

# Jewish Times

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for a Torah  
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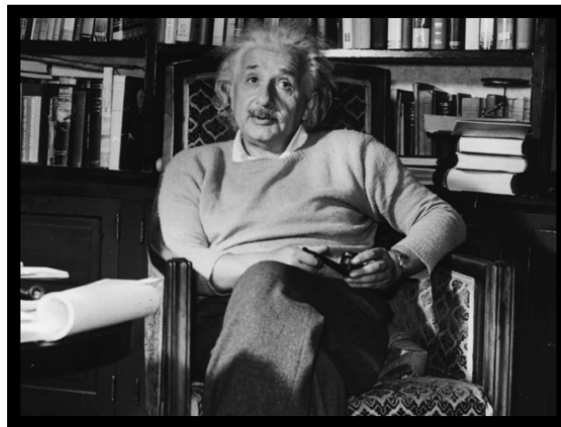
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**| MAN VS. GOD |**

The legendary Albert Einstein upon developing his famous Theory of Relativity, is said to have put his accomplishments into perspective with the following analogy:

"The insight this discovery affords us can only be likened to the improved view of the moon which a roof affords one. For in the larger context of creation and its mystery, my discovery is no less negligible than the proximity that roof has to offer."

**LETTERS**

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

## King vs. Creator

**READER:** When blessing God before eating, I wonder why we refer to God as "king of the world" and not "creator of the world"? He created the food, so creator seems more fitting.

**RABBI:** Rabbi Israel Chait said, "creator" can imply that God created the world and then abandoned it. Whereas "king" refers to God's sustained relationship with man. "King" refers to a greater involvement with

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man, and is therefore a greater praise of God. “The acquirer of heaven and Earth” (Gen. 14:19) means creation is God’s acquisition; he constantly relates to creation.

Maimonides writes as follows:

*All blessings accordingly fall into three kinds; blessings recited when partaking of material enjoyments, blessings recited when fulfilling religious duties, and blessings of thanksgiving, which have the character of praise, thanksgiving and supplication, and the purpose of which is that we should always have the Creator in mind and revere Him (Laws of Blessings 1:4)*

The rabbis coined blessings to make man mindful of God throughout the day. They formulated a standard format: “Blessed are you God, our God, King of the world, who did such and such.” All blessings refer to God’s kingship—which refers to governing man instead of a Creator—because creation is a one-time event, whereas governing refers to God’s continual guidance over man’s affairs. Governing is a greater praise as God performs more, and a more accurate and inclusive blessing is preferred. It a complete praise, and we do not wish to compromise praises of God, so we might have a most complete understanding of Him, as far as humanly possible. So even though it is true that God “created” fruits, providing food comes under a greater and more impressive category of continually governing man throughout time.

**READER:** I see your point. However I'm still struggling to get the idea of creation being inferior to governing man. Mainly because of the idea you have espoused before that the natural laws governing the world were embedded in creation

**RABBI:** Yes, there are natural laws that govern Earth. But there are other laws of providence that govern man, and if he deserves food. This additional providence is more inclusive of God’s greatness than natural law alone. Thus, blessing God not only as Creator, but as governor is a greater praise.

**READER:** I see. I remember one shiur, I don’t remember by who, about the Jews in the desert wanting to go back to Egypt. The gist of the shiur as I understood it was that Jews saw that Egypt was naturally blessed with fertile land and Nile water. Contrast that with the land of Israel which is always under God’s providence, and would yield its produce if the Jews deserved it, but could be harsh if their level dropped. Naturally, man prefers the predictable Egypt (though chance disasters do happen now and then) to the demanding Israel. Since God stated that the land of Israel would continually be under His providence, I guess one can infer that it is higher level

to be under continual providence than natural law?

**RABBI:** Yes, man benefits more when guided by God’s instruction through reward and punishment. But this addresses a different point of “human benefit.” What we are focused on in your original question is which praise of God is greater, “Creator” or “King.” We concluded that king refers to more than creator. “Creator” can imply God made earth and then abandoned it, whereas “King” refers to a constant providence over Earth and man. ■

## Lying for Justice?

**READER:** The police’s main objective is to put people in jail, to bring a strong case to the prosecutor, to use in court against the defendant. They do this by using anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law. Even a word. Even your temperament under questioning. They also do this to break people down to "get them" so they confess, making going to court in a trial non essential but only for sentencing. Often, the questionee is innocent but feels trapped and confesses because he feels he lost. He may have even forgot to ask for a lawyer during questioning. The police also lie to the questionee, telling him for example that a witness saw him leaving the house where the crime took place. This can also fool a young kid who knows nothing about these tactics which are legal for the police to use. Of course, in all fairness, I must say that the police question because they know the person is guilty but they do not have enough to win in court because the defendant will have a lawyer that will raise a reasonable doubt in the mind of the judge or jury. What do you make of all this?

