

SPECIAL ARTICLE:

ARE ALL RELIGIONS CORRECT?

Suggested reading for those uninitiated to Judaism's tenets. Written in easy language for younger people.

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JewishTimes

Volume II, No. 36...June 20, 2003

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Beha-alotekcha**

RABBI BERNARD FOX

“And there were men that were defiled through contact with the dead. They were not able to perform the Pesach offering on that day. And they approached Moshe and Ahron.” (BeMidbar 9:6)

On the first anniversary of Bnai Yisrael's travels exodus from Egypt

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40 Years and the Manna

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

In order to understand the concepts in the manna, we must understand the events immediately preceding its appearance: The Jews traveled to Israel, and were promised its inheritance by God. No doubts were presented to them regarding their ability to conquer the land. While treading Israel's borders, the people desired to send spies to evaluate the land. This was not commanded by God or Moses. Moses consented to this, for he desired that they see there is nothing to hide. Moses hoped the Jews would abandon their wish to spy the land upon seeing Moses' own conviction that all their requests were complied with forthright (Rashi). However, the Jews insisted and spied the land. After their return forty days later, ten of the twelve spies incited a riot. They terrified the people with the spread of a defeatist position - they felt the current inhabitants were invincible, thereby denying God's word. Along with their heretic opinions and projections, they decided not to take on the land.

Due to the Jew's own fears instigated by the spies, they rebelled against God. This rebellion clearly demonstrated

their disbelief in God's age old promise to Abraham that they would receive the land. The Jews were then sentenced to roam the desert for forty years until the last of the rebellious people perished.

Question: If the Jews simply did not deserve Israel, why didn't God allow them to reach another land until the sinners died out? What was the reason God desired the Jews to roam the desert for forty years?

I believe the answer is that the crime the of the Jews was a basic one. Their conviction of how reality operates was based on trust in their own abilities, and nothing else. What is amazing is that after witnessing tremendous miracles in Egypt and at the Red Sea, the Jews still harbored disbelief in God. They felt God wanted to "kill them in the desert". This confirms Maimonides' words that the miracles leave doubt in one's heart. The Jews didn't believe Moses due to miracles. The reason being, miracles lose their significance with heir increased frequency. God desired to address the Jews' disbelief. The method utilized by God shows the level of intricacy and depth in God's system of justice.

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40 Years and the Manna

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

(continued from page 1)

God forced the Jews into a situation where they were solely dependent upon Him for their very existence in the desert. He desired to train them in the ways of believing His word. God chose to raise the Jews above a simplistic existence. He wished to address their problem by raising them from a reality of self sufficiency (where God plays little or no role), to the true reality where God's existence is primary in all equations - a reality where God's word is 'more real' than the physical reality the Jews currently banked on exclusively. God accomplished this in a number of ways:

1) God sustained the appearance of the miraculous manna.

The aspect of a miraculous food removed 'understanding' from the Jews regarding the manna's properties. Had He fed them vegetation or animal products, there would be a feeling of familiarity and reliance on the natural procurement of these foods. This would afford security and detract from God's goal of forcing them to rely on Him alone. God therefore created a "miracle food" which by its very name "manna" (which means "what is it") the Jews could not find any security. It is also something "their fathers were unfamiliar with".(Deut. 8:3) This alien feeling about the manna contributed to their feelings of insecurity in themselves, a prerequisite for redirecting their need for security towards God. We learn from the words in Deuteronomy that people are comfortable with that which their forefathers spoke of. The manna did not carry this sense.

2) God limited the manna's "shelf life" to one day and it would rot if left for the next day:

This was done to remove any security in the manna itself. Therefore, the essence of the manna must include temporary shelf life. No emotional security could be attached to it.

3) God caused it to melt each day as the sun warmed it.

Seeing the manna lying on the ground would provoke the feeling of security; "it is here all the time." This is another area in which the Jews would have sought security. Security in the physical was their weakness, which until this point, caused them to sin. Their need for physical security would have to be redirected to security in God alone.

4) God caused the manna to double in size once it was in their homes Friday evening.

On Friday, the Jews were commanded to gather enough for that day. Although the manna

did not fall on Shabbos, they would have sustenance through the Shabbos. When they did as they were commanded they found that the manna miraculously doubled in size, to sustain them (Exod. 16:5 -Rashi). Their complete confidence would be in God's word. The manna fell each of the 6 weekdays with just enough for each day, as God promised. Left over manna would become wormy and rot, again, to combat self sufficiency. Not so on Shabbos. Manna leftover from Friday through Shabbos remained fresh. The purpose of this was again, to force the Jews to believe more in God's word than in physical reality and their own securities. All the miracles of the manna described above were to engender faith in the word of God. This integral concept of faith in God's word applies today. We demonstrate this idea by our abstinence in all work on the Shabbos. By doing so, we demonstrate conviction that abstention from work on one day does not threaten our existence and livelihood. God will take care of us, however He does so, even though we may not understand how.

