

"And these are they who have no share in the World to Come, but are cut off, destroyed and excommunicated forever on account of their very great wickedness and their sins: the infidels, the heretics, one who denies the Torah..."  
*Rambam: Laws of Repentance, 3:6*

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Houston	5:05	Phoenix	5:03
Jerusalem	4:17	Pittsburgh	4:35
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Los Angeles	4:26	Sydney	7:40
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Miami	5:13	Toronto	4:23
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## Weekly Parsha

# Vayishlach

RABBI BERNIE FOX

### Yaakov's Gift to Esav

And he gave each individual flock into the hands of his servants. And he said to his servants, "Pass before me. And place a distance between the flock." (Beresheit 32:17)

(continued on next page)

## True Tradition?

# Kabbala

## Sinaic Mesora... or not?

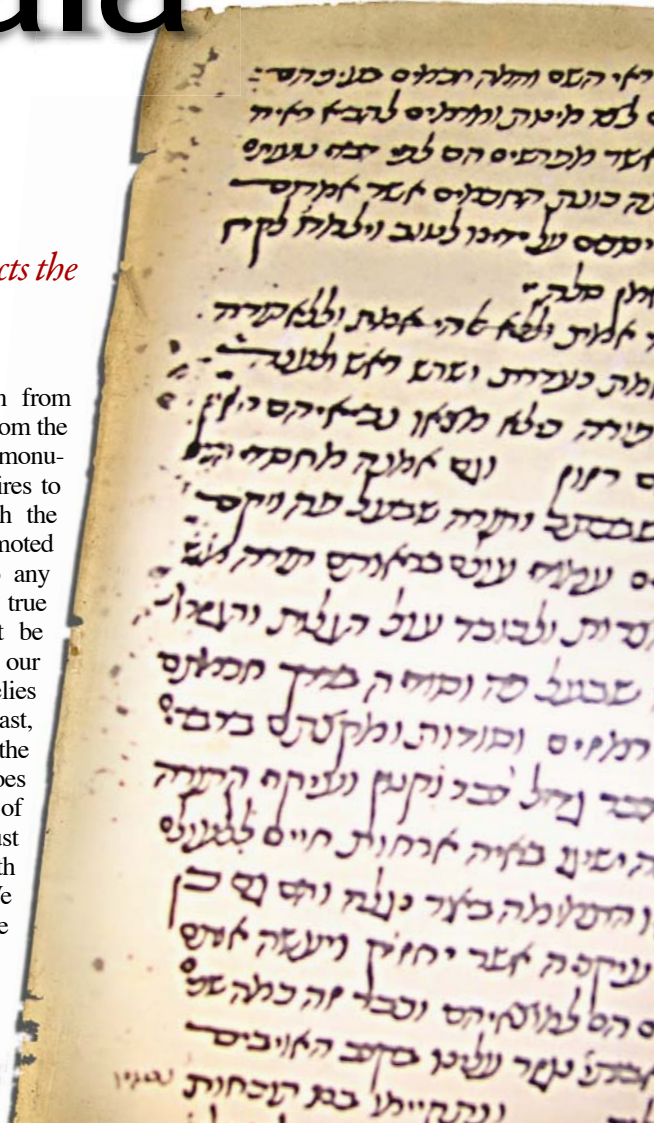
*Newly discovered manuscript of  
Ramban's medieval colleague rejects the  
Bahir – forerunner of the Zohar*

The intro and English translation is taken from "Tohar HaYichud", which you can download from the Mesora homepage. This is a recently published, monumental work by a concerned Rabbi who desires to direct Jews to the truth: to our Torah. With the sustained popularity of Kabbalistic ideas promoted online, in print and in classes, it is vital to any concerned Jew to educate one's self on what is true Torah Mesora, and what is not. This must be addressed by studying the various opinions of our early great Rabbis. As you will read, the Me'ili relies on reason and God's Torah verses. In contrast, many Kabbalistic ideas contradict how the Kadmonim view God. Kabbala's mass appeal does not play any role. Regardless of the number of Rabbis who teach Kabbalistic ideas, we must determine whether what they teach complies with the Kadmonim and reason, or violates it. We reprint this great work with the intent that those who seek Torah truth and reason, will find it.

The Me'ili was the author of the Sefer ha-Meoros on the Talmud, and the teacher of Rabbenu Manoah of Narbonne (author of Sefer ha-Menucha on Rambam's Mishneh Torah). It

(continued on page 6)

*This excerpt from "Tohar Hayichud" translates the Me'ili's complete rejection of the Bahir. Referring to Torah verses, the Me'ili explains why these Kabbalistic ideas are heretical. A must read for all.*



(Vayishlach cont. from pg. 1)

## Weekly Parsha

# JewishTimes

Weekly Journal on Jewish Thought



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Yaakov travels back to his father's home. He anticipates an encounter with Esav. He had fled his home many years earlier to escape Esav. He knows that he must appease his brother's anger. He prepares an elaborate and impressive gift for Esav. The gift is composed of flocks of various animals. Each flock includes both males and females. The proportions are determined by the breeding requirements for each species. For example, the flock of goats included two hundred males and twenty females. For the forty cows, Yaakov provided ten males. The number of males was designed to maximize the growth of the herd.[1]

Yaakov provides his servants with detailed instructions for the delivery of the gift. He tells the servants to place a distance between the flocks of the various species. In order to make sure that this instruction is carefully followed, Yaakov actually requires the shepherds, guiding the various flocks, to pass before him. This allows him to personally monitor the distance between the flocks.[2]

Why was Yaakov concerned with the distance between the flocks? The commentaries offer various explanations. However, their comments share a common theme. Yaakov designed his gift to impress Esav. He needed to placate Esav's anger. He did not want to neglect any aspect of the gift's design or presentation.

Rashi maintains that Yaakov separated the flocks to increase the perception of size.[3] How did the separation create this impression? An impression of size can be created in two ways. The first is to design a large gift. This approach has a disadvantage. The recipient of the gift may evaluate the size differently than the person giving the gift. The second approach is to design a gift that is too large for the recipient to see and evaluate. This approach does not depend upon the recipient's evaluation of the size. The recipient cannot begin to evaluate the gift. Yaakov adopted this second approach. Yaakov did not want Esav to be able to observe the entire gift in one glance. In other words, the procession extended beyond the limit of Esav's vision.

Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno offers another explanation. Yaakov was careful to provide a specific ratio of males to females for each species. This was done to maximize the breeding and growth

of the flock. This attention to detail would only be of value if it was recognized by Esav. Yaakov did not want the flocks to intermingle. He wanted Esav to be able to observe the detailed planning of the gift.[4]

Rabbaynu Avraham ibn Ezra notes another element of the presentation that Yaakov carefully planned. He explains that Yaakov was concerned with the impression made by his servants. He knew that Esav was jealous of Yaakov and felt threatened. The servants could inadvertently heighten these insecurities. These servants were loyal to Yaakov. They might be reluctant to pay homage to a stranger hostile to their master. Therefore, Yaakov carefully communicated to his servants that he himself regarded Esav as his master. He hoped that the servants would duplicate the attitude of their own master.[5]

There is an additional issue that should be



considered. Yaakov told his servants to refer to the gift as a minchah. This term is also used for the grain offerings sacrificed in the Temple. Sefer HaChinuch explains that the term minchah means a small gift. Most offerings in the Bait HaMikdash consisted of animals. Compared to these sacrifices, the grain offering is a modest gift. Therefore, it is called a minchah.[6] Why would Yaakov tell his servants to describe his gift as a minchah? His gift was large

and elaborate. It seems that Yaakov was communicating a message to Esav. True, the gift was large and elaborate. Nonetheless, the gift was a modest present. Yaakov was telling Esav that he held him in great esteem. Relative to his high regard for Esav, the offering was only a modest token.

These elaborate precautions and directions indicate an aspect of Yaakov's greatness. In order to succeed in his plan he could not be deterred by personal pride. He needed to appeal to Esav's ego. He could not do anything that might awaken Esav's insecurities and jealousy.

Most people could not carry out such a plan. Personal pride and ego would not allow us to act subservient. Only a person who is very secure can succeed in such circumstances. A secure person knows that self-worth is not determined by the perceptions of others. It is a consequence of our real substance. Yaakov had this security. This quality allowed him to develop and carry out a successful strategy.

