

# JewishTimes

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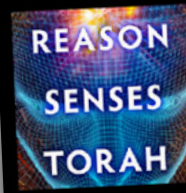
**MISSION**  
**God's Revelation at Mt. Sinai: One Plan for Mankind**  
The greatest event ever witnessed forces one conclusion

MESORA  
Summer 2020

**EVIDENCE EXISTS** for only one event of God revealing His religion to man. All other religions claim divine origin, yet provide no validation. This explains their requirement of "blind faith," which is absent in Judaism: a religion offering proof. 3332 years ago upon Mt. Sinai, God gave us His Bible: the only time God communicated a religion to man. Masses witnessed this, which is the only validation of any historical claim, and why the major religions accept the Bible. Mesora's mission is to share God's Biblical religion with all who seek it. As every human descends from that first couple; all humans are equals. Jews boasting "Jewish Superiority" and those who discriminate against any race violate the Bible and reason. Nearing a quarter century, Mesora helps others realize God's will for us all, sharing the beauty of Biblical wisdom. Search our 1000s of original essays, publications and audio, and write us with your questions. God determined the Jew's role is to share Torah's history, wisdom, laws and moral code with all mankind. As God created all mankind, He loves each person equally. As science has defined laws, God's will for man also has defined laws and principles, and they delight the soul. The greatest minds spent their lives studying God through Torah and science, as they found nothing that compared to its enjoyment. Let us humble ourselves before Moses, Kings David and Solomon, Maimonides, Aristotle, Newton and Einstein who taught that a life of wisdom is the most fulfilling life. We too can partake of this pleasurable existence.

THOUGHT  
**FUNDAMENTALS**

"WHAT IS UNDETECTED BY THE SENSES, REASON OR TORAH, MUST NOT BE ACCEPTED AS TRUTH." MAIMONIDES



FEATURED  
**CONTENT**



CHARACTER  
**PERFECTION**

"PERFECTION" REFERS TO ONE WHOSE VALUES AND ACTIONS COMPLY WITH TORAH PERSONALITIES AND LAWS: THE MOST PLEASANT LIFE.



**KINDNESS**

As equals, all humans must fully treat others as we wish to be treated. Charity, kindness and justice demand we rise above personal or selfish emotions and recognize that God made others as He made ourselves. Doing so creates harmony, and earns His kindness to us.



**RACISM: A LIE**

Mankind descends from Adam. Black and white twins unveil the lie of racism. Bible denounces it: Moses' wife was black, our kings married Egyptians and Messiah descends from a Moabite. "Better is the day of A-tube", Ercol, 7:9. Birth doesn't define us, but how

# JewishTimes

THE JOURNAL ON JEWISH THOUGHT

| Authors may not have been advised of reprints of their essays |

### 3 Death Over Sin

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

What is the purpose of this mitzvah?

### 6 The Future

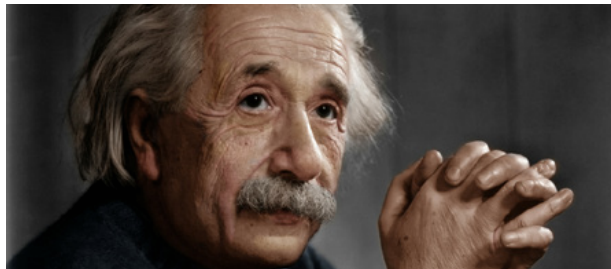
RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Moses prohibited the Jews from adopting gentile practices of inquiring into the future. But what did Moses view as wrong with such practices?

### 8 Above the Law

RABBI REUVEN MANN

Not only judges, but we each must be on guard in our everyday judgements not to succumb to emotional distortions, but seek truth.