In Deuteronomy 8:3, we read: "He (God) afflicted you and hungered you and fed you the manna, which you didn't know and your fathers didn't know, to show you that not on bread alone does man live, but by all that comes from God's mouth does man live."

The word "alone" teaches us that man should live primarily in accordance with natural law. The purpose of the manna was to show that man's reality - the way for "man to live" - is in the reality of God's word, "but by all that comes from God's mouth does man live." It is clear from this verse that man's existence in the wilderness for forty years was meant to direct his dependency on God alone. The Rashbam also states this when he says, "...you had no "bread in your basket" but your lives were dependent upon Heaven each day".

We see that God's multifaceted manna-plan was required to first strip the Jews of their securities placed in the physical and in their own might, and secondly, to permeate the Jews with belief in God. The manna was used to address those areas where he seeks security. Living in the desert for forty years gave the Jews an opportunity to abandon their flawed emotion of self trust. This was a great blessing. Their need to follow only that which was intelligible was replaced with trust in God, His word, and His system of divine providence. ■

Moshe's Appeal to Yisro

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Upon the Jews' initial entrance into Israel, Moshe addresses his father in law as follows: (Numbers, 10:29) (29) "Moshe said to Chovav, son of Reuale the Midianite, father in law of Moshe, 'we are traveling to the place, upon which God said I will give it to you,...Go with us and there will be done good to you, as God has spoken good for Israel. (30) Chovav said to Moshe, 'I will not go, unto my land and my birthplace I will go'. (31) Moshe said, 'please do not forsake us in as much as you know our travels in the desert, and you will be to us as eyes. (32) And when you go with us, that good which God will do unto us, He will do unto you.'"

Why was Moshe addressing his father in law at this time? Did Moshe sense in Chovav some hesitation to remain with the people of Israel? What was Moshe's initial argument, and why did he mention Chovav's role of being a navigator only in passage 31? This was not stated by Moshe in his initial argument. What does Chovav's response about "unto my land and my birthplace I will go" come to teach us? Why mention Chovav as "son of Reuale the Midianite"? We already know who he is.

From Moshe's first statement in passage 29, we understand that Moshe desired Chovav to enjoy the best life, "Go with us and there will be done good to you, as God has spoken good for Israel." Chovav responds, "I will not go, unto my land and my birthplace I will go". Moshe understands from this response that Chovav's attachment to his land and birthplace outweigh his wish to relocate to Israel, receiving the good from God. (The passage itself in describing Chovav states, "Chovav, son of Reuale the Midianite", hinting at Chovav's attachment to his father and his land.) Moshe then tries to use Chovav's own mode of operation to attract him: Chovav was a leader in Midian. He also demonstrated leadership by suggesting a system of judges in parshas Yisro (Yisro and Chovav are the same according to commentators). It appears that Moshe intended to attract Chovav to the ultimate good promised by God, by also appealing to Chovav's own motivations displayed in "unto my land and my birthplace I will go",.... "and you will be to us as eyes" was Moshe's attempt to do so.

Moshe did not initially suggest that Chovav take on some leadership role by being their eyes. Moshe wanted to attract Chovav to the good life, based on the good life itself. When Moshe saw this was not attractive enough, he sought to add a motive for Chovav, so Moshe mentioned that he would be as eyes to the nation, a leadership role. But Moshe being committed to the truth, would not allow this to be the sole argument for Chovav's attachment to Israel, This is why Moshe again adds - even in his second argument - that Chovav will attain the good promised by God. To Moshe, this must always be the motive for following Judaism - it is the ultimate good. No other consideration replaces this as an argument to follow Judaism. ■

The Quail

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM



In Numbers, 11:4, we read that the mixed multitude who attached themselves to the Jewish Exodus, committed a sin when they lusted. They cried out, "who will feed us meat?" Even the Jews joined them. They cried, "we remember the fish we ate in Egypt for free", and they recalled other delicacies. In passage 6 they state, "And now our souls are dried, all we see is the manna." (Interesting is the following, detailed, positive qualities of the manna. Rashi states this description is God's, contrasting the previous complaint of the people.) The account continues with a description of Moshe hearing the people "crying by the household". Rashi states they were crying for the matters of "households", referring to the newly received (Torah) sexual prohibitions of family members. There are many facets to this story. I will focus on how God addresses their cry for meat.

In passage 11:13, Moshe says:

"Where shall I get meat to give to this entire people that cry upon me, saying, give us meat that we may eat?"

God says:

(18) "Ready yourselves tomorrow, and you will eat meat, because you cry in the ears of God saying, 'who will feed us meat, because it was better for us in Egypt', God will give you meat and you will eat. (19) Not one day will you eat, nor two days, nor five days, nor ten days, nor twenty days. (20) Until thirty days, until it comes out of your noses, and it be a vile thing, on account that you despised God Who was in your midst and you cried before Him saying 'why have we come out of Egypt.'" (21) Moshe responds: "600,000 by foot that I am amidst, and You say 'I will give meat to them and they will eat 30 days?'. (22) If the sheep and cattle be slaughtered, would there be found sufficient? If all the fish of the sea be gathered, would there be

sufficient?"

