

What makes sense: that God forgives man when he repents, or when he performs extraneous mitzvahs while continuing his sin?  
What does God say?  
Read "Reward & Punishment"

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of Authentic Jewish Beliefs and Practices

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**Weekly Parsha**

# Emor

RABBI BERNARD FOX

**"The first day shall be a sacred occasion for you. You should not perform any melechet avodah."**  
(VaYikra 23:7)

Parshat Emor provides a list of the occasions on which it is prohibited to perform melachah. Loosely translated the term melachah means work. The list begins with Shabbat.

*(continued on next page)*

## JUDAISM'S FUNDAMENTALS

# REWARD & PUNISHMENT



RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

**W**hat is the primary idea of "Reward and Punishment"? To answer this question, a few sources are required reading. In his 11th of his 13 Principles, Maimonides writes as follows:

*"God gives reward to he who does the commandments of the Torah and punishes those that transgress its admonishments and warnings. And the great reward is the life of the world to come; and the punishment is the cutting*

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(Emor continued from page 1)

## Weekly Parsha

# JewishTimes

Weekly Journal on Jewish Thought



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The Torah tells us that on Shabbat all melachah is prohibited. The Oral law teaches us that there are thirty-nine general categories of melachah. These thirty-nine forms of melachah are derived from the fabrication of the Tabernacle. All of the thirty-nine forms of melachah were essential processes in the construction of the Mishkan – the Tabernacle.

The list continues with an enumeration of the Yamim Tovim – the festivals and holidays. The pasuk above discusses the first day of Pesach. In this pasuk, the Torah tells us that the first day of Pesach is a sacred occasion and that it is prohibited to perform melechet avodah on that day. The Torah does not say that all melachah is prohibited on this occasion. Instead, the term melechet avodah is used to describe the labors that are prohibited. The Torah also tells us that melechet avodah is prohibited on the other Yamim Tovim. There is one exception. The Torah tells us that on Yom Kippur all melachah is prohibited.

In short, according to the passages in our parasha, on Shabbat and on Yom Kippur all melachah is prohibited but on the Yamim Tovim melechet avodah is prohibited. It seems clear that the Torah is contrasting Shabbat and Yom Kippur to these other Yamim Tovim. The term melechet avodah suggests that the prohibition against melachah on Yamim Tovim differs from the prohibition on Shabbat and Yom Kippur. But what is the precise difference?

In Parshat Bo the Torah describes in more detail the prohibition against melachah on Pesach. There, the Torah tells us that all melachah may not be performed on these days with the exception of melechet ochel nefesh – melachah needed for the preparation of food.[1] It is apparent that this is area in which the prohibition against labor on Shabbat and Yom Kippur differs from the prohibition on Yamim Tovim. On Shabbat and Yom Kippur all thirty-nine forms of melachah are prohibited. Even those types of melachah that are related to food preparation are prohibited. But on Yamim Tovim those types of melachah that are related to food preparation are permitted. For example, cooking and baking are prohibited on Shabbat. But on Yamim Tovim these types of melachah are permitted.

With this information we can understand the significance of the term melechet avodah. Nachmanides suggests that in Parshat Bo the Torah details the specific perimeters of the prohibition against melachah on Pesach. It tells us that melechet ochel nefesh is permitted. In our parasha, the Torah does not specifically reiterate that melechet ochel nefesh is per-

mitted on Pesach. Instead, the Torah introduces the term melechet avodah. This term is intended to refer to those types of melachah that are not melechet ochel nefesh. The Torah tells us that – with the exception of Yom Kippur – all Yamim Tovim are subject to a prohibition of melechet avodah. This term is intended to communicate to us that on these occasion melechet ochel nefesh is permitted. In other words, the term melachah – when it is unqualified – includes all thirty-nine forms of melachah that are prohibited on Shabbat. The term melechet avodah includes only those forms of melachah that are not related to food preparation.

