



# GENESIS

*As we conclude Genesis, review its lessons; from God's kindness in His Creation and tolerance of man, to man's righteousness and wisdom exemplified by the Patriarchs.*

*Dedicated to Scriptural and Rabbinic Verification of Authentic Jewish Beliefs and Practices*

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## Weekly Parsha

### Dan Minimal Acquaintance, Major Role

**RABBI DR. DARRELL GINSBERG**

The last event in Yaakov's life, as detailed in this week's parsha, involves his giving the brachos (blessings) to his children, the Bnai Yisrael. In some instances, Yaakov alludes to previous actions committed by his sons, including Reuven's bed-switching incident and Shimon and Levi's attack on Shechem. In others, Yaakov brings to light the traits that set each individual apart from all the others, as demonstrated in the brachos given to Yehudah and Yosef. However, when studying some of the brachos for the "lesser known" brothers, it is difficult to discern Yaakov's focus or what greatness the Torah wishes to illuminate to the reader, especially since the Torah never records any previous incident or trait involving these people. One such example lies with the bracha given to Dan.

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## Fundamentals

### GOD KNOWS MAN'S DOINGS

*Maimonides' 10th Principle*

**RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM**

**Reader:** I have a question regarding the tenth of Maimonides' Thirteen Principles of Faith (Sheloshah Assar Ikkarim). The tenth ikkar quite logically and correctly states, "I believe, with complete conviction, that the Creator, blessed be His name, knows all actions of human beings (b'nei adam), and all of their thoughts, as it is stated, "The One who fashions their hearts together, who perceives all their actions" (Tehillim 33:15).

Regarding the content and phraseology of this principle I have two questions:

1) Why does the Rambam have to cite a verse for a principle which seems self-evident? This is one particular principle that is accepted by all theistic religions, and can surely be proven by simple philosophy. This seems all the more strange - in light of the fact that the Rambam does not offer a scriptural proof in the text of any of the other principles (not even the one asserting the incorporeality of God, an idea that was very controversial in Rambam's day). Why is it this principle alone that merited scriptural verification?

2) How does the verse that Rambam cites prove what he says? Granted, the last part of the verse - "Ha-meivin kol ma'aseihem", "the One who perceives all their actions" - proves the notion that God is aware of all human deeds, but

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Houston	5:07	Phoenix	5:04
Jerusalem	4:19	Pittsburgh	4:37
Johannesburg	6:39	Seattle	4:01
Los Angeles	4:28	Sydney	7:43
London	3:33	Tokyo	4:12
Miami	5:15	Toronto	4:25
Montreal	3:53	Washington DC	4:29

## Weekly Parsha

### Vayeche

**RABBI BERNIE FOX**

**Yaakov's blessing of Ephraim and Menashe**

*And He said to me, "I will make you fruitful and multiply your offspring. I will make you a*

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(Vayeche cont. from pg. 1)

## Weekly Parsha

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congregation of nations. I will give this land to your descendants after you as a permanent possession." Now, your two that were born to you in Egypt, before I came to you in Egypt, are mine. Ephraim and Menashe shall be to me as Reuven and Shimon. (Beresheit 48:4-5)

The angel that redeemed me from all evil will bless these lads. They will be called by my name and the names of my fathers Avraham and Yitzchak. They will multiply in the land. (Beresheit 48:16)

**The basic components of Yaakov's address**

Yaakov and his family have descended to Egypt. Yosef rules the country and provides sustenance for his father, his brothers, and their households. Yaakov becomes ill. Yosef and his two sons – Ephraim and Menashe – visit Yaakov. Yaakov addresses Yosef. He begins with a review of the pledges that Hashem had made to him. Then, he tells Yosef that Ephraim and Menashe will merit a special role in Bnai Yisrael. They will be treated as direct sons of Yaakov. They will have the same status, within Bnai Yisrael, as Reuven and Shimon. In short, there are two parts to this portion of Yaakov's comments. He begins with an introduction, reviewing the promises Hashem had made to him. He then bestows his own blessings upon Yosef and his sons.

In order to understand this portion of Yaakov's address, it is necessary to interpret his introduction, the blessings he bestowed, and the relationship between these two elements. This process will begin with consideration of the basic meaning of blessing Yaakov granted. Understanding this blessing requires a brief introduction.