**RABBI:** I am not certain you cite a general rule of police conduct, or is it an exception. Torah endorses tiring the person to force true confessions. But the judges or witnesses cannot lie or mislead. One certainly cannot use tricky methods as honesty must guide all Torah areas including justice, witnesses and all court proceedings. ■

## Meeting Others in Heaven?

Reader: In Olam Haba, will people (souls) recognize parents, siblings, spouses and friends...even great people they lived under, or who were known to the public, like presidents, military people (if righteous), their teachers etc? Saying otherwise is difficult, because an aunt could have been filled with love but

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had not indulged in deep ideas aside from her emotions [and perhaps not inherited the afterlife].

Rabbi: “No eye has seen it God, except You” (Isaiah 64:3). Rashi interprets this to mean, “The prophets prophesied only regarding the Messianic era, but not about the World to Come.” Thus, man is ignorant of the experience of the afterlife. Talmud Sanhedrin says, “All of Israel have a share in the Olam Haba.” Talmud continues to cite those grave sinners who lost their portion. So your family member does not lose Olam Haba, even though she was not heavily engaged in Torah or wisdom. All Israel have a share in Olam Haba. But there are degrees of the afterlife based on one’s perfection and knowledge of God.

The soul departed from a body does not carry the psychological feelings, so the projection that such feelings exist after death is not accurate. Do souls recognize other souls? We do not know. ■

## Is Every Human Death God’s Will?

**STUDENT:** Does God determine when every person dies? Such a significant event would seem to be God’s decision. If so, what of suicide, or Maimonides’ view that providence is proportional to one’s perfection...some people have no providence. Thus, some people die by chance or naturally.

**RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT:** You answered your own question: without following Torah, one has no providence from God. His death is natural, not God’s will. Providence operates in the sphere of human will; Maimonides says it operates through imagination.

*And what happened once Achashverosh awoke? Haman was in the courtyard. This association of the king’s nightmare and Haman’s presence can change the entire way the kingship plays out. In Achashverosh’s mind, this association can drastically change his actions. Chazal interpret this incident as, “Streams of water is the heart of the king in the Lord’s hand; He directs it wherever he desires” (Proverbs 21:1). God’s providence works through man’s unconscious. And this applies to anybody, not just to a king.*

**STUDENT:** Perhaps Maimonides corroborates this point:

*Divine Providence is connected with Divine intellectual influence, and the same beings [man] which are benefited by the latter so as to become intellectual, and to comprehend things comprehensible to rational beings, are also under the control of Divine Providence, which examines all their deeds in order to reward or punish them. It may be by mere chance that a ship goes down with all her contents or the roof of a house falls upon those within; but it is not due to chance, according to our view, that in the one instance the men went into the ship, or remained in the house in the other instance: it is due to the will of God, and is in accordance with the justice of His judgments, the method of which our mind is incapable of understanding (Guide, book III chap xvii).*


Maimonides states “Divine Providence is connected with Divine intellectual influence.” Meaning, God’s providence relates to man, not inanimate or animal creations. It is amazing that the Megilla, Proverbs and Maimonides all share the same principle: providence operates in the sphere of human will. ■

## Purpose of Mitzvah

**READER:** Is there benefit to wearing tzitzis while asleep?

**RABBI:** Just as the mitzvah is to “don” tefillin, this mitzvah is to “wrap” oneself in tzitzis, which cannot be done when awaking if one sleeps wearing tzitzis. One forfeits the daily mitzvah. The very wrapping is the mitzvah and has a perfecting quality. “Wearing” has 2 parts: enrobing, and maintaining the garment on one’s body. God’s will is that man daily goes through the act of dressing, and tzitzis should form part of man enrobing himself.

Secondly, mitzvah intends to perfect man, and this only occurs when man’s mind is engaged. This cannot occur during sleep, so sleeping with tzitzis is useless. ■



