

**WHY DOES GOD TEACH
MANKIND IN A CRYPTIC
MANNER, NOT OPENLY
REVEALING WISDOM?**

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IN THIS ISSUE:

PARSHA: VAYECHE	1,8,9
MOSES & THE SERPENT	1,4
HOW GOD TEACHES MAN	1-3
CHRISTIANITY'S FLAWS	5-8
BOOKS: QUESTIONING THE BIBLE	10
LETTERS: CHRISTIANITY	11
INCORPORALITY OF GOD	12,13

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Weekly Parsha

Vayeche

RABBI BERNARD FOX

Your father's blessings exceed the blessings of my parents – extending to the boundaries of the heights of the world. May they be for Yosef's head, for the brow of the elect of his brothers. (Beresheit 49:26)

Parshat VaYeche completes Sefer

(continued on page 8)



Moses & the Serpent

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Reader: Can you explain the Rashi in Exodus 4:24, where God seeks to kill Moses for not circumcising his son: "And the angel was made into a kind of snake and swallowed Moses from his head to his thighs, and returned and swallowed him from his feet up to the same place. Tzipora understood that this was happening because of circumcision."

I understand that the angel was hinting. Is there something to learn from the fact that the angel was made into a snake, specifically? My first association is lashon hara, or ungratefulness. I think God sent the

(continued on page 4)



RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

We recently discussed the incident wherein God informed Moses of his error in his perception of his role, sending some type of serpent to afflict him, near-death. This taught Moses that he was in fact "dispensable" in God's plan to redeem the Jews, unlike his own opinion.

We asked why God teaches man by way of subtle indication, in place of outright clarity. We also learn that when Solomon was made king at the age of twelve, God appeared to him, asking, "...ask what I shall give to you." (Kings I, 3:5) Solomon then asked for wisdom, as he realized God would not make such an offer for that which he may procure through natural channels. God was "indicating" that Solomon now had the opportunity to obtain something no other man could: "instantaneous wisdom". Solomon responded, requesting wisdom to judge the people. But God might have simply given him wisdom outright! What need was there for this method wherein God does not 'openly reveal' His message? Additionally, God's Torah is written quite cryptically, and the very existence of an "Oral Law" too teaches that not all wisdom is readily available, on the surface. (The Oral law elucidates the Written Law.) King Solomon writes that he wrote his metaphorical Proverbs so man might

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The physical and metaphysical worlds are limited in scope. Therefore, to truly unveil God's infinite knowledge contained in all parts of creation, something other than mere, physical senses are required.

“Understand proverb and poetic expression, the words of the wise and their riddles.” (Proverbs, 1:6) Furthermore, God gives man prophecy in the form of riddles.

We may learn from God’s “cryptic method” of teaching man, what I feel is essential knowledge about our attainment of knowledge.

(One may well ask, “God said in Numbers 12:8 that He does not give prophecy to Moses in “riddles” as He does with other prophets. So God’s “hint,” to Moses with the serpent, and his vision of the Burning Bush contradict this!” We may answer that Moses initially required God’s cryptic method, but after years of perfection, he arrived at the highest level where he attained God’s word clearly, and not in riddles. However, Moses was the only case of this direct, open communication. What we are studying is God’s general methods for mankind on the whole.)

God does not desire that mankind simply “hear His word”, and respond, without thinking. For this reason, Revelation at Sinai was a one-time event, “A great voice that did not continue.” (Deut. 5:19) This outright, undeniable proof of God’s existence was necessary. However, not being present at Sinai ourselves, future generations would require intelligence to derive this proof of God’s existence. God does not wish to create miracles always, and thus writes, “A great voice that did not continue.” Miracles are not God’s plan for mankind’s approach to Him. Maimonides also teaches that our primary command to love God is achieved by studying the universe. (Laws of Torah Fundamentals, 2:2) Why must this be?

The Study of Reality

God’s plan for mankind is to observe the universe, and with his intellect, understand the nature of things. Study of God’s created world and Torah is man’s sole objective. To enable Moses to accomplish this, God did not communicate his sin in words, but displayed his sin – through an event – which afforded Moses the opportunity to “study God’s relationship to the world.” Without an event, Moses would have lost the opportunity to engage his mind in discovering a new truth on his own. Moses, seeing his own debilitating illness, discovered a new idea: man is not essential for God to carry out His plan. But this was only discovered through witnessing “how God relates to man.” Events are essential for man’s observation, and ultimately, his study.

Throughout the Torah, God teaches man by way of created events. Through these events, punishments, rewards, miracles, and so on, God displays to mankind sufficient ‘evidence’ for man to approach God through gaining increased knowledge of God, specifically “through how He works”. To simply read in books, or to hear God informing us of His methods, man forfeits the realization observed through witnessing reality “in action.” Only by witnessing the very real operation of the world, does

man acknowledge a “reality” to God’s methods.

God created the physical world precisely to bestow mankind with a ‘laboratory’ in which to study God’s knowledge. This applies not just to the physical creations, but also to the metaphysical. God also created natural law, laws of justice, laws of Divine intervention, Divine providence, miracles, and so many other realities.

Since God desires man possess intellect, it is clear that we are to engage this intellect. This is necessary, as God’s knowledge far surpasses man’s knowledge. In order that man is able to comprehend something of God’s infinite knowledge, God created the physical and metaphysical worlds. However, these alone cannot contain the full depth of God’s knowledge. How then will man continually expand his knowledge, gaining greater truths about God? It is only through intelligent study, that greater knowledge may be observed in a given created entity or law.

Creation’s Limitation

The physical and metaphysical worlds are limited in scope. Therefore, to truly unveil God’s infinite knowledge contained in all parts of creation, something other than mere, physical senses are required. Our five senses convey to our minds but little information. These senses are limited in nature, as are their items of study, and cannot penetrate further than the entity’s characteristics. We then hit a dead end. This is where the intellect comes in. It examines, deduces, induces, and unravels many layers of God’s wisdom. The Torah as well is quite cryptic. Written words cannot contain all God’s knowledge. Therefore, Torah was written in a manner that draws the mind in, conveying hints and subtleties that enable further truths to reveal themselves.

We will never reach God’s complete knowledge. However, through observing God’s creations and laws, we are enabled to continue to grow our knowledge. Thus, God created an event for Moses to grow in his knowledge too.

I will offer one example: water. What is it? What knowledge of God may be contained in such a simple substance? Using our senses alone, all we may derive is its form, color, sound, behavior, temperature, moistness, and taste. If we stop there, we learn little about God. I say “little about God”, and not “water”, as all creation targets man’s knowledge of God, and not the creation in itself. Our goal is to arrive at a love of God. Therefore, when our knowledge ends with the object studied, in truth, we have not learned about the true nature of this creation. Knowledge of creation means knowledge of “God’s will that this thing exists”. To derive knowledge of God from His creations, we must seek reasons for His creations, culminating in an appreciation for His designs.

