

JewishTimes

VOL. XI. NO. 11 — FEBRUARY 24, 2012

THE **BIG LIE** Kabbalists & Segulas

PART II:
KADDISH

SERVE ONLY
HASHEM

GOD'S
PROVIDENCE

LEARNING IT
& EARNING IT

Can
God do

ANY
THING?



RELIGION of REASON

by Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim, Founder Mesora.org

Are your beliefs true,
or simply popular
among other Jews?

33 pg Preview

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PARTIAL CHAPTER LIST

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REVIEWS



RABBI REUVEN MANN

Rabbi, Y. Israel of Phoenix; Founder, Masoret Institute; Menabel YBT

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim has written extensively about the philosophy and Hashkafa of Judaism for many years. As the title of his book, "Judaism; Religion of Reason" indicates, his ideas are rooted in an uncompromisingly rational approach to Judaism. He follows the guidelines of the great rationalist philosophers such as Rambam and Saadia Gaon in his exploration into the values and ideals of Torah Judaism. He is convinced that all of the teachings of Judaism and the statements of the Sages make perfect sense and are amenable to the rational, inquiring mind.

He is absolutely opposed to all forms of "mysticism" and seeks to debunk all practices and beliefs which are rooted in superstition or are contrary to reason. This collection of writings covers a wide variety of topics that are of interest to contemporary Jews. It also contains insightful analyses of Biblical narratives as well as the underlying significance and relevance of many mitzvot.

Rabbi Ben-Chaim demonstrates that Judaism can be harmonized with human reason. Indeed he asserts that one can only understand and appreciate Judaism by analyzing it in a logical manner in order to elucidate its deeper ideas. He is not afraid to ask the most penetrating and challenging questions because he is absolutely convinced that Torah is the Word of God and thus based on the highest form of wisdom.

Jews who have a profound desire to make sense out of their religion will benefit greatly from reading this book. One need not agree with all of Rabbi Ben-Chaim's ideas, but his questions, analyses and original thoughts will open your mind to a new appreciation of the wisdom and logical consistency of Torah Judaism.

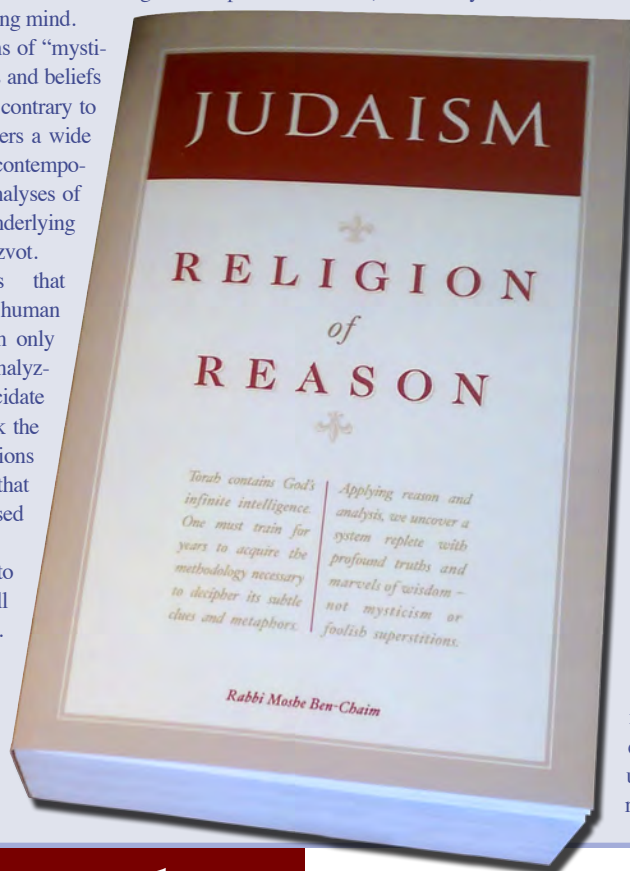


RABBI STEVEN WEIL

Executive Vice President, The Orthodox Union

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim has followed in the footsteps of the great Medieval Rishonim (Rambam, R. Avraham ben HaRambam, etc.) in trying to explain, define and lay out the world outlook of Torah and the philosophy of Judaism in rational, logical terms. Rabbi Ben-Chaim asks critical, crucial and defining questions that any thinking Jew needs to ask. He is extremely critical of approaches to Judaism that superimpose external methodologies (such as mysticism, other religions) and project primitive emotions onto the

Almighty. Although one can disagree with some of the conclusions; his approach, his questions and method enable the reader to explore and engage our theology in a meaningful and serious way. When Chazal employ certain terms and convey certain images, the student is forced to conceptualize, extract and deduce profound psychological and philosophical principles. Unfortunately, many take Chazal at face value or project onto Chazal, motives and rationalizations they never meant. Rabbi Ben-Chaim following the method of the Rishonim, forces us to define, weigh and analyze each word and phrase of Chazal. Rabbi Ben-Chaim shows there is no contradiction between a serious investigation of Science and a serious investigation of Judaism. Rabbi Ben-Chaim has written a work that addresses the thinking, seeking person of all faiths. This work speaks to the scholar and lay person alike. Once again, one may not agree with specifics within the book but at the same time will appreciate it and gain insight into how the great Rishonim define how we view the world. Rabbi Ben-Chaim's website, Mesora.org is a very serious tool and resource for thinking human beings who want to engage and explore the Almighty, the Almighty's universe and do so within the realm of wisdom, rationality and intellectual honesty.