# Man

## Designed for a Torah Lifestyle

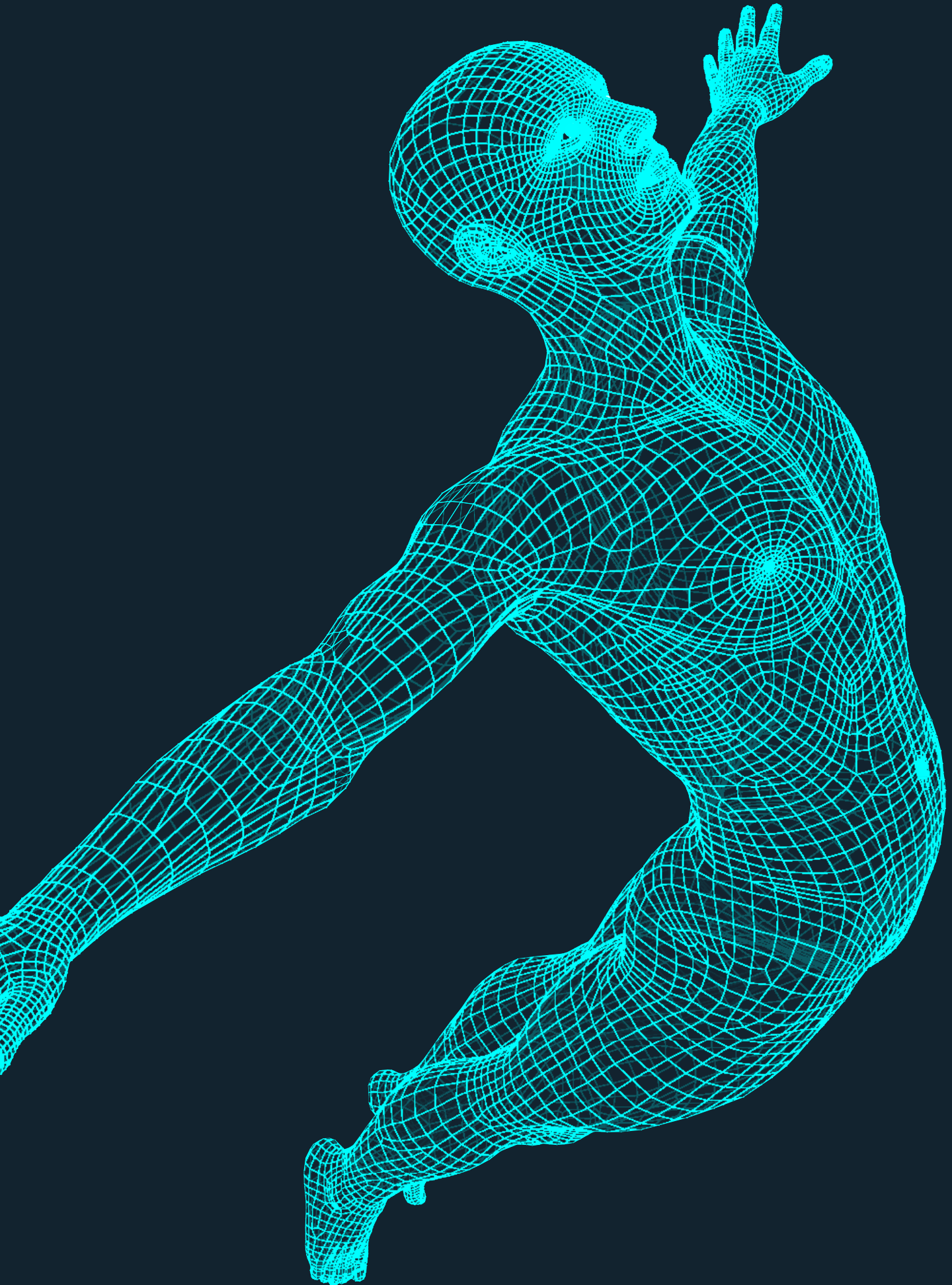
Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim

**M**en speak lies to one another; their speech is smooth; they talk with two parts of their heart (Psalms 12:3)  
May God cut off all smooth speakers... (Psalms 12:4).

In 12:3 three King David identifies 3 flaws: 1) men lie, 2) their speech is smooth and cunning, and 3) they feel one way in their heart but speak another way with their mouths; they lie based on their emotional make up, their divisive hearts. In 12:4, King David says God should cut off of people, but only due to 1 of these 3 flaws. What is significant about smooth speech that it alone demands they should be killed?

The answer is that the first flaw of lying is a single, one-time act, not reflecting a person's total assessment. And a divided heart is only a description of the emotional design, the capacity to be divisive, itself not warranting destruction of the person. But smooth speech describes a corrupted "state": the person deteriorated to a level so corrupt. It is this state that demands his death. It is his regressive level that yields no salvation and requires Gods justice. It's not the single act of lying that warrants one's death, but his regression to a despicable corrupt status that earns his death. Similarly, God says to Abraham, "And your seed shall return here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete" (Gen. 15:16). Here, God tells Abraham about his children's return to Israel: it is contingent on the Amorites' regression to a level of sin warranting annihilation. Thus, we see another expression of this principle that when man sinks to a certain status of corruption, this warrants his death.

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Talmud Archin 15b states as follows:

*Rabbi Yochanan says in the name of Rabbi Yosei ben Zimra, "What is the meaning of that which is written: 'What shall be given to you, and what more shall be done for you, you deceitful tongue?' (Psalms 120:3) [This means] the Holy One, Blessed be He said to the tongue: "All the other limbs of a person are upright, but you are lying horizontally [at rest]. All the other limbs of a person are external, but you are internal [restricted]. And moreover, I have surrounded you with two walls [to stop your evil speech], one of bone [teeth] and one of flesh [lips]. What more shall be given to you and what more shall be done for you, to prevent you from speaking in a deceitful manner, you tongue?"*

We derive an amazing lesson from here. Unlike animal life, the human body is not designed solely for procreation and self preservation. Here, the Talmud tells us that God designed man to be most in line with Torah principles, avoiding evil speech. He created the tongue in a reclined state to indicate that it should not be used as much as other limbs that are vertical. And we see this is so because man cannot function a moment without being able to walk and use his arms and stand upright. These crucial limbs are all designed in a vertical "active" state because of their essential movements at all times. But speech is not an absolute

necessity. And even more so, philosophers have taught that one's speech should be greatly limited. This is because man uses his speech to satisfy his instinctual drives.

