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Weekly Parsha

Beshalach

RABBI BERNIE FOX

**The Weak Self-confidence
of the Generation Liberated
from Egypt**

“And Moshe said to the nation: Do not be afraid. Stand firm and see the salvation of Hashem that He will do for you today. For although you will

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Fundamentals

Tefillin
Miracles
& the
Meaning of

LIFE

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim

On Obama's transition website, the President invited issues to be brought to his attention. Whichever issues received the most votes by the public, would be included in a Citizens' Handbook delivered to Mr. Obama. I submitted a topic "What about our Neighbors?" pointing the elephant in the room: the three generations of Arabs (a.k.a.. Palestinians) indoctrinated into martyrdom at the cost of Israeli lives.

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(Beshalach cont. from pg. 1)

Weekly Parsha

JewishTimes

Weekly Journal on Jewish Thought



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see the Egyptians today, you will not ever again see them." (Shemot 14:13)

Bnai Yisrael arrive at the Reed Sea pursued by the Egyptians. They fear that they will be destroyed. Moshe urges the nation to have courage. Hashem will save His people.

Bnai Yisrael had left Egypt armed. The nation included six-hundred thousand adult males. The Egyptians had been ravaged by ten debilitating plagues. Why did Bnai Yisrael confront their pursuers and fight?

Rabbaynu Avraham ibn Ezra explains that Bnai Yisrael could have fielded a formidable army against the Egyptians. However, two-hundred and ten years of slavery had undermined the confidence of the people. Newly gained freedom could not immediately erase the effects of their prolonged subjugation. The liberated slaves could not envision themselves opposing and overcoming their former masters.

Ibn Ezra explains that this same shortcoming prevented the generation that was liberated from slavery from entering the Land of Israel. It lacked the confidence to battle the fierce nations inhabiting Canaan. A new generation reared in the desert would be better prepared for this challenge. This new generation would not know slavery. It would be nurtured in an environment of freedom. Self-doubt would be replaced with self-assurance.[1]

Ibn Ezra does not intend to imply that the forty years of wandering in the desert were predetermined from the moment of the exodus. As the Chumash relates, spies were sent to survey the land and plan its conquest. Instead, the spies emphasized the unassailable obstacles that awaited them. The nation accepted this report and the spies' conclusion that the conquest was unachievable. The people lost hope in regaining the homeland of the forefathers and questioned Moshe's leadership. It was in response to this failing of the people that Hashem decreed forty years of wandering in the desert.

Ibn Ezra is explaining the cause of this debacle. The crisis created by the report of the spies was a result of the nation's low level of self-confidence. The challenge posed by the conquest was more imagined than real. Hashem had assured the nation that He would defeat the nations of Canaan

as He had destroyed mighty Egypt. But this generation of liberated spies that could not confront its former masters also lacked the self-assurance to wage a campaign against the inhabitants of Canaan. In short, heeding the counsel of the spies condemned Bnai Yisrael to wandering. But the self-doubt that underplayed this failing was exhibited first at the Reed Sea.

The Importance of Convincing the Egyptians of Hashem's Omnipotence

"And Moshe said to the nation: Do not be afraid. Stand firm and see the salvation of Hashem that He will do for you today. For although you will see the Egyptians today, you will not ever again see them." (Shemot 14:13)



"And the Egyptians will know that I am Hashem when I triumph over Paroh, his chariots and his calvary." (Shemot 14:18)

Both of the above passages deal with the miracle of the parting of the Reed Sea. In the first pasuk, Moshe tells Bnai Yisrael that miracle Hashem will presently perform complete the salvation of Bnai Yisrael and the destruction of the Egyptians.

Hashem tells Moshe to proceed into the sea. The water will be parted and the nation will transverse the uncovered dry seabed. Hashem tells Moshe that He has hardened Paroh's heart. He will cause Paroh to pursue Bnai Yisrael into the sea. Hashem will destroy the Egyptian army.

In the second pasuk, Hashem explains to Moshe that through the destruction of Paroh and his legions, the remnant of the Egyptian people will come to recognize the omnipotence of Hashem.