**"Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is not to stop questioning."**

ALBERT EINSTEIN

## PERFECTION

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

## Death Over Sin

*It is mandatory upon the whole house of Israel to sanctify this Great Name, for it is said, "And I shall be sanctified among the children of Israel" (Lev. 22:32). (Maimonides, Hilchos Yesodei Hatorah 5:1)*

The 3 cardinal sins are idolatry, murder and adultery. If coerced to violate these or be murdered, one must accept death. How are these 3 unique as compared to the other 610 commands? These relate to the 3 main categories of man:

What is the concept of the command to "Sanctify God's name," Kiddush Hashem? Man certainly cannot do anything to affect God or benefit Him any manner, as the verse says, "If you are righteous, what do you give Him; what does He receive from your hand?" (Job 35:7) So, what is Kiddush Hashem?

- 1) intellect, i.e., his concept of God (idolatry),
- 2) ego (murder), as one kills another due to his intolerance of reality with them present, so one changes reality through murder placing oneself more important than the murdered person,
- 3) and lusts (adultery).

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## PERFECTION



If man violates one of these 3 sins solely for itself (viz. he is not killing in self-defense), he thereby values either ego, idolatry or lusts as greater than God's will. Thereby his life is worthless as his core faculties are ruined. But one who sacrifices his life instead of violating, demonstrates his perfection in the core areas. By sacrificing his life he creates a Kiddush Hashem.

In his Laws of Teshuva, Maimonides speaks of the varied severity of sins. Some commands aim to perfect only a component of man. Therefore, if coerced, a person must violate other commands to spare his life. For in those cases his life is the greater good as he does not corrupt himself in a core measure as is true regarding the 3 cardinal sins. These "minor" sins like abstaining from shaking a lulav or eating pork do not represent a total breakdown of the person. But these 3 commands represent the totality of man; his fundamental values.

Kiddush Hashem is where a person demonstrates the optimal value of God's will: he does not succumb to his ego by murdering an enemy, he does not succumb to his lusts in adultery, and he maintains a true concept of God by not being idolatrous. He sanctifies God's will. Kiddush Hashem also demonstrates how God created the human being with the capacity to follow true values, even at the loss of his life. This second reason displays God's perfected

creation, that He made a being who can follow His will perfectly. It sanctifies God in mankind's eyes as a perfect Creator. Abraham expressed this trait when he attempted to sacrifice Isaac. On the High Holidays we ask God to recall Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac and Isaac's self-sacrifice, as we wish to embrace this level of perfection which earns us yet another year of life. The shofar that we started to blow today is reminiscent of that ram which Abraham offered in place of Isaac. We must aspire to Abraham's perfection as we blow the shofar each morning now.

We now understand that Kiddush Hashem is when one educates mankind on God's perfection. One demonstrates that God's will surpasses all else—even life—and he also demonstrates God's perfection as a creator whose creations can reach the greatest perfection.

We don't live only for ourselves, but we live for the Jewish people, which explains Maimonides' formulation "It is mandatory upon the whole house of Israel to sanctify this Great Name." Meaning, sanctifying God's name pertains to the entire house of Israel. Kiddush Hashem is not for God, but a great opportunity for a perfected person to teach mankind how perfect God is in His creations, and how perfect is His Torah system. We grasp how life has no relevance if we assume false notions of God (idolatry) or if we cave to our instincts of ego or lust. In place of sinning in these 3 areas, we accept death as the better decision. ■