How does the term melechet avodah express this concept? Nachmanides discusses this issue in detail. He concludes that the term melachah includes two types of activities. It includes activities that one does in order to create or maintain possessions – for example: plowing, planting, harvesting. It also includes activities that one performs for rather immediate benefit – for example: cooking. In contrast, term melechet avodah means only those types of melachah that are avodah – related to ones possessions. In other words, the term melechet avodah refers only to the forms of melachah are performed in order to create and maintain possessions. It does not include those forms of melachah that are designed for personal benefit – melechet ochel nefesh.[2]

Maimonides' understanding of the term melechet avodah is not as clear. In his Sefer HaMitzvot, Maimonides does not even use the term melechet avodah. In describing the prohibition against melachah on the festivals and the Yamim Tovim, he does not use the term melechet avodah. Instead, he explains that on these occasions melachah is prohibited. In his discussion of the positive command to refrain from melachah on the first day of Pesach does he mention that melechet ochel nefesh is permitted.[3] In his introduction to the laws of the Yamim Tovim, he lists the various mitzvot that will be discussed in this section of his code. These positive and negative commandments are all described as either prohibitions against melachah or positive commandments to refrain from melachah. In listing these commandments, he does not use the term melechet avodah. It seems that Maimonides has banished from his lexicon the term melechet avodah.

However, in the very first law of the section the term melechet avodah does appear. Maimonides explains that on Yamim Tovim all melechet avodah is prohibited, with the exception of melachah performed for the purpose of food preparation. If we consider this statement carefully, an ambiguity emerges. An example

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(Emor continued from page 2)

## Weekly Parsha

will illustrate this ambiguity. If I tell my students that they will all have a quiz with the exception of Reuven and Shimon, I am implying that Reuven and Shimon are students. However even though they are students, they will be exempted from the quiz. It is because Reuven and Shimon are students that I must specify that they are exempted. Maimonides tells us that all *melechet avodah* is prohibited on the Yamim Tovim with the exception of *melechet ochel nefesh*. This implies that the term *melechet avodah* includes *melechet ochel nefesh*. Because *melechet avodah* includes *melechet ochel nefesh*, Maimonides must tell us that there is an exception to the prohibition of *melechet avodah*. It does not include *melachah* performed for food preparation.

In short, Maimonides rarely uses the term *melechet avodah*. When he does use the term, he implies that it includes all thirty-nine forms of *melachah* – including those related to food preparation. So, the term *melachah* and *melechet avodah* seem to both include all forms of *melachah*. These two terms seem to be indistinguishable.

This raises two questions. First, Maimonides' position does not seem to be consistent with the message in our parasha. In our parasha, the Torah reserves the term *melachah* for Shabbat and Yom Kippur. The Torah consistently uses the term *melechet avodah* when referring to the prohibition on Yamim Tovim. It seems that Maimonides is suggesting that this distinction is meaningless. According to Maimonides, both terms – *melachah* and *melechet avodah* seem to be indistinguishable in their meanings. Second, it is odd that after completely neglecting to use the term *melechet avodah* in his description of the mitzvot that regulate *melachah* on Yamim Tovim, he suddenly makes reference to the term in the first law of regarding the Yamim Tovim! Why suddenly introduce this term if it has not meaningful significance?

In order to understand Maimonides' position, it is useful to more carefully consider Nachmanides' understanding of the term *melechet avodah*. According to Nachmanides, this term refers to those types of *melachah* that are designed to create or develop our possessions. The term does not include those types of *melachah* that are performed for personal benefit. This means that according to Nachmanides, the set of activities that is prohibited on Yamim Tovim is a different set than the set prohibited on Shabbat. Nachmanides is telling us that there are no exceptions to the prohibition against *melechet avodah* on Yom Tov. *Melechet ochel nefesh* is not an exception to the prohibition against *melechet avodah*. Those forms of *melachah* that are *melechet ochel*



*nefesh* are not part of the set of prohibited activities defined by the term *melechet avodah*.

It seems that Maimonides disagrees with this formulation. He states that *melechet ochel nefesh* is exempted from the general prohibition against *melechet avodah*. This raises a new question. Why are these forms of *melachah* exempted? Maimonides does not discuss this issue directly. However, he does allude to the solution. He explains that celebration of Yamim Tovim includes an obligation to partake in the festival meal. Celebration of the occasion through food and drink is a fundamental element of the observance of Yamim Tovim.[4]

Let us now return to Maimonides' understanding of the term *melechet avodah*. It seems that the term includes all forms of *melachah*. Yet, the term is somehow significant and unique to Yamim Tovim. In order to identify this unique meaning, it is helpful to dissect the term and then to compare it to the term *melachah*. *Melechet avodah* literally means *melachah* of *avodah* – or *melachah* that involves labor or toil. In contrast, the term *melachah* refers to creative activity. As noted, both terms refer to the same *melachot*. However, each term refers to a different aspect of the *melachot*. The term *melachah* refers to the creative element in these activities. The term *melechet avodah* stresses the toil and labor involved in these activities.