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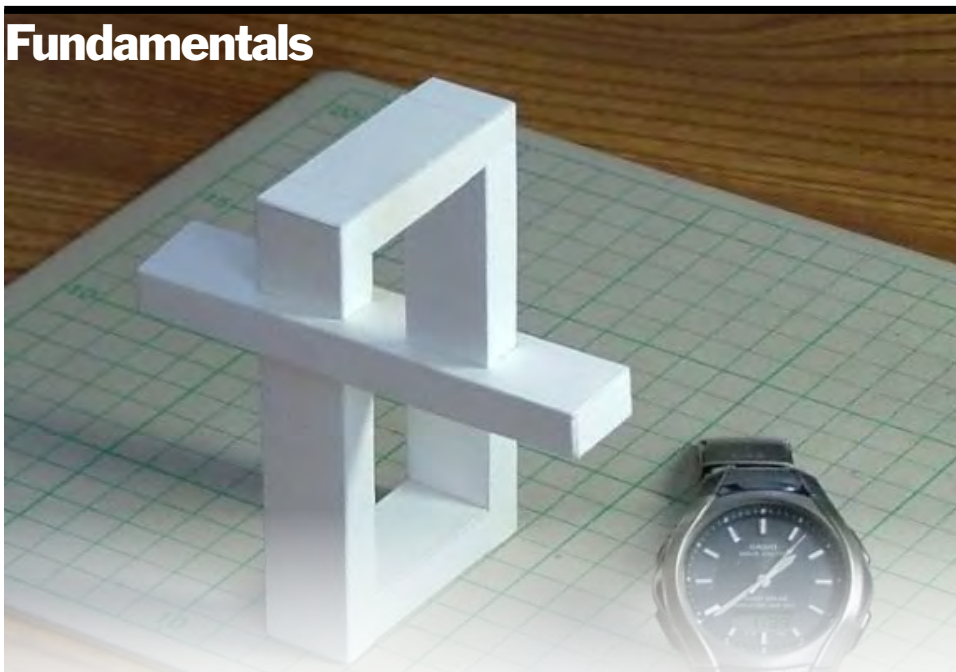


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ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE FOR GOD TO DO?

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Can God do anything? 99% of the time people say "yes". We're trained to believe this since our youth. Rarely do we go back in our minds to question those notions fed to us while children. For the remainder of their lives, many end up harboring unchecked, infantile notions. This notion of God's limitless power might have originated to loyally defend a Superman image of God; it's sacrilegious to limit God in any way.

However, such a notion that God is capable of anything, actually renders God into a vicious, careless, and even powerless being, while also viewing the world replete with impossibilities.

This position that God can do anything, is baseless. Furthermore, the burden of proof on those holding this view. The burden is not upon us to disprove it, since we need not disprove what does not exist in the first place. But, although we have

no burden to disprove this theory, let us do so to benefit others in a fundamental measure.

Inherent Contradiction

The simplest rejection of God being capable of literally anything, is this false claim: "God can do anything, including removing all of His powers, rendering Himself incapable of doing anything." This view is self contradicting. This argument alone shows that God cannot do anything we imagine.

Impossibilities

If God can do anything, He should be capable of creating another God. However, He truly cannot create another God, since He is the sole creator of the universe. The newly created duplicate

God cannot claim responsibility for creating the universe, since the true God already did so. Therefore, God cannot do "anything" we imagine, since He cannot create another God. The Rabbis already taught, God does not do the impossible:

Maimonides: Guide for the Perplexed 3:15

The "impossible" has a stable nature, one whose stability is constant and is not made by a maker; it is impossible to change it in any way. Hence, we do not ascribe to God the power of doing what is impossible. No thinking man denies the truth of this maxim, and none ignore it – except for those who have no understanding of logic . . . Likewise it is impossible that God should produce a being like Himself, or destroy Himself, or make Himself physical, or change

Himself – all of these things are in the category of the impossible, and cannot be attributed to God . . . It has become clear then that, according to every opinion and school, there are things which are impossible and which cannot exist. The power to bring about these impossible things cannot be ascribed to God. The fact that He cannot change them does not imply inability or deficiency of power on His part.

Maimonides is clear: reality has limitations. Certain things cannot be, what we call impossibilities. Another example: a circle cannot also be a square. It is impossible that one thing could at the same moment be something else. And since this is impossible, God's power plays no role, since power is only applicable to real things, not to non-existences, like impossibilities.

How would we answer this claim:

"We can't know how, but God can do anything. There is some system outside of our world and beyond our logic, in which God operates, where He can do what is impossible on Earth."

Although treated as fact, this is an assumption. For no one has experienced

(continued next page)

anything but an Earthly existence. Therefore, we are incapable of any positive knowledge of God, be it abstract or experiential. All we have are God's words.