What an amazing response Moshe uttered! God says, "God will give you meat and you will eat"... "Until thirty days", and Moshe questions this! Didn't Moshe see God's miracles first hand? In light of God's abilities displayed via the Ten Plagues, what can possibly be questionable to Moshe regarding God's promise to provide meat for thirty days? God's response to Moshe emphasizes this point, "Is God's hand short? You will see if this occurs." This rare type of response requires understanding.

Let us list the questions:

- 1) What is meant by "Who" will feed us meat?
- 2) What was the Jews' complaint? Why mock the manna if in reality it was good?
- 3) Why respond to their request and feed them quail as they seem to be in the wrong?
- 4) What is meant that they ate fish "free"? Rashi says (11:5) "even straw was not given to them free, how then fish?"
- 5) What is the purpose of "Until the quail exits your noses"? Who is making it come out of their nostrils?
- 6) Rashi (11:10) on "crying by the household" states "they cried on the sexual prohibitions on family members." How does this relate to our story?
- 7) On "K'misson'nim" Rashi (11:2) states "they were seeking a pretense to escape from following God." The question is why did they need to escape, and why at this time?
- 8) What is Moshe's argument about the cattle and fish being insufficient?
- 9) What is God's response to Moshe, "Hayad Hashem tiksar", "Is God's hand short"?

As a first step to answering these questions, I will note that many times we remain ignorant of truths due to our own, incorrect assumptions. We must be sensitive, not to overlook, assume, or

project. We must focus on the Torah's words which are an exact science. The Torah's content and words lead us to the questions, and it answers those very issues. This very idea is derived from these verses stated by King Solomon:

"If you dig for it like silver, and search it out like a buried treasure, then you will understand the fear of G-d, and the knowledge of G-d will you find. Because God gives wisdom, from His mouth come knowledge and understanding." (Proverbs, 2:4-6).

What is meant by the two statements in this passage, "Because God gives wisdom, from His mouth come knowledge and understanding"? It teaches a fine point - two reasons Torah will yield great insights into truths: 1) "God gives wisdom", meaning, the Source of our studies is God - an infinitely wise Creator. This is one reason why we must dig for knowledge with such vigor. Our outlook must be, "there is tremendous knowledge to behold". A sense of adventure must overcome us as we part from daily affairs and step into the endless sea of enlightening thought and ideas. This sense must present itself when each day, we embark upon new studies. 2) The second idea derived from this passage; Not only is the Source of wisdom remarkable, but the actual structure of each passage is a great study in itself. This is what is meant by "from His mouth...", meaning, God's articulated words and verses are of the utmost precision. Only a refined sensitivity will drive a Torah student to examine the Torah with such exactitude, thereby uncovering deeper ideas. Let us return to the topic.

What did the Jews say? "Who" will feed us meat. Why was this joined with a ridicule of the manna? The first idea we notice is the Jews' degradation of God. They saw all the miracles,

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The Quail

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and yet said, "Who will give us meat?" Another later passage alerts us that they addressed God with this statement of "Who". Passage 11:20 reads, "(God said)...on account that you despised God Who was in your midst and you cried before Him saying 'why have we come out of Egypt.'" Here, God identifies their crime as an act of degrading God. But why were they despising Him now? They recalled the "free" fish eaten in Egypt, which Rashi denies was factual. Rashi is teaching us that they meant free in another sense, that is, free from Mitzvos. A picture starts to emerge. We begin to witness not only an attack on God, but on the Torah system.

The core issue borne out is the Jews' aversion to the Torah - a new, binding, and prohibitive demand on their formerly "free" lifestyle, albeit as slaves. They remembered (imagined) the fish they ate "free", yes, "free" of commandments. The Jews rebelled against the Giver of this Torah, but they could not do so directly, as they only said, "Who" will give us meat. Therefore God clearly identifies for the Jews, that it was God Who they despised.

Why did they attack the manna? The answer is "displacement". When someone cannot vent his emotion on the real object, he directs his emotion towards a replacement. Such was the case with the ridicule of the manna. The Jews really disliked the Torah system, but their eyes saw the event at Sinai, and they could not deny reality - the Torah is true, God is real. Therefore, they selected that which represented God's system, the manna, which He provided miraculously. They vented themselves towards it, instead of towards the divine commands. They said "we want meat", meaning, we don't want this manna. In truth, they had no problem with the manna. The passages teach us how great it was. (Perhaps this is why the Torah interrupts the story with verses 11:7-9 describing how good the manna really was.) What the Jews meant to say is "we

don't want the Torah". This is what Rashi again alludes to when he explains "crying by the household". Rashi stated they were "crying about the matters of the household", they wished to once again have relations with those now prohibited by Torah law. Rashi (11:2) states "they were seeking a pretense to escape from following God."

