



Absolute truth withstands all questions.  
For this reason, Judaism encourages questions  
while Christianity ridicules anything but blind faith.  
Use reason. It proves which religion is true and rational.

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## Weekly Parsha

# Chukat

RABBI BERNARD FOX

"This is the law of the Torah that Hashem commanded saying, "Speak to Bnai Yisrael and they should take for you a completely red cow that has no blemish and has never born a yoke." (BeMidbar 19:2)

(continued on page 4)

# Illiteracy of Christianity

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Christianity's famous argument is that Isaiah 53 predicts Jesus. This chapter describes an afflicted "man" who carried the sins of others. They wish to suggest it refers to Jesus. However, one man does not get justly punished for another man's sins, and nations are not punished for the sins of other nations (Radak, Isaiah, 53:4) as Jeremiah 31:29 says, "...every man will die for his own sin". How then do we understand Isaiah 53? Let us review the chapter:

### Isaiah 53

The World's Nations words:

"1. Who would believe what we had heard? For whom has the arm of G-d been revealed? 2. Formerly he grew like a sapling or like a root from arid ground; he had neither form nor grandeur; we saw him but without such visage that we could desire him. 3. He was despised and isolated from men, a man of pains and accustomed to illness. As one from whom we would hide our faces; he was despised and we had no regard for him. 4. But in truth it was our ills that he bore, and our pains that he carried – but we had regarded him diseased, stricken by G-d, and afflicted. 5. He was pained because of our rebellious sins and oppressed through our iniquities, the

(continued on next page)

See Page 14 for an  
Important Petition

(Illiteracy of Christianity continued from previous page)

chastisement upon him was for our benefit, and through his wounds we were healed. 6. We have all strayed like sheep, each of us turning his own way, and G-d inflicted upon him, the iniquity of us all. 7. He was persecuted and afflicted, but he did not open his mouth; like a sheep being led to the slaughter or an ewe that is silent before her shearers, he did not open his mouth. 8. Now that he has been released from captivity and judgment, who could have imagined such a generation? For he had been removed from the land of the living, an affliction upon them that was my people's sin. 9. He submitted himself to his grave like wicked men; and the wealthy submitted to his executions, for committing no crime, and with no deceit in his mouth. 10. God desired to oppress him and He afflicted him; if his soul would acknowledge guilt, he would see offspring and live long days and the desire of G-d would succeed in his hand.

#### G-d's Words:

11. He would see the purpose and be satisfied with his soul's distress, with his knowledge My servant will vindicate the Righteous One to the multitudes, and their sins does he shoulder. 12. Therefore I will assign him a portion from the multitudes and he will divide the mighty as spoils, in return for having poured out his soul for death and being counted among the wicked, and he carried the sins of the many, and prayed for the sinners."

Christianity divisively rewrote history. Jesus did not fulfill Isaiah 53's prophecy, it's just the opposite: Christianity fabricated the Jesus story, exactly in line with Isaiah 53! What Christianity presents as Jesus fulfilling Isaiah's words is really the opposite – they plagiarized Isaiah. Christianity found a perfect story in the Torah, Isaiah 53. Here, The description is so pitiful, and evokes such sympathy; Christianity copied it and molded it into their fabrication of Jesus. Christianity, as you will read



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### JESUS BEFORE CAIAPHAS

Matt. 26: 57-68.

GOLDEN TEXT:—He is despised and rejected of men.

Isa. 53: 3.

later in this article, capitalizes on the emotions of pity and suffering to attract adherents, making other transparent plagiarisms.

A simple reading makes it clear that Isaiah 53 is describing the 'past' state of the downtrodden Jews, not forecasting a future messiah. Furthermore, Isaiah says further (59:21):

*"And as for Me, this is My covenant with them, said G-d, My spirit which is upon you and My words that I have placed in your mouth will not be withdrawn from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your offspring, nor from the mouth of your offspring's offspring, said G-d, from this moment and forever."*

Note the words, "placed in your mouth". Christianity suggests Isaiah

prophesied for the "future" about Jesus. However, Isaiah is referring to the past. G-d clearly refers to the "word" that will never be lost forever, as that which is already "placed in your mouth", past tense. This is the covenant G-d makes. It concerns the ancient Torah, already in the Jews' mouths – not the future. Christianity didn't read the verses.

Isaiah describes the Jews as "one man". "Man" here is not referring to an individual, but to the collective whole of Israel. The Torah uses "man" in place of the entire nation in dozens of other locations. (See Deut. 27:14, Joshua 9:6, Judges 8:22 and 9:55...there are numerous other cases.)

I fail to understand how Christianity can use these very verses to make the claim that one who is innocent can shoulder the burden of others. The verse openly says the

opposite, "if his soul would acknowledge guilt, he would see offspring and live long days". The suffering party possesses his own sin! "Acknowledging guilt" means they sinned. Christianity simply favors one set of facts, and ignores the others – an overt blunder. But to be fair, we must also explain the words "He was pained because of our rebellious sins and oppressed through our iniquities, the chastisement upon him was for our benefit, and through his wounds we were healed." How can we understand the statement on its own?

#### Isaiah 53 Explained

Radak explains this entire chapter except the final two verses – as the words of the other nations. These words are not Isaiah's words. Radak says the view that the depicted "man" (the Jewish nation in reality) suffers for the sins of others, is in fact a wrong idea, and is a verbalization of the other nations. The nations sought to seek some justice for the innocent Jews suffering in exile. They saw that the Jews suffered, "for committing no crime, and with no deceit in his mouth". The Gentile nations vindicated the Jews. But they also could not tolerate having no explanation for the Jews' suffering, while possessing no sin. These nations therefore verbalized their incorrect philosophy, "He was pained because of our rebellious sins and oppressed through our iniquities, the chastisement upon him was for our benefit, and through his wounds we were healed." Evidently, this is recorded in our Torah, as Isaiah felt it essential that we understand the view of the Gentile nations at that time. The question is, what is so important about our understanding of the corrupted view these Gentiles held? Why must we know that the Gentile nations viewed our exile as a punishment for THEIR sins? If this view is wrong, and it is, why take up space in the book if Isaiah? Aren't there more important ideas to cover, than the false notion that the innocent bear the burden of the sinners?

We are forced to conclude that G-d desires the Jews to understand this attitude of the nations. G-d desires

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(Illiteracy of Christianity continued from previous page)

we know that the nations do in fact seek to “understand”. This is why they concocted such an explanation, that we were exiled for their sins. Although such a notion is false, what we derive from hearing their position, is that the Gentile nations seek “understanding”. This I feel is the lesson.

Now, since they seek understanding, they stand as a concern before G-d, and He desires that they – just like the Jews – obtain true knowledge. G-d therefore says in the final two verses, 11) “with his knowledge My servant will vindicate the Righteous One to the multitudes and also, 12) “and prayed for the sinners”. G-d desires that the Jews 11) benefit the other nations by teaching them, and 12) pray for them.

But if these last two verses are G-d's words, why do we find G-d echoing the false sentiment of the nations?

*11. He would see the purpose and be satisfied with his soul's distress, with his knowledge My servant will vindicate the Righteous One to the multitudes, and their sins does he shoulder. 12. Therefore I will assign him a portion from the multitudes and he will divide the mighty as spoils, in return for having poured out his soul for death and being counted among the wicked, and he carried the sins of the many, and prayed for the sinners.”*

The answer I believe G-d does this, is so as to “indicate” why He desires the Jews to teach and pray for the world's people: since the nations seek to explain, and find reasonable justice for the innocent Jews' persecution, they thereby display their level as nations ready to hear reason. Now, since they are open to reason, G-d desires that the Jews teach them, and pray for them. So when G-d echoes their false views, it is to teach that such a false view is verbalized, only because those verbalizing it, seeking knowledge. A desire to explain means they are using their minds. G-d therefore desires the Jews to teach them. “My

servant will vindicate the Righteous One to the multitudes, and their sins does he shoulder” may be read as follows: “My servant (the Jews) will teach about the Righteous One (G-d) to the multitudes, because they (the Gentiles) seek knowledge, as displayed in their view “ and their sins does he shoulder.”