(continued on next page)

### The Meaning of Yaakov's Struggle with the Angel

And Yaakov asked and said, "Tell me your name." And he said, "Why do you ask my name?" And he blessed him there. (Beresheit 32:30)

Yaakov awaits his encounter with Esav. During the night he battles with a man. Our Sages explain that this man is an angel representing Esav. The angel cannot overcome Yaakov. He strikes Yaakov and dislodges his hip. The man asks Yaakov to release him. Yaakov insists that the angel first bless him. Yaakov then asks the angel to reveal his name. The angel responds that Yaakov has no need for this information. The man blesses Yaakov and is released.

Sefer HaChinuch explains that this encounter communicated a prophetic message. Yaakov's descendants will experience exile. They will be persecuted by the descendants of Esav. Esav's descendants will at times hurt the Jewish people. This is represented by the dislocating of Yaakov's hip. However, they will not overcome Bnai Yisrael. Ultimately, Yaakov's descendants will triumph, just as Yaakov overcame Esav's angel.[7]

Nachmanides agrees with Sefer HaChunuch's interpretation of this encounter and explains additional elements of the incident. One issue Nachmanides discusses is the dialogue in our passage. What was Yaakov's objective in seeking the angel's name? Why did the angel withhold this information?

He explains that the angel told Yaakov that he had no use for this knowledge. He cannot use this knowledge to call upon this angel for help. Only Hashem can provide salvation to Yaakov and his children. If they call to this angel, he will not respond.[8]

Nachmanides comments are enigmatic. What help did Yaakov hope to secure from the angel? Did Yaakov actually believe that there is a refuge other than with Hashem?

Based on Sefer HaChinuch and Nachmanides' interpretation of this encounter, we can understand these comments. Yaakov received a prophecy describing the future suffering of his descendants at the hand of Esav. He asked this angel to reveal his

name. What is the meaning of this request? What does the name of the angel represent? In the Torah names are sometimes more than mere appellations. In some instances, an entity's name describes its nature.[9] In this case, the name denotes the nature of the angel. Yaakov was asking the angel to reveal its nature. On other words, Yaakov wanted to understand the reasons and causes for Esav's persecution of the Jewish people. What are the reasons for this hatred? How can Bnai Yisrael manipulate events to protect itself? Yaakov sought answers to the questions raised by his prophecy.

The angel understood Yaakov's intention. He realized that Yaakov hoped to rescue his descendants from suffering. The angel responded that Yaakov's plan cannot succeed. The fate of Bnai Yisrael solely rests in the hands of Hashem. Esav is merely Hashem's tool. Yaakov's descendants can only turn to Hashem for salvation. They will not succeed in saving themselves through diplomacy or other manipulations.

Of course, as Nachmanides himself notes, this does not suggest that we should not make every effort to assure our own welfare and safety.[10] However, we must also recognize that these efforts cannot – in themselves – secure our future. Instead, our wellbeing ultimately rests with Hashem.

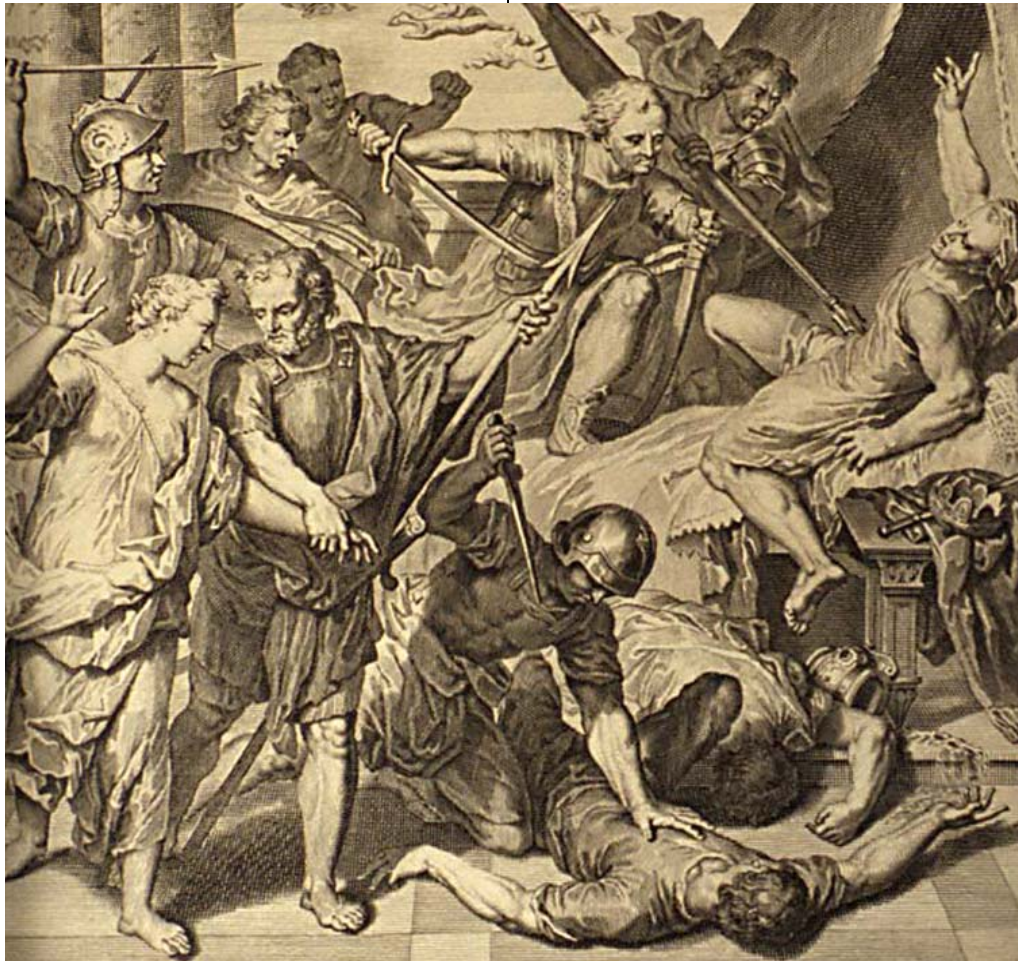
### Yaakov's Sons' Justification in Their Destruction of Shechem

And they said to them: We are unable to do this thing, to give our sister to a man who is uncircumcised, for it is a disgrace to us. But in this manner we can agree to you – if you will be like us, to circumcise every male among you. Then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters unto us. And we will dwell with you and be one nation. (Beresheit 34:14-15)

Dina, Yaakov's daughter, is abducted and violated by Shechem, who is a prince among his people. Shechem falls in love with Dina, and, accompanied by his father Chamor, he requests of Yaakov and his sons' permission to marry her. The brothers respond that they will not allow Dina to marry an uncircumcised person. If Shechem, his father, and all of the males of the city will circumcise themselves, then the children of Yaakov will agree to the marriage. Furthermore, they will join with the citizens of the city as one nation.

Shechem, Chamor, and the inhabitants of the city agree, and they perform the circumcisions. Three days later, while the men of the city were recovering, Shimon and Leyve, two of Yaakov's sons,

(continued on next page)



(Vayishlach cont. from previous page)

## Weekly Parsha

enter the city and kill all of the males.

Why did Shimon and Leyve kill the males of the city? Shechem, his father and the citizens had honored their portion of the bargain. Yaakov's sons seemed to be disregarding their part of the agreement.

Rabbi Yitzchak Zev Soloveitchik Zt"l explains that a careful review of the pesukim indicates that in fact Shechem, Chamor, and the city's citizens never fulfilled in good faith their portion of the agreement. The children of Yaakov were not offering to permit a marriage between Dina and a circumcised idolater; rather, they required circumcision as a part of the overall adoption of the religion of the Jewish nation. If the citizens would agree to a total conversion, then Yaakov's children would merge with them as a single nation.

When Shechem and Chamor related the agreement to the citizens, they drastically altered it. They explained that if the citizens were circumcised, they would be able to arrange marriages with the children of Yaakov and his sons. They also described the economic advantages of merging their two peoples. The children of Yaakov would develop trade, and eventually Shechem's people would absorb the children of Yaakov, and their vast wealth. In order to secure these benefits, they merely needed to submit to circumcision. Shechem and Chamor stressed the material advantages to be gained through circumcision. They did not mention the necessity of renouncing idolatry or abandoning their pagan religion.

Yaakov's sons became aware of this deception, and recognized that the agreement had not been fulfilled. With the failure of the agreement, Shimon and Leyve rescued their sister through killing the males of the city.[11]

### Kever Rachel (Rachel's Burial Site) and Burial Monuments

*And Rachel died, and was buried on the way to Ephrat – this is Betlehem. And Yaakov set up a pillar upon her grave; the same is the pillar of Rachel's grave to this day.* (Beresheit 35:19:20)

These passages describe the passing of Rachel. Yaakov returns to Canaan. During the journey, Rachel gives birth to Binyamin. Rachel dies in the process of childbirth and is buried in Betlehem. Yaakov erects a monument on her grave. This is the first and only instance in the Torah in which a monument is erected on the burial-site of a person.