Let's also be mindful of a strange statement. Moshe said, if all the sheep, cattle, and fish were supplied to the Jews, they wouldn't be sufficient. This is impossible! There were only 2-3 million Jews, and the entire oceanic population most assuredly would feed them forever! How can Moshe say this? Examine God's resolve: God says He will comply with the Jews' request, and provide quail for 30 days, until it exits their nostrils. Why comply? The Jews' were in error. God said so, "you despised God Who was in your midst." I ask you, the reader, to now stop, and think about this following question: What reason can there be for compliance with an ill request? Imagine you are faced with such a scenario, and you comply. What grounds would there be for compliance? (Keep in mind, compliance means you prefer another recourse.) Don't read further, think for a moment.

What are the possibilities? Either there are, or there aren't alternatives. If there are none, one may comply because he has no other alternative, or cannot think of one right now. However, these explanations cannot apply to God. If there are alternatives, compliance is not needed. But there is one reason compliance may be engaged,...not so much to give the person his request, but perhaps for an ulterior motive.

God in no way intended that the quail satisfy the Jews' desire for meat as an end in itself. Moshe too understood that the issue was not a problem with food. In his wisdom, Moshe knew they were rebelling against God. This is what caused Moshe to respond to God's promise of

quail as he did. Moshe was not doubting that God could provide any amount of food. What Moshe meant was, "food is not the answer". Moshe knew the oceans contained enough - enough that is, if food is the issue. But the oceans cannot be sufficient if the problem is a rebellion against God. Moshe was asking of God, "food is not the issue, so why give them quail?"

What God in fact was doing, was complying for an ulterior purpose. That is, that the Jews should see for themselves that their complaint for meat is a misdirected attack on God. The only way for them to realize this, is looking past their lust for meat. Only after they realize their attachment to meat is an unnatural one, will they be able to stop, reflect, and recognize their problem is really with God, and the Torah they wish to abandon. This is why God says the quail will exit their nostrils. Not that God is the cause of this, but that their own unnatural desire for meat would propel them into an eating frenzy. As they would feed, their real, underlying emotion would not be satisfied, that being the removal of their new, Torah obligations. They would then keep eating under the false impression that meat is the issue. This was God's plan. To move them past their blinding emotion that meat is their problem. Sforno actually says the same thing: (11:23) "Is God's hand incapable of finding a method for them to despise all foods?" "They will eat the meat with their own free will, even after the enjoyment is gone, until it exits their nostrils, and they will despise it without any control on their free will at all, and thereby they will repent with a repentance of love..." God saw that the only way to show the Jews their true mistake, was to first show them that their assumed complaint was baseless.

Moshe said to God, "600,000 by foot that I am amidst, and You say 'I will give meat to them and they will eat 30 days?' If the sheep and cattle be slaughtered, would there be found sufficient? If all the fish of the sea be gathered, would there be sufficient?" God responds, "Is the hand of God short?" What was Moshe's mistake which demanded this response? It would seem that Moshe was not of the opinion that the method of addressing the Jews' error was to satisfy the displaced emotion. Moshe felt that the method must be to address the true, underlying emotion - their wish to abandon the commandments. Why didn't God choose this approach? We may suggest that an open attack on the true emotion would end in the Jews' further denial.

I tread in deep waters here, I may err, but yet I wonder, what was Moshe's equation? Did he not see this point, that there are times when a direct assault on an emotion will not be fruitful? Did Moshe feel this case was different than all others? That an open attack on the very emotion to abandon God would be fatal? This point requires further study. ■

Are All Religions Correct?

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

(I wrote this article yesterday in very basic English, and quite quickly as a needed and timely response to someone's opinions. I apologize for the base language used, but the ideas, I feel, are relevant to us all, especially those uninitiated to Judaism's tenets. The intended recipient is relatively young, and needed to be spoken to in this manner. I start this article writing in response to my last discussed point...)

We were talking about religion. We talked about if all religions are "correct"? Meaning, is it correct for a Christian to follow the Christian religion? Is it correct for a Muslim that he follow the Muslim religion? This would also mean that it is not correct for a Christian to follow the Muslim religion. (A problem for a person who converts.)

Let us make our words clear: What makes a person a "Christian" or a "Muslim"? Being born to parents who follow the Christian religion does not make a person Christian. Because, if the child learns of another religion and then chooses to convert, he will not be Christian. Our ideas and our actions after we are born, change us. A person chooses his religion, and being born in his religion can be changed. Religions say it is OK to convert. This means that all religions say how you are born, is not what makes you that religion. We have proved that a person is not born as a "Christian" or as a "Muslim", but he is born as a man or woman. Religion comes later. How a person chooses to live is what makes him either Christian, Muslim, or any religion. To say, "Who is born Christian should follow Christianity" is not a smart thing to say. So how should we choose which religion to follow? I will answer this later on.

Another problem is that every religion believes that their religion is the "RIGHT" religion. This means that every person in Christianity believes that Muslim is a wrong

religion. Every person of the Muslim religion feels a Christian is wrong for being Christian. This means that each religion says there is only one "RIGHT" religion. If we explain this statement, it means that each religion believes that they have the true religion that God wants all people to follow.

Belief is Not Proof. And Proof is Better than Belief.