The two passages seem to communicate different messages regarding the parting of the sea and its collapsing upon the Egyptians. The first pasuk indicates that the objective of this miracle was the salvation of Bnai Yisrael. The destruction of the Egyptians was required to complete this salvation. The destruction of Paroh and his army will assure that the Egyptians will not longer pursue Bnai Yisrael. The second pasuk suggests that the destruction of Paroh and his army served another purpose. Hashem was concerned with the impres-

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sions of the Egyptians. He told Moshe that the destruction of Paroh and his army was designed to convince the surviving Egyptians of the greatness of Hashem.

Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno confirms this interpretation of the second pasuk. He explains that the destruction of Paroh and his army would provide the remaining Egyptians with compelling evidence of Hashem's greatness. Hopefully, this demonstration will inspire them to repent. Sforno concludes by observing that Hashem does not seek the death of the wicked; rather, He seeks their repentance.[2]

Gershonides disagrees. He argues that the second pasuk does not intend to suggest that Hashem was concerned with the Egyptians appreciation of His omnipotence. They had already been provided with the opportunity to discover Hashem. Why did Hashem wish to impress upon the Egyptians His omnipotence? Gershonides explains that this was not for the purpose of perfecting the Egyptians. Instead, Hashem wanted to deter the Egyptians from any other attempts to recapture Bnai Yisrael. Hashem presented the Egyptians with undeniable proof of His omnipotence. This convinced the survivors that they could not hope to overcome Hashem and recapture His nation. With this realization, they were discouraged from any further efforts to recapture Bnai Yisrael.[3]

The Angels Were Forbidden from Singing Praise at the Reed Sea

"Then Moshe and Bnai Yisrael sang this song to Hashem. And they said: I sing to Hashem for He is the most exalted. The horse and its rider He threw into the sea." (Shemot 15:1)

The Egyptians pursued Bnai Yisrael into the sea. The walls of water collapsed and the Egyptians were drowned. Moshe composed a song of praise to Hashem. This pasuk introduces Shirat HaYaam – the Song of the Sea. Moshe and Bnai Yisrael recited the song.

The Talmud comments, in Tractate Megilah, that the angels observed the destruction of the Egyptians and the salvation of Bnai Yisrael. The angels were moved to praise Hashem with song. Hashem protested. He explained that song was inappropriate. Bnai Yisrael had been saved – but only through the destruction of others. The Egyptians were creations of Hashem. The tragedy of their death was commingled with the salvation of Bnai Yisrael.[4]

This teaching gives rise to an obvious question. It was inappropriate for the angels to utter song to Hashem on this occasion. Why, then, was it fitting for Moshe and the Bnai Yisrael to compose and recite the Song of the Sea?

Rav Chaim Volozin Zt"l offers a brilliant answer to this question. He explains that a miracle can be evaluated in an objective and subjective manner. The angels do not personally benefit from the salvation of the righteous or the destruction of the wicked. Therefore, they are incapable of a subjective reaction. They can only analyze and react to the objective aspects of a miracle. The angles' reaction to the miracle of the Reed Sea must be understood from this perspective.

The angels were moved by the awesome significance of the moment. Hashem had revealed His mastery over nature. The wicked had been destroyed. The promise made to the Avot – the forefathers – was now closer to fulfillment. Indeed, the very purpose of creation was closer to being realized. Bnai Yisrael had been freed and were on the path to Sinai and Revelation. The angels reasoned that this objective analysis dictated that the moment be celebrated through song to Hashem.

Hashem responded that this objective analysis was incomplete. The Egyptians were also creations of Hashem. None of His creatures is created to be destroyed. Therefore, from an objective perspective, the miracle of the Reed Sea included an element of tragedy.

People, unlike angels, can benefit personally from miracles. We can evaluate a miracle on a subjective level. Bnai Yisrael had been saved. For the Bnai Yisrael, this was a great moment. The beneficiaries of Hashem's benevolence were obligated to recognize this kindness.

In an objective sense this miracle was not perfect. The angels could not offer praise. However, in a subjective sense, the event demanded recognition of Hashem. Therefore, Bnai Yisrael offered their praise to Hashem for their salvation.