This Talmudic portion also states that God placed the tongue internally, whereas all other limbs are external, teaching the same lesson: God created the tongue in a design indicating it must be contained. And another beautiful idea here is that God created two walls around the tongue: teeth and lips. This teaches a marvelous idea: speech requires the coordination of 3 body parts, the tongue, the teeth, and lips. This means that there is not as much ease in speech which requires coordination of 3 body parts, while all other activities require only 1 limb, such as the hand and the foot. Thus, God made it more difficult for man to speak than to perform other activities, and this is to restrict evil speech. God's design of the human being is in line with following Torah principles. The rabbi say, "God looked at the Torah and created the world." The meaning is the Torah is the blueprint for creation and for man.

Maimonides says evil speech corresponds to the 3 deadly sins of murder, adultery, and idolatry (Hilchos Dayos 7:3). These are sins for which one must sacrifice his life instead of transgressing. This being the case, why is there no principle that one should die instead of speaking evil?

This is because evil speech does not embody the full expression of a corrupt personality. Idolatry is a full expression of denying reality, adultery is a full expression

of caving into the most basic lust, and murder is the full expression of aggression. But evil speech partakes of only a sublimated form, not the full emotional gratification. Through evil speech one recreates a new reality in his mind, he gives into instinctual drives, and he expresses aggression. But in none of these 3 speech motivations is there a complete gratification and therefore not a complete corruption. Therefore one does not need to sacrifice his life if forced to speak evil. Speech is not a completely unbridled expression.

*Rabbi Yochanan says in the name of Rabbi Yosei ben Zimra: "Anyone who speaks malicious speech is considered as though he denied the fundamental belief in God. As it is stated: "Who have said: We will make our tongue mighty; our lips are with us: Who will lord over us?!" (Psalms 12:5).*

Here we find an opposite sentiment, that evil speech is a denial of God, whereas the 3 deadly sins are not. This is because with speech, King David says in Psalms that one's intent is to remove any master, "Who will Lord over us?!" One's egomania expressed through full control of his speech rejects God. But adultery is not about rebelling against one's master, and neither is murder. And even in idolatry, one is not denying God's existence but he seeks to serve God through sub-deities or created forms. This is stated clearly in Jeremiah 10:7: "Who would not fear you King of nations?" ■





# Rabbis' Mistakes

RABBIMOSHE BEN-CHAIM



**E**ven Moses, Samuel and Einstein made errors, so we cannot deify today's rabbis as infallible. This is certainly true when today's rabbis argue: 2 opposing opinions cannot both be correct.

A young man found himself torn between divergent rabbinical opinions. One rabbi went so far as to encourage his breakup with his girlfriend of five months because the girl wore a sleeveless shirt. Dress alone is no grounds to assess one's value. And such advice in a vacuum, without knowing the girl's fine traits is destructive. The error is the rabbi's focus on over-religious notions, not on assessing a complete personality, and not on Torah values.

Human value refers to the inside of a person, not to one's wardrobe. It is absurd to suggest that Torah values a person based on clothing. And this is not even a modesty issue because today sleeveless is accepted normal dress by most women; most women do not view sleeveless as a sexual matter. Even if it violates a Torah law in modesty, this should not become a relationship issue. Torah does not make superficial human assessments. If it is proper for a man to refrain from divorcing this wife who was alone with another man without performing intercourse, certainly man should not divorce his wife or leave his girlfriend based on dress.

One leading rabbi explained that after so many women started wearing slacks, slacks were no longer male clothing, but are now appropriate for both genders. Thus, there was no longer any prohibition for a woman to wear slacks, provided they were modest. Styles change and Torah recognizes the change. Earrings used to be worn by both genders, then this changed in the western world to be solely a female adornment, and now men have returned to wearing earrings; earrings are no longer female dress. Male vs. female dress is not defined by observant Jews, but by the gender.

Today's Jewish landscape is riddled with corrupt philosophies, all of which veer from God's words. Torah is the authoritative source from where we must gauge all of our values and opinions. Contemporary rabbis with foolishness and destructive notions do not form a valid Torah view. People think that if a rabbi talks, that a real Torah value has been expressed. A rabbi's words only have value when they are rooted in Torah or Talmud sources, not personal

opinions or ludicrous notions cloaked as religious. Without a source, a rabbi's words have no value. No human has absolute authority, or infallibility. Furthermore, a rabbi has no jurisdiction outside Torah matters: "You shall act in accordance with their Torah instructions..." (Deut 17:11). Thus, in matters other than Torah we have no obligation to listen to a rabbi.

Today's Jewish world unfortunately values superstition over intelligence, whereas our greatest rabbis, namely Maimonides, Sforno, Ibn Ezra and Moses all followed only what is reasonable. Mysticism does not register on any faculty that verifies reality. Mysticism appeals to a person's superstitions as much as idolatry, because it is a form of idolatry. Maimonides states that man must accept as true only one of three matters: 1) that which he senses with his eyes, ears or his touch, 2) that which his mind demands to be true like  $2+2=4$ , and 3) that which man receives from the rabbis, namely Torah. Other than these three matters, Maimonides says man must not accept any position. This would demand that the person reject any mystical belief. Similarly, a person must reject opinions that are contrary to the Torah or not found in the Torah or our Talmud. To tell a boy to break up with a girl who is fine in character but goes sleeveless, is absurd. The girl has her life ahead of her to perfect herself and to dress more modestly. But more important in a relationship is compatibility and values. No two people agree on everything, and since this girl is a fine character and wants this young man to be her husband, and wants to help him with his decisions to be more rational, I'm delighted this young man has found such a fine young girl.