Let us further examine water, now including

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deductive and inductive reasoning. Water is plentiful, it conforms to any shape, and it flows. We wonder why this must be part of God's plan. Including God in our analysis, we may derive knowledge of His kindness, through His creation. We know that water is essential to all life, but it is not found readily in all areas. As mankind, plants and animals require water, we realize that the characteristic of "shape conformation" teamed with gravity and Earth's topography (mountains and valleys), allow water to "flow": it may reach distant areas, although not sourced there. All members of mankind may obtain water, even though it is not reservoired close by. It is malleable, so it is not obstructed from reaching distant communities: it may travel through very narrow paths, reaching all life forms. Water contains oxygen, providing another essential component. It also possesses no taste: since it is essential for all members of mankind, and an unfavorable taste would preclude many from ingesting this life source, taste is absent, enabling all to benefit with no reluctance. Water is clear: enabling man and animal to detect and procure aquatic life for food and other needs.

This is but a brief glimpse into water, but it serves to illustrate how our physical senses alone cannot avail us to greater knowledge of God. We must use reasoning to appreciate the depth of knowledge contained in creation. "...behold the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You..." (Kings I, 8:27).

Matter and senses alone, respectively, cannot reveal and uncover all of God's knowledge. They are limited in scope. By definition this is the nature of all physical creation. However, God designed the universe precisely in a manner that human reason is required to understand God. Thus, God creates events through which, if we use our minds, we may learn. Moses too was afforded this opportunity through his illness.

Physical Man Interacting with Metaphysical Knowledge

Knowledge is not physical. It is not "contained" in the physical world. But we are physical! How do we connect to knowledge; how does man attain knowledge? What is the "gate" to the world of wisdom?

It is the physical world, and the Torah. God designed both, precisely, in a manner that their perceived features act as portals to vaults of wisdom. When we perceive creation, examining features unique to each created entity, when we study a Torah portion, or a section in Talmud, each instance contains a unique character: water is wet, clear, and malleable. A Succah has at least three walls, and a reeded ceiling. Tefillin are to be worn on the head and arm. Tzitzis must be attached on four corners, in the form of strings and knots. Every single case is unique in design. This is to afford mankind the

opportunity to delve in, examining these unique features, and ponder their essentiality; to ponder their purpose; to ponder why the Creator demanded their very existence and design. Ultimately, we arrive at an ever-increasing number of insights into God's wisdom.

God's wisdom is not comparable to man's. Billions of galaxies exist. A multitude of laws govern the consistent and perfect operation of the human body. If we merely gaze at creation, we know little more than their evident design. However, it is only through reason, our Divine gift of a metaphysical apparatus, which can unlock these vaults of wisdom. Wisdom is the entry gate to the invisible world of knowledge. To attain wisdom, as sensual beings, God granted mankind the universe and Torah. Each creation, each Torah verse acts as a "tip of the iceberg", designed in a manner wherein our exploration will yield greater and greater insights.

This is how man attains wisdom. God's methods of interacting with man are cryptic. Otherwise, there would be nothing compelling us to seek new wisdom. We would be at a dead end as soon as we exhausted our study of the limited, physical characteristics of the world. But God's knowledge has no limits. And He desired that men of even 1000 years of age like Adam's generation never run out of material. Our lives may be short relative to the universe, but are sufficiently long so as to endlessly explore God's infinite wisdom. Therefore, God designed His Torah and His world in a way that reasoning unlocks ideas. Everything follows this design: be it how God interacts with man, how He designed the world, or how He worded the Torah.

God's will is that man enjoys his life of study. But one cannot "look" at wisdom; he may only reach it through engaging his mind. What propels man towards this activity is his curiosity. "Curiosity" too is an essential part of creation! Creation and Torah are perfectly designed puzzles, engaging the mind's curiosity at every turn, affording us all an endless pursuit in the one area we will truly be drawn into, never tiring from, and completely fulfilled by its immensity, and its beautiful design...culminating in an awe of, and an attraction to the Creator.

As physical beings, whose objective is the perception of, and appreciation for metaphysical wisdom and its Creator, we have been presented with portals into worlds of knowledge in the form of a cryptically designed universe and Torah. We are thereby enabled to uncover wisdom through God's generous clues, which tempt us with alluring inconsistencies and rarities, seizing our minds, and alerting us to dig deeper.

"If you seek it (wisdom) out like silver, and search for it like a buried treasure, then you will understand the fear of God, and knowledge of God will you find." (Proverbs, 2:4,5) ■

God's will is that man enjoys his life of study. But one cannot "look" at wisdom; he may only reach it through engaging his mind.

snakes for this reason in Parshas Chukas (Numbers 21:6): "Let the snake to whom all tastes taste the same attack the ungrateful ones who didn't appreciate the versatility of the Manna."

Thanks, Jessie

Mesora: One question is more general in nature, but great in importance: Why does God teach man by way of subtle indication, in place of outright clarity? "Hinting" to Moses via this snake procedure is effective, but not as effective and direct as communicating in words such as, "Moses, you have sinned by doing such and such." I will treat this point in a separate article ("How God Teaches Man"), and address this specific account here alone.

What transpired? Moses desired to follow God's command to descend to Egypt, delivering God's words to Pharaoh and the Jews. Although presently obligated in circumcision on his newborn, Moses thought this would place his son in danger, prohibiting him from travel. Therefore, Moses opted to put off this command, favoring God's other command to travel to Egypt. Moses started his trip to Egypt. The Torah reads as follows:

"And it was (as he was) on the journey, at a lodging place, God met up with him and sought to kill him." (Exod. 4:24)

What was Moses' sin? He was acting in line with God's command to descend to Egypt! Either way, whichever command he selected first, (circumcision of traveling to Egypt) Moses would in fact be postponing the other command. There was no way for Moses to fulfill both simultaneously. How then can Moses be at fault, regardless of which command he selected to perform first? Is God saying that circumcision was a priority? And if so, what was its priority?

We read further:

"And Tzippora took a knife and cut the foreskin of her son, and placed it as his feet. And she said, 'for you are a groom of blood to me'. (Her son's circumcision played a role in causing Moses' near-death.) And the plague ceased to attack Moses, then she said, 'you are a groom of blood regarding circumcision'." (Exod. 4:25,26)

We learn by Tzippora's intervention, that Moses was debilitated by this divine plague, unable to circumcise his son himself. What was God's purpose in debilitating Moses, to the point

that his wife Tzippora had to step in to save him? Why is Moses' debilitating illness required? Usually, a rebuke or lesson from God enables the sinner to reflect, and revamp his own values, correcting his flaw...himself. Not here though. This is significant.