We have successfully shown that “man” does not mean a single person. We have proved that Isaiah 53 discusses the past, and cannot refer to the future - it does not predict Jesus. Also, Israel was suffering due to their own sins, not due to the sins of others. Therefore, there is no basis for the concept of one man suffering for others.

We learn that Isaiah 53 is primarily the verbalized, false notions of the Gentile nations. But such a notion stems only from those who still retain some desire to understand. G-d, therefore, desires the Jews teach and pray for the Gentile nations. ■

### Additional Plagiarisms of Torah

Isaiah 53 is not the only plagiarism of Torah. Compare to the Torah's words to Christianity's plagiarism:

*The Torah says in Exodus, 4:19: "G-d said to Moses in Midyan, go, return to Egypt, for there have died all the men that sought your life."*

*The New Testament says in Matthew 2:20: "Rise, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead."*

*The Torah says in Exodus 1:16: "And (the king of Egypt) said, 'when the Hebrew women give birth, and look upon the stone, if it is a son, kill him, and if it is a daughter, let it live.'"*

*The New Testament says in Matthew 2:16: "Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, was in a furious rage, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under..."*

In both statements above Christianity attempts to equate Jesus to Moses by distorting the truth and provoking the emotion of pity. Christianity continuously portrays Jesus as the victim to foster identification and more adherents. Just as Pharaoh threatened Moses, the story constructed in the New Testament makes Jesus the victim of King Herod. Coincidentally, the events at the time of Jesus' birth were conveniently fabricated to mimic a similar threat, which had taken place during the time of Moses' birth. The reader of the New Testament feels pity and compassion for Jesus in the name of plagiarism. The goal of the New Testament is to equate the statures of Jesus and Moses, which is absolutely impossible. In so many statements contained the New Testament, if read carefully, one will find authentic Torah accounts plagiarized with slight changes, replacing true Torah personalities with Jesus.

Plagiarism is also seen clearly in the first quote; just as Moses was threatened and then afterwards informed to return as all those seeking his life are dead, the New Testament again attempts to plagiarize a known story of Moses and transpose it onto Jesus. For the very goal of engendering pity as a tool for identification with Jesus, Christianity adopted the symbol of the Cross. The Cross' unanimous acceptance as a central icon of their religion displays how correct the developers of Christianity were that pity is a sure-fire lure to attract adherents.

A most obvious plagiarism describes the sale of Jesus by one of the 12 disciples for 30 pieces of silver. It is almost identical to the sale of Joseph by one of his 12 brothers for 20 pieces of silver in the Torah. Compare:

*Genesis 37:25: "And there passed by Midianite men, traders, and they drew him and lifted him (Joseph) out of the pit and they sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for 20 pieces of silver and they brought Joseph to Egypt."*

*Matthew 26:14-15: "14. Then*

*one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests 15. and said, 'What will you give me if I deliver him to you? And they paid him thirty pieces of silver.'"*

Christianity uses another statement from the Torah, distorts it, and fabricates it in order to evoke empathy and identification with Jesus who is again being portrayed as the “victim.” Yet, the goal of Christianity is to raise Jesus to a leadership role. The downtrodden Jesus, just as Joseph whom his brothers sold, would eventually become a great leader. Christianity found many ways to distort the Divine Word of G-d in order to gain mass acceptance.

We conclude with the realization that Christianity severely distorts the Torah to satisfy their corrupt agenda. It is clear that if one does not twist or deny the texts, he will recognize that G-d will never replace Judaism, He does not favor Jesus, and Christianity is a series of lies. Christianity misleads its people, and forces the “blind faith” ethic onto them, as they realize rationale punches holes in their religion. Faith is their only recourse, when reason exposes their falsehoods.

We also learn that to understand the deep words of the Prophet Isaiah, as well as the rest of the Torah, one cannot do any justice to these Divine texts with a cursory read. Much time, effort and tutelage under Rabbis is required to master the Talmudic and Biblical methodologies, so as to uncover the cryptic messages enclosed in the Torah. G-d's words are to be studied carefully, not read like a history book. And indispensable to understanding the Torah, are the words of the great commentaries. The Written Torah is only half of what Moses received at Sinai – he also received the Oral Law. Without the ideas of the latter, one's Torah knowledge is severely crippled, and mostly false.

To learn G-d's word, honesty and the Torah methodology is

Christianity's version of Isaiah 53 is plagiarism, not prophecy. ■

(Chukat continued from page 1)

# Parshas Chukat

RABBI BERNARD FOX

This pasuk introduces the laws of the Parah Adumah – the red heifer. This animal is slaughtered and completely burned. The ashes of the heifer, with other ingredients, are required for the purification. Severe forms of spiritual defilement are treated with these ashes.

The passage describes the mitzvah of Parah Adumah as a law. There are various Hebrew words for "law". The term used in our pasuk is chok. Rashi comments on the selection of this specific term. He explains that the term chok means decree. In other words, the mitzvah of Parah Adumah is a decree from the Almighty. It is an expression of His divine will. It must be carefully obeyed and respected.

The use of this term seems to presuppose that the law of Parah Adumah is subject to some criticism. The word chok is the response to this reproach. Essentially, the response is that regardless of the questions evoked by this mitzvah it must be regarded as a decree of the Almighty and observed in all its details.

What is the criticism evoked by the mitzvah of Parah Adumah? Rashi is somewhat vague in his response to this issue. He explains that the heathen nations can criticize the mitzvah. They will question its reason and design.[1]

These comments are difficult to understand. Many mitzvot are enigmatic. A casual review of the mitzvot of the Torah will result in endless questions. Certainly, the heathen nations will find many elements of the Torah that seem completely unintelligible! The Torah's response to these reproaches is that a person must study Torah as one would any field of knowledge. One cannot

expect to appreciate the wisdom of the Torah through a superficial review of the mitzvot. Why does the commandment of Parah Adumah require a special response? In this case the Torah responds, "This is a chok! Observe the mitzvah regardless of your criticisms and scruples!"

Nachmanides responds to this question. He explains that we must begin by more clearly understanding the reason the Torah uses the term chok. This term is not used simply because the mitzvah of Parah Adumah is difficult to understand. As explained above, many mitzvot seem to defy human understanding. The reason the term chok is used in this case is because the mitzvah of Parah Adumah seems to contradict a basic tenet of the Torah.

One of the fundamental themes of the Torah is that we must abstain from heathen practices and forms of worship. We are forbidden to worship any power other than the Almighty. We may not serve demons, spirits, forces of nature or even angels. In order to regulate our worship, the institution of the Bait HaMikdash was created. All sacrifices are to be offered in the Temple. Generally, we are not permitted to sacrifice outside of the Temple.

Parah Adumah is remarkably similar to heathen worship. A cow is burned in an open field. The service is performed outside of the Bait HaMikdash. It can easily be misinterpreted as a sacrifice to the heathen deities. The heathens can cynically argue that we are hypocrites. We decry heathen worship and practices. Then, we legislate a service reminiscent of the very practices we condemn!