**The meaning of Yaakov's blessing: Conferring upon Ephraim and Menashe the status of Shevatim**

Yaakov had twelve sons. These sons were the progenitors of the Shevatim – the Tribes of Israel. Each was the founder or the patriarch of a separate tribe. Their descendants were members of the tribe of their patriarch. These

descendants could not establish new Shevatim. According to this principle, Yosef's two sons should have been members of the Tribe of Yosef. It should have been impossible for Ephraim and Menashe to be the patriarchs of their own tribes. They are Yosef's children, not the sons of Yaakov.

Now, Yaakov's basic message to Yosef can be understood. He told Yosef that Ephraim and Menashe will be regarded as sons of Yaakov. They will be elevated to the level of Reuven and Shimon. There will not be a Tribe of Yosef. Instead, Yosef will be the progenitor of two of the Shevatim – Ephraim and Menashe.

**Yaakov promised that his name and those of the forefathers will be associated with Ephraim and Menashe**

However, there is another element to Yaakov's blessing. In closing his address, Yaakov says that Ephraim and Menashe will be called by his name and the names of his fathers Avraham and Yitzchak. The meaning of this statement is not clear. Nachmanides offers an explanation. Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov will always be identified with the descendants of Ephraim and Menashe. In other words, the forefathers will

always be remembered through the offspring of Ephraim and Menashe. Nachmanides explains that this promise has far-reaching consequences. It implies that the offspring of Ephraim and Menashe will never be lost or destroyed. Some remnant will always remain. This remnant is the fulfillment of Yaakov's promise. Some remnant must always survive because through this remnant the forefathers are identified with the descendants of Ephraim and Menashe.[1] In short, this second element of Yaakov's blessing was a guarantee that the progeny of Ephraim and Menashe would survive all challenges and tragedies that would befall Bnai Yisrael. Nachmanides' comments require closer scrutiny. What is the basis for his interpretation?

(continued on next page)



## Yaakov's blessing can only be understood in the context of the pledges he received from Hashem

Nachmanides' comments can be understood in the context of the first portion of Yaakov's address – his introduction. In this preamble, Yaakov reviewed the pledges that Hashem had made to him. He explained that Hashem had appeared to him at Luz. There, Hashem made three pledges to Yaakov. First, He told Yaakov that He would have many descendants. Second, Hashem promised that Yaakov's children would be a congregation of nations. Third, He told Yaakov that his descendants would possess the Land of Israel. Apparently, these pledges establish the context for the blessing that Yaakov bestowed upon Ephraim and Menashe. However, the relevance of this context to the blessings must be explained.

## Bnai Yisrael is an Assembly of Shevatim

In order to understand the relevance of these pledges and their role in establishing the context of Yaakov's blessings, the meaning of the pledges must be clearly understood. The meaning of the first promise is clear. Yaakov will have many descendants. The last pledge is also easily understood. Hashem promises Yaakov that his descendants will possess the Land of Israel. However, the second promise is less easily interpreted. What is a "congregation of nations"? Unkelus explains this phrase. He translates it as "an Assembly of Shevatim." [2] Bnai Yisrael will be composed of individual Shevatim. Through communicating this to Yaakov as a pledge, Hashem indicated to him that the structure of Bnai Yisrael as an assembly of individual Shevatim is not merely a practical, political, or administrative measure. The structure of the nation as an assemblage of Shevatim is an expression of the fundamental structure of the nation. In other words, Bnai Yisrael is not composed of individual tribes in order to facilitate the governance of the nation or as a consequence of political forces that prevented the individual tribes from fully integrating. The existence of the Shevatim within the nation is an expression of the nation's design as decreed by Hashem. In future generations, as the nation grew, these Shevatim did emerge as Hashem promised. Their emergence was the fulfillment of Hashem's promise to Yaakov. Furthermore, this system of shevatim is a permanent fixture of Bnai Yisrael.

Now, we can begin to appreciate the relevance of Yaakov's introduction. Yaakov



elevated Ephraim and Menashe to the level of his own children. They would each establish a separate tribe. Yaakov introduced this blessing through explaining the source for the system of Shevatim. He tells Yosef, that the institution of Shevatim was established by Hashem. It is an expression of the nation's basic design. The formation of the Tribe of Ephraim and the Tribe of Menashe will represent the fulfillment of Hashem's promise; Bnai Yisrael will be an Assembly of Tribes.