In today's Jewish landscape there are divergent rabbinical opinions, that cannot be called "Torah" opinions because they have no source in Torah. We just read that Boaz married Ruth the Moabite, and in today's Jewish world there are Jewish groups that would not accept a dedicated convert. What a shame for the group and what a shame for the girl. Joseph, Moses, Joshua and King Solomon all married converts.

As a rule, follow God and Moses' Torah, and Talmudic rabbis. As a rule, never accept an opinion lacking a source in Torah verses or Talmud. ■



# We Don't Pray Towards Jerusalem

Rabbi Uri Pilichowski

I found an interesting description of Jerusalem and the Western Wall on a tourist website: “The Western Wall is the most religious site in the world for the Jewish people. Located in the Old City of Jerusalem, it is the western support wall of the Temple Mount. It is one of the major highlights in any tour of the Old City.” This seems to be an apt description of the Kotel, except that it’s wrong. The most “religious site” for the Jewish people isn’t the Western Wall – it’s the Temple Mount that sits behind the wall.

Fifty-five years ago, the Jewish people reunited the city of Jerusalem. In an interview with Providence Magazine, former Ambassador Michael Oren talked about the Six-Day War that reunited Jerusalem, “Even throughout the war, the Israeli government kept sending messages to the Jordanians saying that if they stopped fighting the Israelis would stop fighting. On the morning of June 7, Prime Minister Eshkol sends a message to Hussein saying, ‘Stop fighting and enter peace talks and we won’t even take the Old City.’ Think about that. On Jerusalem Day, we walk through the Old City with flags, celebrating the reunification. In 1967, the Israeli government was willing to forgo, willing to forfeit, that historic reunification of the Jewish people with its holiest sites in order to have peace with one Arab country. King Hussein never responds. Israeli paratroopers enter the Old City at about 9 a.m. Two hours later they report, ‘The Temple Mount is in our hands,’ and the war is essentially over on the Jordanian front.”

The religious Zionist community celebrates the 28th of Iyar as “Yom Yerusha-

layim.” They consider the day no less miraculous than Chanukah. They recite special prayers and have a parade through the streets of Jerusalem. With a few exceptions, the day hasn’t really caught on with communities outside of Israel’s religious Zionist community. Yom Yerushalayim isn’t a day off for students or companies like Yom Ha’atzmaut (Israeli Independence Day).

It’s clear that Jerusalem plays a central role in every Israeli’s life. Israel’s first prime minister, David Ben Gurion often spoke about Jerusalem. He made three memorable statements about Jerusalem that demonstrate the importance of Jerusalem to Israel. “No city in the world, not even Athens or Rome, ever played as great a role in the life of a nation for so long a time, as Jerusalem has done in the life of the Jewish people.” He also said, “If the Land of Israel is the heart of the Jewish nation, then Jerusalem is its heart of hearts.” Jerusalem is indivisible from Israel, “We regard it as our duty to declare that Jewish Jerusalem is an organic and inseparable part of the State of Israel, as it is an inseparable part of the history of Israel, of the faith of Israel.”

Over two thousand years ago King Solomon said, “[The Jewish people] turn back to You with all their heart and soul, in the land of the enemies who have carried them off, and they pray to You in the direction of their land which You gave to their fathers, of the city which You have chosen, and of the House which I have built to Your name.” The Talmud noted the direction the Jews prayed in and taught, “One who was standing in prayer in the Diaspora, should focus his heart toward Eretz Yisrael.” Many knowledgeable people assume Jews around the world pray

towards Israel, and some assume more, that Jews pray towards Jerusalem. Like the quote from the website quoted above, that isn’t the entire picture.

Jews don’t pray towards Israel or Jerusalem. The complete teaching in the Talmud, which Maimonides wrote goes back to the times of Moses, stated, “One standing in Eretz Yisrael, should focus his heart towards Jerusalem, one standing in Jerusalem, should focus his heart towards the Temple, and one standing in the Temple, should focus his heart toward the Holy of Holies. Consequently, one standing in prayer in the east turns to face west, and one standing in the west, turns to face east. One standing in the south, turns to face north, and one standing in the north, turns to face south; all of the people of Israel find themselves focusing their hearts toward one place, the Holy of Holies in the Temple.” Jews don’t pray towards Israel or Jerusalem; they pray towards the Temple. At a time when the Temple isn’t standing, they pray towards the place it once stood, the Temple Mount.