The Use of Snakes

Ibn Ezra writes that Moses' counsel was not proper. What does Ibn Ezra point to? What was Moses' error in judgment? Perhaps then, to address one of your questions, a snake was a proper response. In Genesis the original snake attained his exclusive identity as an "evil counselor" (to Eve). Therefore, as Moses possessed a flawed counsel, he received a snake as punishment, thereby indicating that he shared something in common with the primordial snake. However, we must understand what was his flawed counsel.

Moses was Dispensable

A Rabbi once taught that God wished to teach Moses that he was dispensable. It would appear that Moses might have felt that he was indispensable for God's redemption of the Jewish people, and thus, selected his mission to Egypt, prior to circumcising his son. This was a flawed assumption. God never said Moses was essential. God therefore taught Moses, through the precise act of debilitating him, that Moses was in fact incorrect. He was dispensable. This is borne out of God's very words, "...and He sought to kill him (Moses)." The precise act of debilitating Moses taught him this very idea of his dispensability. This explains why such an experience was necessary.

Therefore, we need not explain circumcision as 'more important' than Moses' mission to Egypt. This is not necessarily so. As we explained, Moses' misconception of his indispensability had to be corrected. God's emissaries must reflect God's will. And in this matter, Moses required to be taught a new lesson. In truth, if Moses had any other command at that time – other than circumcision – and he had passed over that command too in favor of traveling to Egypt, he would have equally been plagued. Moses' error was not in selecting a lower command before a higher one, but in viewing himself essential to this mission, when in fact, he wasn't.

This may seem trivial, however, the Torah says the opposite. To teach Moses "God has many messengers to accomplish His goals" God created a situation in which Moses was "debilitated". This was essential to drive home this very point that Moses was not essential to the equation. True, God desired that Moses approach Pharaoh, but not at the cost of Moses assuming a role which was untrue. As a leader, perhaps, this is

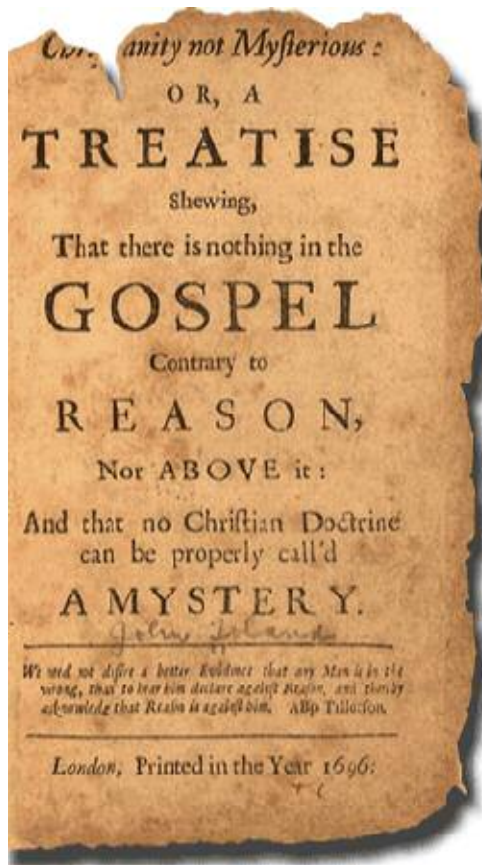
why God was so demanding of Moses. Moses' view of his role must be accurate. He would not fulfill God's mission, had he possessed a wrong notion about his mission: he was to teach mankind God's ways. It was essential that Moses understand that God could achieve His objective of redeeming the Jews in many ways. This is not to say that Moses was haughty in any manner. We learn that Moses was the most humble person, "And the man Moses was extremely humble, from all men who are on the face of the land." (Numbers, 12:3) Moses simply viewed his role as essential. This view was not accurate, and God corrected it.

We may now answer why it did not mitigate Moses' own perfection, when his wife Tzippora performed the circumcision. As Moses' fault was not his neglect of circumcision per se, his circumcising of his son would not address the flaw. Moses' flaw was his view of his role. This was addressed by his ailment: it conveyed to him his dispensability. Moses now understood that although requested at God's word, God's appointment does not remove other possibilities for this mission's success, should current strategies require alteration.

Man sees but a small, and therefore inaccurate picture of how and why events take place; what causes them; and what are their results. Based on this myopic view, man is far from possessing true foresight. God alone knows all factors at play in all situations, and thereby manipulates human events with exact precision, forcing His desired outcome. That which man views as 'essential' to a given result, must be inaccurate. This was God's lesson to Moses.

Fatalism

But the more primary lesson to Moses, and to us, is a new insight into how God operates. We must not live life with a fatalistic view of things. I do not mean "fatalistic" in a negative sense, but in the sense of "absolutes". Man usually views an event as either positive or negative. This need to "label" our experiences stems from insecurity: living with unknowns. However, Jacob was reluctant to make such determinations until the end of his life, when he ultimately saw how each event played itself out. Only at the end of our lives, will we be able to see whether an event that was disappointing – at that time – was truly a negative, or a positive. Many times, what we view as negative, years later turns out to be a blessing. Losing one's job may pave the way for a far better opportunity. Joseph later realized his sale to the Ishmaelites – although depressing at the time – enabled him to provide for many countries, and his family. This is an important lesson, one, which can lift the weights of anguish which we place on ourselves without need. ■



Flaws of Christianity & Other Religions

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Should we allow our lives to be guided by what is popular? Are we to simply follow the crowd, without questioning our beliefs? As all religions oppose each other, all religions cannot be God's word.

Our souls are at stake, and our limited time here in Earth demands that we take stock in what our actions and beliefs must be. Are we living life properly, what our Creator asks, what is truly best for ourselves? We must realize the false notions we harbor, be we Jew or Gentile. It is imperative that we all question these popular notions and not blindly coast through life, losing what could be an inspiring and enlightening existence. What a tragic loss of God's gift of life to each of us, if we do not engage our intelligence, given to man and no other creature. God desires that we use this intelligence in the most important of all areas, our religion: our belief in God and His plan for mankind.

I fear some Gentile and Jewish readers may become inflamed with feelings of religious persecution when reading this article. This is not my intent. Had only the books of Christianity remained with no adherents, this article would be equally needed. The purpose of this analysis is to elucidate the basic flaws of Christianity and other similar religions, (subsumed collectively herein as "Christianity") in order to benefit both Gentile and Jew, who find baseless appeal in its false notions. I hope through the analysis presented, you recognize my sincere intent: to dispel false notions, not to mock a group of people. No gain is realized when one attacks an individual. Christianity predates all Christians alive today. Therefore, the critique presented is one of an ideology, not of individual adherents. My wish is to increase your understanding of God's words, His desire is for our good, and to display what is contrary to the Torah system so we may know its fallacy, and avoid its pitfalls.