## The survival of Ephraim's and Menashe's descendants is directly related to their status as Shevatim

Rav Yitzchak Zev Soloveitchik Zt"l suggests that Hashem's promise to create a system of Shevatim is the basis for Nachmanides' interpretation of Yaakov's blessing. Yaakov had promised Yosef that Ephraim and Menashe would be the forerunners of Shevatim. Implicit in this promise was the second element of Yaakov's blessing – the guarantee that their descendants would survive throughout the generations. How is this guarantee implied?

Rav Soloveitchik explains that there are two aspects to Hashem's promise to create an Assembly of Shevatim. First, as explained above, the institution of Shevatim is a perma-

nent element of Bnai Yisrael. The nation will always be composed of individual Shevatim. Second, each Shevet is a permanent element of the nation. No tribe can be destroyed or cease to exist.[3] On this basis, Yaakov made two pledges to Yosef. First, he promised Yosef that Ephraim and Menashe will be the forerunners of Shevatim. Second, no tribe can ever cease to exist. Therefore, the survival of Ephraim and Menashe's descendants is implicit in this blessing and assured.[4] ■

[1] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 48:16.

[2] Targum Unkelus, Sefer Beresheit 48:4.

[3] Mesechet Baba Batra 115b.

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

Yaakov's blessing to Dan is as follows (Bereishis 49:16-18):

*"Dan will judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan will be a serpent on the road, a viper on the path, that bites the horse's heel so that the rider falls backward. For your deliverance, I wait, Hashem."*

Most commentators, including Rashi and the Ramban, understand this bracha as a prophecy regarding Shimshon, the famed judge (shofet) from the shevet Dan. The Rashbam, however, takes umbrage to this interpretation (ibid 16). He writes that it does not make sense to posit that Yaakov's prophecy regarding the future tribe of Dan focused on one individual, a person whose death at the hands of the Philistines was a "troubling matter." Instead, he explains that Yaakov's bracha was alluding to the role of the future tribe of Dan being "measef kol hamachanos" – the gatherer for all the camps (Bamidbar 10:25). Shevet Dan, from the days of Moshe through Yehoshua, was positioned in the rear of the itinerant nation. The Rashbam explains that travelling in their position meant they were involved in dealing with the enemies of Bnai Yisrael who would be lapping at their heels, setting up ambushes and the like. They were giberim – courageous – and entrusted with protecting Bnai Yisrael from these attacks.

Obviously, this was an important role in the security of the future Bnai Yisrael. However, it is possible there is something more revealed by the Rashbam's approach than Dan's role as tactical rear-guard.

One could also expand this inquiry to some of the other tribes. As mentioned above, reading through the brachos, Yaakov clearly focuses on previous incidents or distinctive traits for some of the brothers. Yet, looking at Gad, Naftali and Dan, nearly all the commentaries agree that the common theme of their brachos relate to their superior military abilities. Why the focus on military prowess? We tend to think of these great people in terms of their chachma and middos, not their ability to wield a spear in battle.

The approach may lie in the understanding the fundamental mitzvah of kiddush Hashem – sanctifying God's name.

The Rambam, in his Sefer HaMitzvos (9), offers some deep insights into this commandment:

*"The concept of this commandment is we are instructed to publicize this true belief in the world and not be afraid of any type of harm."*

He goes on to explain that even if one is faced with ideological persecution aimed at uprooting the fundamental ideas of God, he should pay no heed, and be willing to die rather than accept



this idolatrous alternative. The essence of the mitzvah, according to the Rambam, is a person's willingness to perish for his love of God and belief in His Oneness.

This idea is often expressed through the famous three prohibitions-- murder, sexual impropriety and idolatry – where one should accept death rather than committing the violation. In fact, when the Rambam discusses the halachos of kiddush Hashem, he uses the willingness to die rather than violate the above three as the expression of the mitzvah.

One of my rebbeim, Rabbi Reuven Mann, once made an astute observation about the nature of kiddush Hashem. When learning about the "big three" and kiddush Hashem, it is tempting to say that if one was in the situation of potential death versus violating these commandments, one would of course choose death. This assumption, he explained, was both simplistic and dangerous. In the realm of the abstract, it is easy to choose death. However, when faced with the decision empirically, where the opportunity to exercise one's freewill comes into play, it is quite difficult to ascertain how

exactly one would end up choosing. The average person's sense of self-importance may come to the forefront, inevitably leading to the violation. To say with certainty that "I would take the bullet," without clear and honest knowledge of the self, is foolhardy. A person must, in that moment, possess tremendous confidence in his place in the universe and his belief in God to make the right decision.