The most sacred place for the Jewish people isn’t Jerusalem or the Western Wall, it’s the Temple Mount. There is a significant distinction between the two locations. Outsiders often claim the Jewish people can walk away from the Temple Mount as long as they keep the Western Wall and its plaza. The claim that Jews are just provoking anger by praying on the Temple Mount is made with a pure heart but is based on a lack of awareness of how important the Temple Mount is to the Jewish people. As the Jewish people commemorate the reunification of Jerusalem it’s important to note the most sacred part of the city. ■

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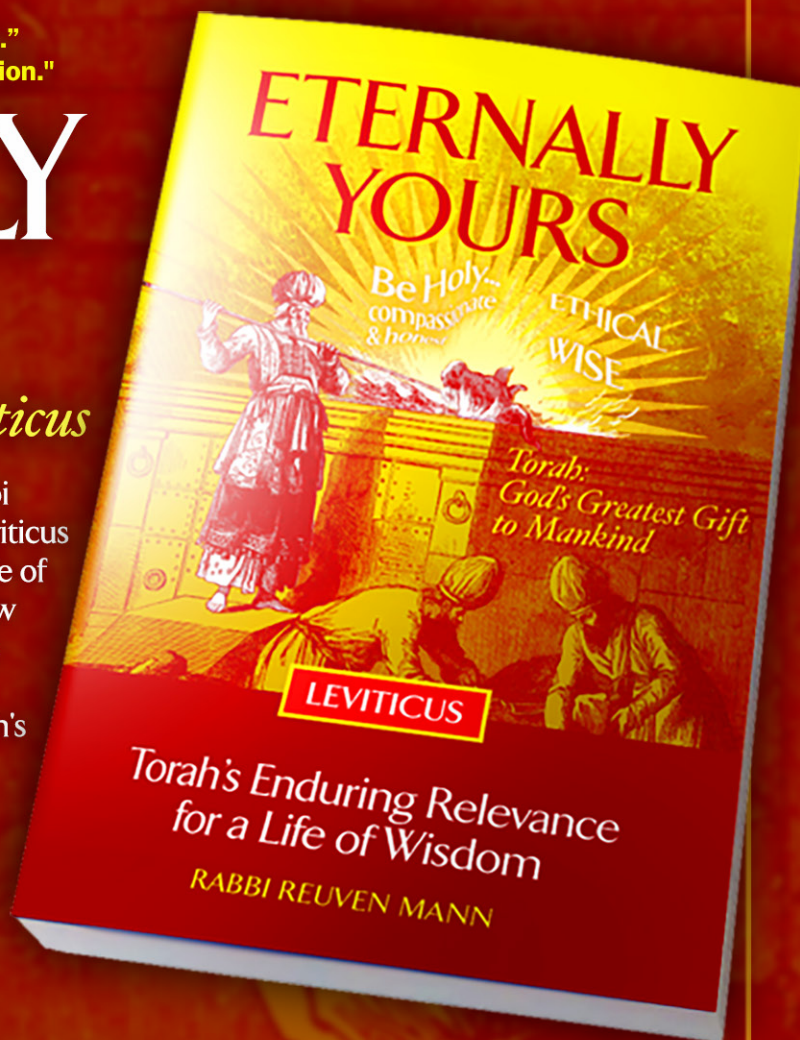
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CONDÉ NAST



In this week's Parsha, BeHa'alotecha, final preparations are made for the journey to the Promised Land. We can detect a great deal of tension among the people, which expressed itself in strange ways.

Take, for example, the matter of their diet. It was evident from the outset that a source of food for the nation would be needed. Hashem responded with the provision of the Manna, a specially designed delicacy, which awaited them every morning outside their tents.

In addition to this, at certain times, Hashem would bring them the Slav, which was a type of quail. Let us also remember that the Jews left Egypt with all of their livestock, which could have been used to satisfy any craving for meat. So what was the problem?

Apparently, the difficulty was that they remembered just how good it had been in Egypt:

*The rabble that was among them cultivated a craving, and the Children of Israel also wept once more, and said, "Who will feed us meat? We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt free of charge; the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic. But now, our life is parched, there is nothing; we have nothing to look forward to but the manna" (BaMidbar 11:4-6).*

Is it possible that, looking back, the Jews waxed nostalgic over the wonderful conditions of their enslavement in comparison with their deprived state of dependency on the manna?

The narrative itself intercedes in order to put things in perspective:

*Now, the manna was like a coriander seed; and its color was like the color of Bedolach. The people would stroll and gather it, and grind it in a mill or pound it in a mortar and cook it in a pot or make it into cakes; and its taste was like the taste of dough mixed with oil. When the dew descended upon the camp at night; the manna would descend upon it" (BaMidbar 11:7-9).*

Given that this was the case, what was the basis for their dissatisfaction with their culinary regimen?

Rashi provides an explanation. He takes issue with their depiction of the food in Egypt as being gratis:

Is it possible, he asks, that the Egyptians who wouldn't even give them straw in order to make bricks would be so generous in

providing tasty, complimentary food? What then is the meaning of "free"? Free from the Mitzvot.

Thus, their psychological state was one of discontent. They compared their current condition of "enslavement to Hashem" with the previous situation in Egypt. In both cases they were forced to do certain things in exchange for which they were fed, and guess what: The fare in Egypt was more versatile and delicious than that which they received in the wilderness!

There are significant lessons to be learned here. According to Rashi's interpretation, it was not the quality of the meals that was at issue. Rather, the discontent of the people with Torah was being displaced onto the food plan.

We see from this, that self-knowledge is a very important thing. When a person experiences extreme unhappiness with something which is actually good for him, he should look within himself and seek out the real cause of his frustration.