This is the criticism to which the Torah responds. The mitzvah is a chok. It is an expression of the Divine will. It may seem inconsistent with the Torah's strong disavowal of heathen practices. But the law is Hashem's decree. We know that the Almighty cannot be inconsistent![2]

**“And the entire congregation of Bnai Yisrael came to the wilderness of Tzin in the first month. And Miryam died there and she was buried there. And there was no water for the congregation. And they gathered against Moshe and Ahron.”** (BeMidbar 20:1-2)

Our parasha tells of the final episodes of Bnai Yisrael's wanderings in the wilderness. The Torah tells us that Miryam died. Next, the Torah relates that there the nation did not have water. The people approached Moshe and Ahron to complain about their predicament. Hashem commanded Moshe to provide water from a stone. Moshe and Ahron sinned in the process of following these instructions. Hashem condemned Moshe and Ahron to die in the wilderness. They were not permitted to enter the land of Israel. In short, three incidents are related within a few passages. First, Miryam dies. Second, there is no water. Third, Moshe and Ahron sin and are punished.

The commentaries are concerned with the relationship between these incidents. Many maintain that there is a direct connection between Miryam's death and the failure of the water supply. They explain that Hashem provided water to Bnai Yisrael in the desolate wilderness. This miracle was a reward for the merit of Miryam. With her death, the nation no longer deserved this miracle. The water supply immediately failed.[3]

Rabbaynu Avraham ibn Ezra rejects this approach. He offers a simple interpretation of the connection between the three events. He begins with the assertion that there no connection between the Miryam's death and the depletion of the water supply. Instead, the Chumash is explaining the deaths of Miryam, Moshe and Ahron in unison. First, the Chumash tells of Miryam's passing. The Torah then explains that there was no water for the nation. This is not to suggest any connection between Miryam's death and the lack of water. The Torah is introducing the events that precipitated the deaths of Moshe and Ahron.[4] □

[1] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer BeMidbar 19:2.

[2] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer BeMidbar 19:2.

[3] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer BeMidbar 20:2.

[4] Rabbaynu Avraham ibn Ezra, Commentary on Sefer BeMidbar 20:2.

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# Good & Bad

**DOUG TAYLOR AND RABBI MORTON MOSKOWITZ**

"You probably have something really wizardly to say about all of this," I challenged, not hiding my sarcasm very well.

I was in a foul mood. Running into my friend, the King of Rational Thought, while waiting for a table at a neighborhood restaurant had cheered me for a split second. But once I related to him everything that had happened to me in the last five hours, my sullen grey outlook returned.

It started when the kitchen sink backed up before I'd even gotten dressed for work. Resorting to a plumber's helper, I inadvertently popped the drain fitting below the sink, causing a cascade of water to run down the inside of the wall.

I finished cleaning up that mess only to discover that my hot water tank had broken, turning a corner of my basement into a lake. Later that morning, one of my biggest clients postponed a large project. But the capper was the call from the IRS about a possible audit.

When I finished the story, the King of Rational Thought asked me the strangest question.

"You haven't died yet, have you?"

I stared at him. He'd either tuned out my tale of woe, or he'd flipped. The latter seemed more likely.

"Huh?" I said. "What?"

"You're still alive, right?"

"Seems like it. Why?" This was not improving my mood. I wanted sympathy, and I wasn't getting it.

"Have you considered the fact that you can't call these events good or bad until you're dead?"

"Well now that seems brilliant," I said irritably. "It's kind of hard to call it once you're dead."

"True," said my friend, "but here's the point. You can't know whether something is good or bad until your life is over. Look, I'll give you an example. Once there was a farmer who had a horse he used to plow his field. One day, the horse ran away. The townspeople came around and said, 'Oh, that's too bad. What terrible misfortune.' But the farmer replied, 'Maybe it's bad, and maybe it's not. It's hard to say.'

"Three days later, the horse came trotting back into the barn leading five wild mares. 'What good fortune!' the townspeople said. But the farmer replied, 'Good, bad, it's hard to say.'

"Two days later, the man's son was thrown while trying to break one of the wild mares, and he fractured his leg. 'What bad luck,' said the townspeople. But the farmer just replied, 'Good, bad, it's



hard to say.'

"A week later, the army came through the town, conscripting all the young men to go off to war. But they left the farmer's son because his leg was broken."

The King of Rational Thought looked me squarely in the eye. "Good, bad, it's hard to say," he said.

I didn't know how to reply.

"Do you ever play pinochle?" he asked.

Pinochle? My head spun as I tried to shift gears.

"Yes," I said, not having the foggiest idea where this was going.

"Have you ever been dealt a hand that looked lousy, but you ended up winning?"

"Yes." A faint glow appeared at the end of the tunnel.

"Have you ever been dealt a hand that looked great, but you ended up losing?"

"Yes." The light in the tunnel got brighter.

"Now do you understand what I mean? You can't tell whether a situation is good or bad until the hand has been completely played. In life," he concluded, "that means when your life is over."

"By the way," he added, "do you also know that once the pinochle cards are dealt, it's a complete waste of time, energy, and emotion to wish they were different?"

My friend's guests arrived just as the maitre d' appeared to take us to our respective tables, and we parted. Once seated, I stared out at the ferry reviewing the ideas I'd just heard. He was right. There didn't seem to be much point in ruining my whole day over events that were outside my control. As the sun broke through my emotional storm clouds, I decided to encourage myself even further.

I skipped lunch and ordered dessert. ▣



# Christianity vs Judaism II

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

If I am invited to join my employer in a meal, and I notice what is being served is spoiled, I must avert ingestion, and also inform my host. When I do, he will hear me, stop, look at the food, and act accordingly. He will probably thank me. What he will not do is respond as follows, "How dare you remark about my food, while I pay you week after week?" He will not offer such a knee-jerk response, and certainly not before he has examined his food. When you attempt to help someone, the normal human response is investigation, realization, and appreciation. Also, a rational person will not allow his authority as my employer, to deny my authority on the nature of this food. These two spheres of authority are unrelated.

So we are puzzled at a similar scenario. Why is it, when we respond (I stress "respond", as we don't chase them) to Christian missionaries, informing them of our reasoning that their religion is riddled with riddles, that we receive a hostile response? After all, they approached us, and not the reverse. We would assume that the missionary would at the minimum, objectively search for truths that may be contained in our response, and not offer a knee-jerk defense, if reason says otherwise. However, this is not the case. Christianity is defended tooth and nail with demands to follow blindly. Rational explanations are not found in their words. We have heard responses like, "How dare you criticize our religion, while we love Israel and join in your causes?" One thing has nothing to do with the other, just as my employer's authority in the workplace does not extend outside that sphere. Instead of investigating our response, we receive an immediate condemnation – despite the validity of our point. There is no attempt to consider our position - perhaps it is reasonable. There is no attempt to take us on our word that our intent is to benefit the Christian. We are viewed as aggressors, although again, we are not the missionaries. This emotional response reveals that something boils below the surface. They have no rationale that may refute us, so hatred is how they react. It is this hatred, which I feel, propels their missionary work to begin with. Why do they feel the need to convert us? Is our religion such a slap in the face to Christianity? Obviously it is. Our religion is rational-based, and rationality uncovers the blind-faith, Christian system as mere beliefs, with no rhyme or reason. Certainly the Christian adherence to the Bible displays their acceptance of the truth that G-d gave the Jews His Book. So why on Earth don't they accept the masters of this Book, the Rabbis, and adhere to these Rabbis' understanding of this Book? The answer is that this fable of Jesus gains an assumed credibility based on such wide acceptance, antiquity, and the veneer of those elderly leaders who are majestically robed, and follow strict asceticism. All these "religious" factors fool the mind into believing there is truth here. But there is one element missing: intelligence.

Such a lifestyle, where one denies his mind, is doomed to frustration. Our world operates based on reason. So when someone lives with faith, he will keep running into inconsistencies.

This one-sided approach, where another viewpoint cannot be heard, leads me to suggest the following: the next time anyone is approached by a missionary, your first words should be as follows, "If I disprove your words, will you abandon Christianity?" If the Christian says yes, then talk with him. But if he responds "No", then he does not operate with reason, and any



rational discussion is useless. Anyone should abandon his or her position, when it is exposed as baseless. The denial to accept rational arguments reveals a person who cannot be reasoned with, and any conversation is a pure waste of time.

