



### The Final Reward

“Only he who has prepared for Sabbath will eat on Sabbath.” God cited this critique to the nations who didn’t learn Torah, and therefore cannot enjoy its future reward. This also applies to Jews.

1997  
2007  
10  
YEARS

# JewishTimes

Dedicated to Scriptural and Rabbinic Verification  
of Authentic Jewish Beliefs and Practices

Volume VI, No. 41...Aug. 24, 2007

WWW.MESORA.ORG/JEWISHTIMES

Download and Print Free

## IN THIS ISSUE

PARSHA: KI TETZE	1-3
END OF TIMES	1,4-6
MITZVOS ALWAYS GOOD?	7,8
LETTERS	9

**SUPPORT THE JEWISHTIMES**  
EDUCATING 10,000S WORLDWIDE



WWW.MESORA.ORG/DONATE

## CANDLE LIGHTING 8/24

Boston	7:15	Moscow	7:29
Chicago	7:20	New York	7:24
Cleveland	7:56	Paris	8:33
Detroit	8:03	Philadelphia	7:28
Houston	7:36	Phoenix	6:47
Jerusalem	6:56	Pittsburgh	7:48
Johannesburg	5:34	Seattle	7:49
Los Angeles	7:12	Sydney	5:14
London	7:48	Tokyo	6:02
Miami	7:31	Toronto	7:51
Montreal	7:30	Washington DC	7:34

## Weekly Parsha

# Ki Tetze

RABBI BERNARD FOX

“If a man takes a wife, is intimate with her and despises her.”  
(Devarim 22:13)

One of the mitzvot discussed in this week’s parasha is the mitzvah of marriage. The above passage introduces the Torah’s discussion of a

(continued on next page)

# THE END OF TIMES

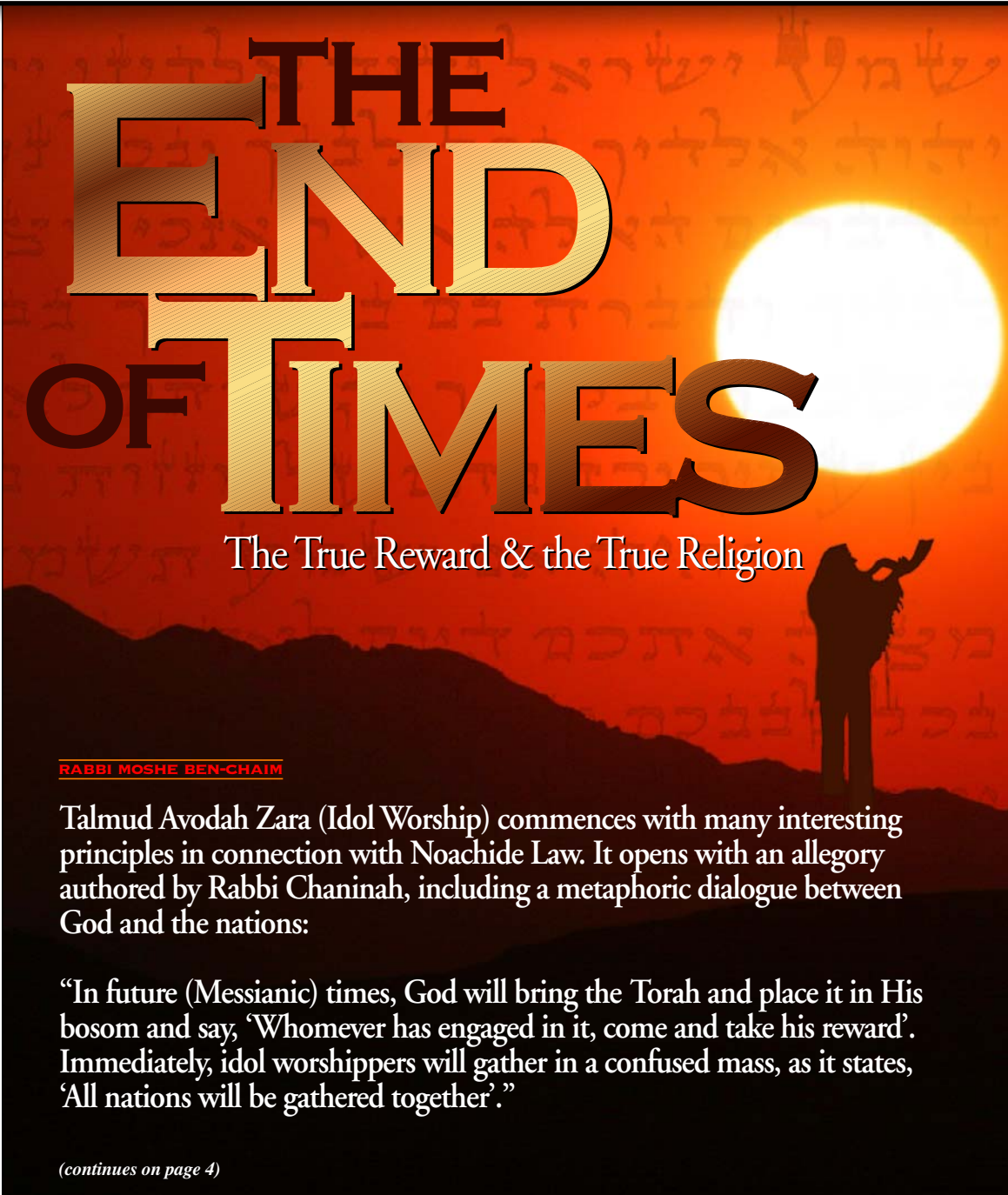
The True Reward & the True Religion

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Talmud Avodah Zara (Idol Worship) commences with many interesting principles in connection with Noachide Law. It opens with an allegory authored by Rabbi Chaninah, including a metaphoric dialogue between God and the nations:

“In future (Messianic) times, God will bring the Torah and place it in His bosom and say, ‘Whomever has engaged in it, come and take his reward’. Immediately, idol worshippers will gather in a confused mass, as it states, ‘All nations will be gathered together’.”