The common scenario is where the opportunity to engage in kiddush Hashem comes to the individual, rather than the individual seeking it out, but that is not the only scenario. In fact, the circumstances of kiddush Hashem may apply both proactively and when not pertaining to one of the three prohibitions, as evidenced by those who willingly place their lives in danger to fight for the survival of Bnai Yisrael. These soldiers who put themselves in the line of fire for the ideological perpetuation of the nation are engaging in kiddush Hashem. To take such measures and to do so motivated by the true ideas of God is a unique trait not found in most people. It requires a tremendous level of confidence in one's beliefs. This might be what Yaakov is alluding to in his brachos to Gad, Naftali and Dan. They all possessed this characteristic, and it would be manifest in their progeny as well.

The opportunity to engage in kiddush Hashem manifests when the soldier steps onto the battlefield. In the case of Dan, there was an added dimension to this perfection in his role as the "measef kol hamachanos." Bringing up the rear guard, from a military standpoint, requires vigilance and attention. The prevention of ambushes, the most dangerous of all attacks, was pivotal in securing the fate of the nation. This meant that the tribe of Dan was in a perpetual state of kiddush Hashem. Based on the Rashbam's explanation, this could have been Yaakov's intent in the bracha to Dan.

When we reflect on the countless demonstrations of kiddush Hashem in our history, there is no shortage of people or events that personify it. But while reacting to a situation that presents itself has its challenges, the essence of this mitzvah is not limited to that type of scenario. We see in those tribes whose role was to lead the way in battle or defend the fledgling nation from attack, the positive expression of kiddush Hashem. We also can see in shevet Dan an ability to remain in this state of mind on a constant basis. It is true that some of the brothers did not have had "prominent" exposure in the Torah. Yet, through Yaakov's brachos, we come to realize their essential roles, both practically and as examples of perfection, in the emerging Jewish nation. ■



RABBI REUVEN MANN

# Gratitude *has a* SHORT *Shelf Life*

In this week's parsha, Vayechi, we read about the death of Yaakov Avinu and the culmination of the era of the patriarchs. Yaakov raised twelve sons who were to be the leaders of the tribes which would be the foundation of the Jewish nation. He brought the family down to Egypt at the behest of Yosef. His final request of Yosef was that he take an oath not to bury him in Egypt but to place him alongside his forebears in the Cave of Machpilah. Many commentators ask a simple question: why was it necessary for Yaakov to elicit an oath from Yosef? Did he not trust him? Why wasn't it sufficient for Yosef to merely agree to his father's request without the necessity of taking a vow?

The Ramban (Nachmanides) provides a very interesting answer. He explains that it was not because Yaakov lacked trust in the word of his son. He was rather concerned about the obstacles Yosef might encounter in seeking to carry out the request. It is obvious from the text that Yaakov had made a great impression on Pharaoh and his ministers. We can surmise the reasons. The Egyptians had been mesmerized by the brilliance of Yosef about whom Pharaoh had said "Can there be found such as him, a man in whom there abides the spirit of G-d?" Yosef had not only saved the country from starvation, he had made it the "breadbasket of the world." Pharaoh's wealth and power was tremendously increased as a result of Yosef's daunting wisdom and honesty. When the time came Yosef told Pharaoh that he had received all of his wisdom from the teachings of his father who was a great and righteous sage. Pharaoh was very eager to have Yosef's father and brothers come and settle in Egypt. The great awe that the Egyptians had for Yaakov can be seen in the lengthy period of national mourning which Egypt observed at his passing.

Yaakov was a realist who knew there would be a great deal of pressure to have him buried in Egypt. It would be a matter of great national prestige to have him interred on Egyptian soil as this would indicate that he had "become an Egyptian" and identified with the culture and values of that society. This, of course, is precisely what Yaakov sought to avoid. He wanted to make it clear that he had never abandoned Hashem's holy land and had been "coerced" by the Divine will to temporarily sojourn in Egypt. He wanted to be buried in the place of his father's and mother's to eternalize his role as the third patriarch of the Jewish people.