It seems that according to Maimonides, there is a fundamental difference between the prohi-

bition against *melachah* on Shabbat and the prohibition against *melechet avodah* on Yamim Tovim. Both prohibitions include the same activities. However, the two prohibitions focus on different aspects of these activities. On Shabbat, *melachah* is prohibited. The prohibition against these activities stems from and focuses upon the creative element in the *melachot*. On Yamim Tovim, *melechet avodah* is prohibited. The prohibition focuses upon the element of toil and labor involved in these activities. In other words, all forms of *melachah* are prohibited on Shabbat because we are commanded to refrain from creativity in the material world. But on Yamim Tovim we are not commanded to refrain from creativity. Instead, these are occasions of celebration and joy. On such occasions toil and labor are inappropriate.

Apparently, Maimonides introduces the term *melechet avodah* in the first law of Yom Tov because it is relevant to the exemption for *melechet ochel nefesh*. Maimonides maintains that *melechet ochel nefesh* is exempted from the prohibition of *melechet avodah* because food preparation is essential to the observance of the festivals and Yamim Tovim. However, he seems to also maintain that this exemption is reasonable because it is consistent with the aim and objective of the prohibition of *melechet avodah*. The prohibition is against toil and labor. It is designed to endow the festivals and Yamim Tovim with a character of celebration and joy. This very aim and objective suggest that *melechet ochel nefesh* – although involving toil and labor – deserve to be exempted from the prohibition. The exemption of these activities is consistent with the very theme and objective of the prohibition against *melechet avodah*. In other words, *melechet ochel nefesh* is not permitted because it is not *melechet avodah*. Food preparation does involve toil and labor. However, the exemption of these activities from the prohibition against *melechet avodah* is thematically consistent with the very objective of the prohibition – to endow the occasion with a character of joy and celebration. ■

[1] Sefer Shemot 12:16.

[2] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer VaYikra 23:7.

[3] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Sefer HaMitzvot, Mitzvat Aseh 159.

[4] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Yom Tov 6:17-19.

(Reward & Punishment continued from page 1)

Fundamentals

off of the soul [in the world to come]. And we already said regarding this topic what these are. And the verse that attests to this principle is (Exodus 32) "And now if You would but forgive their sins - and if not erase me from this book that You have written." And God answered him, "He who sinned against Me I will erase from My book." This is a proof that God knows the sinner and the fulfiller in order to mete out reward to one, and punishment to the other."

In chapter nine of his Laws of Repentance, Maimonides commences with an explanation of a foreseen problem: the Torah views the World to Come as our ultimate reward. Therefore, Maimonides questions – for the reader – all the blessings and curses contained in the Torah, to be received by us "on Earth". If we are to receive blessings, land, children and great harvests as a response to mitzvahs, we are confused as to whether this is our reward, or if the World to Come is our reward. Maimonides resolves this question, explaining that God's promises of Earthly blessings are not the end good for man. These blessings are granted to those who follow the Torah lifestyle, seeking Torah study and love of God as their primary concern. For these people, God grants them all their needs so they might be sustained here and enabled to study, thereby earning them their eternal life in the World to Come. Earthly blessings are a means.

Maimonides is in agreement with the Talmud, "There is no reward for Mitzvahs in this world" (Kiddushin 39b). Much is taught on that page in Kiddushin. One idea is that we receive no reward for mitzvahs in this world, exemplified by the son who respected his father's wish to ascend to the loft and send away the mother bird and capture the young. For both commands – honoring his father and sending away the mother bird – the Torah promises "long life". However, the son died while descending from the loft. The Talmud then asks, "Where is the long life of this son?" The answer: "long life" guaranteed by the Torah for mitzvahs, is interpreted in this Talmudic portion as life in the World to Come. Another idea we learned from this portion is that those with more merits than sins will receive punishments here to pave the way for a pristine existence in the next world, free from punishments. Since we all sin, we must pay the price for our sins, and fortunate are we that the price we pay is temporal, here on Earth, and not as the wicked receive: a loss of the World to Come. What a tragedy. Having approached the topic of evils that befall man, let us elaborate.