The Test of the Mun

"And Hashem said to Moshe: I will rain down to you bread from the heavens. And the nation will go forth and they will collect a daily portion. This is in order that I may test them to determine if they will go in the way of my laws or not." (Shemot 16:4)

Bnai Yisrael had no food in the desert. Hashem told Moshe that he would provide them with mun – manna. This miraculous food would rain down from the sky every day. The people were instructed to collect enough for a single day's use. They were not to gather extra. They also were required to entirely consume the day's ration. They were not to hoard for the future. On Friday – Erev Shabbat – they were to collect a double ration. This amount was to suffice for Friday and Shabbat. On Shabbat the mun did not fall. The people were instructed not to go out to the fields and seek the mun on Shabbat.

Our pasuk explains that the mun represented a test. The commentaries differ on the nature of the test. Rashi explains that the test lay in the observance of the mitzvot related to the mun. Specifically, the people must resist the urge to create a reserve of mun through saving a portion of the daily ration. Also, they must accept the command not to go into the fields on Shabbat to seek the mun.[5]

Rashi seems to imply that these mitzvot regarding the mun were designed to impact and revise the nation's attitude towards personal security. By nature, we seek security. We tend to delude ourselves and assume that we can attain this security through our personal efforts. In reality, we cannot completely secure our future through our own practical provisions. We are dependent upon the benevolence of Hashem. Only through fulfilling His will can we attain true security. The mun helped the people understand that Hashem is the real source of security. The nation was forced to be dependent upon the grace of Hashem. They could not take any action to provide for the next day. They could only follow the will of Hashem and depend upon His daily support.

This was an important lesson to learn before entering the Land of Israel. This would be a fertile, rich land. It would be easy for the people to delude themselves and conclude that their own efforts secured their future. They might forget that they are dependent upon Hashem. The mun reinforced the concept that Hashem, and not our own material efforts, sustain us.

This, of course, does not mean that we are not responsible to work towards securing our own future. The message of the mun is that of our efforts, alone, are ineffective. We need the benevolence of the Creator.

Malbim provides another explanation of the test. The pasuk explains that the mun tested whether the nation would follow the way of the

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Weekly Parsha

Torah. Malbim explains that the way of the Torah is not merely the observance of the few mitzvot related to the mun. Instead, it is full devotion to the observance and study of all the mitzvot. How did the mun test this commitment?

The sojourn in the desert provided the people with the opportunity to totally devote themselves to the Torah. All material needs were met with minimal effort. The clothing of the people did not wear out. They had a convenient supply of water. Their food fell from the heavens each day. There were no distractions. This environment was perfect for complete dedication to the study and observance of the Torah. This was the test of the mun. Given this wonderful opportunity, would Bnai Yisrael commit themselves to the way of Torah?[6]

The Miracle of the Parting of the Reed Sea

“And Moshe extended his hand over the sea. And Hashem drove back the waters with a powerful east wind the entire night. And it made the seabed into dry land. And the waters were divided.” (Shemot 14:27)

Bnai Yisrael flee from Egypt. The people arrive at the shores of the Reed Sea. The sea stands before the nation. The Egyptians are directly behind them. Bnai Yisrael is trapped. Hashem performs one of the greatest wonders recorded in the Torah. He parts the Reed Sea. Bnai Yisrael enter the sea. They travel across the sea over its dry seabed. The Egyptians enter the sea in pursuit of their escaped slaves. The sea closes upon the Egyptians and they are drowned.

The Torah provides some interesting details regarding this miracle. Generally, we imagine that Moshe extended his hand over the water and suddenly they separated and dry land was revealed. However, this is not the description of these events provided by the Torah.

According to our pasuk, the sea did not immediately split in response to Moshe's command. Moshe extended his hand over the water and a mighty wind arose. The wind blew the entire night. What was the function of this wind? Why did Hashem require this wind? Why did He not immediately part the waters?