This incident – the erecting of a monument on the site of Rachel's grave – seems to contradict a teaching of the Talmud. The Talmud teaches that it

is not appropriate to erect a monument on the gravesite of a righteous person. The Talmud explains the reason for this prohibition. It comments that a righteous person should be remembered by his or her actions.[12] In his discussion of the laws of mourning, Maimonides rules that this teaching is the law and that it is not appropriate to erect a monument on the gravesite of the righteous.[13]

Obviously, this teaching seems to be contradicted by Yaakov's actions. Rachel was a righteous person. Yet, Yaakov erected a monument at her gravesite. It is also difficult to reconcile the Talmud's teaching with normative practice. Throughout the generations, it has been the practice of the Jewish people to erect monuments on the gravesites of our departed. How can we reconcile Yaakov's actions and normative practice with the teaching of the Talmud?

Before attempting to answer these questions, it is important to carefully consider the prohibition outlined in the Talmud. This seems to be a strange prohibition. The explanation offered by the Talmud does not seem very helpful. We would imagine that the tzadik – the righteous person – more than anyone deserves the honor of a monument. Yet, the Talmud seems to indicate that the very deeds that distinguish the tzadik are the reason for not erecting a monument in the person's honor. Should we not acknowledge these deeds through the creation of a

monument?

Etz Yosef explains that the purpose of a monument is not to glorify the departed. Instead, it is designed to assure that the memory of the departed will not be forgotten.[14] This is a fundamental distinction. If monuments were intended by the Torah as a glorification of the departed, then the Talmud's prohibition would be difficult to understand. More than anyone, the tzadik deserves to be glorified. However, as Etz Yosef explains, the purpose of the monument is to assure that the departed will not be forgotten. Specifically, because the righteous are to be remembered for their deeds and the guidance that they provided, they should require no other monument. The creation of a monument for the tzadik is a dishonor! The monument implicitly communicates that the deeds and the guidance provided by the tzadik are inadequate to assure that this person will be remembered. This means that either we are questioning the actual righteousness of the departed or that we are implying that we are incapable of recognizing the significance of true righteousness. In short, the erection of a monument at the gravesite of a righteous person implies a depreciatory assessment of either the righteousness of the departed or of our own values.

Etz Yosef's comments also answer another

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troublesome problem. As noted, in his laws of mourning, Maimonides rules according to the teaching of the Talmud. However, in his discussion of the laws regarding spiritual purity and defilement, Maimonides seems to contradict this ruling. There, he rules that all gravesites must be marked.[15] In this ruling, Maimonides makes no distinction between the gravesite of a tzadik or another person. All must be marked.

However, Etz Yosef's comments resolve this apparent contradiction. Maimonides is identifying two different considerations that dictate that a gravesite should be marked. In his discussion of the laws of purity, Maimonides is concerned with protecting people from unintentionally associating with a source of impurity and becoming defiled. The body of a departed person is a potential source of impurity. In regards to the transmission of impurity, it makes no difference whether the departed was righteous or not. In any case, once departed, the body will potentially impart defilement. Therefore, in this context, Maimonides rules that every grave – even the grave of a righteous person – must be marked and identified. This is a precaution against the inadvertent transmission of impurity.

In his discussion of the laws of mourning, Maimonides is dealing with a different consideration. Maimonides begins the chapter by explaining that he will discuss the practices of the Jewish people in their preparation for the burial of the departed.[16] These practices reflect our obligation to treat the departed with respect. In this context, the erection of a monument is an expression of respect. As Etz Yosef suggests, our objective is to assure that the memory of the departed is not lost. It is in this context that Maimonides rules that it is not appropriate to erect a monument at the gravesite of the righteous. Such a monument would not be an indication of respect. It would be a depreciation of the significance of the tzadik's deeds and counsel.

Gesher HaChayim explains that these two concerns require different responses. In order to assure that defilement is not transmitted, it is only necessary to mark the gravesite. Concern over preventing inadvertent defilement does not require the erection of a monument. Any effective marker is adequate. However, the requirement to demonstrate respect for the departed demands the erection of a more substantial monument. [17] It follows that according to Maimonides, the gravesite of a tzadik must be marked. However, a substantial monument is not appropriate.

Although Etz Yosef's comments are useful in understanding the Talmud's ruling and resolving the apparent contradiction in Maimonides' rulings, they do not provide much assistance in resolving the original questions. Why did Yaakov erect a monument over the gravesite of Rachel? How can

we reconcile the normative practice creating monuments at the gravesites of the righteous with the ruling of the Talmud and Maimonides?

In order to answer these questions, it is helpful to consider another comment of our Sages. Moshe sent spies from the wilderness to survey the Land of Israel. These spies decided to alert Bnai Yisrael to the difficulties the nation would face in the conquest of the land. They were even willing to portray the land in a negative manner in order to discourage the nation from embarking on the dangerous task of conquest. Kaleb was among these spies. He disagreed with the assessment of the other spies and did not wish to participate in their conspiracy. However, he was not sure that he had the determination to stand against them. Kaleb traveled to Chevron – to the burial site of the forefathers. There he prayed for Hashem's help in facing this challenge.[18] It is not surprising that Kaleb – faced with this challenge – made a pilgrimage to the burial site of the forefathers. Kaleb was confronted with the challenge of opposing his peers and standing alone against their overwhelming influence. Whose lives could provide greater inspiration than those of the forefathers? The forefathers introduced a radically new concept of G-d to humanity. They stood alone against the religious doctrines of their times. Their examples were a compelling inspiration to Kaleb.

Kaleb's behavior indicates an additional reason for marking the graves of the righteous. The lives of the righteous are a source of inspiration. In times of personal trouble, we can draw from this inspiration, and this inspiration hopefully will infuse our prayers for Hashem's assistance in dealing with our own challenges. Based on this consideration, there is a reason to mark the gravesites of the righteous.

This explains our practice of placing monuments on the gravesites of the righteous. We do not do this as an expression of respect. As the Talmud and Maimonides rule, such monuments would not communicate respect. However, we erect monuments at the burial-sites of the righteous for our own benefit. We make these graves so that we can visit them and draw inspiration from these unique individuals.

Gesher HaChayim confirms this thesis. He explains that there are three considerations that dictate the marking of graves or the erection of monuments. In addition to the two noted above – prevention of inadvertent defilement and as an expression of respect – he identifies a third consideration. We also mark the grave so that we can return to the site and pray there. He further suggests that the Talmud and Maimonides only intend to prohibit the creation of an imposing monument at the burial site of a tzadik. However, a basic monument designed to mark the location as the burial site

of a tzadik is completely appropriate. This basic marker makes it possible for us to return to the site and inspire our prayers.[19]

The midrash seems to indicate that this was the consideration that motivated Yaakov to erect a monument at the burial site of Rachel. The midrash discusses our question. Why did Yaakov erect a monument at the gravesite of Rachel? Rachel was a righteous person. A monument would not seem appropriate. Among the responses is one which indicates that Yaakov intended to provide a source of future inspiration. The midrash explains that Yaakov foresaw, through prophecy, that his descendants were destined to be exiled from the Land of Israel. He foresaw that, as they left their land, they would pass the monument he had erected at Rachel's grave. The midrash describes Rachel praying to Hashem. She implores Hashem to act with mercy towards her children – Bnai Yisrael. This midrash requires careful study. But the comments of Etz Yosef provide an important insight. He explains that Yaakov's intention was to mark Rachel's gravesite as a place of prayer. He hoped that his exiled descendants would be able to return to this site at the border of the Land of Israel and prayer there for Hashem's mercy.[20] ■

[1] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 32:15.

[2] Rabbaynu Levi ben Gershon (Ralbag / Gershonides), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit, (Mosad HaRav Kook, 1994), p 202.

[3] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 32:17.

[4] Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno, Commentary on Sefer Beresheit, 32:17.

[5] Rabbaynu Avraham ibn Ezra, Commentary on Sefer Beresheit, 32:5.

[6] Rav Ahron HaLeyve, Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 116.

[7] Rav Ahron HaLeyve, Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 3.

[8] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 32:30.

[9] See Sefer Shemot 3:13 and 6:3.

[10] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit, Introduction to Parshat VaYishlach.