To achieve this goal he needed to secure an oath from Yosef. Temporal power fades rather quickly. With the famine over and Egypt once again prosperous Yosef no longer wielded unlimited power as in his heyday. In submitting the request to bring Yaakov back to Canaan he referred to the fact that he had sworn to do this for his father. Apparently this was a major factor in securing the agreement of Pharaoh, for in responding to Yosef he said, "Go and bury your father in accordance with your oath."

We can learn a lot from Yaakov's realistic assessment of the political fortunes of Yosef. We should never become dependent on the good will of others. Nor should we exaggerate our popularity or the extent of the gratitude we can expect from those for whom we have done great favors. As we will see, for all the good he had done, Yosef's power began to recede the moment his talents were no longer deemed to be necessary. Indeed, it did not take very long until "a new king arose who did not know Yosef." We must always act realistically and cultivate friendships and alliances, but remember that while friends come and go it is only the love of Hashem that endures forever. May we be worthy of attaining it.

Shabbat Shalom. ■



## PARSHA

# ASTONISHED

**RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM**

We read in Isaiah 6:3 that the angels “called one to the other and said, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy is God of hosts, the entire universe is filled with His honor’.” To mimic a sentiment of those perfect beings, we repeat these words in our Kedusha twice daily. We also stand all day on Yom Kippur, again, an attempt to target the perfection of the angels, who metaphorically “stand” as they have no knee joints.

We understand that angels are not physical beings; we know not what they truly are. But in order to express our desire to reach perfection, we mimic those perfected beings. Of course, we must ask what perfection is expressed in the angels’ first “calling to one another”, and then subsequently responding together in praise of the Creator. Why must one call to the other “first”?

An interesting parallel is located in the source for our “Zimun” blessing, which precedes our Birkat Hamazone. The Talmud teaches a dispute as to the source for Zimun. One view is the verse, “Praise God with me, and we will exalt His name as one”. The other verse is, “For the name of God I call, [we shall] give greatness to our God”. In either verse, one person is calling to the others, so as to praise God together, paralleling the angels. Thus, we find a theme in the Torah. A “theme” meaning that which is of great enough importance that it deserves God’s repetition. So what is this importance of one being calling to another?

I believe the lesson here is to emphasize the astounding nature of the Creator. When wishing to bless God, it is initiated by our recognition of His exclusive role as the Creator of the universe. This universe is so stupendous, it requires a Designer of the greatest wisdom. We are convinced of a “Source” for these grand galaxies and billions of stars, let alone the Earthly marvels. And when we realize how great the Creator of all these must be...we cannot remain silent. We must communicate this amazement! Much like the sentiment expressed when seeing a shooting star: “Hey, did you see that?!” is the sentiment expressed by both

angel, and man. Not that angels experience human amazement, but they too are awed by the Creator. They too are created, and realize the necessity of a Creator. Both intelligent creations – angel and man – find awe in the universe, to the degree that one cannot tolerate silence. Both creations call to their peers.

These verses teach us that this response, of “how amazing the universe is”, is an essential idea. It forms a theme in Torah, explaining its repetition. Man cannot simply recognize the Creator, but he must become so overwhelmed by God, since this “calling to another” is the only acceptable reaction when recognizing God. Any less a reaction reflects a flaw in our makeup, and in what we value.

With this in mind, we should ask ourselves what occupies our time, speech and interests most; what do we find most riveting? If we are not awestruck at creation and wisdom, but find ourselves pulled more to other involvements, we are missing out on that which can truly captivate us and fill us with extreme excitement and satisfaction. We all seek happiness, and this lesson shares with man what captivates the angels and what will captivate us. We are to mimic the angels, since we too share their capacity of attaining this amazement.

It is unfortunate that we are derailed from this pursuit, as society and the media entice us with success, fame and pleasures. It is rare that an individual stops, and questions the actions of the masses. We typically assume the masses have it right. But God says they do not. Our sense of reality is distorted: we follow the beliefs and actions of others, without even attempting to discern if they are correct. We ignore what God teaches, since our peers do otherwise, and we might fall from their graces if we walk to the beat of our own drum.