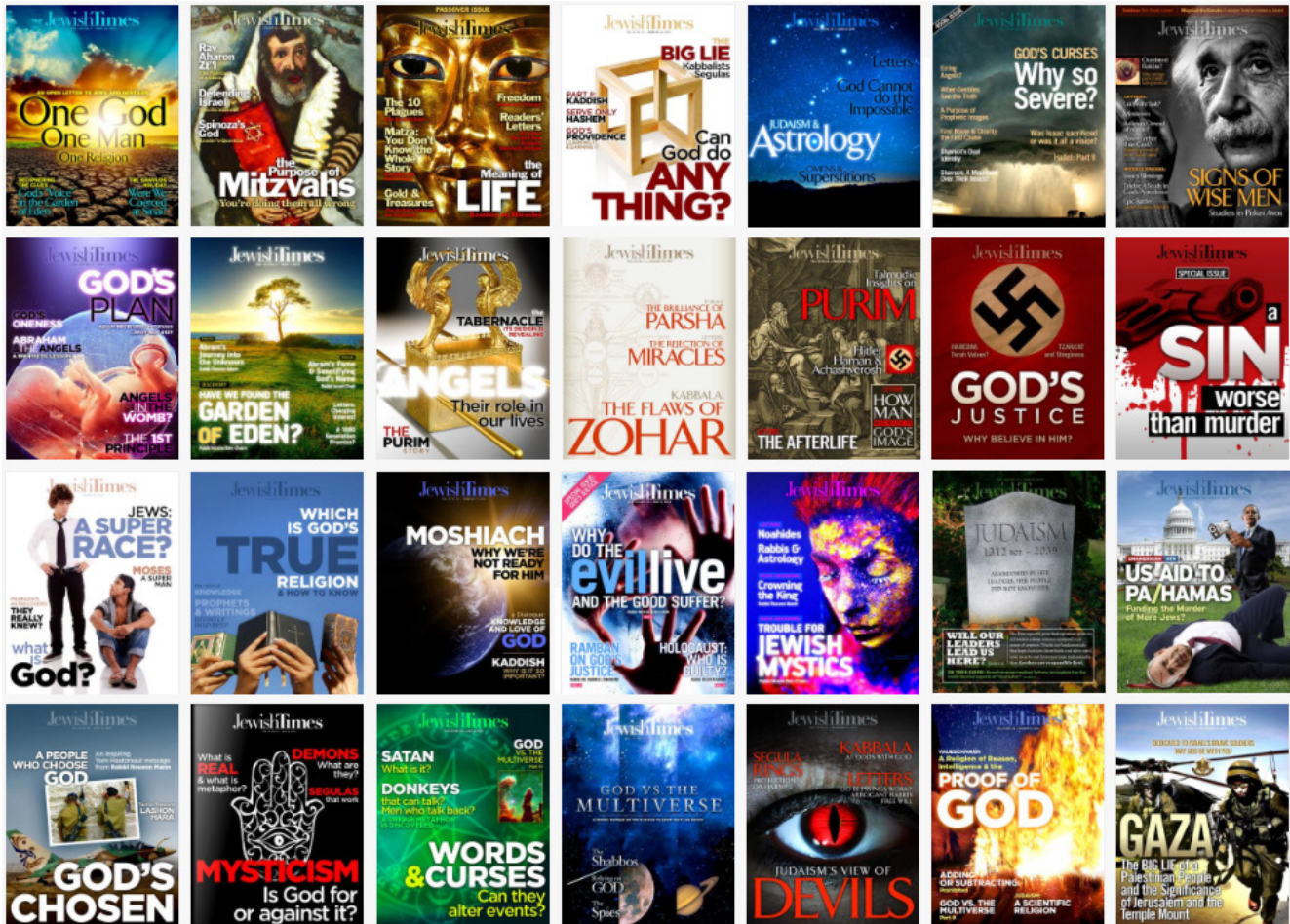
**"The wise man does not expose himself needlessly to danger, since there are few things for which he cares sufficiently; but he is willing, in great crises, to give even his life—knowing that under certain conditions it is not worthwhile to live."**

ARISTOTLE



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# JewishTimes



RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

**M**oses warns the Jews:

*When you enter the land that the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to imitate the erroneous practices of those nations. Let no one be found among you who consigns his son or daughter to the fire, or who is an augur, a soothsayer, a diviner, a sorcerer, one who casts spells, or one who consults ghosts or familiar spirits, or one who inquires of the dead. For anyone who does such things is estranged from the Lord, and it is because of these errors that the Lord your God is dispossessing them before you. You must be wholehearted with the Lord your God. (Deut. 18:9-13)*

Rashi comments:

*THOU SHALT BE PERFECT WITH THE Lord THY GOD — Walk before him whole-heartedly, put your hope in Him and do not attempt to investigate the future, but whatever it may be that comes upon thee, accept it whole-heartedly, and then thou shalt be with Him and become His portion (Sifrei Devarim 173:3).*

What element of these inquiries into the future did Moses deem estrange one from God, that one is no longer “complete” with God?