(continues on page 4)



(Ki Tetze cont. from pg. 1)

## Weekly Parsha

# JewishTimes

Weekly Journal on Jewish Thought



**The JewishTimes is published every Friday and delivered by email. Subscriptions are FREE. To subscribe, send any email message to: [subscribe@mesora.org](mailto:subscribe@mesora.org)**

Subscribers will also receive our advertisers' emails and our regular email announcements.

**Contacts:**

We invite feedback or any questions at this address: [office@mesora.org](mailto:office@mesora.org)  
Ph(516)569-8888 Fx(516)569-0404

**Advertising:**

<https://www.Mesora.org/Advertising>

**Donations:**

<https://www.Mesora.org/Donate>

**Content at Mesora.org:****JewishTimes Archives:**

<http://www.Mesora.org/JewishTimes>

**Philosophy Archives:**

<http://www.Mesora.org/Philosophy>

**Weekly Parsha Archives:**

<http://www.Mesora.org/WeeklyParsha>

**Audio Archives:**

<http://www.Mesora.org/Audio>

**Interactive, Live, Audible Sessions:**

<http://www.Mesora.org/TalkLive>

**Database Search:**

<http://www.Mesora.org/Search>

Articles may be reprinted without consent of the JewishTimes or the authors, provided the content is not altered, and credits are given.

man who libels his wife and the penalty for this crime. However, this passage is also the source for the mitzvah of marriage.

According to the Torah, two people that wish to live together as man and wife must first enter into a formal betrothal agreement. There are various ways to create this agreement. However, the most common method is through kinyan kesef – a transaction executed by the payment of money or an object of significant financial value. In general practice, the prospective husband gives a ring to the woman he wishes to marry. Her acceptance of the wedding band creates the required betrothal agreement between the parties.

It is important to appreciate that the use of kinyan kesef in the marriage process does not indicate that the husband is “purchasing” the wife. In Torah law husbands do not own their wives. Instead, kinyan kesef is used to express full agreement between the parties to the marriage.

As mentioned above, the general practice is to perform kinyan kesef through the transfer of a ring from the man to the woman. What is the reason for this practice? Sefer HaChinuch discusses this issue. He explains that the agreement that the man and woman enter into renders a halachic change in the status of the woman. She is now regarded as betrothed. Intimacy with a man other than her husband is a violation of the mitzvah prohibiting adultery. The ring that the woman accepts she wears as a physical representation of the halachic change that has taken place in her status.[1]

It is worth noting that Sefer HaChinuch would probably not approve of an exchange of rings between the man and woman. The man does not undergo an equivalent change in his halachic status. According to the Torah, adultery only occurs through intimacy between a married woman and a man other than her husband. In such a relationship both the man and the woman are adulterers and have violated the mitzvah prohibiting adultery. However, an intimate relationship between a married man and an unmarried woman does not constitute adultery. An exchange of rings undermines the essential message communicated by the wedding band. If both the man and woman wear rings, the ring worn by the woman no longer communicates a change of halachic status.

Of course, these comments are not intended as a halachic ruling. Instead, these comments are merely a reflection upon the implications of Sefer

HaChinuch's position.

One of the most interesting elements of the Torah's formulation of marriage is that the man must betroth the woman. Although marriage is a mutual agreement between the parties, the man must be the active party in kinyan kesef. The woman must fully agree the marriage. But betrothal cannot take place through the woman giving the wedding band or some object of monetary value to the man.

In order to understand the reasoning behind the formulation it is helpful to consider the blessings that are recited at the wedding. Two sets of blessings are recited. Each corresponds with one of the two steps of the process of marriage.

What are these two steps? The process begins with the betrothal. This is the agreement between the two parties to enter into marriage. As we have explained, the step is typically accomplished

through kinyan kesef and specifically through the man giving the woman a wedding band. This step does not complete the marriage. At the juncture at which the man gives the woman the wedding band the parties are betrothed. But the marriage is not complete. The second step is nesuin – marriage proper. This is accomplished through the man bringing his betrothed into his domain or home. These are various opinions regarding precisely how this is accomplished in the conventional marriage “ceremony.” According to many authorities the



presence of the couple under the chuppah – the wedding canopy – accomplishes nesuin. Others maintain that nesuin is not completed until yechud – when the man and woman are alone together in a private room.

Two blessings are recited prior to the betrothal. These blessings correspond to the betrothal that will be performed immediately after their recitation. After the man gives the woman the ring and betrothal is completed, seven other blessings are recited. These blessings correspond to and relate to the nesuin.

Let us focus on the third and fourth blessings. The third is very brief. We acknowledge Hashem as the creator of humanity. The fourth blessing is somewhat more elaborate. It recognizes that humanity is created in the image of Hashem. It continues and states that Hashem prepared for man or humanity a permanent structure. The blessing's ending is exactly the same as the ending of the prior blessing. It recognizes that Hashem is the creator of humanity.