If however we are brave enough to accept that God’s words are true, and we invest more time in our Torah and science pursuits...we will do more than simply recognize God’s great wisdom. We will be astonished. ■

how does the Psalmist's statement that God "fashions all [human] hearts together" confirm that God knows all human thoughts? One notion does not flow directly from the other, since the argument could be made that although God fashioned the human mind, He does not possess the capabilities to see into it once it has begun being put to use by the individual. You may answer that such an argument is preposterous because "God has knowledge of everything He created," and therefore surely if He formed the human mind, He can see into it. But that is precisely what Rambam's 10th principle is! To offer such a response would therefore be an effort in circular reasoning, since the only way to derive Rambam's principle from that verse, would be to infer it therefrom using that exact principle. I would appreciate if you could help me out on this.

**Mesora:** Different than your source says, Maimonides cites verses in support of other Principles as well. (See his full text at the end of tractate Sanhedrin, chapter 10) The reason for citing verses validates a given principle as forming part of Torah, although reason alone dictates its truth.

You are quoting from an abbreviated version. The question why this format cites a verse for the 10th Principle alone is not a question on Maimonides, but on the compiler. He cites a verse that Maimonides himself did not quote. I do not know who compiled this abbreviation, or why he cites a different verse, but I will offer a suggestion at the very end. Nonetheless, let us understand the verse:

*"Who forms as one their hearts, Who understands all of their actions." (Psalms 33:15)*

Ibn Ezra learns comments: "Who forms their hearts as One Creator, and the creators (of mankind) are not many, therefore He alone understands all of their actions."

Ibn Ezra understands this verse to mean the following two ideas: 1) God is the Creator. God must know His creations, including man's thoughts and actions. 2) Additionally, since nothing else contributed to Creation, God "alone" knows all.

You wrote, "although God fashioned the human mind, He does not possess the capabilities to see into it once it has begun being put to use by the individual." This is a grave error. God does not "perceive". Knowledge and God are not two separate entities, whereby He may perceive that which is external to Him. (This forms part of the concept of "unity" of God.) Your statement suggests that God requires and act of "observation" to know. Observing implies ignorance on His part, i.e., until He has acquired a new perception, and new knowledge. This is a mistake of "projection", where man assumes God to be humanly restrained by natural law; i.e., laws of perception and acquisition of knowledge. However, as Maimonides teaches in his

Laws of Repentance, God does not "know" in the same manner that man knows. Man must observe external phenomena in order to acquire knowledge. This cannot apply to God. Knowledge is inherent in His being, not through "subsequent observation". For example, God's knowledge of what He was yet to create during Genesis was true knowledge. This proves that He need not "observe" anything to know it. He is not barred from any truth.

I would add, the universe had yet to be created; yet, God knew what was about to be created. Without perception. The Torah contains examples of God's knowledge of man's intent, even before he performs it as seen in His discussion with Cain. Again proving His knowledge is not based on perception, but due to His act of Creation, Hew knows all that He created.

Regarding circular reasoning, I do not understand how it is so, as you suggest. Maimonides teaches that God knows all man's actions and thoughts, and supports it by referring to a verse. Once all of Torah has been validated by the Proof of Sinai, all verses are thereby validated. A verse is used merely to cite a truth, not to render it as true. This is not circular reasoning. Circular reasoning would be where one wishes to prove something from the thing itself. But our proof is derived not from the text, but from the unbroken chain of transmission. This external phenomenon of transmission can then prove the text. You too agree to this, as you wrote "the One who perceives all their actions" proves the notion that God is aware of all human deeds".

Until this point, we have referred to the abbreviated version. Let us now understand Maimonides' original formulation of his 10th Principle:

***"That God knows man's actions and does not remove His eye from them***

*His knowledge is not like someone who says God abandoned the land but rather like it says, "Great in council and mighty in deed, Your eyes are cognizant to all the ways of mankind". (Jer. 32) "And God saw, the evils of man were abundant on the land, and every inclination of his heart was only evil, all day." (Gen. 6) And it says, "And God said, 'the cry of Sodom and Amora is abundant, and for their sin is greatly heavy.'" (Ibid 18:20) And this demonstrates the 10th principle."*

Why must Maimonides open his principle by discounting a fallacy? He says, "His knowledge is not like someone who says God abandoned the land". Maimonides could have opened with his first quote! But in all fairness, this question also applies to his other principles. In order to attain "truth", all other possibilities are refuted. Admission of a fact, without the elimination of doubt of that fact, is not considered knowledge. As long as a person harbors doubt about God's being One, or the Only God, or

His non-physical nature, etc., such a person has not yet acquired true knowledge of God. This applies to all ideas. A friend showed me the Minchas Chinuch on parshas Yisro, concerning the command of knowing God. In that section, the author stresses three times that to fulfill this command (the first of the 10 Commandments) man must prove to himself beyond a shadow of a doubt, that God exists. This is not a matter of belief, but of rational conviction. To arrive at conviction the author stresses that all doubts must be removed.