What explanation do the religions use to make them right? Religions other than the Jewish religion believe the words of a single man. Other religions say that God spoke to a single man. For example, Jesus told many other people that God said to follow his new religion. Other people say, "what proof do you have that God came to you?" Jesus has no proof of his story that God spoke to him, so he tells the others, "You must believe me, I have no proof, but believe me that I have heard the word of God." So people will believe him, or they won't believe him, they have no proof to decide not to. This is the story of all other religions - they are created from the words of a single person. Other people who like this new religion follow this person. After many years, this religion grows, until they have millions of followers. This is how Christianity and Muslim and all other religions grew. We see from this example that a religion can become very popular and have millions of followers, even though it is not based on any proof. Does it make sense to follow a religion without any proof? Well, I will not trust my body to a doctor if there is no proof for his medicine, so I will not trust my soul to a religion, when the religion has no proof that God made it.

Numbers of "Followers" Later on is not a Proof.

But Numbers at an "Event" IS a Proof. It does not matter how many people follow a religion. Numbers of followers later on cannot prove if a

religion is true. A "true" religion means what God really wants people to do. But be clear on this point: Even though numbers of FOLLOWERS is not a proof for the truth of an "idea", numbers CAN prove an "event" happened. Again: If I see one million people who today are following the Christian religion, this does not prove that original Christian "ideas" are really made by God. All it means is that many people find Christianity appealing. BUT, if we find an event in history that had many witnesses, then we know 100% that this event really happened. It is impossible that a story with millions of witnesses is false. Any story in history where there were thousands and certainly millions of witnesses AT THAT EVENT, is 100% proof that this event really happened, no matter how long ago it was. Understand this point clearly: Numbers of "Followers" later on is not a proof. But numbers of people at an "event" IS a proof. As an example,

thousands of people met Julius Caesar, so we know for sure that he really existed. A story of Caesar would not have become accepted if he never lived. Nobody would accept such a story. An additional proof is that there is not other story about the Roman Empire for this time period. This rule is true for all other events in history. Any event where there were masses of people present at that event, we know for sure this event happened. If the story is easy for the witnesses to understand, we have no doubt about it.

We Can Not Judge the Jewish Religion as Bad if we Have Little Knowledge of the Torah. How does a person know if the Jewish religion and the Torah is wrong for ALL people, unless this person studies and comes to a clear understanding? The truth is that without much study, a person cannot know this. Maybe after much study, a person will see that Judaism is the only religion given by God. This would mean that

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Are All Religions Correct?

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

God wants man to have only one religion, Judaism. But how do we arrive at a proof that one religion is God's choice for all people? We already showed that all religions feel that all others are false. So all religions are not all right. Only one can be correct, only one is the real religion that God gave man. How do we prove which one it is?

How Do We Choose Which Religion is the Right One?

Can we use "proof" to select a religion, or are we not to use proof? Are we just to "feel" what is in our heart, and follow our feelings? Do we always follow what our fathers teach us? Can our fathers can be wrong? What if two people feel two different things in their heart, are they both right? If your father tells you to be free, and my father tells me to follow the Jewish religion, they can not both be right. Who is right? How do we decide?

The leaders of religions who know the most, say that there can be only one "right religion". So how do we prove which one God wants man to follow?

If we say that simple belief is an acceptable way of following God - with no proof - then any person can do this. For example, I can tell other people that God came to me in a dream and that I have a new religion. Am I any different than Jesus? Why should my religion be any less important than Christianity? Jesus had his religion, and I have mine! So you might say that Jesus made miracles, and I did not. Well, there is no proof for his miracles, there were not hundreds of people that saw any miracles who said Jesus was true. Also, there is no proof that Mohammed flew up to the sky. You see, we keep needing to "prove" which religion is true.

Religion is not a matter of simple belief. It is a matter which like any other story in history, requires a proof if we are to accept it as "100% true". How do we "know" truth? How do we prove which religion

God gave to man? Also, how do we know that God wants one religion to be followed by all people?

Go did not make many types of people, we are all he same. We all have 2 eyes, 1 nose, 1 head, 2 arms and 2 legs. Just like we are all the same in our body, we are also the same in our minds, and in our feelings. All people love, hate, and feel pain when our family members die. We all feel anger when someone lies to us, and most of all, we are all looking for happiness in life. Since all people are of the same design, this means what is good for one person, is good for all of us. All of our bodies, emotions and mentalities are the same.

We know that God made all people. Then God is the best One to ask direction for what we should do to be happy. If God tells us to follow one religion, He certainly knows best, and we would be foolish not to follow Him.

The Proof for Judaism and the Torah.