Is it possible that they couldn't appreciate all the bounty that Hashem had provided for them? Had they so quickly forgotten all the miracles that He had performed for them; to gain their freedom, destroy their enemies and provide them with all their needs in the wilderness?

Maybe, at first glance, the Mitzvot did appear as some sort of enslavement, but that was only a superficial impression. They should have realized that with steady and intense learning they would experience the great beauty and enlightenment of the wondrous ideas of Torah.

And they should have had some gratitude, and not acted as though everything was coming to them. We should not underestimate the great significance of expressing appreciation. A simple "thank you" for the manna would have been very much in order. It would have put things in an entirely different light and quelled any notions of complaining. We must always remember the great Mitzvah of Hakarat HaTov (recognition of the good). It will take us a very long way.

Shabbat Shalom. ■

Dear Friends,

My newest book, "Eternally Yours: G-d's Greatest Gift To Mankind" (VaYikra) was recently published, and is now available at: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09SHRXS3Q>

I hope that my essays will enhance your reading and study of the Book of VaYikra and would greatly appreciate a brief review on Amazon.com.

—Rabbi Reuven Mann

## PARSHA

# A Simple Thank You Would Be Nice

Rabbi Reuven Mann



**T**he parsha of Behaalotecha relates the Jewish people's rejection of the manna that God provided for them in the desert, and describes their craving for meat. The parsha states (BaMidbar 10:4-8):

*4. But the multitude among them began to have strong cravings. Then even the children of Israel once again began to cry, and they said, "Who will feed us meat? 5. We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt free of charge, the cucumbers, the watermelons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. 6. But now, our bodies are dried out, for there is nothing at all; we have nothing but manna to look at." 7. Now the manna was like coriander seed, and its appearance was like the appearance of crystal. 8. The people walked about and gathered it. Then they ground it in a mill or crushed it in a mortar, cooked it in a pot and made it into cakes. It had a taste like the taste of oil cake.*

God responds to this request: (Vayikra 10:19-20):

*19. You shall eat it not one day, not two days, not five days, not ten days, and not twenty days. 20. But even for a full month until it comes out your nose and nauseates you. Because you have despised the Lord Who is among you, and you cried before Him, saying, "Why did we ever leave Egypt?"*

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik ("The Rav") explains in his essay "The Emergence of Ethical Man" that the language used by God in response to this "meat-craving" reflects a fundamental truth regarding the preciousness

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PARSHA

# Torah's Contempt for Meat Craving

Rabbi Richard Borah

of all life and the negative Torah perspective on the taking of animal life for pleasure. The Rav states: "So much disdain and contempt we find in no other story. The insistence upon flesh, this lusty carnal desire, arouses divine wrath". The eating of flesh, the Rav explains, is termed "ta-avah"-lust, an illicit demand".

The Rav goes on to explain that there is an equivalence that exists among all life and, in this regard, the slaying of any life is an act of violation. However, Judaism allows, and even requires the slaying of animals and the eating of meat within its halachic structure. The Rav clarifies:

*Animal hunters and flesh-eaters are people that lust. Of course, it is legalized, approved. Yet it is classified as taavah, lust, repulsive and brutish. The real motif that prompts such an unquestionable antagonism toward slaying of animals is the aboriginal Jewish thought that conceives man on a natural-vegetant-animal plane. Particularly man and animal are almost identical in their organic dynamics that is equated with life, and there is no justifiable reason why one life should fall prey to another. Why should a cunning intelligence that granted man dominion over his fellow animals also give him license to kill? (The Emergence of Ethical Man: page 37)*

In this essay the Rav goes on to explain that the original dispensation of the Jew's restriction on eating meat was limited to only sacrificial meat. The Jews, while in the desert, were required to maintain a level of holiness that would abhor the simple killing and eating of animal flesh to satisfy hunger and experience the pleasure of eating meat. Only when this slaughter and eating was connected to the sacrificial act of the Mishkan (sanctuary) was it sanctified. The Rav states:

*Non-ceremonial taking of animal life was forbidden. Only sacrificial killing of an animal was sanctioned: "To the end that the children of Israel may bring their sacrifices, which they offer in the open field, that they may bring them to the Lord, to the door of the Tent of Meeting, to the priest and offer them for peace offerings to the Lord" (Vayikra:17:6). The animal is designated by divine law as an offering to God." (page 38).*

The Rav goes on to explain that this restriction was modified when the Temple worship was centralized in Israel. This central location created too great a hardship for those Jews living far from its location. But even in stating this removal of the restriction of eating only sacrificial meat, the Rav points out, the term "te-avah" (lust desire) is used. "When the Lord your God shall enlarge your borders, as He promised you, and... you long to eat meat; you may eat meat to your heart's desire (te'avah nafsheha)" (Devarim:12:20-21). The implication being that a Jew's eating meat, though now permissible, has its source in a contemptible part of his nature.