(continued on next page)



(Ki Tetze continued from page 2)

## Weekly Parsha

These two blessings present a number of problems. First, they seem repetitive. Their endings are identical. The first seems to be a brief acknowledgement of humanity's creation and the second seems to be a more elaborate recognition of the same idea. Second, in the second blessing, we state that Hashem created for man or humanity a permanent structure. However, it is not clear to what structure this blessing refers. Finally, both of these blessings are an acknowledgement of humanity's creation by Hashem. Why is this acknowledgement essential to the marriage process? Why are we reviewing the first two chapters of Sefer Beresheit under the chuppah?

In order to understand the commentaries' explanation of these blessings, we must review the Torah's account of creation. The first chapter of Sefer Bereshiet provides a brief summary of creation. In that summary, the Torah tells us the humanity was created on the sixth day. The Torah explains that humanity was formed with two genders. Man and woman were created.

The next chapter elaborates upon the creation of humanity. The Torah explains that Adam – the male gender – was initially created. Adam recognized that he did not have a mate. Hashem then took a portion of the man and created Chavah – woman.

It is notable that according to the Torah, Chavah was created in response to Adam's longing or sense of deficiency. Only after, and in response to, Adam's realization that he was lacking a partner was Chavah created.

From this account it is clear that Adam's cognition of his own incompleteness was a precursor to Chavah's creation. In other words, before Chavah was formed Adam was required to have an appreciation of her significance and his own inadequacy without his partner.

Now let us consider the comments of the Sages regarding the two blessings discussed above. Etz Yosef and others comment that the first of these two blessings refers to the initial formation of man – prior to the creation of Chavah. The second, more elaborate blessing refers to the creation of humanity with its two genders. This second blessing communicates that the completion of the creation of humanity as an intelligent species – in the image of its creator – was only accomplished with the formation of Chavah. This explains the reference to a permanent structure. Humanity achieved permanence through the structure of a man/woman unit. Prior to the creation of Chavah, Adam was still a "work in process." Only with the emergence of Chavah was the creation of humanity complete. Only at this point did humanity emerge as a creation deserving permanence.[2]

Why are these blessings a fundamental aspect of the process of marriage? Apparently, every

marriage should be a reenactment of the drama of creation. Marriage cannot be an agreement of convenience between two parties. Neither can marriage be a means for the pursuit of lustful desires. Marriage requires a cognitive recognition. The man must recognize that by divine design he is incomplete and inadequate. He can only complete himself and find fulfillment through entering into a relationship with his partner.

Each time the process of marriage takes place, the plan and design of creation is reenacted. The man and woman must recognize that their relationship is an expression of the design of creation and an expression of the will of the Creator.

We can now understand the respective roles of the man and woman in the betrothal. The man

must betroth the woman. He must be the active party in the kinyan kesef. The betrothal reenacts the original union between Adam and Chavah. In order for the betrothal to reenact this drama, each party must recreate the role of his or her ancestor. The man takes on the role of Adam. He must recognize that through marriage he completes himself. The woman assumes the role of Chavah. She must appreciate that through her role in this union, she completes the design of creation of humanity. ■

[1] Rav Aharon HaLeyve, Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 552.

[2] Rav Aryeh Lev Gorden, Etz Yosef Commentary on the Siddur.

# 10% off!

Custom Lighting  
FIXTURES, INC.

Speak to a designer  
1.888.523.1999



The finest in handcrafted and completely custom antique lighting reproductions.



Mention this ad and save an additional 10%

[www.customlightingfixtures.com](http://www.customlightingfixtures.com)

**HomeTech**  
Powerwashing - Sealing - Staining  
Decks - Cement - Brick - Vinyl Siding  
All your handyman needs!

Before

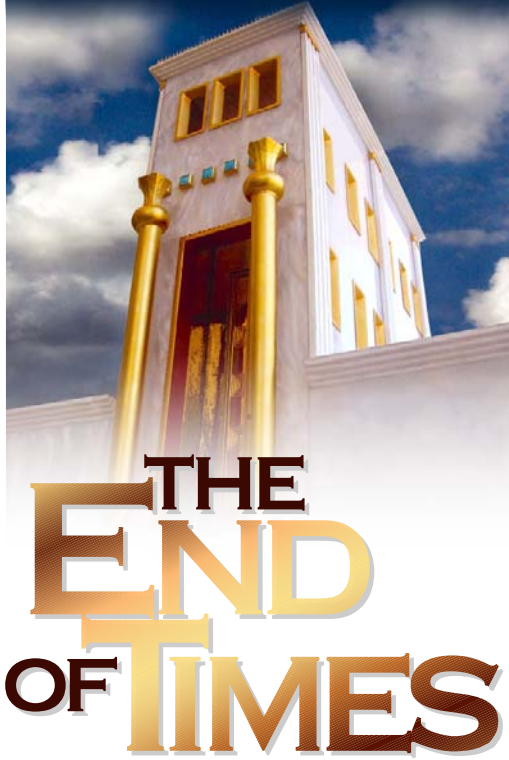
After

516-668-6969  
Brett Gisser

Ad above: NY/NJ Metro area only

(continued from page 1)

## Messianic Era &amp; Reward



The Talmud continues with God asking each nation who approached with a claim of Torah involvement, to validate their claim. They each attempt to do so, but fail. The nations say they built bridges, constructed bathhouses and marketplaces, amassed wealth, and fought battles...ostensibly so that the Jews might benefit from these conveniences, thereby allowing for their greater Torah study. (Rashi, *ibid* 2b) However, God rejects their lies, accusing the nations that all these activities performed were purely out of self-interest and not for the Jews' Torah study.