This is where we come to the proof that God gave the Torah to the Jewish nation on Mount Sinai. This event is the only time in all of world history when God made miracles in front of millions of people and told us there is one God and one religion - Judaism. It is a very simple and clear proof that we know 100% that God wants all people to follow the Torah. The story of the miracles God did on Mount Sinai in front of millions of Jews is not only believed by Jews, but all Christians also believe this story. Do you know why? Because this story spread all over the world. And it spread over the whole world because it was true. Only because so many Jews were telling so many other people, this is why the true story of God giving the Torah spread over the whole world. Everybody knows that if the whole world agrees that something in history happened, then, it must be true. It is impossible to make up a story that a mountain was on fire and

a voice came from the mountain. If this story was false, no one would believe it! But the story really happened, so this is why everyone there told their children, and they told their grandchildren, and they told theirs, until today! Because so many people were there and saw all of God's miracles. God made the mountain on fire. The world believes this history happened because the story says so many people were there, then it did happen. This is different from Christianity which says "believe" in Jesus. Christianity does not have an event where so many people were there. They have no proof. No other religion has proof.

Now that we know that God really gave us His Torah, we must look into it to see what He says will make us happy.

God also tells us in His Torah that all other religions are false. God says that praying to trees, praying to man, praying to animals, believing in magic, miracles or witchcraft is all false. God tells us that anyone who teaches something against Torah is false, and his religion is false. Well, Christians and Muslims teach against God's Torah. They must be false. We are not to follow any religion except Judaism and Torah. Why did God tell us not to follow other religions? God said this because God knows that He made only one religion. That is all we need forever. God knows all of the future, so God knows that Torah is good always. One religion called Judaism and Torah has all the right ideas. If someone tells us something different than Torah, then we know he is wrong, because God is always right. There is no proof that God made the Christian religion or the Muslim religion. Since there is no proof, we do not follow them. But we must know that if God made one religion, then only one religion is needed. God knows how to put all the important ideas into one religion. God does not need more than one religion.

What does it mean to be "good" to other people?

I agree with your idea. It is very important that we are "good" to

other people. This is an idea which the Torah agrees with. The most important thing is that we try to do what is good for other people. We must be interested in the happiness of others, and we are not just interested in ourselves. We are not to be doing always for me, me ,me. This is wrong. We must be generous and kind to other people too. We are nice to people no matter what religion they are.

But we must think about this: What does it mean to be "Good"? What does "Good" mean? The reason I say this, is because I read of many people doing different things in their life - but they all feel they are doing what is "Good". But I ask myself, "How can so many people do different things, but all these different things are Good? This does not make sense to me."

For example, many years ago, the Christians killed innocent people during the Crusades. They thought it was good and important and was based on the laws of their Christian religion. But the people they killed did not think it was a good. So who has the "right" idea of what is good? Are the Christians right, or are the families of the dead right? Who can make such a decision? If we say that killing is evil, then I have another question: If for example, a man named "Thomas" is being killed by a man named "Jon", is it right for Thomas to kill Jon to protect himself? These questions make us think that there must be some rules that tell us when killing is bad, and when killing is good. Without rules and a way to decide, we cannot say if Christians are good when they kill, or if they are evil. This is a question not just on Christians, but on any people who kill. We must have some way to know if killing is evil or good for every situation.

Are we to make up our own laws about when it is right to kill, and when it is wrong? This can not work, because you will come up with one idea and I will come up with a different idea. It is for this reason that we can not just live by a simple rule, "just to be good to everyone." We must first think and learn about what is good.

The truth is, that a man or woman can not come up with a law for what

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Are All Religions Correct?

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

is "Good". This decision is not possible for us to make. In a discussion of "good and evil", no one person can ever be "more right" than another, so there will never be an end to this question. But now that we proved that God exists, and that God made every man and woman, and God also made the Torah, we have an answer. God tells us in His Torah what is good and what is evil. We have a clear explanation. Without the Torah, we can not know what is good and what is evil. Since God made every man and every woman, God is the only one with the right to decide when killing is a good, and when it is a bad. If someone wants to kill me, then he is evil, and I can kill him to protect myself. My killing is a good, because God said that man can protect himself. When the Christians killed so many people, they were evil, because God did not say that to be Christian is good. God said that to be Christian is evil, because a Christian will kill innocent people, then the Christian religion has evil in it.

"Just Being Good to Everyone" is an Evil Thing to do.

Judaism and the Torah says we can not kill anyone. But if a man wants to kill me and I am not bad, then God says in the Torah that I can kill him to save my life. When I save my life, I am killing, but it is good to kill him so I can save myself. God also teaches us in the Torah that there are people who are so bad, that we must kill them. If we let them live, then they will kill more children. So we must kill the bad people to save the good people.

But today, the world says we should not follow the Torah. Today, the world says we can not kill the Palestinian people. But God says that we should, because they kill babies, and little children. So who do we follow? Do we follow the world, and just be nice to people? And then more Jewish babies will die, or do we listen to God?

There is a clear set of rules that God made and gave to man and woman. God calls these rules the Torah. God

wants man to be able to make a decision that is best for everybody. But man can not just think for himself what is best. Man needs God to teach us what is the real "good." This is why I tell you that we can not be simple, and think we have all the answers. We do not. We need the Torah that God wrote. With the Torah, we know what is good and what is evil. If we do not learn the Torah, we will make very big mistakes, and we will let people live who must really die. And when we let people live who are evil, they will kill, maybe even our own children. So we must follow what God says because He knows what is best for all people.