God created our senses and intellects, for He wills us to obtain truths; to perceive accurately and to arrive at logical and true conclusions. He commands us not to favor a poor man in a court case (Exod. 23:6), since He desires justice and not sympathy if the poor man is a crook. He also commands us to depart from any falsehood (Exod. 23:7). Thus, God desires man abide by truth. God says, "I do not change (Malachi 3:6)." Therefore, God will not change and ask man to violate these commands. Thus, these are absolute truths; matters which God will always favor and never change. Now, one who suggests that God can do anything, must also say that God contradicts Himself. God said He does not change, but if God can do anything, why can't He change Himself? if he can do anything, why has He determine these Torah principles to be eternal?

"I am first and I am the last, and besides Me there is no other god (Isaiah 44:6)."

God says He was first, before all else. But if God can do anything, He should be able to make something else first, and this "absolute" truth should be meaningless, since He can change it.

God says He is "one." But of what truth is this, if He can make Himself into three, as the Christians suggest?

God's absolute declarations are without number. To imagine that God can do anything at all, is to disregard the absolute nature of His claims. Furthermore, God's declaration that "I am one", teaches us that His world and ours share common truths. He is imparting HIS truth that works in OUR world. Therefore, to suggest He functions in a world that conflict with ours, is contrary to the entire Torah.

We conclude that as God is trusted, that He desires truth, and He says things about Himself ("I am one") in His Torah, a system that is never to be changed (Deut. 13:1) God thereby tells us there are absolute truths that cannot change. This refutes the opinion that God can do anything.

However, if we take the other position that there is no absolute truth, and that

God may do anything, one of our wisest teachers – Maimonides – taught that we forfeit the afterlife. Maimonides as well as literally every Prophet, Rabbi, and Sage taught that Torah is absolute truth and will never undergo any change. And if we feel certain truths are not absolute (i.e., the 13 Principles), Maimonides writes that one has no share in the Afterlife. Nothing is more severe. The absolute nature of Torah is expressed in the commands not to add or subtract from the Torah (Deut. 13:1). The Torah will never be changed. It is true eternally. God cannot violate His word.

Therefore as the only knowledge we have of God are His words, and as we know that God does not wish to mislead mankind, we trust that there are many things that are impossible, that God cannot do. And we must further appreciate that these limitations that even God cannot violate, are actually God's perfections. Being limited to complete honesty, righteousness, justice, and charity, God is thereby perfect. This is the greatness of God, that He is perfect. Being limited is not a detractor of that perfection. It adds to it. ■



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Kabbalists & Segulas:

THE BIG LIE

A certain value promoted within the Jewish community requires correction. "Rebbes", "Reb-betzins", and "Tzadikim" are continually publicized as offering blessings and segulas (amulets) – a sure-fire cure to people's needs. Whether the need is financial, social or health-related, desperate Jews flock to these Kabbalists with the hopes of reversing their ill fate.

Although many Jews believe Kabbalists and segulas work, there is no evidence for this belief. More primarily, an authentic Torah view is derived from God's words alone, not man's beliefs...no matter how many repeat it, or the reputation of those endorsing it. And based on God's words, these practices are not

Jewish values. In fact, God prohibits such practices due to their powerless nature: "You must not eat on blood. You must not act on the basis of omens. And you must not act on the basis of auspicious times (Lev. 19:26)." Tosefta Shabbos (chap. 7) literally refers to wearing red strings "ways of the Emorites" – an idolatrous culture.

We learn what Judaism is, only from God's words: The Five Books of Moses, Prophets, and Writings. When in need, the Prophets prayed to God. Nowhere in these works do we find the Prophets using a created object to change their fate or reality. They never practiced anything except prayer, or what they might procure through their mechanical

abilities harnessing the natural world. The Prophets based their practices on two considerations: 1) knowledge of nature and 2) knowledge of God and His government over mankind. Nature offers no evidence that man's fate is affected by amulets. And God rewards and punishes man due to his sins and merits. A wicked man is punished, regardless of wearing a red string. A totally righteous woman is given children, regardless of her failure to wear such items. The Prophets lived according to knowledge, not baseless beliefs. And knowledge of the universe taught them that inanimate objects cannot help in any way. God alone changes our fate. You must know this: Maimonides stresses that our denial of "Reward and Punishment" is met with the loss of the Afterlife. One who believes in amulets, denies the truth of Reward and Punishment.

Prophecy ended with Malachi; no one today can guarantee God's response. It is therefore an outright lie to say, "Do such and such an act, and God will respond." Additionally, to make people pay or else hold back assistance, is cruel. So these charlatans are deceptive, robbers, and vicious. These Kabbalists build up the hopes of unknowing masses, and then shatter their dreams when no changes materialize.

If the Jewish public and Jewish leaders fail to correct our nation about these and other heathen practices that afford no help at all, if the media continues to promote such lies, then Jews' will go unanswered since they seek assistance from that which cannot help.

To know what Judaism and Torah is, study God's words. Dismiss all else, as we are commanded not to add or subtract from Torah (Deut. 13:1). If you are in need, God can hear you from any location. "Any place you mention My name, I will come to you and bless you (Exod.20:21)." But if you feel using Torah prohibitions like amulets will work, do not expect God to help you. ■



חוקם המשכן עם כלי הקדש.
The erection of the Tabernacle and the Sacred vessels.
Die Hütte des Himmels wird ausgerichtet, mit ihren heiligen Geräthe.