## Honesty Rules – Not Religious Belief

In contrast, Judaism is based on a search for absolute truth. We do not shy from any question. Our greatest Rabbis demonstrate how committed they were to following truth, and not cherished beliefs:

Maimonides Guide for the Perplexed, Book II Chapter XXVI

*"...Owing to the absence of all proof, we reject the theory of the Eternity of the Universe: and it is for this very reason that the noblest minds spent and will spend their days in research. For if the Creation had been demonstrated by proof, even if only according to the Platonic hypothesis, all arguments of the philosophers against us would be of no avail. If, on the other hand, Aristotle had a proof for his theory, the whole teaching of Scripture would be rejected, and we should be forced to other opinions. I have thus shown that all depends on this question. Note it."*

The Ibn Ezra (Exod. 20.1)

*"...The second category (of commandments) are commands which are hidden, and there is not explained why they were commanded. And God forbid, God forbid that there should be any one of these commands, which goes against human intelligence. Rather, we are obligated to perform all that God commands, be it revealed to us the underlying "Sode" (principle), be it hidden from us. And if we find any of them, which contradict human intelligence, it isn't proper that we should understand it as implied. But we should consult the books of the wise men of blessed memory, to determine if such a command is a metaphor. And if we find nothing written (by them) we (must) search out and seek with all our ability, perhaps we can fix it (determine the command). If we can't, then we abandon that mitzvah as it is, and admit we are ignorant of it".*

These two Torah giants exemplify the utmost honesty that every human owes it to him or herself to follow. Unfortunately, many people wish to fool themselves, allowing their emotional satisfactions to overshadow their rational convictions. They prefer to lie to themselves. Well, free will is G-d's will, so we may not interfere with what a person does. We can only hope that at some point in a person's life, they will detect that they have not been following reason, and will seek the truth, even if it means abandoning

(continued on next page)

cherished beliefs. Rabbis Maimonides and Ibn Ezra, display such attachment to truth. There was nothing more desired by them. No other considerations, not even their religious beliefs, were held onto, if they discovered fallacy. This is what every Jew should do. This is what every Christian should do. We should examine our beliefs, and when we find anything that is not supported by reason, proof, and truth, we must then abandon it.

### Don't Bury the "Hatchet"

A few of our Jewish readers have responded that Christians are our friends, and we shouldn't upset them by denouncing their religion. In no manner did we suggest that someone approach a Christian and denounce his religion - we have been dealing with the "response" required for missionaries. Our writings are intended for our Jewish readers. If Christian missionaries approach our children, and they will, these children must be prepared with an unwavering conviction for Judaism. Such conviction does not happen without learning how Judaism is correct, and all other religions are false. For this objective, we must teach our Jewish children and students. Again, this is not being taught in our Jewish schools, and this is a gross failure.

Christian readers are bound to get upset with what we write. But if they are honest, they should have already been questioning their doctrines long ago without our impetus, and they would have already abandoned Christianity for its lack of rationale and contradictory positions. However, we will not avoid alarming other religionists at the cost of sacrificing truth and losing Jews to missionaries.

I mentioned earlier the anger with which certain Christians responded to our recent articles. It is no secret that Judaism denies all stories about Jesus being the messiah. It is also no secret that Christianity's position is that Jews who deny Jesus will burn in hell. So when we enunciate what we already know is public knowledge, why the hostile reaction? Christian teachings of Jews burning in hell for denying Jesus do not evoke hostility from the Jews. So why is the Christian response angered?

I feel there is one answer for both; why Jews aren't alarmed at Christian teachings, and why Jews desire to squelch the education of Christianity's flaws: Jews are afraid. Jews desire Christian support, more than G-d's approval. This is a real sickness. Jews have succumbed to their infantile need for human approval. They would rather cripple their children by withholding our tongue, than supporting their convictions in what is truth, and what we are commanded to learn and teach. Simultaneously, such insecure Jews withhold the truth from Christians, which also hurts them. We mentioned this last week, but I feel this is important to reiterate.

Part of the cause of anti-Semitism is the Jews' apologetic, Judaic practice. The very act of not standing firm in your religion invites ridicule, and also displays a corrupted Judaism, which I agree deserves criticism. But if the Jew would commit to the knowledge that G-d knows what is best, and he follows authentic Judaism, his actions will earn the accolades of the nations: (Deut. 4:6-8) "And guard them and do them (the commands) for they are your wisdom and your understanding in the eyes of the nations, who will hear these statutes, and they will say, 'What a wise and understanding people is this great nation'. For what great nation has G-d close to them, as G-d, our G-d, whenever we call to Him. And what great nation has statutes and righteous laws as this entire Torah, that I give to you today?"

Anti-Semitism can be dealt with. If Jews study Torah and live in accord with the perfect ideas created by G-d, other nations will have an opportunity to see G-d's wisdom. This is our obligation. I have received letters from Christians who sought rationale for Christian doctrines, but found none, and later, converted to Judaism as it made sense. When the nations are afforded knowledge of G-d's Torah through contact with learned Jews, they will see a different life, one that appeals to their minds, and causes no frustration in their hearts. They will be imbued with the perfection of Judaism, and will desire to learn more. They will appreciate the pure, absolutely clear wisdom G-d, and despise the false, distorted religions made by man. This is exactly what happened with Queen Sheba. She came to King Solomon to verify his knowledge, and she left with a love for G-d's wisdom, displayed in the king's answers. Her unmatched gifts proved her sincerity. As any scientist is awed by the cosmos, any person will be awed by the wisdom that is encapsulated in the Torah. But if as Jews, we do not study, and perform the Torah's laws, by what means will other nations have a chance at seeing Torah wisdom? By what means will other nations realize the true distinction of the Jew, and abandon anti-Semitism?

As a Jew, study our great Torah, and you will find answers to all your questions. G-d wrote it. He knows our questions, and made the answers available. Don't fall prey to the sins of previous generations who sought the accolades of alien nations. We have G-d's promise of a great life if we adhere to His system. This must override your other petty concerns.

Abraham, our forefather, and founder of Judaism, was not a Jew. He was no different than any Gentile today. G-d desires that all mankind exist. Therefore, it is against Judaism to have ill feelings towards any other human being. Just as we have a strong tie to Abraham, we must also recognize G-d's will that each one of our neighbors has been given a soul. Before the existence of "Jews", G-d favored Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the Twelve Tribes, and Moses. These great prophets displayed how perfected man can be. This perfection is available to not only these men, but to any man or woman today, and perfection was made easier through G-d's gift of His Torah.

Our neighbors are black, white, Gentile and Jew. Not one would be alive were it not G-d's will that he or she live. It is this reality that demands our respect and concern for every member of mankind. Every person has an opportunity to make the most of this short life. Our primary goal is to use the intelligence given to us and no other creature. This is why we always stress living a life based on reason, and not blind faith. G-d's very gift of intelligence to mankind teaches that G-d wishes we use it, and not ignore what reason tells us. Although religions demanding faith became popular, this in no way obscures G-d's plan that man use the intelligence, to reason for himself, and arrive at a life where he follows what is proven true, and denies what is bereft of proof and reason. This is why we argue against Christianity. It is false, and it misleads mankind. G-d gave the Jews a role to educate the world in His Torah.