Maimonides writes that the evils of man are one of three types ("Guide"; book III, chap XII): 1) natural causes, like floods; 2) human interaction,

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like war; and 3) self-inflicted problems, the last, Maimonides states is the largest cause of our problems. Of course, God may also afflict us, but this would not satisfy the requirement of an "evil" as God's afflictions are in fact welcomed remedies: "For those who God loves does He rebuke." (Proverbs, 3:12)

Now, let us consider: if there are but three types of evils, and a fourth category of God's afflictions, how is it that we might remove these evils or afflictions? We would either, 1) remove ourselves from areas and conditions most probable of experiencing nature's wrath. Thus, we would not build our homes near volcanoes or in valleys that flood, and if sick, we would research medical treatments; 2) we would establish courts, police and foster peace so men do not harm each other; and 3) we would educate ourselves away from anything that might harm us, minimizing or removing self-inflicted problems of all types. To remove ourselves from God's afflictions, we would follow his Torah system: we would not sin, and we would strive to educate ourselves at every turn, to enjoy the most tranquil and rewarding lifestyle. And if we do see that God has afflicted us, we would follow what the Torah teaches from the prophet, "Let us search and examine our ways and return to God". (Lamentations, 3:40) God

says that through introspection and abandoning our evil, we will return to God, and rightfully true as well, God will then abandon His punishments. Therefore, according to God's Torah system, any other action cannot remove one's problems. We must reverse our course that brought us to a problematic state in life.

This is so reasonable, we are therefore greatly disturbed that the religious of our own people who completely discard our Rabbis, the Talmud, and God's very words. Last month we were approached by one organization Tzintz.org that promised fertility and great fortune for anyone who sponsors a reprint of a dead Rabbi's works. Today, we were again approached by another organization called Chairotel.com that promises fertility, recovery, spouses, and other promises. On their website, they write this:

"As part of an ancient custom, Jews from all over the holy land travel to the gravesite of R' Shimon bar Yochai and study the Zohar on his grave with a mixture of trepidation and awe. All the while aware of the countless miracles that have taken place at the very same site, the visitors give charity and utter heartfelt prayers on the spot, drawing on the reserve of holiness and power etched in the stone and vested in the earth surrounding the resting place of R' Shimon."

Chairotel.com asks for money to pour cold drinks for gravesite visitors, and promises fertility, recovery, spouses, and other promises. They also claim "holiness and power" exist in the Earth at this location. Their approach pays no attention to Maimonides' words, to the Talmud in Kiddushin, which says there is no reward for mitzvah on Earth, and to God in Lamentations who says that we must change our ways if we are to be forgiven. Jacob too told his barren wife that she must pray to be entitled to children, and that he – Jacob – was powerless. If Jacob was powerless, these organizations are wrong to violate the words of our patriarch.

Torah rejects this notion that by performing an unrelated mitzvah, we will correct our wrong in another area that makes us barren, or sick. Sforno states this openly, "A mitzvah does not atone for a sin". (Exod. 32:33) Therefore, if one is barren, she must investigate her ways and repent to earn God's kindness, and children. Or she may simply require medical treatment. But the notion that Chairotel.com supports is against the Torah, and reason. Giving money for this mitzvah can in no way make a sick person recover, if God wills the person sick due to his sins. We cannot avert God's punishments with unrelated activities, or even with mitzvahs.

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(Reward continued from page 4)

Tzintz.org writes on their website and in their ads that the dead Rabbi will be an "advocate" for whomever reprints his books. What does the Torah say about seeking intermediaries and advocates? Maimonides states in Laws of Idolatry 2:1 that it is prohibited to create an intermediary between one's self and God. This is classified as Avodah Zara, idolatry. Otsar Tefilos says as follows (weekday morning Shmoneh Essray, "Oseh Shalom Bimromav") "For we have a great fundamental; it is not fitting to pray to any creation in the world and to request any assistance from it, except from God alone." Furthermore, Maimonides classifies one as a "min" (heretic) anyone who "worships a star, a constellation or anything else, that it should be an "advocate" between him and God." (Laws of Repentance, 3:7) It makes no difference if the advocate is dead Rabbi. To further the sin of such practitioners, Maimonides also states that those who mislead the Jewish nation have no share in the World to Come. (ibid; 3:6, 3:10) In 3:10, Maimonides includes even those who mislead the Jews on a small matter...how much greater is their sin when they steer Jews away from our fundamentals?