What is the meaning behind this metaphor of the future gathering of nations, and why in confusion, as the verse teaches? There are many lessons in this Talmudic section. As we proceed, we will quote more of the Talmud, suggesting our explanations throughout.

### God Holds the Torah

Our first observation is that God holds nothing but the Torah in His bosom, as He announces to the nations to "take" their reward. This lesson is that reality offers no reward other than Torah itself. In other words, the true Torah student seeks nothing for his toil in his life of Torah investigation. The insights themselves are the Torah student's only desire.

Therefore, we may first deduce that Torah itself is the reward, since God came only with the Torah in hand, and asks all who studied it to take their reward. When God offers the "reward", and nothing other than the Torah is in His hand, He is teaching that in this reality in which we live, wisdom is the ultimate prize. This means that the activity of Torah study itself, when performed for its own sake, has no ulterior motive. A parallel is this: "there is no reward for a vacation". The vacation is the ends sought after, as no one vacations with the idea that "if I enjoy a vacation, something else better will result". Similarly, the Rabbis sought the next world for this very reason, that they would have a greater involvement in studying God's wisdom. They did not imagine the Afterlife to be some new realm of physical pleasures, or something else. They engaged in Torah study, as they enjoyed it for the study itself. The marvels they uncovered were all they desired. They wished for no reward for their studies; rather, an Afterlife with an unlimited and uninterrupted state of apprehending God's greater wisdom.

Again, why does God address the nations, asking, "Whomever engaged in Torah, let them come and receive their reward"? Why is this what God inquired about? This teaches that the ultimate activity on Earth is Torah study. For why should God ask about this activity alone, unless this was to be the primary focus? Furthermore, He asks this of "all" nations. We thereby learn that they are blamed that they abandoned study Torah. This is supported by Rabbi Yochanan's statement that God offered the Torah to the other nations, but they rejected it.

### Judaism's Truth: Final Confession

Now, why do the nations seek to take credit for Torah at that time? They were not involved in Torah at all for countless generations! This metaphor indicates that they will have a new recognition of Torah's supreme nature; a realization they never had prior. How this will come about, we do not yet know. But this might explain their confused clamor to obtain the reward: due to the undeniable new revelation that Torah is the only true religion, all nations must suddenly drop their religions, and shift their value systems, and this "confuses" them.

Furthermore, their lies to God that they toiled for Israel's sake is startling: they feel they can lie to God! This exposes their corrupt view of God: i.e., He can be lied to. Their "dialogue" as forecasted in this Talmudic section exposes the humanistic view of God they had harbored; as if One with whom they can deceive with phony arguments. So

although they recognize Judaism as true and their religions as false, and they will reject the religions passed down to them, they will still harbor false ideas. Maimonides teaches, "And when the true Messiah stands, and he is successful and is raised and exalted, immediately they all will retract and will know that fallacy they inherited from their fathers, and that their prophets and fathers caused them to err." (Laws of Kings, Laws 11:10-12 Capach Edition)

### Not Our Fault

The nations leave God's presence shamefaced that their lies about supporting Torah were unmasked. They can no longer lie, accepting that they were uninvolved in Torah. But they now take the angle that they had good cause. This metaphoric dialogue ensues as the nations address God: "Did you ever give us the Torah, that we didn't accept it?" God says, "Yes", and the Talmud derives this truth from verses. Realizing their error, the nations revamp their claim: "Did we ever accept Torah, and fail to observe it?" God asks them why they didn't accept it. They again see His point. A third time, the nations address God with another revamping of their position: "Did you ever coerce our acceptance of Torah [like Israel was coerced at Sinai] that was followed by our failure to observe Torah?" God reminds them the initial generation after the Flood - that of Noah - had accepted the seven Noachide laws, but then later generations failed to uphold these laws. This is the exact wording from the Talmud:

*"R. Joseph said: 'He [God] stood and measured the earth; he beheld' etc. What did He behold? He beheld the seven commandments which had been accepted by all the descendants of Noah, and since [there were clans that] rejected them He rose up and granted them exemption. Does this mean that they benefited [by breaking the law]? And if so, will it not be a case of a sinner profiting [by the transgression he committed]? - Mar the son of Rabana thereupon said: it only means that even were they to keep the seven commandments [which had first been accepted but subsequently rejected by them] they would receive no reward.' Would they not? But it has been taught: 'R. Meir used to say, Whence can we learn that even where a gentile occupies himself with the study of the Torah he equals [in status] the High*

(continued on next page)



(continued from previous page)

## Messianic Era & Reward

*Priest? We find it stated: ... which if a man do he shall live in them; it does not say 'priests, Levites and Israelites', but 'a man', which shows that even if a gentile occupies himself with the study of the Torah he equals [in status] the High Priest.' - I mean [in saying that they would receive no reward] that they will receive reward not like those who having been enjoined perform commandments, but like those who not having been enjoined perform good deeds: Hanina has stated: Greater is the reward of those who having been enjoined to do good deeds than of those who not having been enjoined [but merely out of free will] do good deeds."*