Rabbi Bernie Fox

TERUMAH

The Sanctity of the Mishcan and its Component Utensils

As all I show you concerning the structure of the Mishcan and the structure of all of its utensils so you should do. (Shemot 25:9)

Parshat Terumah discusses the design of the Mishcan – the Tabernacle – that traveled with Bnai Yisrael through the wilderness. After the people entered the Land of Israel the Mishcan, in derivative forms, continued to function as the most sacred place of worship in the Land. Ultimately King Shlomo constructed the Bait HaMikdash – the Temple. The Bait HaMikdash replaced the Mishcan and became the focal point of sacrificial worship. In our parasha Hashem directs Moshe in the construction of the Mishcan – the Tabernacle, its components and utensils. Rashi explains that these instructions were to serve as the design for all

generations. If any utensil should require replacement, these design specifications must be followed. For this reason, in the construction of the Bait HaMikdash, these basic design outlines were followed.

The Chumash explains that in order to be initiated into service, each utensil of the original Mishcan was anointed with a specially formulated oil. The Talmud explains that this requirement did not extend beyond the initial Mishcan. A utensil constructed to replace an original component did not require anointing. For example, one of the component utensils of the Mishcan was the Shulchan – a golden table positioned directly outside of the compartment of the Mishcan that housed the Aron – the sacred Ark. The Shulchan that was fabricated in the wilderness as a component of the Mishcan was anointed with the special oil. However, if it becomes necessary to construct a new

Shulchan as a replacement for the original table, the new Shulchan does not require anointing. This suggests an interesting question. If the original components required anointing, why are replacements not subject to this requirement?

This question indicates an important concept. The initial anointing was performed upon specific objects. However, the process did not merely sanctify that object. Instead, the process sanctified the abstract element represented by the specific object. Let us consider an example. The original Shulchan – table – was anointed. This was not merely a sanctification of that specific object. With the anointing of the specific Shulchan in the Mishcan, the abstract element – the institution of Shulchan – was sanctified and incorporated into the Mishcan.

Now, it is possible to understand the Torah's treatment of the replacement Shulchan. From where does this replacement derive its sanctity? It acquires its sanctity because it is a replacement or a new expression of an abstract element or institution already sanctified by the special oil. In other words, the anointing sanctified the abstract Shulchan. The new Shulchan is sanctified because it adheres to the specifications of this object. It is an expression of the element already sanctified.

This formulation reflects an important idea. The Mishcan and the Temple are permanent components of the Torah. This institution was created and sanctified in the wilderness. Each new Temple or component represents a new expression of a continuing institution. The third Bait HaMikdash will be a renewal of this permanent institution.

The Torah Promotes Peace among the Members of a Society

And the cherubs shall spread their wings upward, their wings covering the Ark-cover. And they shall face one another. They should face the center of the Ark cover. (Shemot 25:20)

The Aron – Ark – in the Mishcan held the tablets of the Decalogue. The opening of the Ark was sealed by the Kaporet – the Ark cover. Mounted on this golden cover were two cherubs. The golden cherubs were positioned at the ends of the cover. The cherubs faced one another. Their wings were spread forward and upward.

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There are various opinions regarding the meaning of these cherubim. Don Yitzchak Abravanel explains that the cherubim symbolize two relationships. Their up-stretched wings represent the relationship between the individual and Hashem. The cherubim faced one another. This represents the relationship between a person and his or her friend. The cherubim were placed upon the Ark that contained the tablets. This communicates the message that both of these relationships must be based upon the commandments of the Torah.

The importance of the Torah in regulating relations between individuals is reflected in a well-known teaching of the Sages. "Torah scholars increase peace in the world." This concise dictum communicates the lesson that the Torah is a guide for the treatment of one's neighbor. Through following the principles of the Torah, a healthy community is formed.

It is interesting that our Sages taught that Torah scholars increase peace. Why did the Sages not say that the scholars create peace? Rav Zalman Soroskin zt"l offers an insightful response to this question. He explains that two issues must be addressed in order for peace to be achieved. First, there must exist, among the members of the society, a desire to establish peace. Second, wisdom is required to translate this goodwill into concrete rules for relationships. The scholar, through the Torah, can provide the framework in which peace can develop and flourish. However, in order for these efforts to be successful, there must first exist a sincere desire to pursue peace.

Based in this insight, the meaning of the Sages emerges. The Torah scholar cannot create peace. First, the desire must exist. However, given this desire, the scholar can help society achieve its goal.

Two Opinions Regarding the Design of the Menorah

Six branches should extend from its sides – three branches from one side and three branches from its second side. (Shemot 25:32)

The Mishcan included a candelabrum – the Menorah. The Menorah consisted of a central trunk and six branches. Three branches extended from the right to the trunk. Exactly opposite these branches – on the left side of the Menorah – extended another three branches. The central trunk and each branch were capped with a flame.

The Chumash provides this general description of the Menorah. However, there is an interesting dispute regarding the specific design of the Menorah. According to Rashi, the branches of the Menorah were completely straight. They extended from the sides on a diagonal. Rabbaynu Avraham ibn Ezra disagrees. He maintains that the branches were curved. Each curved outward and then up from the trunk. What is the basis for this argument?