As these ads appear in national Jewish papers, it is equally upsetting that Rabbis, columnists, and leaders well aware of such philosophies do not speak out to defend Torah truths, and protect the innocent masses from falling prey to these fabrications, harboring vain hopes. It is cruel to keep other Jews in the dark, allowing the lies of these organizations to proliferate unopposed. A concerned Jew is obligated to rebuke a fellow Jew, and to educate others on imposter philosophies. Do not be misled by the popularity of these philosophies, or of their association with names like Rav Shimon bar Yochai. As Maimonides taught, intermediaries and advocates are against the Torah. Certainly, God can hear each one of us without the "assistance" of dead people. And God will not remove His punishments unless we remove our sins...doing other mitzvahs like these groups claim will not atone for a sin we still repeat.

I urge all responsible Jews, teachers and Rabbis to write any Jewish publication that supports these organizations, and protest their ads. Write to the organizations as well, and inform them that you reject their false claims, which violate Torah fundamentals, and mislead the masses...both are grave sins.

If many of us voice our rejection of these popular practices, we can correct Torah distortions, and dissuade further misconceptions. We will return Jews to the authentic, reasonable Torah fundamentals voiced by true leaders such as Maimonides and our prophets. But if we are silent, we allow further deviations. ■



# Letters

*from our*

## READERS



### No Proof

**Micha:** Rabbi Ben-Chaim, you wrote: "It is an important lesson that multiple arguments defending a single position as Mr. Harris presents, imply the failure of each individual argument. For if someone possessed 'solid evidence' as Craig Harris claims, he would not need to resort to more than one 'solid' proof."

Looking through the Rishonim it would seem that they disagree with you, for instance, in Chovot HaLevavot Rabbeinu Bachya often brings multiple arguments. For instance in Shaar HaYichud Chapter 7 he brings 7 proofs to God's oneness. Or for instance Maimonides in the Guide for the Perplexed (book 2, chapter 19) brings multiple proofs for the universe being created. Or Rav Saadia Gaon who in Emunot VeDeot brings proofs from both reason and verses on almost every point

It would seem that there are 2 purposes in

bringing multiple proofs: first a proof can be used to draw out a different dimension of an idea by showing it from every direction. Second in the area of philosophy as opposed to mathematics proofs are not 100% true (for instance you can't know 100% that there weren't Martians giving the torah at Sinai or even that I'm not a Martian who is writing to you), proofs "merely" demonstrate that an idea is likely and should be accepted; more proofs adds to the likelihood of the idea and are therefore useful.

Of course no matter how many proofs you bring if they are all stupid then the number makes no difference.

**Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim:** I don't agree with your statement that 100% proofs belong only to math. I do agree Micha...there are cases when one proof sufficiently demonstrates an absolute truth. And then, there are times when many proofs are given to contribute additional facets of knowledge. But we also see the Talmud asking "Mai v-Ode?", "Why does the Rabbi offer another proof? [Isn't one sufficient?]" The Talmud too agreed that once a sufficient argument exists, additional arguments cast suspicion on the cogency of the first argument. For if the first argument was absolute, a second argument cannot "again" prove what has already been proved.

We easily resolve this disparity between multiple proofs adding more facets, or displaying weakness in each argument by reviewing the substance of each argument. Once we see an initial argument proving a truth beyond doubt, we will witness arguments like the Talmud, "Why a second argument, the first was sufficient!?" In such a case, we are interested in understanding the second argument, for we now know that this author seeks to defending a truth, already proved by argument #1, and we enjoy learning more truths. Therefore, we do wish to hear another aspect of this truth.

But when a position is defended by an argument lacking any demonstrative proof, additional arguments cannot remove the fallacy of the first one. Further arguments might offer truth unto themselves, but we have already suspected the author of faulty reasoning, having submitted argument #1, in his mind a valid proof, but in reality, it was flawed. Although any number of faulty arguments to defend his view cannot absolutely "prove" wrong his position, however, after a number of faulty arguments, the author's credibility has been lost.

In Craig Harris' case, he too unveiled his lack of intelligence, so each additional argument he lodges is counterproductive. He failed to offer any proof that Jesus was resurrected, also admitting

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## Letters

that he is delusional, having claimed contact with dead “spirits”, as if spirits are true phenomena. In the end, Craig Harris falls into the category Maimonides criticizes: “They have not only not left off worshipping things in existence; they even worship imaginary things.” (“Guide for the Perplexed”; book III, chap. xlvi)

## No Acceptance

**Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim:** Micha (above) pointed out to me, a seeming contradiction in Maimonides’ words:

*“Any Jewish heretic (apikores) is no longer Jewish in any measure, and is never received in his repentance, forever. And the heretics are those who go astray after their heart’s thoughts in their foolish words that they state, until they violate the Torah’s Fundamentals, despicably in spite, with an outstretched hand, and they claim that they are not sinning. It is forbidden to speak with them and to respond upon them with any response at all.” (Maimonides’ Laws of Idolatry, 2:5)*