### No More Noachide Laws?

God reminds them that Noach did accept the Noachide Laws, but later generations failed to uphold them. At this point, the Talmud makes a startling statement: "He rose up and granted them exemption." God then released the nations from the Noachide laws. This seems on the surface to suggest that Noachides no longer have these seven Noachide laws. However, as we read the following statement of Mar in the Talmud, we see this is not the correct understanding:

*"Mar the son of Rabana thereupon said: it only means that even were they to keep the seven commandments [which had first been accepted but subsequently rejected by them] they would receive no reward."*

Mar explains that the exemption mentioned here is not regarding the 'obligation' of Noachide law. Rather, the Noachide is now exempt from the 'reward', so that he is not as great as one commanded. Meaning, the Noachide had the chance to accept their laws, and since they ultimately rejected this system, they forfeited a higher level of reward by doing so. Now that they are as if not commanded, their reward cannot be as great. But how do we understand this idea that due to the Noachides' rejection of their laws, they are now "as if" not commanded? The fact is that they ARE commanded. This can be explained as follows...

Even if a Noachide learns today, he does not do so due to God's original commands to Noach, but due to his own sense of righteousness. Therefore, he is not following "God's" transmitted laws which commenced with Noach and reached him. There

was a break on transmission. Therefore, he is following his own mind. Hence, his reward is severely reduced. "Reward", or rather, one's perfection, is based on "following God". Therefore, as Noachides subsequently rejected the observance of the Noachide laws, whomever decides today to observe is doing so not from a receipt of those laws directly back to Noach. The breach in Noachide observance has effects: observance of the Noachide laws today is not due to "following God", but something decided by gentile societies seeking harmony. God is not part of their considerations. Thereby, following such "commands" has been mitigated in importance. "Compliance with God's command" is the ultimate form of observing any of God's law, be it Noachide or Israelite law.

The one exception (taught by Ramban, Ritvah: Tal. Makkos 9a) is that if a Noachide accepts to follow his laws in front of a bet din – a Jewish court – then his adherence is back on par with Noach himself. He is not considered as one "not commanded", with respect to his reward. This makes sense, since this specific Noachide desires to follow the Torah format of Noachide law, transmitted in an unbroken chain by the Jewish nation. With his acceptance in a Jewish court, this Noachide reunites with the unbroken Noachide laws, and observes them as Noach did, as truly "commanded". This Noachide views his commands as divine emanations, and not as practical system of government. So this Noachide is not considered to be performing the Noachide laws secularly, but divinely. His reward is complete.

To be clear, the Noachide was never permitted to break his laws. What the Talmud means as Mar teaches, is that since the Noachides rejected their laws, any subsequent adherence is not to follow God, but for practicality: to simply create a harmonious society. And since this Noachide would not be seeking God in his adherence to these commands, he clearly forfeits most of his reward. Reward is proportionate to the level of attachment to God. But when a Noachide accepts his laws in a Jewish court, he has reunited with God.

It should be noted here, that Talmud Sanhedrin 59a clearly teaches that as God repeated the original Noachide laws in the Torah, the Noachide is fully obligated in his laws along with the Jew. This Talmudic statement is dated long after God's "release" of the Noachide. Yet, the Rabbis of the Talmud do not suggest the Noachide is exempt today. This proves Mar's explanation that God's "release" of the Noachide is in regards to his reward only, not his seven Noachide obligations.

### If I Can't Have it, No One Can

As the Talmud continues, these nations try yet another angle: if "they" cannot obtain God's offered reward, they don't want the Jew to have it either. They claim that the Jews as well abandoned Torah, as they abandoned their seven Noachide laws.

What does this sentiment reveal about the nations? Again we see that their motives are not pure. They live in the world of competition and ego, and do not seek truth and morality. Had they adhered to real virtues, their loss of reward would not be met with a competitive desire that the Jew suffers that loss as they do. But God proves to them – from their own gentile members – that the Jew did not abandon Torah.

Finally, God offers the nations one last chance at fulfilling Torah, by granting them the mitzvah of Succah. They attempt to fulfill this quite easy and inexpensive command, but when God causes the sun to wax hot over their heads, they leave the Succah - which is permissible when too hot outdoors - but they then kick the Succah as they leave. Why do they kick it? This displays that the gentiles have no understanding of the mitzvah's benefit, and simply view it as what caused their discomfort.

### The Metaphor

This entire dialogue is metaphoric, an allegory authored by Rabbi Chaninah. He teaches that in the end of times, God (reality) will expose which religion is correct. The "dialogue" refers to the realizations all nations will arrive at. They will realize that they have no reward in Torah, (what God offers) since they really abandoned Torah. All their pursuits were for themselves, and their ends - suggesting all they built can "now" be used for the Jews - will not justify the means. They will also realize that they have no defense for their abandon of the Noachide laws...as if God told them so in a dialogue. In this metaphor, absolute truths are represented as God. In those future times, the nations will still harbor resentment towards the Jew, expressed by their final sentiment that the Jew too abandoned Torah, which they realize is another false claim.

Their final attempt will be to try and quickly earn Torah reward by taking the easy way out, and performing the simple mitzvah of dwelling in a Succah. Again, God does not literally talk to them as the metaphor suggests. God's "talking" refers to their realization that Torah is true, as if God told them so.