Maimonides ("The Rambam") makes mention of the holiday requirement to eat meat along with drinking wine in the Mishneh Torah in the Laws of Yom Tovim (6:17-18). He states:

*On these days, a person is obligated to be happy and in good spirits...Men should eat meat and drink wine, for there is no happiness without partaking of meat, nor happiness without partaking of wine.*

The Rambam, in stating the requirement of meat and wine for a person to truly rejoice, explains that the eating of meat, for men at least, is at the core of the state of rejoicing. The Rambam's statement can be seen as in consonance with the position of the Rav in the following way: For man to be "mesamayach" (in a state of true rejoicing) all elements of his being must be satiated. This includes those which elements of the human personality that have their source in the appetitive, aggressive, lustful area, as well as his desire for emes (truth) and mishpat (justice). The eating of meat (and drinking of wine) are the optimal means of satiating these lustful parts of man's nature and so are not only permitted, but required for proper whole-hearted rejoicing on the Yom Tov.

What the Torah disdains, it seems to me, is the isolated desire and indulgence in the enjoyment of meat as an isolated craving and pleasure. Today, although there is no sanctuary or sacrificial altar, we can still wed the eating of meat with religious celebration or, at the very least, to social engagements and gatherings. But to eat meat as an isolated act, solely to satisfy one's craving for its pleasures would still reflect an unrefined and unworthy type of physical indulgence from the Torah's perspective. ■



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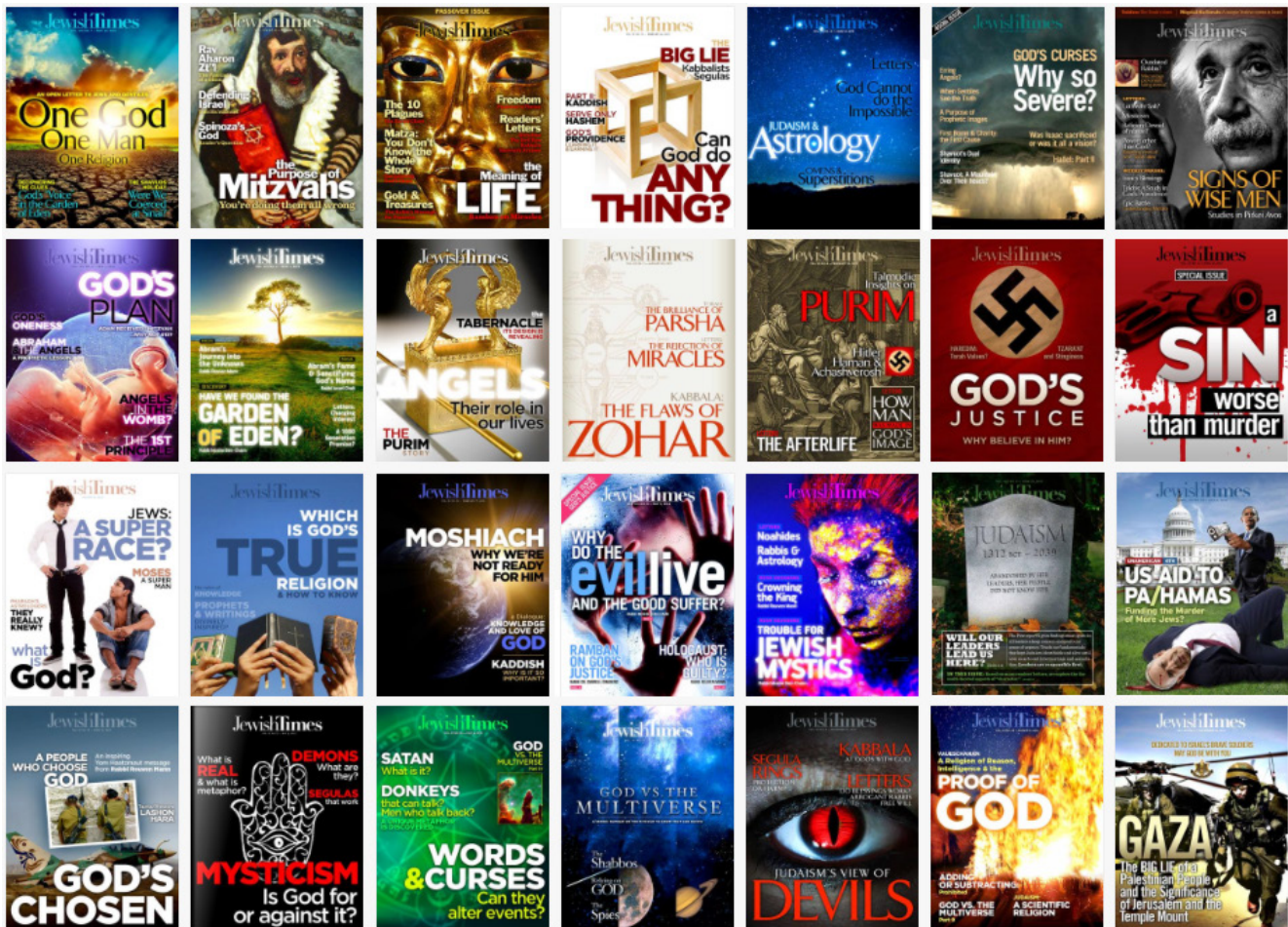
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