Nachmanides explains that the wind was part of an elaborate deception. Hashem had brought the Egyptians to the Reed Sea. Here, they were to be destroyed. However, what was to induce the Egyptians to enter the sea? After all, if Hashem had parted the sea in order to save Bnai Yisrael, it

was not likely He would allow the Egyptians to follow them! What would the point be of a miracle that failed to save Bnai Yisrael? Certainly, the Egyptians would realize that Hashem would not prolong His miracle for the benefit of his nation's adversaries!

Nachmanides suggests that the wind was part of a ruse. The Egyptians believed that the wind had split the sea. Bnai Yisrael were escaping into the sea as the result of remarkable good fortune. They just happened to reach the sea at the onset of a tremendous storm. The storm cleaved apart the waters. The Egyptians felt that they too could take advantage of this opportunity. The wind would continue to drive the waters apart. They could enter the sea and overtake Bnai Yisrael. The deception worked. The Egyptians were lured into the trap!

Of course, the Egyptians were mistaken in their interpretations of the phenomenon. They were not witnessing an unusual meteorological occurrence. They were seeing a miracle. They entered the sea and Hashem brought the waters crashing down upon them.[7]

Rashbam adopts a completely opposite approach to explaining this wind. He contends

that the wind actually parted the water. The Creator performed His miracle through the vehicle of natural forces. Rashbam adds some detail. He explains that the wind had two functions. First, it caused the water to back up. Once the water backed up, the seafloor was revealed. Second, it dried the seafloor and created a passable path across the seabed.[8] Ibn Ezra adds that the wind continued to blow as Bnai Yisrael crossed the sea. Only the power of the wind prevented the water from rushing in on Bnai Yisrael.[9]

In short, we are faced with two approaches for explaining this wind. Nachmanides maintains that the wind was not a factor in splitting the sea. The wind was merely part of a ruse designed to lure the Egyptians into the sea. Rashbam and others disagree. They insist that the miracle of the sea parting was brought about through this wind. Hashem used the wind to split the sea, dry the seabed, and hold the waters apart for Bnai Yisrael.

This raises an interesting question. We can understand the position of Nachmanides. Hashem is the Creator of the universe. He formed the seas and established the boundaries between the oceans and the continents. Obviously, He can

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alter these boundaries. If He wishes to create dry land in the midst of the sea, He can. He is omnipotent. He does not need any wind to assist Him. The position of Rashbam is more difficult to understand. It seems as if the Rashbam is limiting Hashem. He seems to deny his omnipotence. Why does Hashem need a strong wind to do His bidding?

The answer to this question is very important. It provides an insight into the Torah's understanding of the natural world. The answer also indicates the Torah's attitude toward scientific knowledge.

We all realize that we are required to observe the Torah. Observant Jews might dicker over the specifics of observance. However, we would agree that Hashem revealed the Torah with the intention that we observe its commandments. The reason for observance is obvious. The commandments are an expression of the will of Hashem. As His servants, we must submit to His will.

However, it must be noted that the mitzvot of the Torah are not the only laws that Hashem created. In addition to the mitzvot, He created the laws of nature. These are the laws that govern the movement of the galaxies and the behavior of the smallest subatomic particle. Just as the Torah's mitzvot are an expression of His will, so too the laws of nature are a manifestation of the Divine. It is reasonable for the Creator to expect that these natural laws should be observed.

Now, we can understand Rashbam's position. Rashbam does not deny Hashem's omnipotence. He is not positing that the Creator needs a wind to split the sea. He is asserting that a perfect Creator would not disregard His own laws. He would not capriciously suspend or violate the laws He had established.

Rashbam is also providing us with an important perspective on scientific knowledge. In order to understand this perspective, let us ask a question: What is religion's attitude towards science? The answer is that science and religion have often contended with one another. Many religions have resisted science. What is the reason for this conflict?

There are many factors that have contributed to this contentious relationship. We will consider two of these. First, religion is often steeped in the mystical. For some, religion provides an explanation for the inexplicable. According to this perspective, religion begins where science ends and provides answers to the questions science cannot address. In such a relationship, the advancement of science must reduce the signifi-



cance of religion. As science expands our knowledge of the universe, the realm of religion is reduced. Mysteries that were once explained through some mystical truth are interpreted by a set of scientific principles. The realm of the mystical is reduced, and the danger arises that religion will become trivial.