Some nations free evil people for political reasons. But if we would follow what God says in the Torah, we would not let evil people free. When evil people are free, they will kill more Jewish children. Why do evil men go free? Because of politics. This is evil. God knows better than leaders, and God's Torah says to kill the evil men. But if Sharon wants money from the United States, and he listens to Bush and lets evil people free, Sharon would be evil.

We see that in politics, if we do not listen to God, our politics will kill Jewish children. So even in politics, we can not do anything if we do not use the Torah as our teacher. If we do not follow God's Torah, we will cause evil to ourselves. Even politics makes no sense with out God's Torah.

The Torah is to help us in every area of our lives.

God did not say, "just be nice and good to everyone". Torah is not that simple. Only if we learn the Torah, slowly and with our heart, then we will learn what is true. We will never know the whole Torah! This is not our job. This is too big for us to do. But if we learn a little each week, or even each day, then we will slowly learn what makes sense in every place in our lives. But if we don't listen to God's wisdom, then we will live a life with much hurt, and we will not be happy. This is what God says in His Torah. □

Parashas Beha-alotekcha

RABBI BERNARD FOX

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the nation celebrated the festival of Pesach. This observance included the offering of the Pesach sacrifice. This sacrifice cannot be offered on behalf of those that are defiled. A group of individuals had come into contact with a dead body. As a result, they were excluded from the sacrifice.

These individuals regretted that they could not participate in the Pesach sacrifice. They explained their concerns to Moshe.

Moshe approached Hashem. The Almighty responded that there is a solution for these people. Hashem revealed the mitzvah of Pesach Sheynee. This mitzvah provides a second opportunity to participate in the Pesach. If a person cannot participate in the Pesach on the 14th of Nisan, this individual offers the Pesach one month later.

This opportunity is afforded to a variety of individuals. Included are those that are not able to participate in the offering of the Pesach on the 14th of Nisan. In the wilderness, this group primarily consisted of individuals that were defiled. After the conquest of the land of Israel, this group also included those that could not reach the Temple by the 14th of Nisan. Pesach Sheynee also applies to a person that do not participate in the offering of the 14th of Nisan out of negligence. This person is also obligated to participate in Pesach Sheynee.

There is an amazing discussion in Tractate Pesachim regarding the mitzvah of Pesach Sheynee. The discussion revolves around an interesting question. After the

sacrifice, the meat of the Pesach is consumed by those bringing the offering. The Pesach is not eaten alone. It must be consumed with matzah and marror. Assume a person is defiled or unable to reach the Temple on the 14th of Nisan. This person's condition prevents participating in the Pesach offering on this date. However, nothing prevents this person from eating the matzah an marror that accompanies the Pesach. These can be consumed by a defiled person. They can be eaten outside of area of the Temple. Does this person consume the matzah and marror, without the Pesach?

The Talmud responds that the person does eat matzah and marror on the 14th of Nisan. Inability to participate in the Pesach offering does not interfere with the obligation to eat matzah and marror on the 14th of Nisan. To this point, there is nothing odd in the Talmud's discussion.

Next, the Talmud discusses the source for this law. Where does the Torah tell us that it is required to eat matzah and marror? The Talmud offers two responses. We will concentrate on one response. The Talmud suggests that the source is the pasuk that states, "In the evening you shall eat matzah." [1] The Talmud explains that this passage teaches us that the obligation to eat matzah and marror apply even in a case in which the Pesach cannot be consumed.

This brings us to the remarkable portion of the Talmud's discussion. The Talmud explains that the message of this pasuk is not at all obvious. One might think that some

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individuals would not eat matzah and marror on the 14th of Nisan. One could reason that those obligated in Pesach Sheynee do not eat matzah and marror on the 14th of Nisan. Instead, they fulfill these obligations in conjunction with the mitzvah of Pesach Sheynee. Therefore, the pasuk stating, "In the evening you shall eat matzah" is included in the Torah. The passage indicates that everyone eats matzah and marror on the 14th of Nisan. The passage specifically includes those that will participate in Pesach Sheynee.[2]

This discussion presents a major problem. The passage stating, "In the evening you shall eat matzah" was revealed to Moshe in Egypt. According to the Talmud, it specifically addresses the person that will celebrate Pesach Sheynee. In other words, the passage deals with a possible misunderstanding created by the mitzvah of Pesach Sheynee. This implies that if the mitzvah of Pesach Sheynee did not exist, it would be self-evident that everyone eats matzah and marror on the 14th of Nisan and the passage would not be needed. This does not seem to make sense. In fact, the mitzvah of Pesach Sheynee did not exist in Egypt. It only was revealed later, in the wilderness! The Torah is responding to a mitzvah that had not yet been revealed!