We can gain some insight into Rashi's position through a careful analysis of his comments. He begins by asserting that the branches were straight and angled upward. He then explains that the branches differed in length. Those branches lower on the trunk were longer. Those higher were shorter. This design assured that all the lights, located at the top of the branches, were at the same height.



It is clear from Rashi that a fundamental element of the Menorah's design was the height of the lights. The Torah required all the lights to be at the same height. Perhaps, this consideration determined the design of the branches. The branches were designed to serve a single purpose. They connected and related the lights to the trunk of the Menorah. If we assume that this is the sole function of the branches, we can understand their design. A straight diagonal branch describes the simplest path from the light to the body of the Menorah. In short, according to Rashi the fundamental design components of the Menorah were the trunk and the lights. The branches were required solely to relate the lights to the trunk.

Ibn Ezra seems to understand the design differently. According to him, the branches curved out from the trunk of the Menorah. They then rose in a path parallel to the trunk. These

branches have their own design requirement and are not merely appendages joining the lights to the body. They seem to be an essential component of the Menorah. The Menorah was fundamentally a many-branched candelabrum.

In short, Rashi and Ibn Ezra differ on the function of the branches. According to Rashi, they are a functional element of the Menorah. They are required to relate and connect the lights to the trunk. Their form is dictated by this simple function. According to Ibn Ezra, the branches are a fundamental element of the form of the Menorah – a many-branched candelabra. Therefore, they are assigned their own unique design. ■

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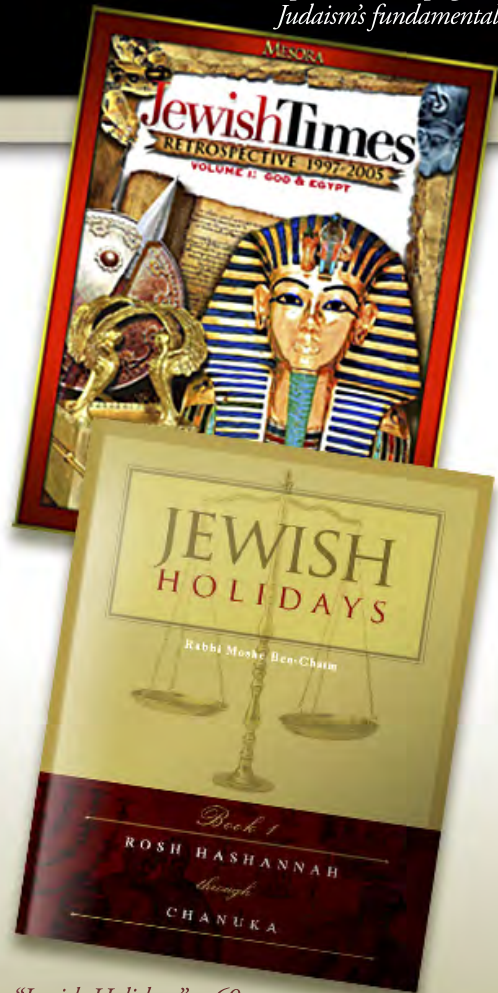
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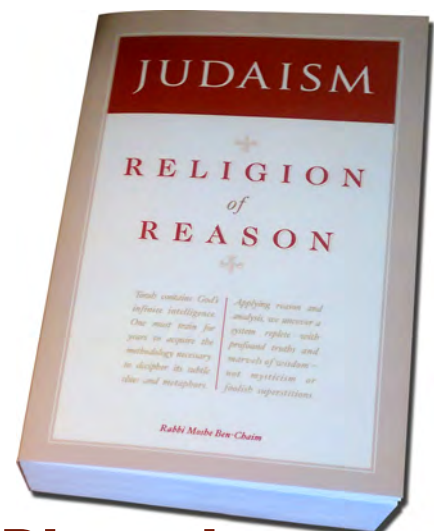
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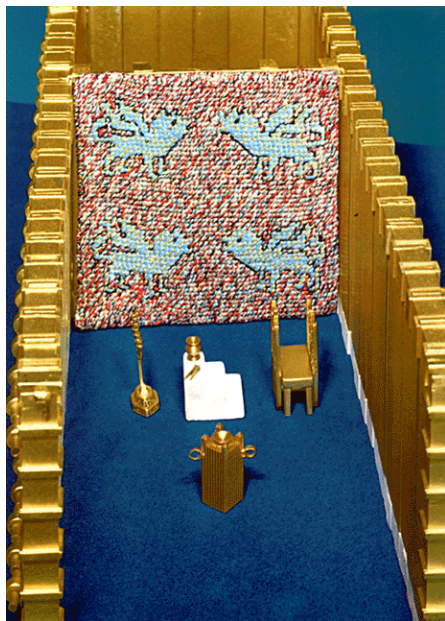