That being said, we will continue to expose what we find as baseless, to steer our children and students away from fallacy. For any Christian reader, bear in mind that to hear what we discuss, you must be honest and objective. If you desire Jesus more than reason, I suggest you cease from reading further. But if you wish to live in line with honesty and reason, please continue. If you have questions, please write us. Your mind can discern between truths and fallacy. Do not deny your mind, in favor of maintaining beliefs that are clearly false. Be honest, you have one life. Don't forfeit it simply because you have lived so long in a certain manner. That is no argument to continue in your error. ■



# G-D

## NEVER FORSAKES *the* TORAH or *the* JEWISH PEOPLE

**RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM**

Christianity attempts to proliferate the lie that G-d forsook His original Torah, replacing it with a "new covenant". They claim this covenant is "Christianity", which now supplants Judaism as G-d's "newly selected" religion. This claim is not supported by the text at all. However, Christianity attempts to support their claim, quoting Jeremiah 31:30. But I will quote the entire context from 31:26-35. The glaring contradiction to Christianity's very claims makes you wonder how anyone could accept Christianity's positions. Let us review the actual text:

*"Behold the days are coming - the word of G-d - when I shall sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah, the seed of man and the seed of animal. And it shall be that just as I was diligent concerning them, to uproot, to smash, to destroy, to annihilate and to bring evil, so will I be diligent to concerning them to build and to plant - the word of G-d. In those days it will no longer be said, 'The fathers ate sour grapes, but the teeth of the sons are set on edge.' Rather, every man will die for his own sin, and the man who eats the sour grapes, his own teeth will be set on edge. Behold, days are coming - the word of G-d - when I will seal a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. Not like the covenant that I sealed with their forefathers on the day I took hold of their hand to take them out of the land of Egypt, for they abrogated My covenant, although I became their Master - the word of G-d. For this is the covenant that I shall seal with the house of Israel after those days - the word of G-d - I will place My Torah within them and I will write it onto their heart; I will be a G-d for them and they will be a people for Me. They will no longer teach - each man his fellow, each man his brother - saying 'Know G-d'. For all of them will know Me, from their smallest to their greatest - the word of G-d - when I will forgive their iniquity and will no longer recall their sin. Thus said G-d, 'Who gives the sun as light by day and the laws of the moon and the stars as a light by night; Who agitates the sea so that its waves roar; G-d, master of Legions is His name. If these laws*

*could be removed from before Me, - the word of G-d - so could the seed of Israel cease from being a people before Me forever."*

G-d says that just as the laws governing the luminaries and the ocean will never cease, so too the people of Israel will never cease from being a people from before G-d. It could not be clearer: G-d will never abandon Israel. What is more startling is that G-d openly says, "...I will place My Torah within them and I will write it onto their heart." The Torah is clearly never abandoned by G-d. This "new covenant" that the Christians imagine to be Christianity, is in fact the original Torah, as G-d says:

*"For this is the covenant that I shall seal with the house of Israel after those days - the word of G-d - I will place My Torah within them and I will write it onto their heart; I will be a G-d for them and they will be a people for Me. They will no longer teach - each man his fellow, each man his brother - saying 'Know G-d'. For all of them will know Me, from their smallest to their greatest - the word of G-d."*

G-d said, "for they abrogated My covenant", i.e., the Jews forsook G-d. G-d therefore promises a reestablishment of His providence over the Jews. This is the meaning of a "new covenant". And with this new covenant, G-d will never again be removed from the thoughts of the Jews - they

will never again abrogate their relationship with G-d. In the prior generation, the Jews abandoned G-d. What G-d will now do in the future is guarantee that the Torah and G-d are never lost from the Jews. This is the "new covenant". To suggest it refers to Christianity is overtly foolish, and displays Christianity as illiterate.

Furthermore, the Torah again says as follows (Isaiah, 59:21):

*"And as for Me, this is My covenant with them, said G-d, My spirit which is upon you and My words that I have placed in your mouth will not be withdrawn from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your offspring, nor from the mouth of your offspring's offspring, said G-d, from this moment and forever."*

What is the word that was already "placed in your mouth"? Christianity suggests Isaiah prophesied for the future about Jesus. However, this cannot be, as Isaiah is clearly referring to the past. G-d clearly refers to the "word" that will never be lost forever, as that which is already "placed in your mouth", past tense. Thus, G-d declares that the word, which He already placed in the mouth of the Jews - the Torah - will never be withdrawn. End of story. G-d will never replace the Torah. Isaiah's "new covenant" refers to something in the past, and not in the future. G-d's word in the past is clearly the Torah given at Mount Sinai. Review G-d's words, "For this is the covenant that I shall seal with the house of Israel after those days - the word of G-d - I will place My Torah within them and I will write it onto their heart".

(Parenthetically, quoting this section as their "proof" for Christianity is shooting itself in the foot, for in this very section we read, "every man will die for his own sin". This portion denies their doctrine that Jesus can die for others, although he did not sin!)

Isaiah teaches the opposite of what Christianity claims: G-d openly attests that he will never forsake the Torah or the Jewish people. ▣





# From New Testament to Old

LINDA BEHREND

After reading Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim's thoughtful article, "Christianity and Judaism Can't Both Be G-d's Word" I wrote the following words. My perspective is one of an ex-Christian. I offer these thoughts to your fine magazine:

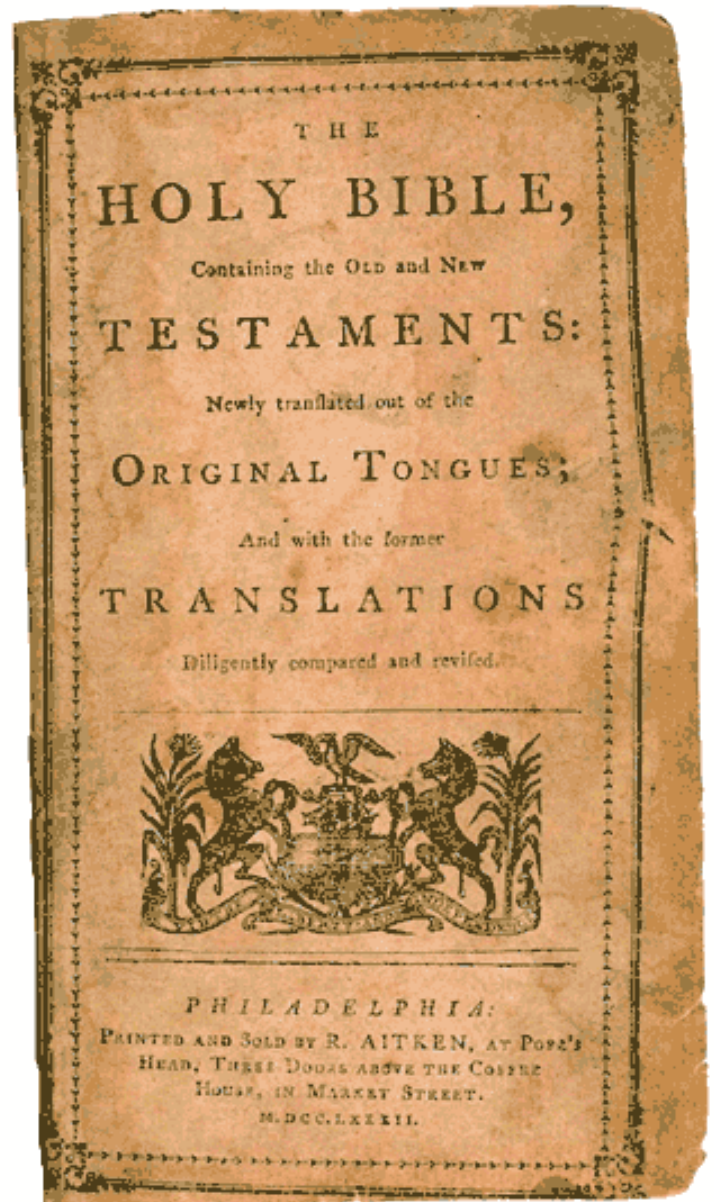
Rabbi Ben-Chaim, As a seeker of truth, I turned from the New to the Old Testament. I returned to G-d.