There is an interesting comment by Rashi that indirectly deals with this issue. Rashi begins with an interesting question. The mitzvah of Pesach Sheynee was revealed in response to an inquiry. Defiled individuals approached Moshe seeking an opportunity to participate in the Pesach sacrifice. Why did the Almighty not reveal the commandment of Pesach Sheynee at Sinai? Why did He wait until these individuals approached Moshe? Rashi responds that the mitzvah could have been revealed at Sinai. However, the Almighty

decided to delay communication of this mitzvah. He wished to reward these sincere individuals. He rewarded them through revealing a section of the Torah in response to their inquiry.[3]

It seems, from Rashi's comments, that this section was not an afterthought. It was part of the Torah revealed at Sinai. However, this specific commandment was withheld. This was done in order to communicate the mitzvah at the appropriate time. In other words, the Torah is an integrated whole. Each mitzvah is recorded as one of the 613 integrated mitzvot. Each mitzvah is consistent with all of the others.

This answers our question. It is true that the passage stating, "In the evening you shall eat matzah" deals with a problem created by Pesach Sheynee. It is also true that this passage was revealed before the mitzvah of Pesach Sheynee was given. However, the passage is designed as part of a complete Torah. The complete Torah includes all 613 mitzvot. Pesach Sheynee is one of these mitzvot. Therefore, it is reasonable for the mitzvah of matzah and marror to be recorded in a manner that is consistent with the command of Pesach Sheynee. The passage assumes the existence of Pesach Sheynee, even though the mitzvah has not yet been revealed.

"And when the ark went forth Moshe said, 'Arise, Hashem and disperse Your enemies. And those that hate You will flee from before You'. And when it came to rest he said, 'Return, Hashem to the myriads of the thousand of Israel'". (BeMidbar 12:35-36)

In a Torah scroll these two pesukim are set apart from the preceding and following passages. An inverted Hebrew letter is appears before the passages. The same inverted letter follows the passages. The letter used is the nun.

Why are these passages set apart? The Talmud, in Tractate Shabbat, explains that these passages are regarded as a separate book of the Torah. They are set apart to indicate this special status.[4]

This only raises an additional question. Why are these passages given the status of a separate book of the Torah? There are various responses to this issue. One obvious approach is to attribute some special significance to the content of the passages. However, Rav Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin Ztl (Netziv) offers another approach.

Netziv bases his explanation upon a discussion in Tractate Shabbat. The Talmud comments that the Torah is not actually composed of five books. It is composed of seven. Beresheit, Shemot VaYikra and Devarim are each counted as a single book. However, BeMidbar must be counted as three books. This is because our pesukim compose a separate book. This book divides BeMidbar into two additional books. The section preceding our passages is one book. Our pesukim constitute a second book. The section following our passages is a third book.[5]

Netziv explains that our passages are not set apart because of their unique content. They are set apart in order to divide Sefer BeMidbar into two separate parts. This break is designed to contrast the first portion of the sefer with the material that will follow. What is this contrast?

The first part of the sefer depicts the close relationship between the Almighty and His nation. The sefer begins with a detailed description of the encampment in the wilderness. The various tribes camped around the Tabernacle. The influence of Hashem was manifest in the Mishcan. The Almighty was among the people. The inauguration of the Mishcan is described.

The mitzvah of sotah that is related in the previous parasha captures this relationship. This test of a suspected adulteress relies on the intervention of the Almighty. The woman is given a mixture to drink. This drought is harmless. However, if the woman is guilty of adultery, Hashem will perform a miracle. The mixture will kill the

woman. This entire concept assumes a remarkably close relationship between G-d and Bnai Yisrael.

The later section of the sefer depicts a different relationship. The nation begins to complain against the Almighty. They send spies to study the land of Israel. The nations refuses to enter the land. Korach and his followers rebel. As the nation removes itself from the Almighty, He responds. He distances Himself from His people. He condemns the generation that left Egypt to death in the wilderness. The ultimate exile of the nation from the land of Israel is decreed. Various other punishments are depicted, throughout the later half of the sefer.

We can now define the contrast contained in Sefer BeMidbar. The nation entered the wilderness with a unique closeness to the Almighty. The sefer contrasts this intimacy with the more distant relationship that developed in the course of the sojourn in the wilderness. Our pesukim are the dividing point between these two relationships.

We can now understand the reason Sefer BeMidbar is characterized as a single book and as three separate books. It can be described as three books because our pesukim divide the first portion of the sefer from the later portion. These two portions tell of very different relationships between the Almighty and His nation. Each relationship can be appropriately described as a separate stage of the development of Bnai Yisrael. On this basis the sections can be regarded as separate books divided by a third intervening book.

BeMidbar can also be described as a single book. It is designed to express contrast. The contrast is created through including the two relationships in a single book. From this perspective, BeMidbar deserves to be regarded as a single book. [6] □

[1] Sefer Shemot 12:18.

[2] Mesechet Pesachim 120a with commentary of Rashbam.

[3] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer BeMidbar 9:7.

[4] Mesechet Shabbat 116a.

[5] Mesechet Shabbat 116a.

[6] Rav Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin (Netziv), Commentary Hamek Davar on Sefer BeMidbar, Introduction.