Maimonides clearly teaches that such individuals who “violate the Torah’s Fundamentals, despicably in spite, with an outstretched hand, and they claim that they are not sinning” are never accepted in their repentance. However, in his Laws of Repentance 3:14, Maimonides states ALL people are received in the repentance, including this above category of “apikores” (3:6). To be clear, Maimonides defines an “apikores” as one of three types: 1) a person who denies prophecy, claiming God’s knowledge has not reached man; 2) one who denies Moses’ prophecy; and 3) one who claims God is ignorant of man. (Laws of Repentance, 3:8)

So which is it: is the apikores accepted in his repentance, or not? Maimonides appears to say both. However, we know this cannot be so. The Kessef Mishna (Laws of Repentance 3:14, last words) resolves the contradiction. He states that those who Maimonides mentions in Laws of Idolatry 2:5 are in fact, literally never accepted, exactly as Maimonides writes. The reason being, the sin of this apikores differs from others, for he “violates the Torah’s Fundamentals, despicably in spite, with an outstretched hand, and they claim that they are not sinning.”

How does this apikores differ from others? What is his greater sin, which demands his repentance never be accepted? One possibility occurs to

me. This apikores is akin to one who says, “I will sin, and later I will repent”. Regarding this latter individual, Maimonides states his repentance – his “teshuvah” – is prevented. Perhaps this is so, since when he sinned, he denied the gravity of sin, feeling he can easily repent later. He viewed sin as a light thing. Our apikores too denies the evil performed. In both cases, the individual has little appreciation for the damage self-inflicted through sin, and therefore, even when attempting to repent, he cannot, as he is blind to his true sin, having previously denied it. I offer this is a possibility and invite your own thoughts.

## No Apology

**Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim:** “John” emailed Mesora this week, regarding last week’s critique of Craig Harris’ “proofs” of Jesus resurrection. John’s letter was quite long, and he made some very valid points on the style and method of response, for which I thank him. But I disagree on one of his criticisms, that I should not have referred to Craig Harris as “delusional and psychotic” as that was a ‘personal’ attack, according to John, and should be avoided.

I quote Craig Harris: *“Finally, the ongoing encounters with Jesus today. Millions of us throughout history have had a conversion experience. We know Jesus is alive because we have felt, known and experienced him.”*

This was the subject of one of John’s critique, to which I share my response: “John, while I appreciate your critique of facts, your criticism of my use of “delusional and psychotic” is invalid. These were not personal attacks, but declaring fact. These words accurately describe the person, to teach others wherein lie his flaws. I again use this

term in this week’s JewishTimes. Even more so, when we wish to protect others from falling prey to false, idolatrous religions, we should be even harsher in our response. As a Rabbi once taught, “any political correctness smacks of some tolerance”, which is intolerable when denouncing Christianity. “Hakay es shinav”, “blunt his teeth” is how the Rabbis teach we respond to the wicked son.” ■

## Letters

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# the Book of Job

## PART VIII LIMITED PROVIDENCE

### Chapter 25

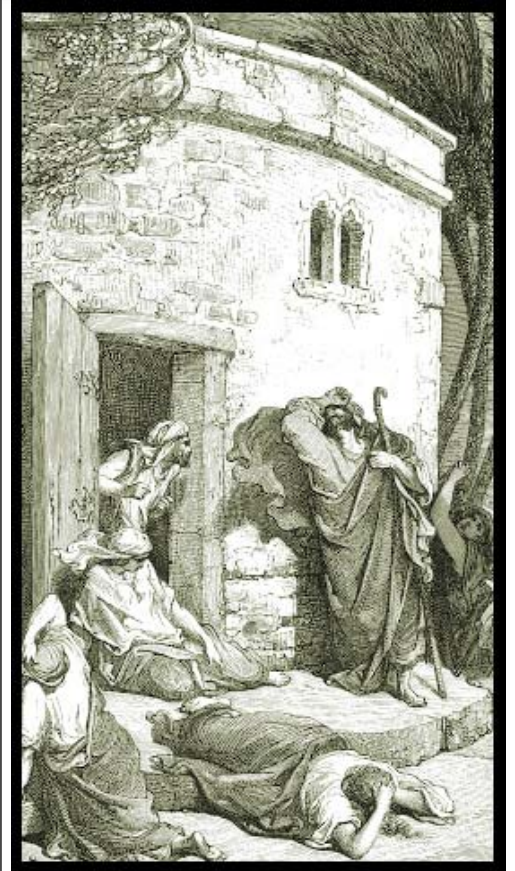
This chapter commences with Bildad's view that "Oseh Shalom Bimromav" – "God works peace in His heights." Bildad means that God's perfected system is not in the realm of the physical, but in the metaphysical world, "in His heights." Bildad attempts to answer Job's claim against Earth-bound injustice, by suggesting that justice does exist perfectly in the heavens, but as this system of justice is filtered down to Earth, it becomes imperfect. It is odd, as Bildad herein offers the answer of Eliphaz. Job states that Bildad's remarks help only Bildad, but not himself.