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RABBI REUVEN MANN

This week's parsha, Teruma, describes the building of the Mishkan, which was designed to be the "Dwelling place of G-d." One should not impute any material qualities to the Creator and thus should not imagine that G-d literally resides in any location. One must always remember that G-d exists outside the realm of time and space. The Torah speaks in the language of man so that its message should penetrate his heart. The Mishkan was the designated place where Hashem would "manifest His Presence" and providential protection of the Jewish people. The physical structure of the Mishkan did not by itself guarantee G-d's presence. Hashem said "And they shall make for me a Tabernacle and I will dwell among them." Rashi elucidates this verse saying, "They shall dedicate it to my name as a House of Holiness." There are two very important ideas contained in this Rashi. The Mishkan must be consecrated to His name, which represents the authentic idea of G-d that is unique to the Jewish people. We must divest ourselves of any false notions of G-d, which stem from the idolatrous emotions of man. A key aspect of our Emunah (faith) is the affirmation that "He is our G-d there is no other." We can't put our faith in any other being even if we believe in Hashem as well. We must worship Him exclusively and not believe that any person no matter how holy or object no matter how sacred can achieve anything for us in our time of need. We must cultivate a pure Emunah in which we turn only to Hashem for all of our needs and desires.

This trust in Hashem also means that we must serve Him only in the manner in which He has instructed us. We must adhere to faithful performance of His mitzvot and not add to or subtract from them. The ideal of

meticulous adherence to the exact commands of Hashem, is expressed in the very construction of the Mishkan. The Torah goes into all of the most intricate details pertaining to the building of this Holy House. Why is it necessary for scripture to enumerate all the particulars of this project? Hashem instructed Moshe to proceed, "In accordance with all that I show you, the form of the Tabernacle and the form of its vessels, so shall you make it." In describing the actual construction of the Mishkan the Pasuk states that the Jews "did all of the work in accordance with all that the L—d commanded Moshe, "and then tells us that "Moshe beheld their work and indeed they had made it exactly according to all that Hashem commanded Moshe and Moshe blessed them." Says Rashi, "He said to them, 'may it be His will to bestow His presence on the work of your Hands.'" The most important element in erecting the Mishkan was absolute dedication to following every instruction of Hashem, with no deviation. There is much that we can learn from this. Our task is to serve Hashem in faithfulness without recourse to "strange, unauthorized practices" which He did not mandate. This is a very relevant message for our times. There are many charms, amulets, incantations and other "segulot" which have made inroads in some sections of the religious community. In times of stress there is a temptation to give in to our desire for lucky charms and magical solutions. We must have true faith in Hashem and resist these deviationist practices and serve Him exclusively according to the mitzvot He has revealed to us. May we elevate ourselves to serve Hashem in true faithfulness and merit that "His presence should dwell in the works of our hands."

Shabbat Shalom. ■

God's Providence: Learning & Earning It

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim



Since many of us are not engaged in Torah study as we should, we are easily misled by our peers. We assume "They've got it all right." So when we see the orthodox masses spending the overwhelming portion of their day engaged in business, we think this is proper. However, this is not so. I wish to share a few sources that spell out Torah's actual view on man's required dedication to God and Torah, as opposed to following man and worldly pursuits.

Trusting God Over Our Natural Abilities

A wise Rabbi once said that man tends to be attached to the "messenger", and not the Master. Meaning, Jews tend to be attached to the pursuit of their livelihoods more than they are attached to God, the actual One who determines our income each Rosh Hashanna.

This weakness is an expression of our reliance on natural law, more than on God. We feel that with less work, we will not earn

sufficiently. Torah says otherwise.

There is a primary principle you must know as a basis for all else written herein. Just as God wills plants to grow when supplied with sufficient moisture and sun, He also wills His laws of providence to grow man's wealth when he abides by Torah principles and philosophies, and trusts in God. Neither one – nature, or God's laws of providence over man – is more real than the other. They are equally "created systems" that at one time in history, did not exist. Therefore, neither system should be trusted any less. But man is overtaken by his emotions; he sees natural law around him from his youth, and all day. But he doesn't "see" God's providence.

Due to the sensual nature of natural phenomena and our inclination to be sensual, we tend to trust nature to be more "real." But if you engage your mind, you will realize that both natural law, and God's system of providence over man (Reward and Punishment) are equally true. We must exert our thinking over our emotions, if we are to see this clearly.

Once we review all the Torah's lessons of God's interactions with the Prophets and all the benefits they received from Him, we affirm that the "invisible" system of providence is a reality. We can then loosen the grip that our trust in nature has placed on us. We then acknowledge that God is the true provider and that natural law is under His rule. We will agree that following His words will ensure greater success than ignoring His words and chasing after wealth with our mortal means.

It is for this reason, I believe, God says only once in His Torah "test Me" in connection with charity. Here, God is asking us to part with our source of security, our money. So He tells us we may test Him, to see if He doesn't "open the storehouses of heaven, emptying out a blessing that's more than enough (Malachi 3:10)." God understands our weakness; our belief that parting with wealth leaves less, not more. So He informs us in this verse that this is not so. He tells us that by following His word, we will end up with more.