Now that Maimonides teaches what is not considered God's knowledge of man, he goes on to tell us what is. But in doing so, why does he require three verses to make his point? Perhaps, each verse was not recorded to illustrate a new point (although by definition, a new verse must teach a new idea). Perhaps three verses teach the presence of a "theme". A triad of verses is regularly used in prayers to indicate that a Torah concept permeates the three parts of Scriptures: Torah, Prophets and Writings. Here too, perhaps, Maimonides' lesson is that God's knowledge of both, man's thoughts and actions, are known by God, and are a theme in Torah. It is a central idea. If you review the verses above, you will note that each one includes references to both, thoughts and actions.

Why does the abbreviated version of Maimonides' 13 Principles omit all supporting verses, except from in this principle? What is there in proving God's knowledge of man's actions, (this 10th Principle) that a verse would be more essential? One thought presents itself to me: the very definition of a "verse", a Torah verse, is that which God formulated to convey His knowledge to man. This is the purpose of God's concretization of His ideas, in the form of Torah verses. Following this explanation, we may suggest that a verse's very existence is proof of God's relationship with man. But God relates to man based on His knowledge of man's thoughts and actions, to refine the dross from his soul. It is only due to His knowledge of how and what man thinks and does, that His Torah verses exist. A "verse" is proof that God knows how man thinks and acts.

Our final question was why the compiler of this abbreviated form does not use Maimonides' own quoted verses, but uses another verse. I think we may now answer that the compiler is following Maimonides' lead. Maimonides desired to show that God possesses knowledge of all man's thoughts and actions. The compiler too quotes a verse that addresses both areas of man's life, i.e., man's thoughts (heart), and his actions. God is aware of both. Additionally, the compiler may have selected to use a fourth verse, as this strengthens the point that this theme exists in the Torah. With more verses quoted, a theme is more pronounced, and thus, the lesson is imparted in greater measure. ■



# Year-end Contributions



As we draw to a close of 2010 we look back on all we have accomplished these past 12 months. With much toil, endurance and a passion to share new Torah insights with you, we're about to reach a milestone issue #400, enjoyed mostly by you, our regular readers. Here's a few more stats from this past year:

- 641,003 articles were read
- 49,603 audio classes were listened to
- 264,548 JewishTimes issues downloaded
- 99,179 unique visitors
- 33,611 monthly visits
- 200,000 signatures to date for world Jewry
- \$65,000 raised to date for those in need

At this time, we ask your show of thanks with your year-end, tax deductible contribution. We are gratified by the Torah light we have shared, aiding your Jewish learning and activism. We look forward to new achievements this coming year.

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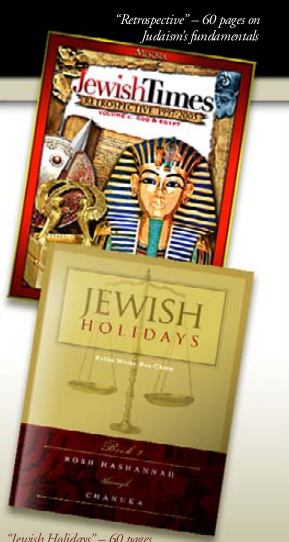
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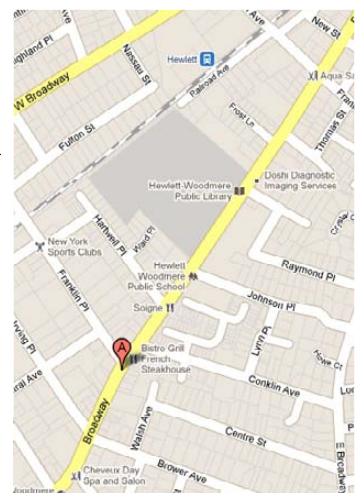
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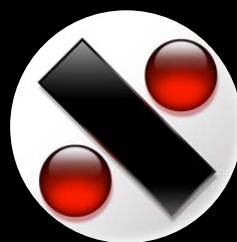
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