The role of the Jew has always been to educate the world on God's Torah. Remaining silent at the fear of ridicule cannot enter the equation. For through such silence, greater harm is inflicted: the Torah authorities conceal God's true Torah ideal from mankind. The Jew was selected by God as a "chosen people". However, many misconstrue "chosen" in a haughty light: as if the Jew is somehow better from birth than Gentile. If this were the case, God would have created "Jews" and "Gentiles", but he did not. He created man and woman. Judaism did not enter the world's stage until the year 2448, that's 3317 years ago. What was God's plan before 2448? Why was no Torah given yet? It was God's plan that man would observe the universe, realizing a Creator, and pondering His marvels. However, from the very start, man began to commit idolatry. Adam's grandson Enosh worshipped the stars. After many generations, more and more idolatrous practices arose. It soon became necessary that a Code exist, extricating man from his infantile fantasies, redirecting him to correct, and monotheistic ideals. Abraham was a rare individual, capable of realizing his own idolatrous practice as false, eventually recognizing the Creator, and then

endeavoring to teach all of mankind. Due to his correct philosophy, God desired to create a nation from Abraham, one that would possess true knowledge, and teach all of mankind.

God desires the Jew to benefit every other culture and religion, guiding them with rational arguments away from false and harmful notions, towards what truth and reason dictate is reality. It would be against God's will for any Jew to remain silent, allowing another human being to remain prey to idolatrous practices and beliefs. If someone is open to hearing ideas, we must educate them. It is then up to them to discern truth from falsehood, and select what their own minds dictate is reality. We are only commanded to teach, they must choose to practice what their minds desire.

I. Essential Flaws in Other Religions Christianity Claims God Spoke with Jesus

It is essential that you become fully aware of the historically proven event at Mount Sinai where God demonstrated His existence and selected the Jews to adhere to His Torah. This event was witnessed by approximately 2.5 million people, a proof not duplicated in any other culture or religion, and recorded in Deuteronomy 4:9-15. It is impossible that history contain the account at Sinai where the Jews heard an intelligent voice emanating from the fiery mount Sinai, seeing no physical source, and that such a story be accepted by the world through the present - were it false. Had Sinai never occurred, it would not be accepted back then, nor would it survive through time. Had Moses lied, and attempted to convince individuals they saw such a miracle, which they did not see, they would view Moses as a fraud. Imagine someone telling you that you were at an event that you did not attend, that there were 2.5 million others there, and that specific miracles occurred. You would view the person as bizarre, and he would have absolutely no success at convincing you or others that you witnessed that which you did not. The unanimous acceptance today of this event as history - not only accepted by Jews - confirms its truth. Concocted stories of a peoples' history, witnessed by millions, are not unanimously accepted. Sinai occurred. God selected the Jews and no others, and He gave a law never to be altered. God selected the Jews through an awesome event to serve for the precise purpose of a proof. Judaism is not based on belief. No science is.

Not only does reason deny acceptance of all other religions, but God's very words attest to the fact that Judaism will be the one eternal and exclusive religion:

Deuteronomy, 4:33,34: "Has any people heard the voice of God speaking from amidst fire as you have heard, and lived? Or has God miraculously come to select one nation from others with miracles, signs and wonders, and with war, and a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with great awesome deeds, as all that Hashem your God did for you in Egypt in front of your eyes?" (continued on next page)

Religions

Here, Moses reminds the Jewish people here of their selection. God selected the Jews from all other nations. This was never performed for any other nation. Many religions do not accept God's selection of the Jewish nation, denying God's very words. They concoct stories of supposed miracles or prophecies, which Jesus and others experienced. But any individual can suggest God spoke to them, or that they performed miracles. There is no way to disprove such lies. But be mindful, nor is there any way to prove these stories. All other religions are based on individual testimony, as this is something others cannot disprove. It is a safe position. Not Judaism. Judaism is based on historic events witnessed by millions.

Christianity Claims God became Physical

The notion of God becoming physical is impossibility. He, Who created all of physical existences, is the One Being not subject to those laws. God governs all physical matter. To suggest God can become physical and be subject to His own physical laws means that He does not control the universe. A clear contradiction and impossibility.

Christianity Claims Jesus Died for Other Peoples' Sins

Deuteronomy, 24:16; "There will not be killed fathers for sons (sins, nor) are sons killed for father's (sins). Each man in his own sin will be killed."

This verse teaches that the theory of the death of Jesus on behalf of others' sins is contrary to God's own words. God's system is just, only the one who sins pays the price, not another. God teaches us intellectually sound ideas that are reasonable and conform to justice.

Christianity Endorses a "Blind Faith" System

Belief can be used for any idea or religion. Belief seeks no support from reality. Christianity teaches what is not real. Contrary to Christianity's own goals, they teach that defectors, finding other religions more emotionally appealing, is proper. Christianity's tenet of "blind faith" would require them to allow Christians to follow another religion and deny Jesus, if they followed faith. How can they argue? They are not based on reason, so a system of faith other than Christianity cannot be argued as wrong. An incoherent and contradictory position. If however Christianity attempts to lodge reason to justify Christianity as the supreme religion, they thereby deny their principle of blind faith, as they have demonstrated an attempt to justify their religion via reason, and not faith.

Christianity Denies our Use of God-given Intelligence

In the most important of all areas - our belief in God's word - Christianity asks us to abandon reason. Sinai was orchestrated by God to achieve a proof of God's existence and His desired system for man. No other religion can make such a historically proven

claim. God intended man to use his reason and arrive at the correct life. Christianity asks man to violate God's intent and abandon reason, living by faith.

Not Observing God's 7 Noachide Laws is a Sin Against God

Christianity's laws oppose God's will that all gentiles follow the 7 Noachide laws outlined in the Torah.

Religion of Love

A Rabbi once noted, the claim by Christianity to be a religion of love is an attempt to deny an underlying religion of hate. Jesus in effect murdered God, as Jesus' existence replaced God's existence. Calling their religion one of love attempted to deny Christianity's true, hateful and aggressive ideology displayed by the Crusades, Christianity's creed of eternal damnation for those who deny Jesus.

II. Christianity's Primitive Nature and Mass Appeal**Deification of Man**

Christianity appeals to many through false ideas. We already mentioned one; a guilt free existence because Jesus died for one's sins. Accordingly, man's sins can be absolved, and man takes no responsibility for his corrupt actions. This is quite enticing, although baseless and false. Another primary idea is the satisfaction of the emotional need for approval from man, i.e., the man Jesus is the central focus.