## PART IX THE RASHA'S UNDOING

### Chapter 27

The problem in this chapter is that in verses 9 and 10, Job seems to be stating that there is a system with which God works, wherein the Rasha is punished from God:

*"Let mine enemy be as the wicked, and he that riseth up against me as the unrighteous. 8. For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul? 9. Will God hear his cry*



*when trouble cometh upon him? 10. Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?"*

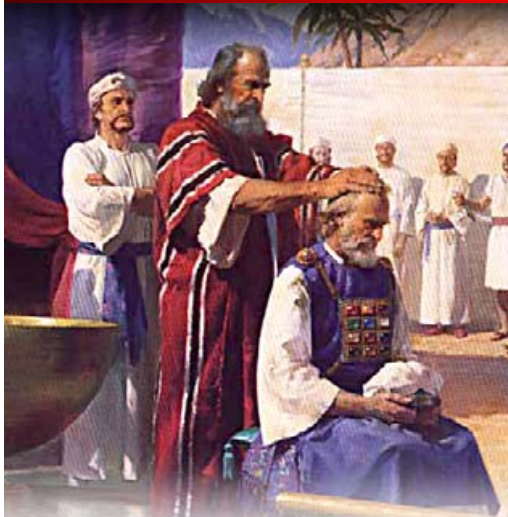
This goes against the tenor of Job's words up to this point. However, Job is not saying that God brings evil upon the Rasha, but rather, that living a wicked life in and of itself goes against reality: even without God stepping in, the Rasha will fail. First, (verse 8) Job tells the three that he won't and cannot move from living honestly and that they are the hypocrites. And when he seems to start showing partiality towards the idea of there being a system, he really is not changing his course. He refers only to the state of the Rasha, not whether or not God hears him, viz. "will God hear his cry" should read, "will his cry be heard." The words "Will he cry" means: will the Rasha recognize reality so as to cry. Job's critique is on the ignorance of the Rasha, not on the absence of God's response. And verse 10 means, "Will he partake of the enjoyment of knowledge?" Job means to say, "Will the Rasha exist in reality?" Job is consistent.

We must ask why Job does not say the opposite regarding the righteous, i.e., that the righteous – while living in reality – will prosper, and not necessarily from God? The reason being that it is not true. ■

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

Transcribed by students





# a Matter of Life & Death

RABBI REUVEN MANN

On occasion, I have the pleasure to spend time learning with Rabbi Reuven Mann in Plainview NY, and enjoy his many classes throughout Shabbos. This past Shabbos he spoke on some important Torah themes.

Rabbi Mann commenced by considering the Torah's view of death: "Lave chacham b'vais avale", "The heart of a wise man is in the house of mourning". What is the wisdom referred to here? Maimonides too says that when faced with the choice between a wedding and a house of mourning, one should go to the house of mourning. Additionally, King Solomon states that it is better to be go to a house of mourning than to a party. When Jacob was about to die, he prepared his children. He was no fraught with terror or any fear of death, but was collected, reviewed each of his sons' merits and flaws, addressing them with much wisdom. King David also mirrored this approach to death, as he too just before dying, counseled his son Solomon. We learn that in the future, we will no longer recite the "Dayan haEmess", or "True Judge" blessing. We will no longer view death with morbidity or evil. Rather, upon hearing news of someone's death, we will recite

"Hatove v'Hamative", "One who is good and does good". With this in mind, we question why contact with the dead prohibited for priests.