[11] Rav Yitzchak Zev Soloveitchik, Chidushai MaRan RIZ HaLeyve on the Torah, Parshat VaYishlach.

[12] Talmud Yerushalmi, Mesechet Shekalim 2:5.

[13] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Avel 4:4.

[14] Etz Chaim, Commentary on Midrash Rabba 82:10.

[15] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Tumat Met 8:9.

[16] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Avel 4:1.

[17] Rav Yeschiel Michal Toktsinski, Gesher HaChayim, 28:1.

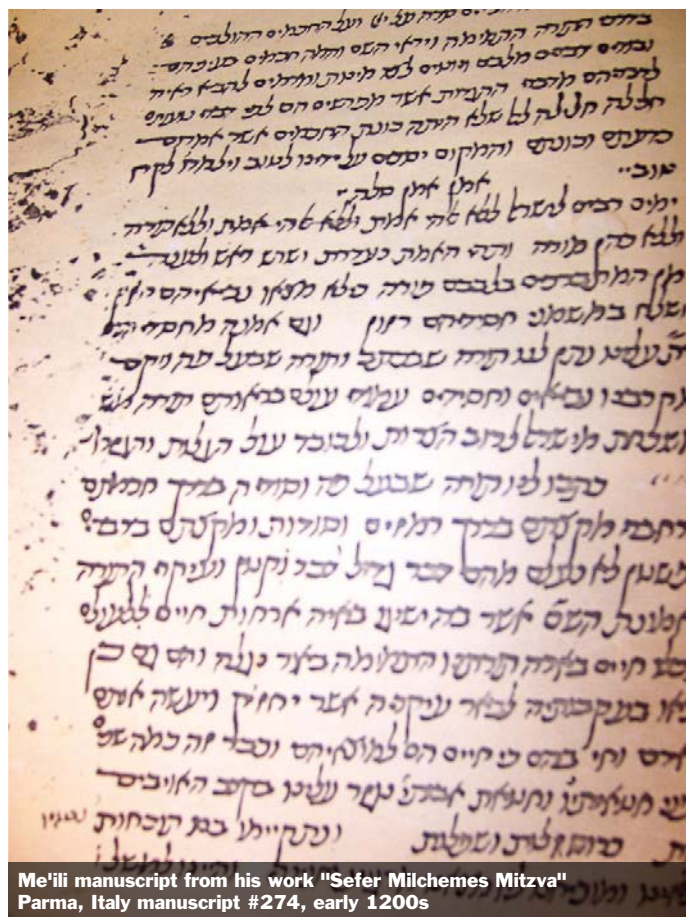
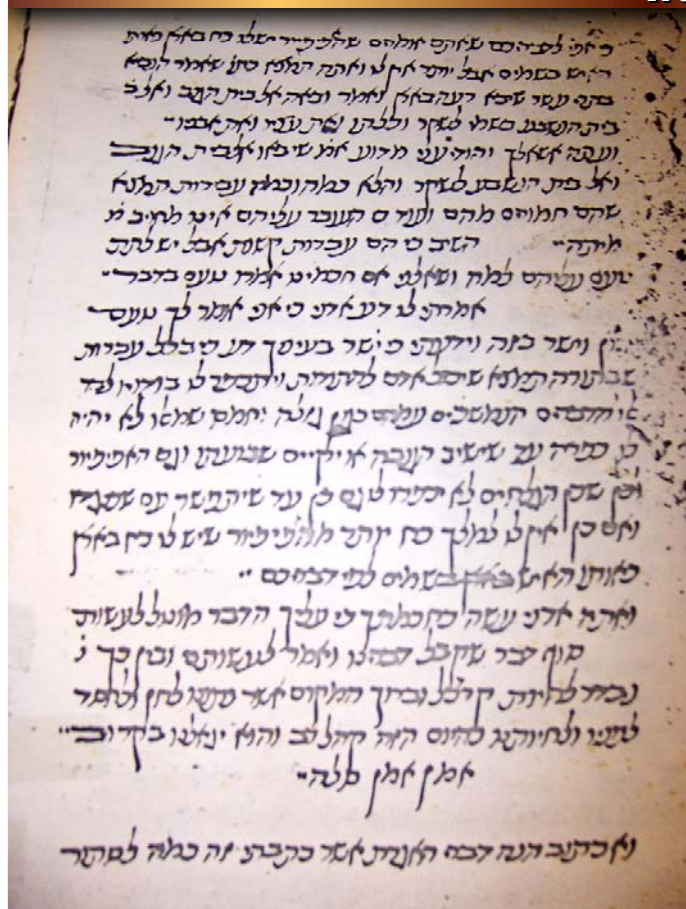
[18] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer BeMidbar 13:22.

[19] Rav Yeschiel Michal Toktsinski, Gesher HaChayim, 28:1.

[20] Etz Chaim, Commentary on Midrash Rabba 82:10.

(Kabbala cont. from page 1)

## True Tradition?



Me'ili manuscript from his work "Sefer Milchemes Mitzva"  
Parma, Italy manuscript #274, early 1200s

should be noted that this was written against the Sefer HaBahir, the forerunner to the Zohar. I thank my friend who photographed these ancient manuscripts in an effort to present true Torah ideas, and correct those who have been misled by the current popularity and heresy of Kabbalistic notions.

—Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim

## Introduction

Kabbalistic ideas of this kind surfaced in Provence in the form of the sefer ha-Bahir ("The Book Bahir"), which the kabbalists attributed to Rabbi Nehunya ben Hakkannah. They called it the "Midrash of Rabbi Nehunya ben Hakkannah" (and it is by this name that Ramban refers to it in his Torah commentary). Its appearance evoked violent opposition. Rabbenu Meir ben Shimeon (ha-Me'ili) of Narbonne (1190-1263), was an elder colleague of Ramban. Both were pupils of Rabbenu Nathan ben Meir. With the approval of his uncle, the great Rabbenu Meshullam, author of the sefer ha-Hashlama, Rabbenu Meir (ha-Me'ili) wrote, as follows:

"I shall record here, the words of the letter that I wrote some time ago to refute the words of those who speak perversion about G-d and about the sages who walk in the path of the unblemished Torah and those who revere Hashem. They (i.e., those who speak perversion) are wise in their own eyes, invent ideas and incline toward heresy (minuss). They imagine they are bringing proof for their views from the statements of Aggadot that they interpret according to their [heretical] error. G-d forbid! The intent of the Sages who made those statements was not in accord with their view and intent (i.e., not in accord with the view and intent of those who incline toward heretical error). May G-d approve our effort for good, and may He grant us proper instruction. ... Amen, Amen, Selah. ...