Man is attached to his parents, projecting on them a supreme, authoritative status. A child seeks approval, and finds parental disappointment most devastating. Many individuals never grow out of this emotion and find this satisfaction even in adult life, by idolizing human figures and creating heroes. Christianity satisfies this need through its portrayal of Jesus as superhuman, a clear display of deifying man, not God. Conversely, Judaism teaches that man is simply flesh and blood, with no powers. God remains as the central focus of Judaism. Numerous laws prohibit man from seeking man's approval and the projection of superhuman qualities onto man. In contrast to Christianity's saints, Judaism's prophets shun the spotlight, as seen from Elisha who himself did not approach Naaman with God's instructions for healing, but Elisha sent his servant to give those instructions to cure Naaman's leprosy. Elisha wished God alone to maintain responsibility for the government of man and nature. Additionally, Judaism prohibits idolatry, warlocks, enchanters, and witches, to name a few. Each law is an example of Judaism's goal to extricate man from believing any power exists, aside from God. As Ibn Ezra and Maimonides state, all these practices are false. God created all matter and all laws governing them - He alone Who created these laws, controls them. Man, a creation, cannot over-power God. Man is the created, not the Creator.

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Denial of the Sexual Drive - Holy People - Virgin Birth

As a permutation of the previous corruption, Christianity places nuns and priests on pedestals. Part of their aura is their deprivation of sex. Christianity seeks to create saints by praising those who abstain from areas in which man feels shame or guilt. Conversely, Judaism does not deny man's powerful urges, but asks man to channel those urges to the proper partner, and only at the appropriate times and circumstances. Judaism does not wish man to be steeped in desires, nor to deny his desires. Judaism directs man to the proper balance of satisfaction and abstinence. Man is taught to guide his desires, not to follow them blindly. This practice redirects man's energies towards the higher goals of pursuing wisdom and justice. Man finds true satisfaction only when he engages his true self - his intelligence. Current accounts of priests sodomizing children demonstrate Judaism's accurate view on the need for sexual satisfaction, and the repercussions of those who deny real desires. Judaism teaches reality, Christianity teaches lies, in the most fundamental area. It may very well be that the "virgin birth" story was written to deny the sexual in connection with Jesus, from his "conception".

The contradiction of nuns and priests is that on the one hand, they claim their life's work to be God's will, i.e., their existence is a good. On the other hand, their abstinence does not allow new children to enter the world, who themselves could become nuns and priests. If they feel human existence is a good when one is a nun or priest, their very abstinence prevents other nuns and priests from being born and continuing their work.

Christianity Teaches Fantasy in the Most Fundamental Area - Eating of Jesus' Body

Matthew 26:26-28 "26. Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' 27. And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of it, all of you; 28. for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'"

Christianity's practice of eating a wafer symbolizing Jesus' body, traces itself back to primitive, cultural rites. In one rite, members of a cult would drink the blood of animals, believing it to permeate them with that animal's characteristics. When we study a man-made religion, we will undoubtedly discover evidence of man's base, instinctual drives. Man-made religion is in truth a projection of man's instinctual desires that are repressed - their system will reflect man's instinctual nature. Again, Christianity succeeds at deviating completely from God's will. Unlike Judaism, this practice of eating the body of Jesus has no correlation to anything true, thereby reinforcing fallacy. It further embellishes the need for attachment to the physical, yet represses natural, human desires and need.

Jesus' Resurrection

Belief in immortality and fortunetellers are fabricated solutions to man's two basic fears; 1)death, and 2)security about his own Earthly fate. With the resurrection of Jesus - his "second coming" - Christianity gives false hope not only in Jesus' immortality, but in his followers' as well, as they too will share in the ultimate, eternal kingdom. Resurrection also attempts to validate Christianity; The second coming alludes to Christianity's unspoken doubt of Jesus' validity, as his first coming was not successful.

III. Christianity Denies God's Words False Prophets

The Torah teaches that we are not to follow a prophet who goes against God's word:

Deuteronomy, 18:19, 20. "And it will be the man who does not listen to My words, but who speaks in My name, I will inquire from him. However, a prophet who sinfully speaks a matter in My name which I did not command to speak and he speaks in the name of other God's, you must kill that prophet."

Jesus spoke against God's laws in God's name, attempting to change what God said. God's Torah teaches that this crime is so great it deserves death.

Incomparability to Judaism

A further, false proof of Christianity's claim of the supreme religion is the following: We might ask why God did not perform such an undeniably true event as Sinai, on behalf of Christianity. If God wishes something to have recognition as truth, Sinai teaches that He has the ability to create an undeniably true event, witnessed by millions. Why are all religions - including Christianity - bereft of such events? It is clear that God does not endorse Christianity or any religion. God endorsed Judaism alone, and He promised in the Torah that such an event will never be reproduced:

Deuteronomy, 5:19: "These matters (the Ten Commandments) God spoke to your entire assembly from amidst flames, cloud, and thick darkness, a great voice not to be repeated, and He wrote them on two tables of stone and gave them to me."

God clearly states that such a revelation at Sinai, a selection of a people, and specifically a giving of a law, will never be repeated. Again, the giving of a law by God will never be repeated. These are God's words and Christianity denies them with their fabrication that God endorsed a new system of Christianity. Christianity's ideology is based on lies told to its followers, duping them into the belief that God has a new plan, even though God stated such a revelation will never be repeated. Christianity lies to its followers.

Christianity Violates God's Command not to Alter God's Torah

Deuteronomy, 4:2: "Do not add on to the matter

which I command you, and do not detract from it, to observe the commandments of Hashem your God, which I command you."

God teaches us not to alter the Torah, yet Christianity does so in so many areas - again denying God's words. Christianity suggests that God "changed His mind". This is absurd, that a Perfect Being knowledgeable of all past and future history would create a complete and perfect Torah system at one point, which includes a law not to alter it in any way, and then contradict His own words as Christianity suggests.

IV. A Corrupt Philosophy & Plagiarism**Christianity Portrays Jesus Reasoning to be Unjust**

Matthew 26:6-13: 6. "Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, 7. a woman came up to him with an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head, as he sat at table. 8. But when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, 'Why this waste?' 9. For this ointment might have been sold for a large sum, and given to the poor." 10. But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. 11. For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. 12. In pouring this ointment on my body she has done it to prepare me for burial. 13. Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."

Jesus is on record as preferring kindness to himself, in place of the poor. His reasoning is that he will not always be around. Therefore one must prefer to share oil with Jesus than using the monetary value of that oil to support the needy.

Christianity Mimics the Torah to Earn Credibility

Compare to the Torah's words to Christianity's plagiarism:

The Torah says in Exodus, 4:19:

"God 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..."

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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 like 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 and distorts 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 becomes a great leader as Joseph, whom his brothers sold would eventually become a great leader. Christianity found many ways to distort the Divine Word of God in order to gain mass acceptance and many followers.

