature. The false prophet is a test (13:4) to see if man will remain faithful to the evidence of Sinai or follow the mysterious, the emotional and the faith type of thinking. We are never to be impressed by soothsayers, miracle workers, faith healers or other mystical performers. Throughout the Five Books of Moses and the prophets we find respect

only for knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. The message of the Torah is a clear one: If we are to perfect ourselves we are to pursue knowledge not any other modes of cognition. God's universe and God's Torah are based on knowledge. (See especially the first three chapters of Proverbs).

Only those who think of themselves as scholars but have never mastered the method of Torah analysis, and often times do not even know Hebrew, proclaim otherwise. Nahum M. Sarna in his book Understanding Genesis, states:

The quality of faith associated with Abraham at the covenant ceremony shows itself once again in this situation. Answering the doubts of his servant, the Patriarch is absolutely sure that the mission will be successfully accomplished. "The Lord, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my birth, who promised me under oath, saying 'I will give this land to your offspring' - He will send his angel before you and you will get a wife for my son from there, (Genesis 24:7)."

Nahum M. Sarna, Understanding Genesis, (Schocken Books) 171.

Sarna then compares these words of Abraham with the words he used previously at the covenant of the parts, Genesis 15:2 and 15:8 stating:

At the outset of his career his very first words to God were expressions of doubt about each of the two elements of the divine promise - posterity and land. "O Lord God, what can you give seeing that I die childless...", (Genesis 15:2)," he had said despairingly of the former; and, "O Lord God, how (sic) shall I know that I am to possess it?" (Ibid. 15:8) was his response to the latter. Now he evokes both posterity and land, serenely confident that God's promises will work themselves out in history. Abram, the doubter has become Abraham, the man of absolute faith.

Ibid. Sarna's claim that Abraham was "absolutely sure that the mission will be successfully accomplished" is patently false. Had Sarna simply read the very next verse he would have realized this. Genesis 24:8 states, "And if the woman be not willing to follow thee then thou shalt be clear from this my oath." It is clear from 24:8 that Abraham was not sure at all that God would fulfill his mission. Sarna made a mistake in his translation verse 7. In Hebrew the future tense often signifies a hope or desire. the correct translation for the Hebrew word yishlach

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in this instance is not will send but shall send meaning should send. The same is true of Genesis 49:10. The translation should read "The scepter shall not depart from Judah," meaning should not depart, not will not depart. People in Israel often say Hashem yaazor, meaning (I hope that) God shall help, not God will help. Abraham was not a man of naive religious faith who assumed that God will do as he wishes. He knew full well that neither he nor any other human being has knowledge of God's will. He thus prepared his servant for both eventualities.

Being raised in a Christian environment Sarna equated faith with religious virtue, he then proceeded to project this notion onto the Torah. He committed the error of a bad historian. He took something from his existing environment and projected it onto the past. Sarna's idea that Abraham doubted God at the covenant of Genesis 15 is not only wrong it is stupid. How can one speak to God, know that He is creator of heaven and earth and yet not think He can give him a son or give a certain land to a certain people? He is, however, consistent. He demonstrates as much understanding of Genesis 15 as he does of Genesis 24. (Genesis 15 contains a very profound concept which I cannot expound upon here). Unfortunately, due to the fact that most people are ignorant, men like Sarna can masquerade as scholars when they don't even know the most basic and fundamental principles of Torah. One must be extremely cautious about one's authorities these days.

It should be pointed out that the word emunah translated as belief or faith does not connote in Hebrew what these terms mean in English. The word emunah means verification of a truth from an external source, (see Genesis 42:20 and Exodus 14:31). It does not mean blind religious faith.

The Torah personality is guided by the tzellem elokim, the divine element in man's soul. All Torah authorities interpret that term as the rational element in man's soul. He bases his life on his knowledge of Torah and the demonstration at Sinai. (For an understanding of how the demonstration at Sinai is relevant today you may send for a special paper I have written on the subject). His belief in God is based on knowledge not shallow faith. As Maimonides states in the very beginning of his work, "the foundation of

foundations and the pillar of all knowledge is to know that God exists." One must search assiduously for the knowledge of God's existence through the study of Torah.

The Torah personality is an individual committed to a way of life based on knowledge. For decisions in religious matters he studies the Talmud. He uses only intellect in interpreting its words. No Talmudic authority has ever based a ruling on feeling or religious emotion. Only logic and reason are admissible in this endeavor. What is contrary to logic is false.

But what of modern man is he a believer or a non-believer? Every person must have some philosophy of life. Every person strives for happiness and acts in a way he thinks is good. Modern man is ruled by one notion - success. He is convinced that fame, fortune and satisfaction of his desire for romantic love will bring him happiness. But does modern man know this to be true? Can he prove this? Indeed if we were guided merely by what we observe of others' lives it would be patently clear that such is not the case. Again and again people find to their dismay that those people who have what they dream of are in the depths of misery and despair. But modern man does not change his course. He persists in believing that in his case it would be different. He is a believer. He believes his emotions. Torah teaches us not to trust our emotions, to reason about what is truly good for man and to understand the nature of our emotions and instinctual life. Only through knowledge can we have a good and happy life. The Torah personality is a total non-believer in the benefits most people ascribe to wealth, fame or romantic love. Maimonides states that the true Torah personality does not get excited by a sudden increase in his possessions or renown nor does he get depressed by a decrease in his wealth or popularity. He rides an "even keel" through life having the true good, Torah knowledge before his mind's eye always and everything else in proper perspective. His emotional life is tempered by knowledge. He is very critical in his judgments and goes through a lengthy analysis of himself and Torah before making any decisions.

Thus, based on our original definition of a believer as he who accepts conclusions uncritically and a non-believer as he who is guided by his mind we must conclude that the

Torah personality is a non-believer while modern non-religious man is a believer par excellence.

Modern religious man who subscribes to the man-made religions, attempts to escape the human dilemma by creating in his mind a world based on simplistic infantile notions which have no support from reality. If only I could believe these things life would be great, he thinks. Belief becomes his great challenge. For the Torah personality perfection is the challenge. But even witnessing the event at Sinai does not give man perfection as is clear from the Torah narrative. Knowledge of God's existence through Sinai is only the beginning. Perfection involves the study and understanding of Torah ideas. We must gain knowledge of what is good and what is evil. We must understand our every emotion. We must recognize the difference between our instinctual nature and our divine element. We must exercise careful judgment in our deeds to make certain that we are not being guided in our lives by our basic emotion. Like a great general, the Torah personality assesses his own strengths and weaknesses, knows when to move into battle and when to avoid certain situations. He knows when and when not to satisfy his instinctual nature. His every move is determined by knowledge. He knows that even the most righteous occasionally fail. He is always ready to reanalyze and reevaluate his past deeds. He learns from his errors and thereby rises to even greater heights. His is not an infantile simplistic challenge of faith, but the challenge of challenges - the challenge of human perfection. He is armed with a great work, the work that gives man true insight into the greatness and the frailties of human nature. He is constantly engaged in the delights of this insightful work, the great joy its knowledge brings, as well as the unique existence it forges for him. The Torah personality is never bored. He is interested in all of God's knowledge, from the most obscure minutiae of Halachic detail to the latest advance in scientific knowledge. In all this he sees God's infinite wisdom. He is best described as the prophet describes him, "And let us know, let us run (eagerly strive) to know God, (Hosea 6:3)." Ibn Ezra states on this verse, "We should eagerly strive to know God because this is the foundation of all knowledge and because of this alone man was created."

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