We must realize that God runs nature. If we see this clearly, if we trust His promises, we will be able to part with our wealth, be charitable and actually become richer. It is the one who does not trust God, that does not part with his wealth, and works far more during his day than he learns. Another verse tell us this: "God does not forsake those who search Him out (Psalms 9:11)." Here, God promises His providence for those who seek Him through studying His ways, and studying His Torah. These are the closing words of Shacharis, just before reciting Alaynu. Those who

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seek out God fulfill the greatest mitzvah (Moade Katan 9b). Thereby, they increase their worth before God, and are more deserving of His assistance. He detaches himself from the physical and is more convinced in God's abilities than in physical means. God controls the physical, so the person is attached to the Controller, not the controlled (i.e., nature). Psalm 147:11 teaches that God desires those who await His kindness. This means that God will act on their behalf.

In his Laws of Sabbatical Year and Jubilee (13:13) Maimonides writes: "Any person whose spirit moves him, using his/her understanding, to separate himself to stand before God, to minister and serve Him...to know God...and this person walks upright as God made him, and he removes from his neck the yoke of many calculations [monetary concerns] that the masses seek: this person is sanctified as holy of holies and God will be his portion and inheritance for ever and ever and he will merit in this world sufficient means, just as is merited by the priests and Levites. Behold, King David, peace upon him, said, "God is my allotted portion and my share; You make my lot perfect". And Psalms (9:11) says, "And those who know Your name will trust in You; for You have not forsaken those who seek You, Hashem".

And a few more quotes: "...and one should work each day based on his needs to survive if he has not what to eat, and the remainder of his day and night [he should] engage in Torah study (Maimonides Laws of Torah Study 3:8)."

"Minimize your involvement in work, and maximize your engagement in Torah study (Pirkei Avos 4:12)."

The Torah philosophy is not caught up in amassing that which you cannot take with you. It is concerned that man pursues what improves his soul and his relationship with His creator. For this alone endures.

Be Part of the Community

Attend minyan. In this manner, one's status as part of the community's prayer is much greater in God's eyes than his individual worth. Maimonides teaches that the minyan's prayers are "regularly heard" (Laws of Prayer 8:1).

Observing the Primary Commands and Affirming Truths Regarding God

One must be concerned not to violate all commands, but the commands are not all equal. Maimonides was quite passionate about the loss of our souls that results from not accepting the 13 Principles. By studying these principles and becoming convinced of their truths, we raise ourselves to a higher level, earning God's kindness that much more.

In summary, God teaches man to pursue Torah study more than wealth. He should also part with his wealth. Doing both, man will not suffer the assumed loss of income. This message is throughout the Torah, as we have seen above. This does not mean God will make man a millionaire. King Solomon and all the Prophets did not value wealth as an ends, for they all knew man takes nothing with him as he departs this world. The Prophets valued only that which is eternal, that which has lasting value.

Yes, it is difficult to veer from the lifestyle of all your close friends. To change your

lifestyle where you chase less after the fancier things and sit in the Beis Medrash will also raise eyebrows. But it will gain God's attention, as you pursue the life He says is most valuable. This path of Torah study, and study of the natural world will provide greater fulfillment than all else: "Better is wisdom than pearls, and all desirous things do not equate to it (Proverbs 8:11)."

So trust that God has it correct, and that the world is wrong. Abide by all the Torah sources mentioned.

After you trust Him, and you live this proper Torah lifestyle, you will no longer need to trust how good it is. For you will have firsthand knowledge that the life of wisdom surpasses all else. And regarding your livelihood, work wisely, work minimally and be charitable. God has many messengers to assist you. You may not be wealthy, but as the Birchot Hamzone ends, "You will not lack anything." And in truth, as you live the correct philosophy, you will not want much, as King Solomon said, "do not make me wealthy, or poor [but] provide me my daily bread (Proverbs 30:8)."

As you engage wisdom as your primary pursuit, you will naturally desire wealth much less. The simpler things will suffice, as your focus will be always pulled towards Torah marvels. ■


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PART II

Kaddish

Why is it so Important?

Rabbi Dr.
Darrell
Ginsberg

In the previous article, the general importance of kaddish was established, recognizing the importance of our function in sanctifying the name of God, and noting how it cannot be complete until the coming Redemption. With this idea firmly entrenched, we now turn to the well-known halacha of kaddish de'rabannan.

The Talmud (Sota 49a) offers an extremely vague passage as the source for kaddish de'rabannan:

"Raba said: And the curse (klala) of each day is severer than that of the preceding, as it is stated: In the morning thou shalt say: Would God it were even! and at evening thou shalt say: Would God it were morning. Which morning [would they long for]? If I say the morning of the morrow, nobody knows what it will be. Therefore [it must be the morning] which had gone. How, in that case, can the world endure?— Through the doxology recited after the Scriptural reading, and [the response of] 'May His great Name [be blessed]' [which is uttered in the doxology] after studying Aggada; as it is stated: A land of thick darkness, as darkness itself, a land of the shadow of death, without any order. Hence if there are Scriptural readings, it is illumined from the thick darkness."