Why do people seek the future? Seeking astrologers, fortune tellers, inquiring from the dead et al. are based on a false notion and a weak psyche. The false notion is that the future is real—a fixed and knowable

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# THE FUTURE

## DOES IT EXIST?



reality—as real as the present. The weakness of the psyche is insecurity about one’s future. Moses teaches the heathens’ fundamental errors: the belief in “powers” (other than nature) that determine success and failure is false, just as false as the ability to gain foreknowledge without prophecy. With such beliefs, God is no longer the single power guiding the universe. And that the future is fixed, is also erroneous. We know from Torah that sins can forfeit fortune (entering the land immediately was delayed 40 years) and repentance can avert punishment: “Teshuva, prayer and charity avert the evil decree.” A third error of these beliefs is that people feel that there are certain unique individuals such as fortune tellers or soothsayers who possess some knowledge of, control over, or connection with these powers. In fact, it is God’s will that foreknowledge is unavailable to man, as this knowledge would remove free will.

The desire to know the future implies a lack of trust that God can care for you if you follow Him. The desire to know the future is an attempt to know what to prepare for. And preparation means that you view the future as fixed and certain, and you then gauge your actions accordingly. The desire to know the future is a rejection of God’s system of reward and punishment. For if one lives properly, he has nothing to fear. Nothing but God’s objective plans are definite. But man’s subjective framework is in flux. This explains Rashi’s words that if you just look to God and you don’t seek out knowledge of the future then “you will be with God and in His portion.” Meaning, you accept that God alone rules the world: there are no mystical forces guiding reality; there is no charted future for man’s decisions and his subjective fate. Nor are there “special people” who are privy to it, who can reveal it to you...of course for payment.

But the person who trusts that God takes care of His followers does not concern himself with inquiring of the future. He does not think about what the future “beholds,” precisely because he knows his future is not etched in stone. He also knows God is by his side. It is like King David said, “A thousand may fall at your left side, ten thousand at your right, but it shall not reach you” (Psalms 91:7). Many times in Psalms King David refers to the protection of the righteous:

*I turned to the Lord, and He answered me; He saved me from all my terrors. (34:5)  
Here was a lowly man who called, and the Lord listened, and delivered him from all his troubles. (34:7)  
The angel of the Lord camps around those who fear Him and rescues them. (34:8)*

*Fear the Lord, you His consecrated ones, for those who fear Him lack nothing. (34:10)  
Lions have been reduced to starvation, but those who turn to the Lord shall not lack any good. (34:11)  
They cry out, and the Lord hears, and saves them from all their troubles. (34:18)  
Though the misfortunes of the righteous be many, the Lord will save him from them all. (34:20)*

The verses are endless. Rashi on Gen. 15:5 reads as follows:

*God told Abraham: “Go forth from (give up) your astrological speculations, that you have seen by the planets that you will not raise a son; Abram indeed may have no son but Abraham will have a son: Sarai may not bear a child but Sarah will bear. I will give you other names, and your destiny will be changed.”*

Meaning, although nature might determine Abraham and Sarah to be barren, God controls nature and easily overrides it. Astrology here does not refer to mystical forces (which don’t exist), as Abraham rejected such nonsense. Here, astrology refers to Abraham’s understanding of natural law. God taught Abraham that he would alter nature to improve his life. But this concerns nature, which has fixed laws and regarding which a person is correct to assess how it progresses into the future. But what Moses rejects is not nature, but events. His vital lesson is that man’s future life does not yet exist. Seeking to learn the future is like seeking to discover what’s inside an empty box. The future did not happen yet, and thus, it cannot be perceived like the contents of that empty box. And what does not exist, should not be feared. Man’s decisions and his subjective life are not charted. No “special person” can tell you what will be. God alone guides a worthy person’s fate.

