



"If you search for it like silver, and seek it like buried treasures, then will you comprehend knowledge of God, and the fear of God will you find."

King Solomon, Proverbs 2:4-5

ESTD 1997

Dedicated to Scriptural and Rabbinic Verification of Jewish Beliefs and Practices

JewishTimes

Volume I, No. 17...May 31, 2002

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AN OPEN LETTER TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY:
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Rachel's Disgrace

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

My friend's wife asked, in Genesis, 30:23, upon her birth of her first son after being barren, Rachel our matriarch said, "God has gathered in (removed) my disgrace". Rachel said this as she was relieved, finally having a child. The simple explanation is that her disgrace was her being barren, and now it was finally removed. However, Rashi states a Midrashic interpretation, "All the time a woman has no son, there is no other person upon whom her guilt may be placed. Once she has a son, it is cast upon him; as in, 'who broke that vessel, your son', 'who ate those dates, your son.'"

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Deification of Man

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

I recently had a conversation with an individual regarding her firm commitment in the absolute perfection of her "rebbe". She told me that she heard from her friends that he healed people, and did many miracles. She also said that a tzadik never makes a mistake, so he couldn't. She was also told to check her mezuzos when one is sick.

What is the Torah's view on elevating a human being to this level?

Rambam addresses these issues. In Hilchos Yisoday HaTorah, (8:1) Rambam states clearly that "(the children of) Israel did not believe in Moses due to the miracles which he performed. For one who believes based on miracles, there is doubt in his heart, perhaps he did the miracle out of trickery or slight of hand".

Rambam shows that miracles do not work to validate one's level.

Furthermore, for those who idolize a person by thinking he is the messiah due to so called miracles, I have one question...where is the performance of a miracle a requirement for one to be viewed as the messiah? Again, Rambam addresses this in the Mishne Torah, Kings (11:4), "If there arises a king from the house of David, who keeps the Torah, involved in the mitzvos, like David his father, according to the written and oral Torah, and he causes all Jews to follow this Torah, and he strengthens them in keeping the minutia, and he fights the wars of Hashem, he then has a potential status of being the messiah. If he does this and is successful, and rebuilds the Temple on its original ground, and gathers the dispersed Jews, he is then definitely the messiah." Does the Rambam say anything about miracles? No.

Additionally, how could a rebbe do more miracles than Elisha or Eliyahu who did only 16 and 8 miracles respectively? According to this person, her rebbe did many more miracles than

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ASK YOUR CHILDREN:

"Should we follow what everyone else does, or should we follow what makes sense?"
Have your children email us with their answers: questions@mesora.org

Wisdom and Suffering

RIVKA OLENICK

"When a person suffers any type of misfortune, he/she should use it as a cue to arouse his/her improvement." Chovos Halvovos Brochos 5a; 7:6.

We should do everything possible to protect ourselves and avoid unnecessary suffering and psychological harm. First we have to make the effort and try to understand what suffering means. When you think of suffering, you equate it with fear and you imagine that all kinds of terrible situations will confront you. Setback and tragedy are part of life yet the outcome of one's suffering can prove to be very beneficial for a person. Sooner or later each person confronts - but can hopefully endure - their trial of suffering. A person who cannot accept their trial is very unfortunate because they will have gained nothing. Chazal say that God created the world and it is good, that only good comes from God and what happens in the world is for the ultimate good. These ideas are not easy to internalize when one is suffering and in the middle of a crisis or a personal tragedy. Nevertheless, the approach in understanding suffering should be a philosophical one. By allowing your mind and heart to be open to wisdom suffering can open the door to profound joy and may prove to be a great blessing, believe it or not.

When a crisis occurs a person feels they lost control of their life. Many people become depressed and anxious when they are suffering. They find it hard to focus on study or prayer and/or their livelihood and they feel alienated from their family and friends. This suffering produces uncertainty, which is scary. Many people feel lost and can't figure out what to do. If suffering entraps you, first you should look into your life and examine it closely. Seek practical guidance or advice from someone you trust and who is willing to help you feel grounded. Feel positive and optimistic if you don't rebel against God because of your suffering, because that itself is a high level and a very good starting point.

Rather than acquiring more possessions, a person should think about acquiring more wisdom. Make an investment in your peace of mind. How can acquiring wisdom help a person through suffering? Wisdom can significantly help a person accept their suffering. Acceptance is extremely important. Acquiring wisdom is for anyone who can understand a concept contained in an idea. Engage yourself in thinking about and exploring the concepts and ideas that are based on wisdom. Do this by making time to learn and acquire. Study the great ideas contained in Pirkei Avos,

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