In summary, Christianity lies to its people, it contradicts God's own words, it is a religion where reason is replaced by belief, and deceit is the means of attracting to-be proselytes. Do not feel compelled to adhere to Christianity due to its popularity, or its leaders' reputations. Many people are drawn in by the impressive structures of churches, ancient paintings depicting Jesus, the Church's long history, and the sense of piety associated with nun's and priests' garb. Do not be impressed, for previous idolaters also made great structures, wore ornate clothing, and were widespread, yet, we comprehend their false ideas - based on reason alone. Reason teaches, that which is false, cannot become true because we adorn and decorate it. King Solomon taught, "A gold ring in the snout of a pig, (so too is) a beautiful woman with a deviant personality." (Proverbs 11:22) Radak's last statement on Zephania, 1:8 teaches that God punished certain Jews who dressed in clothing more impressive than

their brother Jews, only to project a false piety. God frowns upon external dress, as this has no bearing on one's perfection, destroying social harmony in its wake. So too, we are not to be impressed by Christianity's adornment of their clergy, nor of their beautiful structures or moving, choric hymns. What is false cannot be made true no matter how much they adorn themselves, no matter how effective they are at mimicking Judaism and no matter how much pity they evoke for their fabricated man-god.

God's Torah, and reality, requires one to use his mind, seeking proof for one's actions. Torah is built on rationale, containing proofs so man may function in accordance with intelligence, leading a life, which is pleasing and reasonable. Man, being so impressed with the sensibility of the tenets of Judaism, is encouraged to derive much benefit not only in actions that are good for oneself and society, but as one engages one's mind, one discovers new insights which offer the most satisfying life. Intelligence is the one faculty God gave man and no other being. God desires that mankind enjoy life, and use intelligence alone to study reality and perceive wisdom, which affords a person the greatest existence.

Intelligent inquiry is the sole tool enabling our appreciation of all sciences, and of Judaism. God created sciences and Judaism to reflect His wisdom. Through our minds, we see beauty in the Torah system, we find solid proofs and reasons for God's laws and ideals, we become enamored with the depth and structures of Torah laws, and we continually grow towards God's goal for man - a being appreciative of, and attached to what is real and true.

God's perfect Torah system applies to both Gentile and Jew. There is no other God-given system. There is no other good for mankind. ■

Vayeche

RABBI BERNARD FOX

(continued from page 1)

Beresheit. Sefer Beresheit deals with creation, early humanity, the forefathers and the children of Yaakov. Very few mitzvot are contained in this first sefer of the Torah. However, the sefer does provide important insights into the laws developed in the other books of the Torah. An interesting insight is contained in Parshat VaYeche.

Parshat VaYeche discusses the end of Yaakov's life. Before his death, Yaakov blessed each of his children. Many of Yaakov's blessings are difficult to understand. They are recorded in the Torah in an extremely difficult and unusual Hebrew. Because Yaakov's words are so difficult to interpret, the Sages offer a variety of interpretations for these blessings. According to Rashi, almost all of the blessings – to some extent – deal with the land of Israel. For example, Yehuda is told that the portion of his descendants will be remarkably fertile. A similar blessing is given to Asher. Zevulun is told that the portion of his descendants will be along the shore. Shimon and Levi learn that their descendants will not receive typical portions among the other shevatim – tribes. Instead, their descendants will be dispersed among the other

tribes.

Our passage is the closing of Yaakov's blessing of Yosef. The passage is very difficult to translate. The translation above draws from different commentaries. The translation of the first portion of the passage is consistent with Rashi's interpretation. According to this Rashi, Yaakov explained to Yosef that the blessing he had received from Hashem exceeded the blessings that his father Yitzchak or his grandfather Avraham had received. However, the passage does not clearly identify the manner in which Yaakov's blessing from Hashem exceeded those received by the earlier forefathers.

Rashi assumes that Yaakov's focus remains upon the land of Israel. Based on this assumption, he finds a hint further in the pasuk

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(Vayeche continued from previous page)

as to the superiority of Yaakov's blessing. Yaakov explains that the blessing he received extends to the boundaries of the heights of the world. Again, we are confronted with an enigmatic phrase that requires further interpretation. Rashi suggests that we compare the blessings that the prior forefathers received regarding the land of Israel with the blessing that Hashem gave to Yaakov.

Hashem spoke to Avraham after his initial separation from his nephew Lote. He told Avraham to cast his eyes in every direction. Hashem promised Avraham that he would receive all of the land that he saw.[1] According to Rashi, this blessing – although very extensive – was limited. It implied that Avraham's descendants would receive a specific portion of land. Hashem spoke to Yitzchak during a famine. He told Yitzchak that he should not seek refuge in Egypt. Instead, he should remain in the land. Then, Hashem added that Yitzchak's descendant would receive "these lands." The reference to "these lands" was not very definitive. Hashem continued and explains that "these lands" refers to the portion promised to Avraham.[2] So, Yitzchak's blessing was essentially a reiteration of the blessing given to Avraham.

Rashi suggests that we compare these blessing with the promise that Hashem gave to Yaakov. Yaakov left his father to travel to Haran. He had a dream in which he saw a ladder that extended into the heavens. Angels ascended and descended on the ladder. Hashem was above the ladder. Hashem spoke to Yaakov is this vision. He told Yaakov that his descendants would be as numerous as the dust of the earth. Then Hashem told Yaakov that these descendants would spread in all directions.[3] Rashi understands this to mean that Yaakov's descendants will take possession of the land in every direction. Rashi further points out that no limit or boundary was noted. In other words, Hashem told Yaakov that there is no specific limit to the land that will be the home of his descendants – the land of Israel.

Based on this comparison, Rashi explains our passage. Yaakov told Yosef that the blessing he received regarding the land of Israel was more extensive than the blessings received by Avraham and Yitzchak. Avraham and Yitzchak were promised a land with specific boundaries. But he was promised a land "extending to the boundaries of the heights of the world." In other words, the land would extend to the furthest reaches occupied by his descendants – even to the ends of the Earth![4]

Clearly, Rashi interpretation of our passage is remarkable in both its originality and brilliance. It is easy to be overwhelmed by Rashi's creativity. We can neglect to evaluate Rashi's



comments critically. But if we do not give Rashi's comments careful consideration, we will miss an important element of his message.

If we carefully consider Rashi's interpretation of the passage, we will notice that his meaning is not completely clear. In fact, his comments invite an obvious question. According to Rashi, Hashem promised Avraham and Yitzchak a land with specific boundaries. Yaakov was promised a portion not restricted by specific boundaries. These blessings do not seem to be consistent. Avraham and Yitzchak were promised a land with specific boundaries. In other words, they were told that they were to receive a specific piece of property. Yaakov was told that the land promised to his descendants had no boundaries. Rather than receiving a promise regarding a specific portion of land, Yaakov was promised a land without boundaries. Was Hashem revising or replacing the promise given to the earlier forefather? Is there some way to reconcile the promise given to Yaakov with the earlier promises given to Avraham and Yitzchak?