*Walk before him whole-heartedly, put your hope in Him and do not attempt to investigate the future, but whatever it may be that comes upon thee, accept it whole-heartedly, and then thou shalt be with Him and become His portion.*

Moses’ lesson is not to follow the erroneous, practices of superstitious and insecure people by seeking what cannot be perceived. There are no powers other than God. Individual man’s future has not occurred yet. Following God leads to a good future. But of course, as God revealed future events (the Flood, Egyptian bondage and redemption, Rivkah’s twins, the Plagues, etc.) the

glaring question is this: Does the future exist or not? As it has not yet transpired, it does not exist, and what is non-existent is not observable. But this is only from man’s perspective of time and observation. However, God doesn’t know matters through the senses; He isn’t physical. God knows all as He is the creator; He is omniscient. As He is also outside of time (He created time), He has no future, so our past, present and future are known by Him equally. This explains Moses words which immediately follow our first quote above:

*Those nations that you are about to dispossess do indeed resort to soothsayers and augurs; to you, however, the Lord your God has not assigned the like. The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet from among your own people, like myself; him you shall heed. (Deut. 18:14,15)*

Moses tells the Jews that, in contrast to the failed heathen attempts at accessing the future, God will communicate the future through a prophet:

*And should you ask yourselves, “How can we know that the oracle was not spoken by the Lord?” [God answers] “If the prophet speaks in the name of the Lord and the oracle does not come true, that oracle was not spoken by the Lord; the prophet has uttered it presumptuously; do not stand in dread of him” (Ibid. 21, 22).*

Thus, in this parsha, Moses lays out the precise formulation of how man should relate to the future. In our subjective lives, we must trust God and accept how our lives progress and not seek foreknowledge, which is unavailable. But for the nation, God will at certain times intervene and communicate the future. But without prophecy, we are to embrace our reality and trust that Torah adherence will secure only goodness. God knows the future, but to us, the future does not exist. Our fates are in our hands. There is no fixed plan as our free will determines our lives. As we change ourselves, the outcome changes. It’s not fixed. Thus, what is non-existent cannot be perceived. But God knows all, and when necessary, He will reveal His plans.

A person must not think that, “As God knows all, He knows if I will be evil or good. As He can’t be wrong, my life is fixed, so I have no free choice.” Maimonides answered this question in Hilchos Teshuva 5:5 saying that we don’t know how God knows, but His knowledge does not remove our free will. We don’t live in God’s world. We must view our reality as humans, which means we determine our future, which does not yet exist, and therefore cannot be known. ■

# Above the LAW

RABBI REUVEN MANN

**T**his week's parsha, Shoftim, deals with creating a judicial system comprised of judges and police whose task is to see that society is governed by mishpat tzedak (righteous justice).

Establishing a community that lives according to just laws that are applied consistently and without exception is a prime objective of Judaism. Yet the Torah is aware of how vulnerable to corruption legal institutions are. The major causes of this defect are money, politics, and ordinary human emotions.

People who occupy positions of power can get things done for you or keep harm away from you. If you are embroiled in a major case involving large sums of money or lengthy prison sentences, you don't want to be on the losing side. So you may then be tempted to seek shady avenues to obtain favorable treatment including the offer of a bribe to the presiding judge.

The Torah therefore prohibits in no uncertain terms any bribe-taking, as Rashi says, (even) "to judge righteously." Even if a party offers money to the judge with no conditions as to how he decides the case, he may not take it. Being beholden is part of human nature. A person is naturally inclined to be favorable to anyone who honors him in any way.

Even if the judge scrupulously avoids bribe-taking, he is still vulnerable to corruption, because he is human and therefore an emotional creature. His deep seated feelings are responsible for "systemic" biases, sympathies, and preferences.

Thus, favoritism is prohibited in the conduct of trials, neither to the poor nor the wealthy. If an altruistic judge presides in a monetary case in which a poor person is pitted against a very wealthy one, he may not tweak things to benefit the needy litigant. He might seek to justify this by saying that both he and the

wealthy party are obligated to support the poor, so why not allow him to win the case and be sustained with dignity?

This form of behavior is strictly prohibited by the Torah. The judge's assignment is not to implement social justice, nor to correct all the ills of society. His only task is to apply the judgments of the Torah in the most fair and accurate manner.