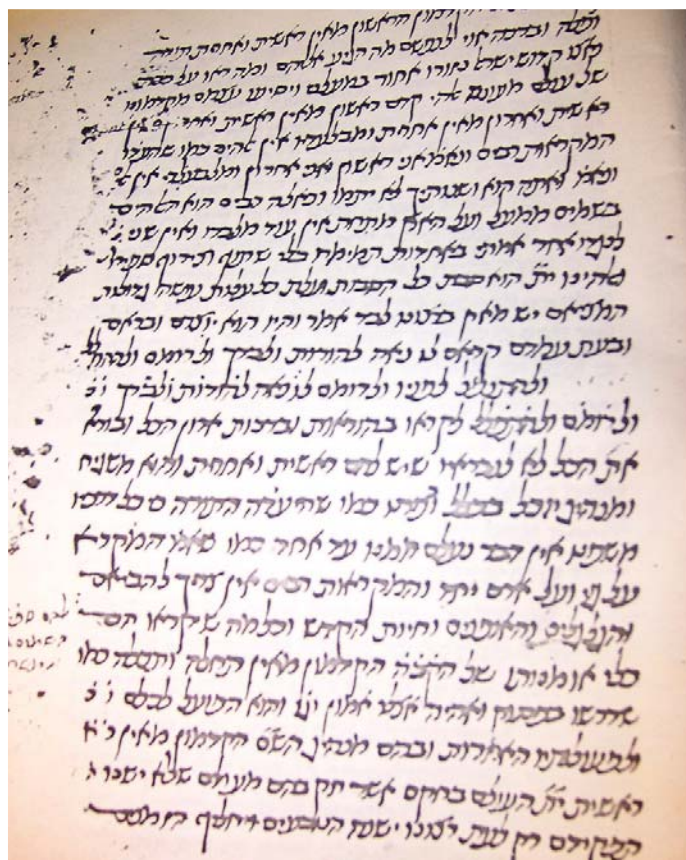
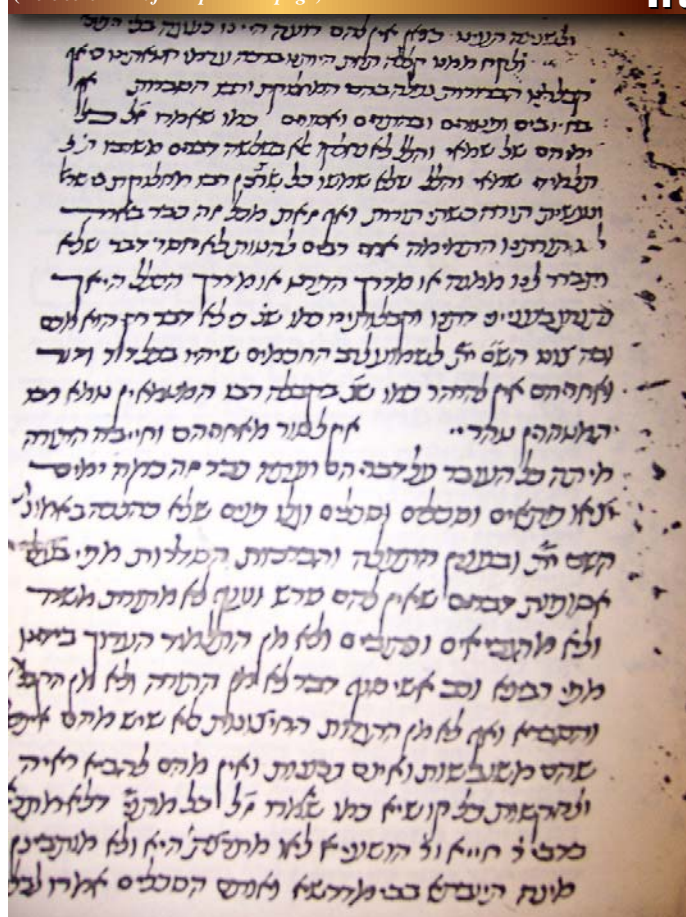
It is already some time now that fools have gone forth with distortions concerning the [true] faith in G-d and concerning the Prayer and the Blessings that were arranged by the Scholars in Council. These distorted views have no root or basis either in the Torah of Moshe, or the Prophets and the Writings, or in the Talmud as edited for us by Rabbina and Rav Ashi -- in a word, not in the Torah and not in the Received Instruction nor in Reason. ... These fools have decided not to render thanks, prayer and blessing to the Eternally Pre-existent G-d, Who is without beginning or end. Woe unto their souls! What happened to them and what did they see concerning this! They have contemned the Holy One of Israel; they are turned away backward in their treason. They have caused themselves to wander away from the Eternally Pre-existent G-d of the universe, the Eternal Divine Refuge, without beginning and end, beside Whom there is no G-d, as many Scriptural verses testify: "I am the first, and I am the last, and beside Me there is no G-d" (Isaiah 44:6); "And You remain the same, and Your years are endless" (Psalms 102:28); and many other Scriptural verses like these.

He is G-d in heaven above and in the earth beneath, there is none else beside Him, and there is no other alongside of Him. He is a true Unity (achdut emity), a perfect (i.e., absolute) Unity (achdut temimah) without association and combination of Sefiroth (b'li shi'ut v'tziruf sefirot) Our G-d, blessed be He, is the Cause of all causes (sibot kol ha-sibot, v'ilut kol ha-ilut) the Maker of great things which He brought into existence out of nothing (ex nihilo, himtziam yaish m'ayin) by His Will alone. He spoke and they came into existence, He created them, and when they stood forth, He called them (i.e., to their functions). To Him it is fitting to give thanks, to bless and extol Him, to pray to Him and to humble ourselves before Him, and to exalt Him and call Him in the Thanksgivings and Blessings "Master of all and Creator of all" -- not to His creatures (i.e., the Sefiroth) who have a beginning and end. He watches over and rules all, in general and in detail, as the Torah testifies: "For all His ways are justice" (Deuteronomy 32:4). Nothing at all is concealed from Him. ...

(continued on next page)

(Kabbala cont. from previous page)

## True Tradition?



Me'ili manuscript from his work "Sefer Milchemes Mitzva"  
Parma, Italy manuscript #274, early 1200s

It is wrong to associate with Him anything else; for it is improper to associate creature with its Creator, [created] substance with Him Who formed it, what has been originated with the Originator, and to say that His Unity is not absolute (shlaymah) but that together with them, all is one. For all that is and exists beside Him, He created them and brought them into existence out of absolutely nothing pre-existent -- from the smallest creature to the greatest. "And whoever associates the name of G-d with something else will be uprooted from the world" (Sanhedrin 63a). This is the proper Emunah (Faith) for all Israelites of religion to believe.

Whoever strays from this is a denier (kofer) and a heretic (min). What need is there for lengthy discussion of the opinions of the fools who direct all their prayers and blessings to divinities who, they, say are created and emanated, who have a beginning and end. For they say in their foolishness that whatever is called "first" and "last" has a beginning and an end, and it is written (Isaiah 44:6): "I am the first, and I am the last, and beside Me there is no G-d." So have we found in one of the books of their error (i.e., of their heresy) which they call Bahir, and so too have some of our scholars heard from their mouths. They have said that one should pray in the day to one created divinity and at night to another divinity who is superior to the former, but who is likewise created, and on Holy Days to yet another. During the Ten Days of Repentance they have increased perplexity and backsliding by praying to another created divinity, and to other created divinities below the former during the rest of the year. They have made many distinctions in prayer (i.e., many distinctions in the Divinity to whom their prayers are addressed) [the next word is indistinct in the manuscript] their deficient understanding. They shall be an abhorring unto all flesh; the worm of their folly shall not die, nor shall the fire of their foolishness be quenched. For they have desired many divinities, and say in their deficient understanding that all of them (i.e., the Sefirot) are connected with one another and all [together] are one.

These fools do not let their ears hear what they declare with mouths. For in truth the G-d in Whom we ought to believe and to Whom we should pray, Whom we should serve, bless and thank is One. If they say that He is more than One, then they deny the Torah which says: 'Hashem our G-d, Hashem is One' (Deut. 6:4) and: '... there is none else beside Him' (Deut. 4:35). If they say He is One, why do they divide their prayer, [praying] to one during the day, and to another one at night? Why do they distinguish [in addressing their prayers] between Holy Days and weekdays? Why do they differentiate between the Ten Days of Repentance and the rest of the year? How are all these distinctions appropriate in relation to Him?

In truth they should know that G-d is One, and His Oneness is from infinity, without beginning or end, without change, as it is written: "I the L-rd change not" (Malachi 3:6). Therefore He is One before the Sefirot were created and originated, for they have a beginning, and [these fools] also admit that the Sefirot have a beginning and end, and yet it is to them (i.e., the Sefirot) that their hearts are directed in their blessings and in their prayers. Must they not recognize the fallacy of their statements? However, their eyes are bedaubed that they cannot see, and their hearts that they cannot understand. The end of the matter: all their words are as the chaff before the wind and as stubble, empty words without substance; demolition and destruction of the Torah; heresy and denial.

If what they say be true, that it is not proper to bless and to pray to the Eternally Pre-existent G-d Who is without beginning or end, the Cause of all causes, Whom they call in their terminology "En Sof," the Infinite One, and that whoever does so is in their eyes "a destroyer of shoots" (i.e., a heretic),

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(Kabbala cont. from previous page)

## True Tradition?

and does not deserve to see the pleasantness of salvation reserved for those who know G-d and fear Him, then how can any intelligent person imagine that this was not made clear in the perfect Torah that Hashem gave us for everlasting life, in which it is written: "Unto thee it was shown that thou mightest know that Hashem He is G-d, there is none else beside Him" (Deut. 4:35). For how are we to know what Hashem has not spoken (i.e., has not mentioned in the Torah)? Where, then, has He shown us that we might know all these things? And how is it that all this was not made clear to us by Rabbenu Hakkadosh who arranged (edited) the Mishnayoth, and by Rabbina and Rav Ashi who closed and wrote the entire Talmud that we possess, which [two works, i.e., the Mishnah and the Talmud] are the main Torah She-bal peh (Oral Torah)? How did they leave all Israel to err and to be banished from Olam Haba (the World to Come) as mikatzetzin b'nitiut, "destroyers of shoots"?