Born to a Baptist mother and Pentecostal father, I grew up with Jesus, a kind, comforting, holy man. At 14, I saw a movie about Hattie Moon, a Baptist missionary. Unlike all my peers, I found her zeal terribly wrong. What right did she have to change others to her version of Christianity or to Christianity at all?! At 16, I visited other churches to learn variations on a theme, much to the consternation of the Baptist elders. Finding my Baptist dogma too narrow, I left the fold. Organized religion didn't fit my needs. For years I didn't see the mutual exclusivity of Old and New Testament. I practiced inclusive religion, an oxymoron I soon discovered -along with the cruelty of Christians. From Christian background, I grew beyond its borders.

One night I was trying to recite the Ten Commandments. Surprising to me, I couldn't recall the first: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." In a moment of epiphany, I was transformed: I came to see the golden calf named Jesus. Christianity had usurped G-d with Christ, the most blasphemous form of idolatry.

Today, I found your article, learned Rabbi, articulating so cogently the Christian fallacy. Up to this point, I could define my faith by what it was not: I could no longer be exclusive, as Christianity is at heart, exclusive to all who don't follow Jesus. Now, I can define my faith in terms of what I do believe: I believe in the Old Testament and see the New Testament as sacrilege, putting Jesus above G-d, blasphemy at its base.

A pivotal point: Five years ago, I sat in a circle of Stephen ministers: Presbyterian care givers in training to "listen with love." I mentioned to the group that I was practicing inclusive religion: I had a date with a nice Jewish man. "He can't be that nice if he doesn't believe in Jesus" was the snippy stab of one in the group. Astounded, I sat speechless, mouth hanging open, still Pollyanna in my innocence of such hatred. Not one uttered a word against such sanctimonious slicing, including the reverend condoning the silence. Soon thereafter, I left their fold, married that nice Jewish man, and am now living happily ever after in natural harmony in New Ulm, Texas. The revelation of such Christian idolatry burned my vision clean. From my pastoral perspective atop this hill on G-d's green earth, I can see the hypocrisy through the glass of illusion ever so clearly. The truth lies in the Old Testament alone with the majesty that is G-d in abstract as one. Thank you for your insightful illumination and articulation. ▣



## CHRISTIANITY'S FOIBLES IN A NUTSHELL

CHRIST, HISTORICALLY SPEAKING (DOGMA), DIED AT 33, WAS RESURRECTED.

THE APOSTLES' STORIES, 30+ YEARS LATER.

100-200 YEARS LATER, NICEA, CONSTANTINE.

900 YEARS LATER, BYZANTINE ICONOGRAPHY - ABSTRACT BECOMES CONCRETE.

1400 YEARS LATER, THE RENAISSANCE: GOD BECOMES MAN. G-D IS FORSAKEN.

ALL THE STATUES.

ALL THE HUMAN FORMS.

ALL THE NEW TESTAMENT, DISAPPEARANCE OF THE OLD.

ALL EMOTION AND PHYSICALITY.

NO RATIONALITY NOR ABSTRACTION.

OLD TESTAMENT LAWS GIVEN TO MOSES, ALL HISTORY WASHED AWAY.

OPPOSITION TO EDUCATION, NO NEED FOR IT.

FAITH OVER FACT. PAUL'S DOGMA OVER MOSES' TABLETS.

BURIED MOST DEEPLY, THE FIRST COMMANDMENT: "THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS ABOVE ME."

THE HUMAN NEED TO IDOLIZE, TO GIVE HUMAN SHAPE TO G-D, THE ULTIMATE SACRILEGE.

THE ULTIMATE BLASPHEMY, "LIFE TO CHRIST - DEATH TO G-D."

THE CHRISTIAN LEGACY.

# RESPONSES

## CHRISTIANITY VS JUDAISM

**Reader:** I thoroughly enjoyed this article. I have recently come out of the Baptist denomination and I find it fascinating to read how others perceive the Christian church. I left because of several of the flaws you mentioned such as idolatry. I was stunned to learn the true origins of Christmas & Easter as well as the facts regarding Sunday worship, the dismissing of Torah, and on and on. It truly is what you accused it of being...a man-made religion. (Turns out there is little or no "Judeo" in my so called "Judeo-Christian" tradition!)

In my experience, I was not taught nor encouraged to critically judge for myself what was the truth. Rather, I was encouraged to rely on leaders to disseminate that for me. Additionally, I was taught to be afraid of and run from anything that didn't match my leaders teaching. At long last, I know the truth can stand the light of day and will not crumble or be destroyed by honest and sincere scrutiny. (However, lies might.) Thanks for encouraging open and honest dialogue. We need it desperately!

Another worthy criticism I read remarks that Christians rely heavily on "faith" without evidence, while Judaism relies on the clear evidence of Mt. Sinai. I'm puzzled then, on the reliance of the "oral" traditions (no evidence) when we're told not to add to or subtract from & we read that "Moshe wrote all the words of the L-rd." (Exod. 24:4)

Thanks again for the good read!

Vicky Mitchell, Topeka, Kansas

**Mesora:** It appears your one question (correct me if there are more) is how we rely on the Oral Law, as you assume it was not proven or given in front of masses, as was the Torah. The answer is that Moses gave it too at Sinai, and transmitted to Aaron, to his sons, to the elders and to the nation, along with the Written Law.

How do we know that Moses himself did not make all the Oral Law? This is based on the miracle of Moses' face shining with light from his descent from Sinai, until his death. Such a miracle is only possible if G-d performs it, and G-d would not do such an act of condoning Moses, if Moses in fact deviated from G-d's words. Where thereby learn that G-d condoned all that Moses taught, including Moses' received Oral Law. Had Moses lied about the Oral Law, saying it was G-d's when Moses fabricated it, G-d would not have condoned Moses' words via any miracle.

**Reader:** I read with interest your recent articles on Christianity and Judaism. I have two questions:

1) Is Christianity OK for Gentiles? I believe Maimonides said that Christianity was all right for Gentiles since Christianity taught there was one God, and thus an improvement over polytheism, though he also said Christianity's understanding of His nature was flawed in that it believed He is a trinity. Is this the correct understanding of Maimonides' position?

**Mesora:** Let us read Maimonides' words:

Laws of Kings, Laws 11:10-12 (Capach Edition):

"[10] ...Can there be a greater stumbling block than this (Christianity)? That all the prophets spoke that the Messiah will redeem Israel and save them, and gather their dispersed and strengthen their Mitzvot, and this (one, i.e., Jesus) caused the Jews to be destroyed by the sword, and scattered their remnants and humbled them, and exchanged the Torah, and caused the majority of the world to err to serve a god other than the Lord. [11] Nevertheless, the thoughts of the Creator of the world are not within the

power of man to reach them, 'for our ways are not His ways, nor are our thoughts His thoughts.' And all these matters of Jesus of Nazareth and that of the Ishmaelite who arose after him are only to straighten the way of the king Messiah and to fix the entire world, to serve God as one, as it is stated (Zephaniah 3:9), "For then I will turn to the peoples (into) clear speech, to all call in the name of G-d and serve Him unanimously. [12] How (will this come about)? The entire world has already become filled with the mention of the Messiah, with words of Torah and words of mitzvot and these matters have spread to the furthestmost isles, to many nations of uncircumcised hearts, and they discuss these matters and the mitzvot of the Torah. Some say: "These mitzvot are true, but were already nullified in the present age and are not applicable for all time." Others say: "Hidden matters are in them (mitzvot) and they are not to be taken literally, and the messiah has already come and revealed their hidden (meanings). And when the true Messiah stands, and he is successful and is raised and exalted, immediately they all will retract and will know that fallacy they inherited from their fathers, and that their prophets and fathers caused them to err."

We cannot suggest that G-d desired Christianity to arise. G-d desires no other religion than Judaism. G-d knew the future, and foresaw all future religions, that would arise. Nonetheless, He publicly instructed man in only one religion – Judaism.