What is the great lesson of death? We notice that people have a difficult time dealing with this subject: they joke about death, although prohibited by, "Lo-age l'rash charaf Asahu", "One who mocks the poor [the dead] disgraces his Maker." This is because death is a great blow to one's narcissism. People are distorted, and are striving for immortality. People chase wealth, even if they are millionaires. If they would live to be 1000, then, perhaps, a millionaire may be justified to continue working into his eighties. But this is not the case. What propels such behavior is the fantasy of immortality.

We just completed the Torah portion of Emor. In it, we learn of the Priests' prohibition of becoming ritually defiled (tamay) through contact with the dead. As this prohibition does not apply to the other tribes of Israel, we wonder what we may derive from such a law. Clearly, a connection between death and the Priests is thereby evidenced. But what is this connection?

The Priest has a significant role in Judaism. He is the one who services in the Temple, which includes sacrifices of animals and produce offerings. Some of these sacrifices serve the purpose of repentance, such as the Chatas offering. What do repentance, animal sacrifice and produce offerings share in common? What do these phenomena reflect on Temple worship? And what is the connection to the Priest and his prohibition to come in contact with the dead?

One more item mentioned by Rabbi Mann in connection with death, is that the Torah obscures Olam Haba, the afterlife. No mention is made of this reality. Why must this be?

Rabbi Mann offered an interesting observation. He expressed that the Temple has a focus: it is "life". Meaning, the goal of the Temple is to teach man the correct ideas for life here on Earth. And the rewards of the good life are also in terms of this world. The Shima states, "And I will give you rain for your land in its time." When we experience a bountiful crop, we bring our best produce to the Temple. When we are wealthy, we give our wealth to God's purposes; such as Temple, the poor, and other mitzvos. Jacob too gave back to God a tenth of the wealth that God granted him. The remainder Jacob used to live properly. Wealth is good; the Torah does not frown on he who is wealthy. For with wealth, he procures all necessities to follow God. The true servant of God also avoids fantasies carried by wealth. It is our relationship to money, which may be corrupt, not the money itself. Charity helps to place man in the proper focus. Jacob gave a tenth to God to emphasize from Whom he received his wealth. He wished to show thanks for the good he experienced in this life. Temple sacrifice duplicates Jacob's act of giving to God, and these sacrifices also include repentance. This teaches

that we are to be concerned with living the proper life, removed from sin. So we bring our sin offerings to God in the Temple. We bring them to the Priest.

The Priest is the one who worships in the Temple. To highlight this point that Temple focuses on life, he is restricted from contact with the dead, unless they are one of his close relatives. Of course if there is a body with no one to bury it, then even the High Priest – normally prohibited from contact even with close relatives – must take responsibility and bury the dead.

Our existence in this world is to be our focus, unlike other religions that are focused on the afterlife. In doing so, the other religions miss this life, and pass up the one opportunity God granted us to study His marvels, and come to appreciate His wisdom and Torah. The truth is, if one learns and observes the Torah's commands, but for the objective of receiving the next world, he is not truly deserving, as he did not follow the commands or study...as an ends in themselves. He imagines something "else" awaits him in the afterlife.

What is the correct approach through which we truly value Torah and mitzvos and are granted eternal life? It is when one learns Torah because he is intrigued by the subject matter, then he learns properly, and then he will enjoy the afterlife. But the afterlife is not another thing divorced from wisdom; rather, it is wisdom on the highest plane. So, if wisdom is not something that we have learned to love here, what is one anticipating with regards to the afterlife, the purpose of which is a greater wisdom, and knowledge of God? If one learns, never reaching the level of learning for itself, "Torah Lishma", then his learning suffers, and his life has not served its purpose. We cannot calculate who retains what measure of the afterlife. However, what the wise and perfected men and women enjoy here, they will enjoy to a much greater degree in the next world, but we must come to "enjoy" our learning – our focus must be on this life. Therefore, the Torah obscures the afterlife, although a very real phenomenon.

In order that man achieves his goal, that he truly values Torah and mitzvos for themselves as is God's will, God designed the Torah to focus man on this life, so we may use it to obtain a true appreciation for the Creator, the One who made this life. The priest, who worships in the Temple, displays the character of the Temple's focus – this life – through the prohibition to come in contact with the dead. Aaron was called a "Rodafe shalom", a "pursuer of peace". He was one who sought to create peace...in this life, thereby reflecting the purpose of the Temple wherein he ministered.

"Lave chacham b'vais avale", "the heart of a wise man is in the house of mourning". This teaches us that a wise man does not approach death with morbidity; he does not cater to his immortality fantasy. He views life and death as God's design, and thus, they are both good, and deserving an intellectual approach. ■



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