Woe unto the eyes that see such [words], woe unto the ears that hear such [words], woe unto the generation in whose days such [heresy] has arisen! How is it that those who declare the declarations of Hashem and are clothed in His fear have not gathered strength [to condemn such heresy]? How is it that the sages of the generation (chachmei ha-dor) have refrained from speaking out? See ye, is it for nought that the troubles and the yoke of exile and the [evil] decrees have assumed unusual proportions against us? Is there in this time of ours among all the vain beliefs of the gentiles regarding the Unity of G-d anything worse than these [heresies]?

If they should say that one who blesses [G-d] and prays to G-d, the Cause of all causes, the Creator of all, is [not] banished from the world [to come], and does attain eternal life, and is not called a "destroyer of shoots" (i.e., a heretic), but they (i.e., the kabbalists) think in their foolishness that this is the faith of the multitude, whereas they (i.e., the kabbalists) know the secret of G-d and are of those who fear Him, and hope to rise to a higher level than the others through this belief of theirs, then these fools abandon what is even according to them certain and adopt what is uncertain. What is certain is that through this [heresy] they and their souls become desolate, and they descend to the lowest level, contrary to their hope and wrong intent. The end of the matter: every intelligent person is obligated to reject their words of folly.

Now we have written all this before you, our Rabbis of every city, in order to reveal all these matters, *because we fear the signatures of those whom they have misled to sign for them. Moreover, we have been told that they have forged the signatures of many scholars of this land, who really did not sign.* In this way many of the land may go astray after them, and through many deceits they will boast saying: "In the land of scholars of Torah and Wisdom we have found strength and power" -- lest they should say: "our hand is exalted." Heaven forbid, Heaven forbid such wickedness, to incline toward these words of heresy! Such as this shall not come to pass in Israel!

*We have heard that a book has been composed for them which they call Bahir ('Bright') mentioned above, in which they see no light. This book has come into our hands, and we have found that they attribute it to R. Nehunya ben Hakkanah. G-d forbid (chas v'shalom)! It is utterly untrue! That righteous man never stumbled by means of it, and was not numbered with the transgressors. The language of that book and all its terms indicate that it is by one unacquainted with literary form and style. It contains words of heresy and denial (divrei minuss u'kefra) in many places.*

We have also heard that in addition a commentary has been written for them on the

Song of Songs, on Sefer Yetzirah and on Hechaloth. This commentary contains words written in the mode of their heresy (v'nichtiv sham devarim b'derech minussam). Also a commentary on Koheleth (Ecclesiastes) and on other [Scriptural] books. Inquire and search well, and if they (i.e., these books) are in your midst, remove them from the land so that this shall be no stumblingblock unto you. Dig them out as we too have removed those found in our midst. And may G-d in His mercy send us a redeemer and gather together the scattered of Judah and Israel. May He remove from the midst of His people their doubts and perplexities, and turn the heart of fathers to children, and the heart of children to their fathers.

We have written all this with the approval of our master, the great Rav, the light of Israel, our teacher R. Meshullam son of the great Rav Moshe, may G-d protect him (the author of Sefer Hahashlamah, who was the teacher and uncle of the writer, Rabbenu Meir ben R. Shimeon ha- Me'ili), and the other sages of the land, some of whom knew privately the root of the matter, and what caused us to write [this letter].

"And they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn the many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Daniel 12:3).

Amen, Amen, Selah." ■

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# Chabad Lubavitch: Time to take a Stand

by, Rabbi Elchanan Ben Eliezer

## Rabbis speak out against Chabad's heretical teachings

*Call for Chabad leaders to denounce R. Cunin's heresy*

**"It's the Rebbe who runs this world, until he comes to take us out of golus"**

Rabbi Shlomo Cunin: "The Rebbe runs the world!"



**T**he Rambam in Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah, Chapter 1 Halacha 5 after discussing the Creator says... "This entity is the G-d of the world and the L-rd of the entire earth. He controls the sphere with infinite and unbounded power. This power [continues] without interruption, because the sphere is constantly revolving, and it is impossible for it to revolve without someone causing it to revolve..."

The Radbaz (vol. 6 Responsum 2116) says "L-rd of the entire earth" describes His dominion over material existence. By stating "the entire earth" the Rambam is asserting that it is G-d that controls every facet of worldly existence.

In Halacha 6 the Rambam continues, "The knowledge of this concept is a positive commandment, as it says 'I am Hashem your G-d', anyone who thinks that there is another god transgresses a negative commandment, as it says "You shall have no other gods before Me", V'kofer B'ikar (and he denies the fundamental principle of faith, referring back to the previous Halachos too), as this is the great fundamental on which everything else depends."

It is clear from the Rambam that it is not sufficient to believe in one G-d but one must also believe that it is He that controls the world from the time of creation until eternity. Anyone that denies this fundamental is a Kofer B'ikar, a heretic of the worst kind.

It is for this reason that I was shocked to see a video clip ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=j0au5zpGEF4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j0au5zpGEF4)) of Rabbi Shlomo Cunin[1], lead Chabad emissary in LA, California[2], at a prayer rally for those unfortunate Kedoshim that were brutally murdered in Mumbai, India say "They will understand and see that it is the Rebbe who runs the world". This shocking statement is the worst kind of k'firah especially because it was said by a man with a long grey beard, long black coat, big black hat to an audience dressed similarly in a speech laced with Yiddish to which everyone answered Amen! Had I not seen this with my own eyes I would have never believed it. It is easy to dismiss a non-Orthodox university professor or Reform rabbi as a Kofer, but when someone who is indistinguishable in dress and speech, from a Chareidi Ben Torah or Rav says these words, the danger is far greater.

We are at a time when due to the terrible tragedy of last week, Klal Yisrael feels united. All segments of our people gathered together to pray for our fellow brothers and sisters who were slaughtered by those monstrous terrorist animals just a little over a week ago. Tefilos were offered from Lakewood to YU, Chabad to Satmar and everything in between. Who has not seen the images of Rachmana Litzlan, the little two-year-old Moshe calling out for his Ima and was not reduced to tears? But yet our feelings of Achdus cannot trump our obligation to stamp out blatant K'firah from our midst. Rabbi Samson

(continued on next page)

(Chabad cont. from previous page)

## Heresy

Raphael Hirsch comments on the Passuk "Emes V'shalom Ehavu" that Shalom – Peace, can never last if it is built upon Sheker – falsehood, it can only exist if it is predicated on truth.

I have personally learned and gained much from the Chabad Lubavitch movement and continue to admire their efforts to bring our lost brothers and sisters back to the fold. Their Ahavas Yisrael is legendary. They were doing outreach before anyone else knew the word. I have personally availed myself of many a Chabad house in far-flung places for a Minyan or food to eat. It is precisely because of their outstanding influence that they must once and for all take a stand against this type of K'firah or risk severing themselves from the rest of Klal Yisrael. This was not said by a fringe Shaliach (see biography below), and it goes far beyond believing that the Rebbe is Moshiach (a problem in and of itself though not K'firah). This is plain and simple blasphemy no matter how you look at it. The time for Chabad to act is now, its Rabbanim must purge these types of "Minus" (blasphemy) from their lexicon. This was not an isolated remark; there have been many similar comments with varying degrees of blasphemy from other Chabad emissaries. The risk of not taking forceful action is to lose all the great work the Rebbe has started and his devoted followers have continued. Kiruv Rechokim starts at home! ■

[1] From Wikipedia - Rabbi Shlomo Cunin is the director of Chabad-Lubavitch CA activities on the West Coast of the United States. He was sent as a Shliach in 1965, and together with Rabbi Menachem Shmuel David Raichik, he built a network of Chabad Houses throughout California and Nevada. Cunin is a member of Agudas Chasidei Chabad of Russia. He is trying to help recover the Chabad library.

[2] Chabad of California is noted for its educational facilities, non-sectarian drug-rehabilitation program, and homeless programs. Each fall it hosts a telethon to raise money for its programs.