(continued on next page)

(continued from previous page)

## Messianic Era & Reward

The nations try to observe Succah, so as to reap reward. But even at this will they fail, expressed by their kicking of the Succah. And why do they kick it? Since they have not changed their outlook, they remain ignorant of what a mitzvah is. They feel mitzvah must offer physical pleasure. But when the sun beats down on them, and they lose pleasure, they abandon Succah. But the Jew knows that a mitzvah has a higher goal of imbuing man with the underlying idea of each particular mitzvah. Though the Jew may also leave Succah when discomfort sets in, he doesn't kick the Succah, since the 'Succah' is not the objective of that command: accepting God as our true shelter is. So we don't look at Succah - or any physical object or performance - as a mitzvah's final objective. We seek out the deep ideas. But the gentiles do look at mitzvah as a physical matter and nothing more; all based on this underlying message that even at the end of days when God reveals the truth of Torah, the gentiles will not have had any time to truly appreciate what it is. It will take time, if they choose it.

### Summary

Judaism will be shown as the only divinely given religion. God will inform the world that the real reward, is Torah itself, for that is all He holds in hand when He tells the world to come and take their reward.

There is nothing more desirable than God's wisdom: (Proverbs 8:11) "For better is wisdom than pearls, and all desirous things do not compare to it."

The nations will recognize Judaism, and will desire the reward for Torah. However, they haven't changed themselves internally, even with their recognition that Judaism alone is true. Man cannot suddenly transform his inner world. Yes, the nations must agree with what they see as true, but this does not change their emotional makeup. That takes time. They still harbor false ideas about God, about His Torah, and they still have anti-Semitism. Eventually, "all sons of flesh will call His name". But apparently, not right away.

Fortunate are we that we have the Torah.

What we must do now, is reflect on whether each one of us truly values wisdom and yearns to return to Torah study...so deeply, that we start "minimizing our work, and maximizing our Torah". (Ethics) Is wisdom something we truly value over all else, as King Solomon taught in Proverbs? God is telling us that in the end, the real reward awaiting us is greater wisdom. But

we will not appreciate that reward, if we do not make the efforts now to abandon what the world values, like entertainments, wealth, and fame, and sample the unparalleled marvels that God's wisdom offers mankind, as the wisest men have discovered. Without expending effort, we cannot simply enjoy the true reward later on. Just as the gentiles in the future will not be able to enjoy Torah's reward, we will not be able to do so either, unless we train ourselves in its study.

Though the first steps are difficult, the enjoyment will come.

So don't waste your life, you yet have time to immerse yourself in regular Talmudic study; finally discover what true enjoyment is - what God intends for you.

It's your choice, who will you follow: popular opinion, or those like King Solomon? ■

The image shows a screenshot of the NYDesign.com website. The browser address bar shows 'http://www.nydesign.com/1-nydsnewsite/newindex.html'. The website header includes navigation links like 'home', 'free quote', 'email', and 'flash intro'. Below the header is a banner with the text 'where good design is smart business' and a 'Free Quote Here' button. A gold medal icon indicates a '20th Anniversary - Award winning sites'. Below the banner, there is a list of 'Serviced Corporations Include' with logos for A&E, Polo, Disney, Pepsi, Warner Bros, Pizza Hut, Burger King, and MasterCard. At the bottom of the screenshot, there is a list of services: Corporate Identity, Website Design, Marketing, Advertising, Fund Raising, Package Design, Presentations, Flash Animations, and Business Plans. The contact information '516.569.8888 info@NYDesign.com' and the slogan 'Where Good Design is Smart Business' are prominently displayed at the bottom.

# Are Mitzvos Always Good?

MATT SCHNEEWEISS

The most fundamental idea about mitzvos is that they are for our benefit - not for *God's* benefit. The Ramban elaborates on this at length in this week's parashah (Commentary on Devarim 22:6):

In the past the Sages arranged for us these words in the prayer of Yom Kippur: "You set man apart from the beginning and You considered him worthy to stand before You, for who can tell You what to do, *and if he is righteous what can he give You?*" And so it is stated in the Torah: "[Now, O Israel, what does Hashem, your God, ask of you? . . .] To observe the commandments of Hashem and His decrees, which I command you today, *for your benefit*" (Devarim 10:13); so too, "Hashem commanded us to perform all these decrees, to fear Hashem, our God, *for our good*, all the days" (ibid. 6:4).

The Rambam, after presenting and explaining the same idea in the Guide for the Perplexed (3:31), divides the benefits of the mitzvos into three categories:

The sole object of the Torah is to benefit us . . . every one of the 613 mitzvos serves (a) *to inculcate some good idea or to remove some bad idea*, (b) *to establish a just principle or to remove injustice*, (c) *to guide in accordance with a good trait or to warn against a bad trait*. Everything depends on three things: ideas, morals, and social conduct . . . These three principles suffice for assigning a reason for every one of the Divine commandments.

In last week's parashah (Shoftim) we read: "A prophet from your midst, from your brethren like me, shall Hashem, your God, establish for you - to him shall you hearken" (18:15). The Rambam explains the halachic ramifica-

tions of this injunction (Sefer ha'Mitzvos: Mitzvos Aseh #172):

The 172nd mitzvah is the commandment to obey every one of the prophets and to fulfill everything he commands us in, even if he commands us to transgress one or several of the mitzvos (except for avodah zarah) - provided that this is temporary, and that he doesn't permanently institute an addition or subtraction.

According to the Rambam's statement in the Guide for the Perplexed, every mitzvah has a reason or a benefit, either in our ideas, our moral character, or in our relations with our fellow Jews. The question is: What is the benefit of the mitzvah to obey a prophet? Moreover, if mitzvos are beneficial, then how can it be beneficial to obey a prophet who tells us to violate mitzvos?