There is a second issue. In some religions, doctrine may seem to contradict science. Religious doctrine is regarded as a revealed or, at least, inspired truth. It is not subject to challenge. Therefore, any conflict with science must be eliminated.

When these conflicts arise, these religions must respond. There are a number of responses. At the extreme, the response can take the form of outright suppression of science. More commonly, these challenges lead to the disparagement of science and a marginalizing of its importance.

It is noteworthy that many of our greatest Torah Sages possessed extensive knowledge of science. Apparently, these Sages did not perceive any conflict between their religious outlook and scientific knowledge. The attitude of these Sages suggests that science and Torah can peacefully coexist. What is the basis for this coexistence?

Rashbam's explanation of our pasuk provides a response. It is clear that Rashbam regarded the laws of the universe as a manifestation of the Creator's will. They are an expression of His infinite wisdom. Even Hashem will not flippantly disregard these laws. This implies that these laws deserve our respect.

This attitude eliminates the conflict between science and religion. The discoveries of science are not viewed as a threat to religion. On the contrary, these insights are an inspiration to the Torah scholar. They provide awesome testimony to the infinite wisdom of the Creator. The expan-

sion of scientific knowledge does not diminish the significance of the Torah. This newfound knowledge gives us a greater appreciation of Hashem. These insights are a source of inspiration in our service to Hashem through the performance of His mitzvot.

It is important to note that we are not suggesting that the study of science is a substitute for the study of Torah. This is a completely different issue. Even within a single science, there is a proper order for its study. For example, in mathematics the study of algebra precedes that of calculus. In addition, some sciences are more easily understood and more suitable for general study. And of course, practical considerations can suggest that one science be given priority over another. All of these issues and others must be discussed in order to determine the relative merit of Torah study as compared to the study of science. Nonetheless, it is clear from the comments of Rashbam that scientific knowledge deserves our respect. ■

[1] Rabbaynu Avraham ibn Ezra, Commentary on Sefer Shemot, 14:13.

[2] Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno, Commentary on Sefer Shemot, 14:18.

[3] Rabbaynu Levi ben Gershon (Ralbag / Gershonides), Commentary on Sefer Shemot, p 102.

[4] Mesechet Megilah 10b.

[5] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Shemot 16:4.

[6] Rabbaynu Meir Libush (Malbim), Commentary on Sefer Shemot 16:4.

[7] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Shemot 14:21.

[8] Rabbaynu Shemuel ben Meir (Rashbam) Commentary on Sefer Shemot 14:21.

[9] Rabbaynu Avraham ibn Ezra, Commentary on Sefer Shemot, 14:21.

(Tefillin cont. from page 1)

In a recent conversation, I raised the question of how a two-state solution could be considered at all, when nothing is being done to attempt the reform of generations of terrorists, who continue indoctrinating their people, starting from kindergarten. When I mentioned God as the authoritative arbiter of morality and that His acts are essential to answer this question of responding to murderers, one person asked if “we can leave God out of this debate”.

This is a clear example of much of today’s world. God is not the center, but each man feels right in his own eyes. People are so blind. They cannot reflect on the most obvious of all truths: they are “created” beings. Thus, there is an infinitely wise “Creator”. This Creator who created life, is thereby the authoritative voice on all morality. Yet, man feels he can arrive at conclusions without God.

Arrogance has no boundaries.

Such people completely lose this one opportunity at life...they abandon the real meaning of life.

We just finished reading Parshas Bo, where God delivered the last of His 10 Plagues.

During the Plague of the Firstborns, all Egyptians feared that each one of them – not just firstborns – would perish. Therefore, they expelled the Jews in a national panic. (Exod. 12:33)

Towards the very end of Parshas Bo (Exod. 13:9) God commands the Jews to wear Tefillin. The reason given is that we should bear a sign and remember that “Biyad Chazzakah” (with a mighty hand) did God take us out of Egypt. This is reiterated in the final verse of Bo (13:16) “for with a mighty hand did God take us out of Egypt” where we are further informed that Tefillin and redeeming the firstborns are ‘eternal’ laws. Animals too must be redeemed, since God smote all firstborns of man and beast (12:29).