# Chabad & Heresy

by, Rabbi Saul Zucker



Note-filled grave: Torah violation

There is no doubt that the statement in the video is heresy. What is shocking is that the rabbi who made the statement is the head of Chabad of California. To my knowledge, there has been no statement of criticism or censure or retraction from Chabad. This raises a serious question against those from within Chabad who have continued to proclaim that the messianists or the deists within Chabad are the exception, not the rule, "on the fringes" and are a non-influential and insignificant minority. The head of Chabad of one of the biggest and most populous states in the country is hardly insignificant. I would now be in doubt about any claims that even "mainstream" Chabad makes about denying messianism or deism with regard to the entire movement. One last word -- it is not a valid "excuse" to say that the speaker was in a state of extreme pain and shock due to the tragedy of the situation of the Holtzbergs, Hy"d. All of Klal Yisroel was and is in a state of pain and shock. Our hearts all went out to the family. It was and is an unspeakable horror for ALL Jews. But this is no reason to promulgate heresy. Tragedy should not beget lies and rebellion against HaShem; on the contrary, it should cause us to turn to HaShem and cling to Him with all our might. ■

**PUBLISHER'S NOTE:** Our objective was to help Chabad recognize their error; or, to help separate Chabad members dedicated to truth, from heretical elements within their organization. We wish to promote true Torah ideals and to enlighten all Jews regarding the Torah's fundamentals. Considering Chabad's tremendous reach, it is vital that all Rabbis and educators make it their mission to contact your local Chabad houses, and insure that such teachings cease. Silence would be a grave sin as it allows heretical notions to spread.

In fairness to Chabad, earlier this week we phoned to speak with Rabbi Shlomo Cunin to urge him to correct this heresy. We informed Chabad of our intent to publish a response. When we received a call back from Rabbi Cunin's son and asked to speak to Rabbi Shlomo Cunin, he would not put us through to him, and said his father will not speak to us. He deflected our claim of heresy by suggesting the video was "taken out of context" and placed online without his knowledge. (We later learned that the very photographer who filmed this video, has recorded and posted other footage on Rabbi Shlomo Cunin.) Rabbi Cunin's son's claim of "out of context" cannot excuse the statement made by his father, **"It's the Rebbe who runs this world until he comes to take us out of Golus (exile) now"**. R. Cunin's son's defense of his father that "the dead seek the good for all living Jews", is not what his father said. His father said, "It's The Rebbe who runs this world". Truly an inexcusable and heretical statement.

As Rabbi Cunin's son said the statement was quoted "out of context", we therefore asked he remove this admittedly misleading video and to also publicly clarify the error. He said he would not comply to either. He thereby allows this most damaging idea to spread. We clearly explained to him that his father's statement was in violation of Torah fundamentals, outlined by Maimonides. He responded "based on Zohar", that the dead (the Rebbe) actively seeks the welfare for Jews. We asked R. Cunin's son to justify why the Rebbe was more "influential" than, say Moses. We also informed him that Moses' very burial site was hidden by God for this very concern: God does not wish man to seek out the dead. (Deut. 18:11) God desires us to seek Him exclusively. This is because "God alone effects mighty deeds" (recited every morning) and He has no need for man, nor need for anything. Other Chabad Rabbis must openly denounce this heresy, and teach your members that this is not Judaism and in fact, is no different than Christianity. ■

\*Rabbi Shlomo Cunin is the head of Chabad in LA and director of Chabad Lubavitch activities on the West Coast of the United States.

# Zohar & Halacha

by, Rabbi Saul Zucker

Question from a reader: I am a Jew slowly coming out of the Kabbalistic haze. Tohar HaYichud was one of the most shocking and convincing condemnations of the Kabbalah I have ever seen.

My question for you is, it is clear that Rabbi Yosef Karo based many of his piskei din on the Zohar and other Kabbalists. Most notably, the idea that one should not wear tefilin on Chol Hamoed, the idea of taking one's tefilin off for the musaf prayer on rosh chodesh, or the idea of waiting seven days before being mekadesh the chodesh. Should these psakim be ignored? And should we follow the other opinions on these and related issues?

Thank you.

**Rabbi Zucker:** [1] First, it is not true that Rav Yosef Karo based "MANY of his piskei din on the Zohar and other Kabbalists." It is only a few.

[2] Second, there were many legitimate authorities who did hold from the Zohar, such as the Vilna Gaon. How are we to understand this? The Vilna Gaon must have maintained that the ideas promulgated in the Zohar are very deep, in the sense of the mishnah at the beginning of the second perek of Gemara Chagigah. In his view, the Zohar was written in a way as to hide its true meaning -- thus it is not to be taken literally or superficially. That being the case, there are, in the Vilna Gaon's view, ideas that might manifest themselves in halakhic practice. In this sense, those practices indeed have true ideas at their heart. It is this that Rav Yosef Karo codified. Of course, any practices that do have

true ideas at their heart are clearly and unequivocally valid.

[3] At the same time, it is important to note that at the time that SOME of these issues began, such as not wearing tefillin for Mussaf on Rosh Chodesh, there was a terrible outcry from the standard frum world -- how can you change what has been the practice for thousands of years? In the end, though, Klal Yisroel seems to have accepted the "new" version. (Although it is difficult to believe that the Vilna Gaon, who wore tefillin all day long, took them off for mussaf on Rosh Chodesh). This being the case, IF you have a doubt about the area, you should ask your poseik for a pesak about the specific issue.

I hope this helps somewhat. The main point is that there is a method to halakhic pesak and to learning in general, and as long as this is followed, even if it includes a view based upon something that may be unauthentic (according to many but not to all), then the pesak is legitimate. ■



## Letters



# Letters

*from our*

## READERS



### 13 Principles: Faith or Proof?

**Reader:** Hello Mesora, I several of your articles you emphasize that Judaism is all about proof, as opposed to Christianity, which is about belief (faith). In your translation of the Rambam's 13 Principles, you just have statements of what these are (e.g. The Unity of God). However, in other translations ([www.ou.org/torah/rambam.htm](http://www.ou.org/torah/rambam.htm)) of these principles, I always see "I believe with perfect faith ..." (e.g. "I believe with perfect faith that God is One...."). It seems that the Rambam wants us to have faith, not proof, as the basis (definition) of being a Jew. Can you talk to this point a little.

**Mesora:** If you read Rambam's principles, you will notice that he also "explains" the reasoning behind each. Had he felt these are to be simply believed, without proof, he would not explain the reasons and proofs behind each. Additionally, to call these 13 "fundamentals", one must have a basis of distinguishing "fundamentals", from other ideas not termed as funda-

mental. Such a distinction made by Rambam clearly indicates an underlying reasoning which "proves" these Principles' higher status as fundamentals.

**Reader:** I am Jewish by birth but not observant. Seeing the proof on you web site and wanting proof of all laws and ruling is a very attractive attribute to me personally (I am an engineer). However you are the only Orthodox group I have read that emphasizes proof of Judaism so passionately, whereas others either openly or by implication emphasize faith, and not require proof of anything.

**Mesora:** I understand this problem, but let's properly frame this question: it is not Mesora.org vs. others...its is Rambam vs. today's Jews. And not only Rambam, but all great Torah minds. We must follow the wiser individuals, and not our peers. Just as you allow only a certified doctor perform surgery on your body; so too, only allow the greatest thinkers to be considered, and then endeavor to grasp their reasoning.

It is due to today's Jews' ignorance of what the Sages taught, that has created a generation that is bereft of the Torah's primary messages. Were people to study, they would discard the Christian tenet of blind faith, and recognize that Moses reminded the people not to forget "what their eyes saw" at Sinai. (Moses asked the Jews to use their minds, and proof. Not faith.) They would know the Rambam's words here. They would learn Duties of the Heart who quotes Torah verses that demand our individual conviction in ideas, not the parroting of others.

They would recognize that God gave each human being intelligence...so it would be used.

**Reader:** On a related question, if you say that any law (Rabbinic ruling/ halacha) has to make rational sense, then what is your opinion on some irrational (to me) rulings. Thanks in advance for your answers and your great site:

1. No fowl and milk (I now keep kosher at home only):

**Mesora:** Milk cooked with meat was an idolatrous practice, so we do not copy idolatry. Fowl was included in the halachik category of "meat" since people viewed it as such.

2. No rice on Pesach for Ashkenazi Jews:

**Mesora:** Rice is similar to grains, so this is a safeguard against Chametz.

3. Electric light = fire, so one can light Shabas or Chanukah candles using electric lights:

**Mesora:** If electricity is viewed halachikly as fire, then it may be used equally to fire.

Although I am not ruling on this.

4. I keeping family purity, during the "off" time, not even being allowed to touch your spouse due to fear it may lead to "something more":

**Mesora:** Another safeguard, as you stated.

5. Not being able to shake a hand of a woman:

**Mesora:** This protects against sexual violations. But since we are also commanded in honoring others, and not reciprocating an extended hand will embarrass someone, it is permitted. ■

### Fasting

**Reader:** As a voluntary activity, the benefit of fasting would be for the person who is doing it. It's my understanding that the purpose would be to help one focus his or her energy toward the world of ideas and the world of the eternal. In my view, it's important that fasting not be viewed as a punishment or a type of self-affliction where one punishes the body, as some ascetic groups do. The Torah does not view the body as bad, nor does it view the natural desires, such as the desire for food, as bad. Rather, on Shabbat for example, the Jewish people are enjoined to have a good meal.