The Ralbag states two benefits of the mitzvah to obey a prophet. (Commentary on Devarim 18-19, ha'toeles ha'shishi). His second answer provides a fascinating insight into the nature of mitzvos:

There is another benefit in this mitzvah, specifically regarding cases in which the prophet commands us to transgress certain mitzvos at certain times. Even though the Torah generally guides the nation toward the Good, it is possible that in certain cases it would be better to deviate from some of its mitzvos. Since Hashem (may He be exalted) desired the greatest good at all times for His nation . . . He identified for Israel, through his prophets, that which needs to be changed from time to time - something which was impossible to do within the Torah itself.

(continued on next page)





(continued from previous page)

## Torah

This idea is similar to the idea of miracles which Hashem brings about through his prophets, namely, that Hashem set up nature in such a manner as to achieve the general good through each of the natural laws. But since, in certain cases, it would be better to deviate somewhat from this natural order, Hashem - may He be exalted - saw fit that this should be done through His prophets at a time of need.

According to the Ralbag, the mitzvah to obey a prophet is built upon the premise that the mitzvos are not inherently good, but generally good. It is inevitable that there will be cases in which the mitzvos do not bring about good, either for an individual or for the nation. Therefore, Hashem granted His prophets the ability to temporarily suspend mitzvos in situations where keeping them would be ineffective or detrimental [1].

The Ralbag's answer to our question is that the mitzvah to obey the prophet does not have a benefit in its own right. Rather, this mitzvah makes it possible to achieve the maximum benefit from the Torah as a whole by permitting the violation of the Torah in those cases where violation would be better than observance.

The Rambam elaborates on this idea at length in the Guide for the Perplexed (3:34):

It is also important to note that the Torah does not take into account exceptional circumstances, and commandments are not based on minority conditions. Whatever the Torah teaches, whether it be of an intellectual, a moral, or a practical character, is founded on that which is the rule and not on that which is the exception; it ignores the injury that might be caused to a single person through a certain Torah decree or precept. For the Torah is a divine institution, and [in order to understand its operation] we must consider how in nature the various forces produce benefits which are general, but in some solitary cases they cause also injury . . .

We must consequently not be surprised when we find that the objectives of the Torah do not fully appear in every individual. There must, of absolute necessity, be people who are not perfected by the instruction of the Torah, just as there are beings which do not receive from the specific forms in nature all that they require, for all this comes from one God, and is the result of one act: "They are all given from one Shepherd" (Koheles 7:2). It is impossible to be

otherwise, and we have already explained that that which is impossible always remains impossible and never changes.

From this consideration it also follows that the laws cannot, like medicine, vary according to the different conditions of persons and times. Whilst the cure of a person depends on his particular constitution at the particular time, the divine guidance contained in the Torah must be certain and general, although it may be effective in some cases and ineffective in others. If the Torah depended on the varying conditions of man, it would be imperfect in its totality, each precept being left indefinite. For this reason it would not be right to make the fundamental principles of the Torah dependent on a certain time or a certain place; on the contrary, the statutes and the judgments must be definite, unconditional, and general.

To summarize: Hashem created two systems: the Laws of Torah and the Laws of Nature. Both systems are designed for the benefit of His creatures: the Torah for Jews, and the Laws of Nature for all living things. However, it is impossible for any system to achieve its objective for every individual in every particular case [2]. For this reason, Hashem enabled His prophets to "correct" the Laws of the Torah and the Laws of Nature in those cases in which they would not have otherwise achieved their purpose. ■

[1] Needless to say, we non-prophets have neither the knowledge nor the authority to suspend even one iota of halacha. Even if we knew with 100% certainty that keeping a particular mitzvah would be ineffective or detrimental for us in a particular case, we do not have Hashem's authorization to tamper with His system. We have no choice but to keep all of halacha under all circumstances.

[2] The idea that mitzvos are not inherently beneficial, but only generally beneficial, clashes with certain Kabbalistic notions - those which, as stated by Rav Hirsch, reduce each mitzvah to "a magic mechanism, an operation or rejection of theosophic worlds and anti-worlds" (Nineteen Letters on Judaism, Letter 18). As the Rambam stated, it is impossible for anyone to design a system which is effective for every individual in every case. Even Hashem cannot create such a system, for Hashem cannot the impossible. Thus, any idea which asserts that mitzvos achieve their purpose for every individual in every case must be false.

*Matt Schneeweiss authors the blog*  
<http://kankanchadash.blogspot.com>

**MESORA**

**Talk LIVE**

**Sun. 8/26 11:15 AM EST**

**End Times: True Reward**

**[www.Mesora.org/TalkLIVE](http://www.Mesora.org/TalkLIVE)**



## Letters



# Letters

*from our*

## READERS



### Fertility and Sexual Laws

**Doug:** Can you help us with two unrelated questions?

(1) If I recall, the law clearly states that a Noahide cannot have sexual relations with his father's sister. At the same time, you mentioned the case of Amram and Jochebed - the parents of Moses, Miriam, and Aaron. If I recall correctly, you said that Amram married his aunt.

Now if he married his aunt, wouldn't that mean that she was his father's sister, and wouldn't that be a prohibition of the seven Noahide laws? The Torah had not yet been given at Mt. Sinai, but the seven Noahide laws were in effect at that time. So how is it that Amram was able to legally marry Jochebed?