Before taking up the issue of kaddish de'rabannan, we must first get a basic understanding of this Midrash (for those who see no issue in increased curses and Chazal's solution, there is no need to read this explanation). The verse cited above comes from the section in the Torah known as the tochacha, where God reviews the different punishments the Jewish people will suffer as a result of

their straying away from the derech Hashem. The Talmud takes this verse and applies it in a slightly different context. In essence, according to the Talmud, in the morning we yearn for the previous evening, and in the evening we yearn for the earlier morning. The Torah then is emphasizing a general desire of Bnai Yisrael for the past, nostalgia of sorts. Clearly, based on the above passage, this is referring to the time of the Bais Hamikdash. In other words, Chazal recognized that one of the results of the destruction of the Temple would be a general longing by the Jewish people to return back to that period of time. If this is so, one can assume that the idea of an increase in curses is not to be taken literally. Instead, it is that the effect of the state of being "cursed", in exile without our Temple, becomes more apparent as time goes on. Chazal saw that events would emerge that would lead to Bnai Yisrael wanting to return to the way things were – being in galus, subject to rampant anti-Semitism, would mean constant reminders of this void. However, such an attitude can be dangerous. We should not be looking to return to what we once were. This idea should not be confused with remembering the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash. The point here is that there is a difference between remembering and wanting to re-create. We should recognize and focus on the future redemption, knowing that it will be a different experience, rather than desire what previously occurred. The theme of kaddish, where we express our yearning not for the past but for the future, where God will be sanctified throughout the world, seems to be the perfect counter to this concern. The question now is the forum for reciting this kaddish.

The Talmud isolates two situations – reciting kedusha desidra (contained in the tefila of "uva l'tzion") and reciting kaddish de'rabannan after learning aggada. Rashi explains that both express the importance of learning Torah and sanctifying God's Name. Chazal instituted the kedusha desidra in order to ensure that every Jew learn some Torah on a daily basis. As we see in the kedusha desidra, we recite the Hebrew verse, and then the Aramaic interpretation, which serves as a type of limud Torah. In the second scenario, as per Rashi, the people gather together on Shabbos to hear shiur. Upon completion of the shiur (he calls it "hagada she'hadarshan dorshin"), the people would recite yehei shmei rabba.

The relationship between Kiddush Hashem and learning Torah is the centerpiece of Rashi's approach. We have established previously the importance of the sanctification of God. Now we must explain its relationship to learning Torah. In the first halacha cited by Rashi, Chazal instituted the recitation of kedusha desidra. This in essence is a study of the very idea of God's sanctity. In other

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words, it is not merely enough to recite the words; rather, one must understand the concept in order to properly engage in sanctifying Him. In the second notion, we see the tzibur gathering together on Shabbos to hear a shiur, leading them to recite kaddish de'rabannan afterwards. Why is this such an important experience? It is interesting that Rashi emphasizes the fact that the people gather together because on this day there is no melacha, or work. He could have just written that it is Shabbos, but instead uses the absence of melocho as the portrayal. What this could be hinting to is a very basic, yet fundamental idea of Shabbos. To most people, a day off from work is just that – a day off. Time to catch up on sleep, lay around in a semi-catatonic state, watch TV, etc. Yet what occurs (or at least is supposed to) with the Jewish people on Shabbos is profound. We turn away from the world of the physical and engage in learning Torah. And such an action is, in fact, the ultimate expression of the sanctification of God. So we see now how the two concepts, kaddish and Torah, go hand in hand. In one instance, Chazal sought to emphasize the importance of studying kaddish. And in the second, the gathering of Jews together to engage in Torah is in and of itself a Kiddush Hashem, leading to the verbalization of kaddish de'rabannan.

This idea became more formalized in the system of halacha. The Rambam, in his Seder tefila (found at the end of Sefer Ahava) writes that if ten men (or more) gather together to learn Torah She'beal Peh, even if it is Midrashim or Aggadas, they recite kaddish de'rabannan afterwards. Most others learn this halacha to apply only to the learning of aggada with at least a minyan. And as many of us know, this led to the common practice of reciting "Rav Channaniah...." after a shiur, regardless of the topic, being that

this is an aggadic statement (see, for example, Magen Avraham OC 54:3). In general, one should ask why it makes any difference at all what is being learned by the tzibur. Why these particular types of Torah, and what is the explanation for this debate? As we stated before, the phenomenon of the tzibur coming together to learn (and a minyan is always considered to be a miniature "Bnei Yisrael") is something that in and of itself embodies kiddush Hashem. Yet it would seem that the very learning per se must be something that reflects the Jewish people and its relationship to Torah. As we know, the Torah She'bectav is accessible to everyone, Jews and non-Jews alike (and we have suffered greatly for this). But Torah She'beal Peh is something that we Jews have sole access to, a body of knowledge whose keys are held onto by Bnei Yisrael. And, as we discussed last week, the role of being mekadesh Hashem is unique to the Jewish people. Therefore, after partaking of this "type" of Torah, according to the Rambam, we recite kaddish. It is through our uniqueness, as expressed in our link to Torah, that allows us to engage in kiddush Hashem. However, there is another way to look at this concept. Aggadas are not simply stories and tales, to be taken literally. There are deep and powerful ideas contained within them. The method to uncovering these ideas is part of our tradition, something we have unique access to. The methodology is (or at least should be) front and center when studying this "type" of Torah, and it is one solely found within the mesora of the Jewish people. Therefore, according to these opinions, it is the type of learning that leads us to say kaddish.

In the next article in this series, we will look at how kaddish made its way into tefilah. ■

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