The same is true when a distinguished individual appears to be on the verge of losing a very important case. This would constitute a big embarrassment for him and could negatively impact his business and the livelihoods of many people who depend on him. The judge might think that it would be better to let him win and make up the monies paid by the "losing" side from his own pocket. This constitutes the severe sin of compromising the judiciary system established by the Torah.

Politics is another matter that must be kept out of the courts. Too often, activist judges seek to impose their personal philosophies in

interpretation of the laws. In fact, very often the decisions of certain justices on the Supreme Court are easily predictable. Nowadays, the Court generally consists of two types of people. There are traditional judges who believe their job is to interpret the constitution as honestly and objectively as possible to establish the "intent of the framers."

The other type of justice maintains that the objective is to achieve societal goals via the passage of laws. Thus, they will find ways to justify statutes that are clearly unconstitutional because they believe in the objectives that they promote.

The current trend of interpreting judicial matters to align with political goals is very dangerous. Our democracy is protected by the fact that "no one is above the law," that the rule of law is objective and unbending. When it is chipped away at and distorted to attain the desires of some, the whole system is undermined and corrupted.

The teachings of our Parsha are not only

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relevant to magistrates but to every one of us. We may not be sitting on the bench but on a functional level we are impelled to be judges. We are obliged to make judgements on the character of others such as spouses, children, friends, Synagogues and other organizations.

Indeed, virtually every aspect of our lives entails the need to make moral evaluations and intelligent choices. We therefore must train ourselves to be loyal seekers of truth and to resist the allure of those, such as politicians seeking our vote, to abandon reason and accept their propaganda.

Like the righteous judge every one of us must strive to recognize truth and to resist the "bribes" and appeals to our emotions of those who have selfish agendas. We must isolate and overcome inner impulses and external inducements that impede clear judgement.

Now more than ever the words of our Parsha are crucially relevant: "Judges and police officers shall you place in all your gates...and they shall judge the people with righteous judgement." We have reached the point where the continued welfare of our society and all its members depends on this. May we merit to attain it.

Shabbat shalom. ■

Dear Friends,

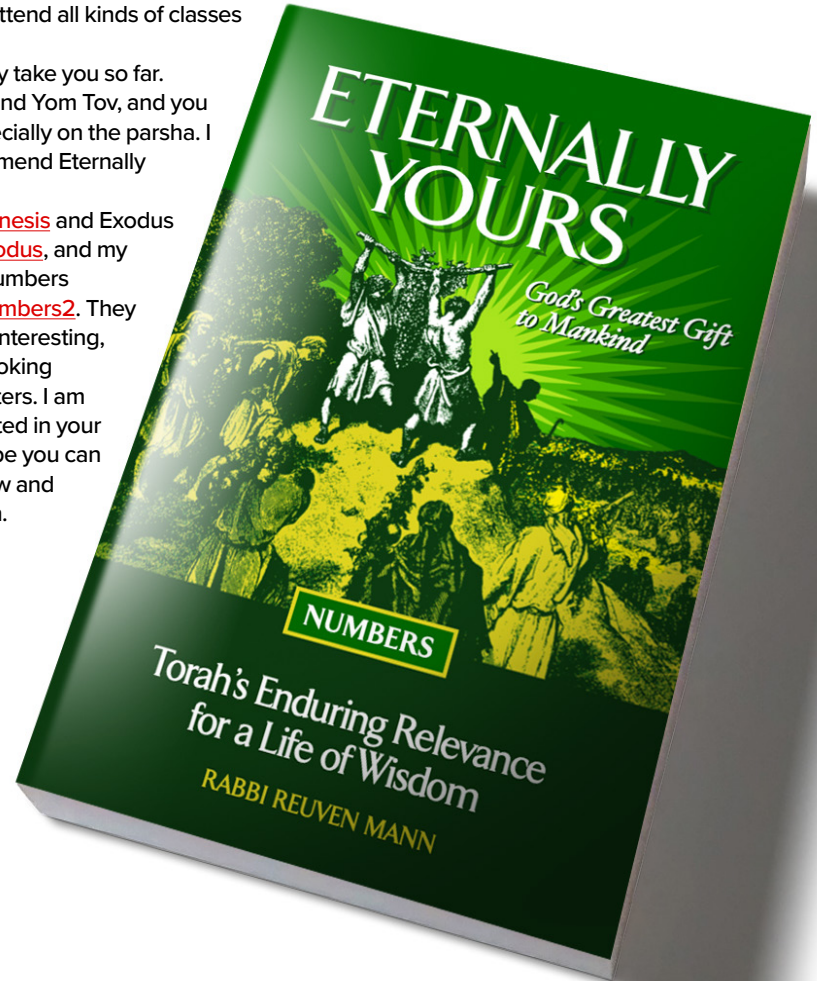
In this time of "social isolation," we should seek ways to avoid boredom by staying occupied with meaningful activity. The world of virtual reality allows us to stay in touch with friends and attend all kinds of classes available online.