(2) During the course of a class with Rabbi Weiss, he mentioned that the pagans used to cook a kid in its mother's milk in order to somehow influence fertility. Thus, I assume that the prohibition against cooking a kid in its mother's milk came about - at least in part - to prevent the Jewish people from becoming involved in what was then an idolatrous act.

Daniel raised this question, which relates to both this situation and probably others where the 613 commandments prohibit something that used to be idolatrous but no longer has that stigma. He asked, why is it that the Jewish people have to forever cease mixing meat and milk just because some pagans many hundreds of years ago used to do that? After all, no one who eats a cheeseburger these days thinks about influencing fertility. In other words, the possible "purpose" for that prohibition has long since gone away. So why does the prohibition remain in effect?

Thanks for any light you can shed on these questions.

**Mesora:** Good questions...

Marrying one's aunt from the mother was prohibited to Noahides. So Moses' father Amram who married his aunt from his father was allowed.

Regarding milk and meat: although the practice in specific may be gone, we must appreciate that this practice to induce fertility was generated from the human psyche, which never expires, or changes. So our observance today is a testimony to the very real and identical psyche that has the same potential to do exactly what those idolaters practiced.

We are guarding against the same tendencies that man always had, and always will have. Though fertility rites may seem old, they can reassert at anytime, since our emotional makeup is exactly what idolaters possessed 1000s of years ago. Just as they concocted foolish, idolatrous practices, without Torah and reason, we can too. ■

### Sexual Laws II

**Micah:** I have two questions about the article sexual laws 2

1- I was looking at Maimonides and he seems to be talking about all Arayos how does your answer explain sister?

2- In your answer you say that mother is also father's wife. If you do not have any relatives ("like a newborn") how is he your father?

**Mesora:** Sister is one of all those forbidden: whether by marital relations (i.e., "arayos", like a father's wife) or through family (shi-are). "Arayos" is used to refer to two matters: the general sexual prohibition, and also the specific manner of prohibiting through sexual contact. In contrast, "shi-are" refers only to kinship.

Now, since the convert is akin to a newborn, all family ties are broken. Therefore, how is his father's wife prohibited, seeing that he is no longer his "father"? The answer I believe is that conversion severs only a family tie. Therefore, his father is no longer his father. However, this only permits relations with his previous family, like a natural mother and sister. However, his stepmother was not initially prohibited via a family tie (shi-are) but through an act of intercourse by his father (arayos). This "act" is not erased due to his conversion. Conversion erases family ties, not historical events. So this event, with its prohibition is not affected, since she is not prohibited due to family issues, but due to sexual activity. This is a different type of prohibition. We might view another case: can the son disrespect his father, now that he is converted? Or is the "father" role still in tact in this capacity? Perhaps conversion severs the convert's tie, only in matters of lineage, but not in other matters. Rambam says conversion severs all.

Another possibility is that although no longer the father's son, the prohibition on his stepmother now inheres in the stepmother. This prohibition was only initiated via the father, but once intercourse was performed, the prohibition no longer relies on the father, or his marriage to that woman. Thus, even after the father dies, the son cannot marry this woman. ■

**Funding for small to medium sized, private or public companies.**

**Private Transactions  
Reverse Mergers  
Block Trades  
Convertibles  
Stockloans  
Shells  
Pipes  
IPOs**



**Salamon Brothers**

**516.371.9440  
salamon.brothers@verizon.net**

**BARBERRY ROSE MANAGEMENT**



Property Portfolio Fund **THREE**

in support of Mesora.org  
and the JewishTimes

[info@brmfunds.com](mailto:info@brmfunds.com)

thank you to  
**Barberry Rose Management**  
a real estate leader with  
average yearly ROI of 36%

Mesora & the JewishTimes

**A MARINE,**  
**YEHOSHUA AHARON**  
**BEN EPHRAIM FISHEL**  
WILL BE STATIONED IN IRAQ STARTING  
MID-AUGUST FOR 8 MONTHS.  
WE ASK YOU TO HAVE HIM IN YOUR TEFILOS  
FOR A SAFE MISSION AND RETURN.

**American to save Israeli Solider:  
How you can partake in this Mitzvah**



This summer a 19 year-old Israeli Solider will get a new lease on life due to a selfless gift from Yosef Chiger, of Harrisburg Pennsylvania. Ayelet Katz, of Moshav Be'er Tuvia had been stationed in Tel Nof Air Force Base, where she worked as an assistant to the head of human resources, until she was forced to leave the IDF because of kidney failure and begin fulltime dialysis. Often Israelis in need of kidney transplants wait for years because of the shortage of organs; however with the help of the Halachic Organ Donor Society (HODS) Ayelet will be fortunate to receive an altruistic donation that will allow her to resume a healthy life in a matter of months. Chiger, married and the father of a five-year old daughter, will be traveling to Israel to donate his kidney and thereby giving Ayelet the ability to resume a full and healthy life. It was especially significant to Chiger that she is an Israeli and a solider, and that the transplant means that she will have a long productive life ahead of her.

The transplant is being facilitated by the Halachic Organ Donor Society, which facilitates altruistic kidney donations and educates Jews about organ donation and halacha.

HODS is raising \$15,000 to bring Chiger and his family to Israel. Contributions can sent to the HOD Society at 49 West 45th Street, 10th Floor, New York, NY or via their website at [www.hods.org](http://www.hods.org).