These two sections at the end of Bo, in which we find these two instances of “Biyad Chazzakah” and Tefillin’s command, form the first two of Tefillin’s four sections. The third and fourth sections of the Tefillin are the first two paragraphs of the Shema. Through Tefillin’s containment of these Torah sections referring to the final plague, redeeming firstborns and Tefillin, we thereby give testimony always to God’s “mighty hand” which redeemed us. But what exactly does “mighty hand” mean? Why is it so essential that it be repeated? Why is a new command of Tefillin constructed around “Biyad Chazzakah”, and the Shema? We must also be clear that “Biyad Chazzakah” – not the Shema –

is Tefillin’s primary focus and definition. For when it is first mentioned in the Torah, “Biyad Chazzakah” and Tefillin are mentioned together, with no mention of the Shema. Thus, Tefillin and “Biyad Chazzakah” are intimately related. What is this relationship?

“Biyad Chazzakah”

Getting back to our debate on Obama’s site, the one participant wished to leave God out of the discussion. This is exactly the lesson of “Biyad Chazzakah”.

When God wished Egypt to live properly, He attempted to educate them away from idolatrous fantasy by displaying the stark reality that only He could alter natural law, since only He created it. All other idols and gods are imposters and never did what God did, as they are all lifeless, human carvings. As one of the Sages put it, “Where were all the other gods when God said at Sinai, “I am God”? Why didn’t any other god object? Humorous: but to the point.

Similarly, when God took the Jews out of Egypt, He did so “Biyad Chazzakah”, through miracles. Why?

The purpose was to make it clear: the One who frees you, is the Creator, and this is proved only when miracles are present. Thus, “Biyad Chazzakah” is a fundamental. We will say more on this shortly.

As Saadia Gaon taught, miracles prove God’s involvement, and this is why He utilizes them when endorsing a prophet. For only when a miracle is performed, is the prophet proven as God’s true emissary.

God wished for the Jews too – just as He wished for the Egyptians – that man lead his life based on reality. And the ultimate reality is that this universe has a Creator. This is not some selfish desire God possesses, that man seeks, studies and praises Him. For God created desires like selfishness, and therefore they do not guide Him. God created human life – and the life of angels – so that intelligent creatures might recognize Him, and enjoy continued study about God and His creations. This study would offer man and angel a perfected existence unparalleled by any other involvement. Putting it simply: God offered mankind ultimate happiness by creating him with intellect. The meaning of life may be summed up as a truly pleasure-seeking existence. Man’s flaw however is his confusion about what might offer the richest pleasures. Man is duped by blindly accepted rules like “the masses must be right”, and “physical success will offer happiness”, and many others.

The Jewish Identity: a “Redeemed” People

Now, as God wishes the best for His creations as testified by His perfectly designed and orchestrated world, He desired that the Jews – now freed – would consider how this freedom came to be.

A wise Rabbi taught that the very emergence and formation of the Jewish People must have occurred with their redemption. This means that the Jewish identity is a “redeemed people”. God did not wish the Jews to taste freedom, free of direction. God wished the best for the Jews and all people. He therefore freed the Jews...for the sake of following His commands. The Jew cannot view himself as separate from God. For at our inception as a people, God redeemed us from slavery and guided us towards Sinai “to receive His Torah”. This is the fundamental of Tefillin: that we wear reminders of miracles...phenomena that could only have been performed by the Creator of natural law. These Tefillin will remind us throughout the day of our true purpose for having been created. God did not create each of us so we might follow our passions, or other misled cultures. God created man with intellect so that he might intensely enjoy life. And the most intense enjoyment is when man makes new discoveries. Steak, sex, cars, homes, clothes and fame...all briefly lived moments. All become tiresome, painful with overindulgence...some even embarrassing if publicized. But engaging in scientific experiments and theories; Talmudic inquiry; philosophical debate; and pondering God’s existence and His will...all of these intrigue us, captivate us, and allow our full energies to become immersed with new fruits in every session.