But that can only take you so far. Comes Shabbat and Yom Tov, and you need books, especially on the parsha. I personally recommend Eternally Yours on Genesis

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<http://bit.ly/EY-Exodus>, and my newest one on Numbers

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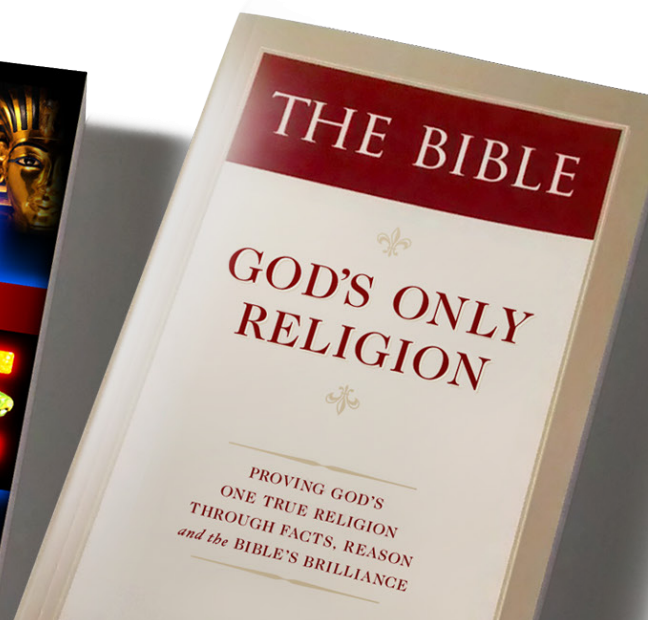
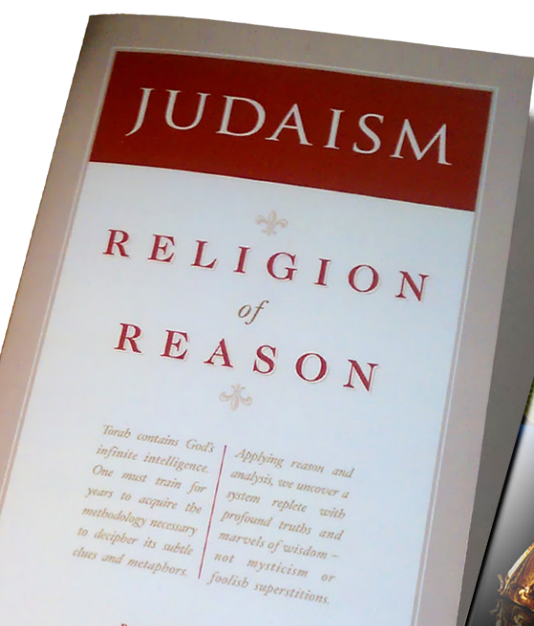
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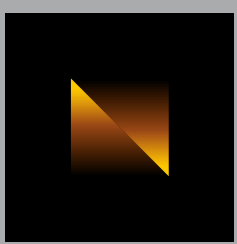
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