A hint to answering this question emerges if we rephrase the contradiction. Avraham and Yitzchak were told that the land of Israel has specific boundaries. Yaakov was told that the land of Israel does not have specific boundaries. The land of Israel extends to whatever land Bnai Yisrael will occupy. Can these two descriptions of the land of Israel be reconciled? They can.

In the closing section of his Mishne Torah, Maimonides explains that any land captured by the Jewish people is regarded as part of the land of Israel. However, the conquest must be authorized by Bait Din – the High Court – and conducted under the auspices of the king of Israel.[5] However, earlier in the Mishne Torah, Maimonides explains this law more thoroughly. He explains that although the boundaries of the land of Israel can be extended through conquest, this can only take place after the land of Canaan is completely captured. In other words, first Bnai

Yisrael were required to capture the land promised to Avraham and Yitzchak. After this task was accomplished, any further conquest would be incorporated into the land of Israel. Maimonides explains that because of this law, the lands captured by King David did not have the normative sanctity of the rest of the land of Israel. David captured additional territory before all of the land of Canaan had been captured. Therefore, although the land was captured by Bnai Yisrael lead by a king and the conquest was authorized by Bait Din, these conquests were not deemed to be equal to other portions of the land of Israel. This was because David's conquests occurred prior to the occupation of the entire land of Canaan.[6]

Let us consider Maimonides' comments carefully. What can we learn from his position? It would appear that through conquest land can be added to the land of Israel. In other words, first the land of Canaan must be conquered. Once this is accomplished, land can be added to the land of Israel through further conquest. The land of Canaan is the primary territory of the land of Israel. Other conquests can only be incorporated into the land of Israel as an extension of the primary territory.

Based on Maimonides' comments, we can easily resolve our problem. Hashem promised Avraham and Yitzchak the land of Canaan. This promise was never rescinded or revised. The land of Canaan is the primary territory of the land of Israel. Hashem did not contradict this promise in His blessing to Yaakov. He told Yaakov that the land of Israel would not be limited to the primary territory promised to the earlier forefathers. Instead, the land could be extended beyond this territory through conquest. However, this extension can only take place after the primary territory is controlled by Bnai Yisrael.

In short, although we would not expect Parshat VaYeche to deal with an area of Torah law, our passage does provide important principles regarding the sanctity of the land of Israel – and these principles are incorporated into the Torah's legal system. ■

[1] Sefer Beresheit 13:14-15.

[2] Sefer Beresheit 26:3.

[3] Sefer Beresheit 28:14.

[4] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 49:26.

[5] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Melachim 5:6.

[6] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Terumot 1:2-3.

*Taken from "Getting It Straight"
Practical Ideas for a Life of Clarity*

Questioning the Bible

DOUG TAYLOR & RABBI MORTON MOSKOWITZ

"Give me a test," I said. "Any question you want. I'm ready."

I was cocky. I'd been studying the Bible a long time, and I was sure I could handle anything the King of Rational Thought could dish out. We were sharing a take-out pizza when he mentioned that people often read the Bible without questioning or analyzing what they're reading. Convinced that I never do that, I threw down my challenge.

"OK," he replied. "You're familiar with the story in Genesis 47 of Joseph bringing his family into Egypt?"

"Sure," I said. "I've read it many times."

"What happened when Joseph brought his father Jacob before Pharaoh, king of Egypt?" he asked.

"Well, let's see," I said, struggling to remember the details. "Jacob blessed Pharaoh. Pharaoh asked Jacob how old he was. Jacob replied that he was 130 and told Pharaoh how few and unhappy his years had been. Then Jacob blessed Pharaoh again and left. That's about it."

"Very good," replied the King of Rational Thought. "Now, what's wrong with all of that?"

"What?" I said. "What do you mean, what's wrong with it?"

"Doesn't anything about that story strike you as odd?" he asked.

"Like what?"

"Well, why would Pharaoh ask Jacob how old he was right away? Isn't that an unusual opening question? And why did Jacob bless Pharaoh twice? And what's all this about Jacob saying his years were few and unhappy? This guy was a great sage and scholar. What kind of reply is that?"

I was busy eating, which was fortunate because I didn't have a clue as to how to answer. Sensing my dilemma, the King of Rational Thought answered his own questions.

"A wise person recognizes and takes into

account the attitudes and personalities of others," he began. "Pharaoh was a powerful ruler. Jacob knew this. He also knew he was a guest in someone else's kingdom and palace. So he acted carefully and respectfully. He began by blessing Pharaoh, an appropriate action under the circumstances. Then Pharaoh asked Jacob how old he was. Why was that the first thing on his mind? Because there are certain people who have to be the best at everything and can't stand it if someone has one up on them. You know the type. The possibility that Jacob was somehow better than Pharaoh, just because he might be older, bothered Pharaoh. So that was the first question he asked."

"Now," he continued, "note Jacob's wise reply. Based on Pharaoh's opening question, and possibly other information he had already gathered, Jacob had an idea of Pharaoh's personality. Remember, Jacob was no slouch. He answered truthfully, but played down his life as if to say, 'Yes, I'm old, but my years have been nothing compared to yours.' By his very reply, he appeased Pharaoh's concern, then blessed him a second time to reinforce that."

"But that sounds almost deceitful," I said.

"Not at all," he replied. "If you found yourself in the cage of a sleeping lion, would it be deceitful to tiptoe out quietly to avoid waking him?"

I was practically speechless. "How did you come up with all of this?" I finally asked.