Wearing Tefillin recalls God’s Firstborn plague, the “Yad Chazzakah” the mighty hand...miracles. Tefillin focus us each day on why we exist...to relate to the Creator of those miracles. To realize we were created for one purpose: to enjoy the world of wisdom, which is a reflection of the Creator. As such, we now understand why the Shema is also contained in the Tefillin. For the Shema elaborates on God’s “exclusive” role as Creator. He is One. There are no others. This is another fundamental.

Tefillin direct man’s thoughts to regularly save him from escaping into fantasy and deluded worlds where man exists without God. When we consider that we became a nation through miracles, we cannot avoid God’s essential role in our lives. But if we are wiser than that, we consider that God didn’t only redeem us...He created us.

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(Tefillin cont. from previous page)



Humans are Incomplete Beings

The Talmud states, "Man is a sick being, but a bandage is available. The bandage is Torah."

The lesson is that man is not independent. One might think so, as man seems to possess all he needs: circulatory, respiratory and digestive systems, muscles, and a rigid skeletal frame. However, without regularly engaging in Torah study, we are left to our emotions...that destroy our values and ideas.

The very design of Tefillin – that it is affixed to our bodies – teaches another primary lesson: man's design is incomplete. Since people view the "form" of man as a perfectly working

machine, God commanded that Tefillin are affixed to our outline with oddly protruding boxes, so as to refute the assumption that the human figure is perfect. Rejecting the physical human profile and now calling it imperfect without Tefillin, God intrudes on man's elevation of the bodily form, making an opening for us to consider that there is more to us than they beauty of our form.

Think about the grandeur the Greeks bestowed on the body through statues and Olympics performed in the nude. Although the Greeks took it to extremes, all men possess the overestimation of physical forms, or what we call 'design'. Tefillin teach that man is much

Perhaps Tefillin's geometric shape is to contrast to the fluid human profile.

Nothing in the human form mirrors a cubic shape. Tefillin reject the notion that the human being is perfect by itself.

Without Torah, there is no meaning to our lives.

more. Our forms are not beautiful, if we neglect our intangible souls. Tefillin awaken man to reject the Greek philosophy...a philosophy only publicized by the Greeks, but unconsciously valued by all.

Why are Tefillin squares? Perhaps this perfect geometric shape is a direct contrast to the fluid and curvaceous design of the human profile. Nothing in the human form mirrors a cubic shape. Our eyes are perfect circles; our noses hint to triangles...but nothing is a cube. Square or cubed, Tefillin thereby reject the notion that the human being is perfect by itself. No. Something of geometric, or scientific design must capture the human if he is to be truly praiseworthy, and if he is to truly enjoy his existence as God desired. The human form alone is meaningless, if when drawing his shape, we exclude two boxes in his portrait.

Without following God's moral instruction available in the Torah, Prophets and Writings, man is destined to bring much harm upon himself, and others. Obama's recent executive order to close Guantanamo in protest of torture was unwise. For if God allows torture of evil people, man cannot argue with God. And if Israel would heed the Torah on war and battle; many Jews could be saved.

Until such a time when man opens his eyes to the reality that he is created, and his Creator is wiser, man is doomed to failure. ■



THE JEWS ACCEPTED IDOLATRY. GOD'S "MIGHTY HAND" KILLING ALL FIRSTBORNS
IMPOSED A NATIONAL JEWISH REALIZATION THAT GOD
– AND NO EGYPTIAN DEITY – CONTROLS THE UNIVERSE ALONE.
TEFILLIN WERE THEN COMMANDED AS A REMINDER OF THIS "MIGHTY HAND".
TEFILLIN BECAME THE ICON RECALLING THE CREATOR'S MIRACLES EMPLOYED TO
DIRECT THIS NEW NATION TOWARDS REALITY, AND TO ABANDON IDOLATRY.

All of God's commands contain great truths.

THE TASK OF DISCOVERING THEM IS OUR OBLIGATION...
AN ENDEAVOR UNPARALLELED IN ITS ENJOYMENT.