Maimonides does not indicate that G-d desired Christianity's existence. This is clearly in direct opposition to G-d's Torah. All Maimonides says is that G-d's plan will not be altered by the rise of other religions. The fact that Christianity spread the Mitzvot, is not equivalent to saying G-d desires Christianity from the outset. The spread of Christianity may have brought about awareness, but a false one at that, and one that all nations will ultimately see as false, as the quote says, "...immediately they all will retract and will know that fallacy they inherited from their fathers, and that their prophets and fathers caused them to err." Look at Maimonides' opening words: "...Can there be a greater stumbling block than this (Christianity)? Also, "and this (one, i.e., Jesus) caused the Jews to be destroyed by the sword, and scattered their remnants and humbled them, and exchanged the Torah, and caused the majority of the world to err to serve a god other than the Lord." Christianity is pure evil.

**Reader:** 2) If Christianity is not OK for Gentiles, what is their alternative? Should they convert to Judaism? If so, then why don't Jews proselytize? If Gentiles shouldn't convert, then what else can they do? Just following seven laws can't satisfy spiritual need. How should they worship God? What should they study? Thank you for your reply

**Mesora:** Gentiles should study and observe their seven Noachide laws, as G-d's will demands. And the study required to master these seven laws will take years, and certainly will satisfy one's "spiritual needs" as you put it. The seven Noachide laws must be understood as the 'minimum a Gentile must keep, in order to remain alive'. This is why death is the punishment for the violation of any of the Noachide laws.

We do not attempt to convert Gentiles to Judaism. If a Gentile wishes to benefit from our additional laws, then he must do so out of his own recognition, if he is in fact to merit from such a decision. How can a Jew's oppressive conversion of a Gentile benefit the Gentile? Missionary work makes no sense. Love of the Judaic system must be internally generated, not external. Otherwise, it is not a true love. ■



## RESPONSES

# CHRISTIANITY VS JUDAISM

## Leaving Christianity

Thank you for your article "Christianity vs Judaism". I found it most interesting and helpful because I was raised in the Roman Catholic Church. As my children approached school age, I knew that I needed to start teaching them about G-d. Even as a Christian, I took the job of teaching my children very seriously, but I knew that I could not teach them what was not in my heart.

I searched and struggled while exploring the RC church and other "Christian" churches. I left each one angry and empty. My questions were left unanswered. I was told that I must "just have faith." No one could comprehend that I was, apparently, not born with this faith inside me. It made no sense to me. I was tortured by the idea of worshipping a man-god.

Some looked at me in absolute fear that I should even question the things I was questioning. I think one reason Christians hold on to their faith so tightly is their fear of burning in hell if they do not believe. That is one heck of a way to get people in the doors every week to put money in the basket. I just was not buying it.

Right about this time, I became friends with a Jewish man. He was good and kind to those all around him - whether he knew them or whether they were strangers. I had never met anyone like him. As our friendship grew, I felt I could trust him with the angst of my searches for truth and tradition to pass to my children. He laughed and said if I wanted tradition, I should look into Judaism. He was 1/2 joking, but I took him up on it.

I studied on-line and took out books from the library and even purchased a few. I was not finding all my answers, but no one I talked to in the Jewish community told me not to ask the questions. No one told me to "just have faith." Everyone welcomed the discussions. How different from what I had been experiencing!

I then found a wonderful Rabbi and studied with him for an additional year and 1/2 before I formally converted.

I started out searching for something I could teach my children, but came to realize that I have much to learn!

Thank you again for your article. I have a brother who is my opposite. I live in the Northeast, he in Los Angeles. I am a democrat, he a republican. I converted to Judaism, he to some offshoot of the Baptist church. Oy! He sends me many emails trying to convert me back. Lots of quotes from the Bible claiming that this or that predicted the coming of Jesus. I am happy to have quotes to send back to him now!

Perhaps I should have already had these verses in my back pocket, but like I stated before... I have much to learn.

Just a PS - Reasons why I chose Judaism and why I teach it to my sons:

Christianity is a death-based religion. They tell you that Jesus rose from the dead, but that is not the symbol that they wear around their necks or hang in their churches. The cross is a symbol of death.

Judaism is a religion that celebrates life. L'chaim!

Christianity is a selfish religion. The Christian does charity to feel good and with the thought earning heavenly gold stars. (Again more focus on death.)

Judaism is a community-based religion. Mitzvot and tzedakah are requirements from G-d to make the place we are living in a better place for all with no thought of doing it to save our own souls.

Thank you for listening.

Jew By Choice,  
Kathleen Connelly

## The True Canon

**Reader:** What were the criteria used to accept the other books of the Tanach other than the Torah? I was looking at Deuteronomy where it states that the word that He gave was not to be added to or taken away from and that got me thinking. Are the words of the Prophets and the Writings "adding"? If they are not, then are they considered to be equal as the "word of G-d" as the first five books? I am not trying to be contentious, but have asked this same question of the books of the "New Testament", as these are what I was raised under, and now must ask the same about the other books that are not among the first five. What of the historical books, are they also considered to be equally inspired? And if so, how was this decided as they were not witnessed by large numbers of people as the very voice of G-d speaking? Thank you for your time.

**Mesora:** According to one opinion, the Men of the Great Assembly decided upon what was and was not canonized as Prophets and Writings. Additionally, the Five Books (Torah) surpass the Prophets and Writings, in that only from the Five Books are Torah laws derived. Additionally, the Rabbis teach that there is nothing new in Prophets and Writings, the latter two - even though they too are the word of G-d - only reiterate the concepts originally found in the Five Books.

The Men of the Great Assembly also taught that nothing after their canon is G-d's word. Prophecy had ended. Those great men had the Mesora, the teachings, handed down directly from Moses to them, and we therefore abide by their Torah decisions. Their decisions include what enters Prophets and Writings, and their decision is final. They are the sole authority. The Torah teaches, "In accord with the Torah that they teach you, and upon the statute they tell you, so shall you do, do not veer from the matter that they tell you, left or the right." (Deut. 17:11) These are G-d's words, commanding us to follow the Rabbis. Thus, upholding the opinions and decrees of the Rabbis is G-d's will. Whoever violates the Rabbis, such as those who say that the New Testament is G-d's word, is in violation of G-d's words. ■

# Torah Study Methodology

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

This paper was written as an aid for Torah study. Developing the proper, central questions on any area is crucial to arriving at answers.

When one goes through an account of Jewish history found in either the Torah, Prophets, Writings, or Jewish Law in the Mishna or the Talmud, it is essential to your understanding to keep the following in mind: the Torah was designed word for word, letter for letter by G-d, as was the Oral Law. The Talmud was written by the extremely wise. One commits a grave injustice both to the ideas and to oneself by offering a simple explanation of any topic found in these areas, as they all stem from G-d Who has infinite wisdom, "For G-d gives wisdom, from His mouth come knowledge and understanding." (Proverbs, 2:6). Everything must be appreciated and understood on this level. Every sentence in the Torah, for example, must contribute to the explanation of the area. In any given story in the Torah, the Prophets or the Writings, the precise amount of information is disclosed to us by G-d so that we can detect the issues. Certain unusual words will be used to catch our attention. Certain passages will seem out of place at first, and seemingly impossible events are described which force us to delve onto the area. These are all generous clues for the investigation.

Besides having the correct appreciation for the design of the Torah, you must also approach your studies with the correct questions. As a Rabbi once said, "asking the right question is 90 percent of the answer."