If one wished to fast, a person could do so virtually whenever he or she wished. The fasting would not necessarily constitute a halachic act, but would just be a time for abstaining from food. In order to have the fasting constitute a halachic act, one would have to fast in accordance with the halacha given to the Jews, and that varies depending on the day involved. The details of that are beyond my knowledge.

Rabbi, please feel free to add any comments you may have.

**Mesora:** Rabbi Mendy Feder taught it is also to remove us from our instinctual drives which cause sin in the first place, and create the need to repent. Fasting is then a starting point towards repentance...to control our desires that lead to sin. I added that fasting benefits us as we are forced to recognize our dependence on the Creator for our very lives and sustenance. This is the main objective in repentance: to return to God. ■

## Letters



# Letters

*from our*

## READERS



### Golem

**Reader:** Greetings Rabbi. Recently, I was listening to a lecture by a Rabbi that he made years ago to a group of Ben Noachs. He was talking about kabbalah, its dangers and the many fraudulent people who claim to practice it today. As I understand it, a certain Rabbi is said to have created this golem, a creature with a human-like body but no soul. He was reprimanded by other rabbis. According to the said Rabbi, the golem had no purpose without a soul. It wasn't a magical thing, rather, the Rabbis were saying that a time will come when people know enough to create humans (genetic engineering of sorts) but doing so will not be good for us.

This got me thinking about the snake in the garden of eden. I once heard Rabbi Chait's lecture in which he mentioned that one of the reasons why God saw it fit to 'destroy' the

original snake was because it would have been to man's destruction to have an intelligent creature with ego, that was purely instinct, and man would be greatly attracted to that lifestyle. Apparently, while many people today admire an animal's life (eat, drink, sleep, mate), the main reason we look down upon them is because of our superior intelligence.

With this in mind, I asked myself if the golem prohibition is for the same reason cited as danger of the snake. What do you think?

**Mesora:** Perhaps the genetic creation of humans is unlike the snake, regarding their respective damages. The snake entices us towards hedonism. But creating humans might engender in man the feelings of a "creator", who is on par with God. That would be a greater damage to us than the snake. For incorrect notions about God are the greatest of crimes, as we discussed in this week's critique of Chabad's deification of the Rebbe. ■

### Evil Spirit?

**Reader:** In my Noahide study group, we were asked about the Jewish custom of Netilas Yiadaim, in the morning, right after the person's rising and the reason this is not an obligation to Noahides.

The Shulchan Oruch says that this is in order to remove an "evil spirit" that rest on Jews hands, since their bodies as being "emptied" so to speak, at night, having their souls gone to heavenly court to the 'daily judgment'. So when the soul returns it said that an "evil spirit" had been in the 'empty' body, so the Jew must wash his hands in Halacha's way, in order to remove it.

What is the meaning of this practice? And why Noahide were not ordered to "remove" this evil spirit as well?

Thank you, and Chazak U'Baruch!

**Mesora:** Sleep is a purely instinctual state, as the mind is absent. We pray much longer in the morning than we do in the afternoon and evening. This is because as we exit sleep, we require much more effort to return to a state

where we engage the intellect. We had just been immersed in the instincts for 8 hours. But this is not the case regarding afternoon and evening services. We have been awake and involved in Torah thought. Washing the hands in the morning is a demonstration of our removal of this state, but unnecessary in the afternoon and evenings. Although Rambam teaches we do wash our hands before all prayers, but perhaps for another reason of preparedness before praying to God.

Mishneh Brura says we wash for possibly touching areas of our body during sleep. The second reason stated by the Mishneh Brura quoting Rashbah, is that we are akin to a new creation each morning. We are required to praise God for this, for our resumed worship of Him. And to serve God - as in Temple - man must first wash his hands.

Noahides are not obligated in most laws, only in those that are the minimal issues that grant him a right to life. But a Noahide may take on most other laws if he or she so wishes. See our Philosophy link to read more on why Noahides must keep minimally to their commands. ■

## Letters

Mesora invites your questions, letters in response to articles, your own thoughts, or your suggestions for the JewishTimes.

*"The only poor question is the one not asked."*

Email us:

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Kabbalistic teachings of sefirot – that God is expressed in many emanations – is a clear rejection of the Shema which says God is “one”.

When a notion contradicts Torah fundamentals, it must be rejected. Certainly, when such notions contradict reason. Therefore, think about what you are taught...perhaps it is wrong. It must not matter that we find these ideas in books, or quoted in the name of Rabbis. We follow God, not man.

God gave Moses a perfect Torah, including the command not to alter Torah. Thereby, God taught that Torah was, and is perfect, long before the Bahir and the Zohar introduced new ideas.

God teaches that we serve Him alone – there is no need or help derived from man. We are also prohibited from seeking out the dead. For this reason, God hid Moses' grave. It is a violation to seek assistance from the dead in any fashion, and a denial of God's capabilities.

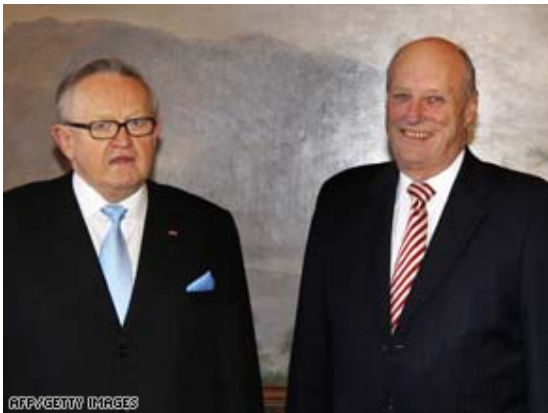
## News



WorldNEWS

December 12th, 2008

From combined news sources



## Former Finland leader accepts Nobel Peace Prize

(CNN) -- Nobel Peace Prize winner Martti Ahtisaari Wednesday called on U.S. President-elect Barack Obama to "give high priority to the Middle East conflict in his first year in office." (Martti Ahtisaari (left) with King Harald of Norway before the Nobel Peace Prize award ceremony)

"All crises, including the one in the Middle East, can be solved," the former Finnish president said in his Nobel acceptance speech, even as he admitted it was "the most challenging peace-building project ahead of us."

"We cannot go on, year after year, simply pretending to do something to help the situation in the Middle East. We must also get results," he said as he received the prize for his efforts to resolve conflicts from Kosovo to Indonesia and Namibia.

The international community also had to put its weight behind the project, he added, saying its credibility was at stake.

"Peace is a question of will. Wars and conflicts are not inevitable," he said, arguing that they are caused by people who have something to gain from them. "All conflicts can be settled." ■

## U.N. sanctions alleged Lashkar members

UNITED NATIONS (CNN) -- A U.N. committee has designated as terrorists four men believed to be members of the Lashkar e-Tayyiba (LeT) terrorist group suspected of masterminding last month's deadly attacks in Mumbai.

Pakistani Jamaat-ud-Dawa members, left, distribute sacrificial meat at their relief camp in Muzaffarabad.

The Security Council's al Qaeda and Taliban Sanctions Committee



added to the list: group leader Muhammad Saeed, chief of operations Zakir Rehman Lakhvi, finance chief Haji Muhammad Ashraf and financier Mahmoud Mohammad Ahmed Bahaziq.

Bahaziq was also a former leader of the group in Saudi Arabia. ■

### Other News

**FM takes heat over Israeli Arab remark:** Kadima head implies nationalistic aspirations of Israeli-Arabs can only be realized in future Palestine.

**Bibi tells EU he will pursue peace:** Netanyahu: We intend to interlace rapid economic development for the Palestinians with peace making.

**Iran arrests blogger who visited Israel:** Derakhshan had previously defended his visit, saying that it countered "horrific" Israeli propaganda.

**Cash shipment arrives in Gaza Strip:** NIS 100 million comes from Palestin-

ian banks in West Bank; lawmakers slam Barak's approval.

**Army readies for Gaza border attacks:** OC Southern Command orders troops to prepare for possible strike during Hamas celebrations Sunday.

**Zahar: Schalit can be released in a day:** 900 days after kidnapping, Hamas leader hopes new Israeli gov't will free prisoners serving life sentences.

**Likud committee bumps Feiglin down to 36 on Knesset list:** Decision jeopardizes Netanyahu rival's Knesset birth; Feiglin announces he won't appeal; Kadima to hold primary using computerized system.

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