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SUGGESTED READING:

SEE THESE AND OTHER ARTICLES AT OUR SITE

Maimonides' 13 PRINCIPLES

THE BASIC FOUNDATIONS WHICH ALL JEWS MUST KNOW AS TRUE. WE URGE YOU TO READ THEM:
www.mesora.org/13principles.html

God's Existence Belief or Proof?

www.mesora.org/belieforproof.html

God's Land Without God?

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY:
www.mesora.org/openletter/openletter2.html

Does God Give Man Powers?

MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

The first page in Talmud Taanis quotes an interesting statement of Rabbi Yochanan:

"Three keys are in the hand of god and are not given over to a messenger, and these are they; the key of rain, and the key of life and the key of resurrection. The key of rain is derived from the verse 'God will open for you His storehouse of good, the heavens, to give you the rain (for) your land in its time'. From where do we learn the key of life? As it is written, 'And god remembered Rachel, and He heard her, and He opened her womb'. The key of resurrection is learned from where? 'And you will know I am God when I open your graves'.

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Formulating Better Questions

MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

This paper was written to be an aid in developing questions when studying Torah, and to help direct one to the main issues and understand a given area.

When one goes through an account of Jewish history found in either the Pentateuch, Prophets or Writings, or Jewish Law in the Mishna or the Talmud, it is essential to your understanding to keep the following in mind: the Pentateuch was designed word for word, letter for letter by God, as was the Oral Law. The Talmud was written by the extremely wise. One commits a grave injustice both to the ideas and to oneself by offering a simple explanation of any topic found in these areas, as they all stem from God Who has infinite wisdom, "For God gives wisdom, from His mouth come knowledge and understanding." (Proverbs,2:6). Everything must be appreciated and understood on this level. Every sentence in the Pentateuch, for example, must contribute to the explanation of the area. In any given story in the Pentateuch, the Prophets or the Writings, the precise amount of information is disclosed to us by God so that we can detect the issues. Certain unusual words will be used to catch our attention. Certain passages will seem at first out of place, and seemingly impossible events are described which force us to delve onto the area. These are all generous clues for the investigation.

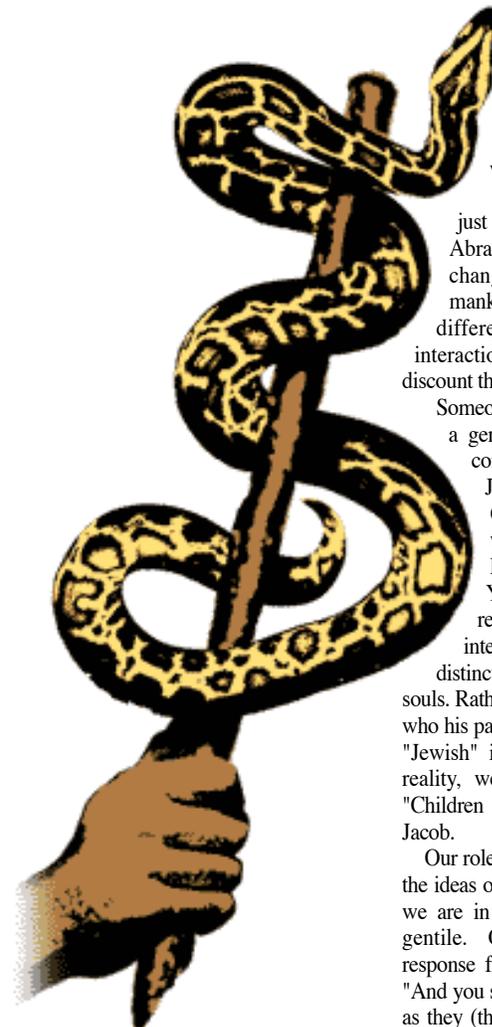
Besides having the correct appreciation for the design of the Torah, you must also approach your studies with the correct questions. As a great Rabbi once said, "asking the right

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Questions, & Answers

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Reader: I recently wrote you a question, in response to which, you referred me to the articles on olam habah, soul and afterlife. The articles were interesting and enlightening, however they make absolutely no reference to the question of a non-Jew. I often hear people throwing out quotes from Jewish sources that a gentile has no soul, there is no prohibition to steal from a gentile and only Jews merit olam habah. Rationally it is difficult for me to accept that the Torah does not give the majority of the people in the world the status of being human. And if that's our view why should we complain when a gentile feels the same

way about a Jew? The point is, the Torah's evaluation of the non-Jew is one of the critical underpinnings of this religion. If you could clarify it for me I would be very appreciative.

Mesora: A gentile has a soul, just as Adam and Eve had, and as Abraham and Noach. God hasn't changed the way He creates mankind. The view that there are different laws regarding our interaction with gentiles does not discount their having a soul just like ours.

Someone suggested foolishly, "When a gentile, who has no Jewish soul converts to Judaism, he is given a Jewish soul". My rebuttal is that God had no problem talking with Adam, Eve, Abraham, and Noach who were all non Jews. Yet they were perfected, and reached the levels that God intended. God does not have the distinction of Jewish and non Jewish souls. Rather, man has a soul, regardless of who his parents are. The entire category of "Jewish" is really man's fabrication. In reality, we are simply "Bnei Yisrael", "Children of (the man) Israel", who was Jacob.

Our role in existence is actually to bring the ideas of the Torah to the other nations, we are in fact serving the needs of the gentile. God desires the following response from the gentile: (Deut. 4:6-8): "And you shall watch them and keep them as they (the commands) are your wisdom and understanding in the eyes of the nations, who will hear all these statutes and declare 'what a wise and understanding people is this great nation. Because what great nation has God close to them like God, whenever (they) call to Him? And what great nation has statutes and laws as righteous as this entire Torah'....."

When Abraham changed his ways from idolatry to monotheism over a 40 year period of intellectual probing, he had no conversion or no new soul blown into him. He simply elevated the level of function of his one soul given to him at birth, and God then related to him directly. It is foolish to say otherwise when the Torah itself bears no support for such theories. It is even more foolish to hypothesize in areas one does not even understand the basics (metaphysics, how the soul is created).

We have shown clearly that all men and women have a soul, not that "types" of men have types of souls.