Many times when asking a question, you already have more information than you may think,

and by using that information in your question, you will more likely arrive at the correct answer. For example: When you see a flat tire on your friend's car you can ask "what happened?" But you already know what happened. He drove his car over some sharp object. The question should really be formulated as "What did you drive your car over?" By asking the question in this way, you will start pondering what could have punctured his tire. You've directed your thoughts directly to the area that will contain your answer - namely, the type of sharp object. If



you would have persisted with your first question of "what happened?", you would have placed your mindset in an astonished state, as opposed to an inquisitively directed state. Being in an astonished state creates an emotional curiosity that does not necessarily probe further, and not an intellectual search.

The following area in the Torah will illustrate this point. I will first give a brief summary of the area. Then I will show an indirect and direct way of asking questions.

The area is in Numbers, chapter 21, verses 4 through 9. It states that the people traveled towards the land

of Edom, and their patience grew short on the way. They complained regarding G-d and Moses that there was no bread and water and they were tired of the light bread (the manna). G-d then sent fiery serpents to attack and kill the people, and many died. The people saw their wrong and went to Moses and confessed that they spoke wrongly about G-d and about Moses, and asked that he pray that the serpents be removed. After Moses prayed, G-d told him to create a serpent and to place it upon a pole and that any who looked at it would be healed. Moses did so, and made a brass serpent and placed it on a pole, and any man that was bitten gazed at it and was healed. This is the basic story. Be mindful that to successfully answer an area you must keep to the main issues, and identify what is peripheral. Thus cannot be emphasized enough.

The main questions on this section are: What was the fault of the people? Why did G-d choose to give "fiery serpents" as a punishment here, as opposed to something else? What does the added affliction of "fiery" serpents come to accomplish? Why did Moses have to make a serpent if the people already confessed? Why put it on a pole? Why did Moses make it out of "brass"? How did looking at this serpent heal?

Rashi said, "let the serpent who was punished due to his evil talk (the section dealing with Adam and Eve) come and exact punishment from those who spoke evil. Let the serpent come, to whom everything tastes as one, and exact punishment from those who denied the good. That one thing (manna) was changed for them to many things." According to Rashi, the Jews

(continued on next page)



# Torah Study Methodology

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

received a corrective measure through snakes because of evil talk. However, this isn't the first time someone spoke evil. Why didn't Miriam receive snakes when she spoke against Moses? Why didn't the Jews receive snakes long before this? They spoke evil before.

These are the basic questions. It is very possible to work with them as they are. But if we make slight changes to their structure, we will direct ourselves closer to the answers. Remember, all of the information needed to answer these questions is in these passages.

The main question should be addressed first. Why snakes? We know why. They spoke evil. So we must ask more directly: "What was the difference in the evil talk of the Jews here, that they received the serpents?" Asking the question in this way, you direct your mind to look at their actions for the answer. You know that in other cases the Jews complained to G-d and Moses, and they didn't receive snakes, let alone "fiery" snakes. So speaking evil per se cannot be what is the cause of their extraordinary punishment. What is different here? The difference is that it never mentions anywhere else that the people "grew tired on the way". This first passage seems extraneous at first. But now, rephrase the question using this information from the first passage: "What is it in the fact that they were tired, that their following evil talk should be punished with serpents?" You can almost immediately make the connection that their evil talk was the direct result of being tired. Meaning, that their evil talk was unjustified in relation to the object of their complaint. It was just talk used to vent their emotions regardsomethinglese.

There was no inherent flaw with the manna. Talking can be used for one of two things: 1) communication of an idea, or of a real complaint, 2) an outlet for the emotions, as one does when hot tempered and breaks something. So instead of breaking something, you whine and complain. This first passage is here to hint towards the underlying cause for their complaining: they were tired of the journey and didn't control their feelings, and began to displace their frustration to outlet their emotions. We also understand now why they received such a different punishment here than in other areas. Here, their complaining wasn't based on any real problem. They covered it up with a rationalization of the lack of bread and water. But in reality they shouldn't have complained. This explains why they received serpents. Serpents were given to them because they represent what the original serpent was punished for- evil talk- and to point out to them that they were victims of an emotion of outletting their feelings through speech. Had there been another incident in Scripture where an individual, or people, had outletted their emotions in this manner, and were on a level for G-d to administer a corrective measure, we would witness another case of "fiery serpents". However, this is the only account where this specific flaw occurred, and therefore, the only account where fiery serpents come to correct the situation.

With this information, we can also answer another question: Why the additional aspect of "fiery"? The reason is because they denied the good of the manna. This is what Rashi was pointing to. If there were

two aspects to their punishment (serpents and fiery), there must be a reason for both. So "serpents" come to correct evil speech, and "fiery" comes to correct their denial of the good manna.

Tangentially, Miriam wasn't punished with serpents because her degrading talk wasn't to outlet an emotion. Contained in her words was an incorrect notion regarding how G-d relates to man. She however expressed this with a boastful overtone. Thus, she fell prey to two faults; 1) she misunderstood how G-d relates to Moses, (as compared to herself) 2) she gave in to the feeling of haughtiness. Since Miriam faulted in these two, G-d corrected her in both. He taught her how His relationship with Moses differed from His relationship to her, and He gave her leprosy, which lowers ones self-esteem. This is another example of how G-ds punishment differs from mans. When G-d punishes someone, or a people, it is an act, which corrects a fault. It's not just a deterrent. This is the basic concept behind "Mida k'neged mida", (measure for measure).

What about the question as to why G-d told Moses to make replica of the serpent? Didn't the people repent already? This is one way of asking this question. But we can deduce from the facts that there must have been something lacking if G-d told Moses to do something further. The question should be rephrased as the following: "What was it in the Jews' request for the removal of the serpents that their repentance was not complete?" You can see the answer clearly. Their confession to G-d and Moses is immediately followed by their request to have the serpents removed. (An important point

about this is that they both take place in the same passage. When one passage contains a few thoughts, they are related.) Their repentance was only for the sake of removing their immediate pain from the serpents, and not a true conviction in their error. Because of this, G-d instructed Moses to create a replica of the serpent so that they could stare at it in order to contemplate their problem properly and remove from themselves their incorrect notions. Placing it upon the pole facilitated them to direct their thoughts towards G-d, Who is figuratively "upon high".

## Summary

The following steps should be taken when approaching an area of Torah:

- 1) Know where the area begins and ends.
- 2) Understand the area thoroughly.
- 3) Distinguish between main points and side points.
- 4) Ask yourself how this area differs from all other areas. This will help to point you towards the main topics.
- 5) Formulate questions clearly using as much information as you have to work with.
- 6) If the area deals with G-ds relationship to man, detect either man's fault and see how the punishment fits the crime, or look into G-d's actions towards man to understand what He was improving upon.
- 7) If the area deals with mitzvos (commandments), if they are positive commands, look into man's nature to see what they affect; and if they are negative commands, then they are coming to control a natural disposition of man, which must be tempered. ■

Att: Jewish School Principal

*We urge parents to sign this letter  
and send to your school principals*

# Open Letter to Jewish Schools & Educators

In response to the greatly funded efforts of Christian missionaries, and in line with Rashi's teachings that we teach our children of the dangers of other religions, I request your commencement of classes teaching our children the fallacy of the major religions. This neglected subject must no longer be ignored. Educating our children on Judaism's truth, and the other religions' fallacy, is the only method for securing our children's continued adherence to Judaism. Missionaries are successful with those students who have no response to their attacks. I sign my name below requesting such classes be part of your regular curriculum starting September 2004. Mesora.org volunteers their articles as source material for your existing teachers. You may download them from the "Philosophy" link on their site, under "Other Religions." It would be an unforgivable crime if such education is not taught, and we lose our children to missionaries and cults. It is our obligation is to prepare them.

"Their full intention is to  
confuse and convert Jews."



*Please Help us in our efforts  
to Convert Jews to Islam*



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*Christian Missionary web pages.  
Make sure your school commences  
classes teaching students the fallacy  
of Christianity and other religions.*

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Parent of \_\_\_\_\_

/ / 2004

Date