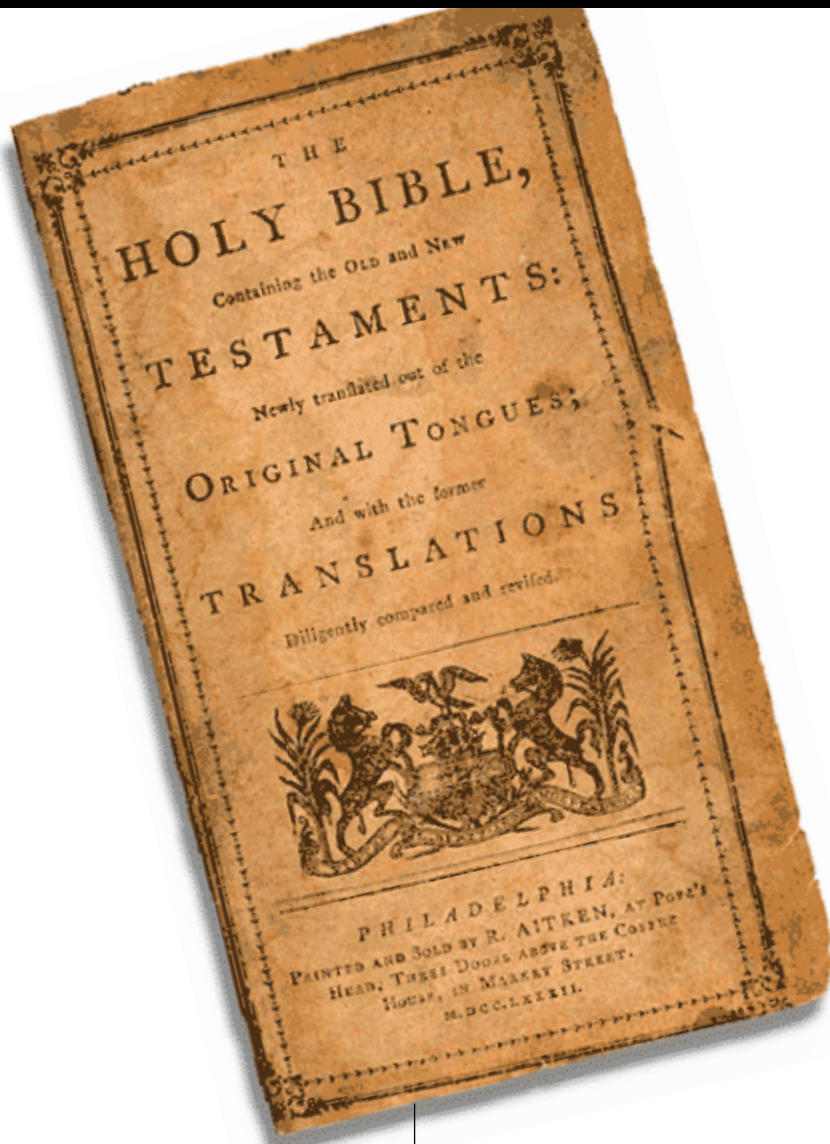
"From the questions," he replied. "You have to question. If a passage isn't completely clear to your mind or if it doesn't make sense, you must question it. It's your questions that can lead you to answers and real understanding. Based on the questions surrounding this passage, this interpretation is the only one that makes sense."

I wanted to continue the discussion, but realized I had to get back to work. As we parted toward our respective cars, I called out another question. "Does this mean that there are right ways and wrong ways to interpret the Bible?"

"Of course," he called back as he headed across the parking lot.

"Then that would mean that some religions are right and some are wrong," I yelled.

He smiled, waved, and was gone. ■



The New Testament: Part of the Bible?

Reader: Hello. I was reading the article about the Torah from Sinai, and I now know the Torah is the "Old testament" of the Bible. I was raised as a Christian, forgive me if I mistake the names, my native tongue is not English, and I do not understand why I should

believe only the first half of the Bible but not the "New testament". How is this possible? I think the Torah is the same as the "Old testament". I cannot say for sure, but I cannot understand why the Bible can be true first, and then false, in the "New testament". Maybe I am mistaken for I know little about the Torah.

I would appreciate any orientation on the subject; I will begin to study the Torah. I hope you have the time to help me with this situation.

Sincerely,
Octavio.

Mesora: Octavio,

The Bible, or the Torah, (not including the New testament) was given by God to the Jewish nation on Mount Sinai. Even

Christianity agrees to this.

Now, if the Jews were the true recipients of the Torah, before Christianity exited, and the Jews say that the Torah does not recognize the New Testament, as it was not part of God's word, you must accept this. The Jews are the "exclusive authority" on what Torah is.

This would be similar to someone named John, telling Henry Ford (who created the Ford auto) that John created the "true" Ford. One, who comes after historical fact, cannot alter that history. This is what Christianity attempted with their false claim that God authorized the New Testament, when in fact He did not.

You must ask yourself this: Why, throughout all generations, did the Jews not suggest that the New Testament was from God? They are the true authority on what the Bible is. ▣

Turning the Other Cheek: Response

Dear Rabbi Ben-Chaim,

I noticed that in your response regarding the Jewish view of the position of "Turning the Other Cheek," you explained the Jewish position that one should not lay down to die when someone else seeks to kill him/her. Bravo, I agree.

But I feel you neglected to mention one point, a point that relates to nonphysical violence. In the concluding paragraph of Shemoneh Esrei (Elokai Netzor), we say, "Let my soul be silent towards those who curse me, and let my soul be like dust towards all." In a way, this is a manifestation of a doctrine similar to that of "turn the other cheek," in the sense that it is saying that human beings should not respond or be irritated at verbal abuse - so long as it is not actually harming them -- but should rather forsake their own honor and absorb these "curses." -Joshua ▣

THE INCORPOREALITY OF GOD

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Reader: Since we posted it our web site, your article "Tanya's Heresy" has come under attack by a Chabad Rabbi who has called you a heretic, and your writings heresy, and has placed a ban on your web site. Have you ever recanted of your original thoughts and words since you wrote the piece?

Mesora: The only reason to abandon one's position is when proof exists for its error. However, Tanya's statement in this case (below) that there is a "literal piece of God in man" is indeed heresy, as it assumes God is subject to division. I do wish to make it clear, as many have misunderstood my intent. In my previous comments on this section of Tanya, I did not accuse any individual per se. Rather, I took issue with a "statement", regardless of the author. As my friend Yaakov indicated, and I agree, the Baal Tanya is consistent with the Torah's fundamentals in other sections of his work. It therefore seems that this statement in Tanya that man's soul is "truly part of God", may not be accurately ascribed to the Tanya's author. I quote the section at hand below:

"The second, uniquely Jewish soul is truly part of God above.

'A part of God above' is a quotation from Scripture (Job, 31:2). The Alter Rebbe adds the word 'truly' to stress the literal meaning of these words. For, as is known, some verses employ hyperbolic language. For example, the verse describing 'great and fortified cities reaching into the heavens' is clearly meant to be taken figuratively, not literally. In order that we should not interpret the phrase 'a part of God above' in a similar manner, the Alter Rebbe adds the word 'truly', thus emphasizing that the Jewish soul is quite literally a part of God above."

(Lessons In Tanya," published by "Kehot")

This statement contradicts all we know as true, and the fundamental of Torah: God is in no way subject to natural laws, the very laws He created. Suggesting that God is subject to "division", one thereby errs twice: 1) he equates God with His creation; 2) also assuming man knows something about God. There are two verses in our Torah, which openly deny both of these points: God told Moses, "Man cannot know Me while alive" (Exod. 33:20). God also told Isaiah, "To what can you equate Me, and I will be similar?" (Isaiah, 40:25). In both cases, God Himself teaches that man cannot know God, nor is anything equivalent to God in any manner. Therefore, suggesting God is subject to division denies God's own words to Isaiah that He is not similar to anything, and His words to Moses, that He cannot be known.

Reader: Do you know of any other credible sources that have commented on the same subject before? I remember from one of the articles someone mentioned that someone had weighed in on this same thing in the past?

Mesora: Nothing is more credible than God's very words to Moses and Isaiah! But yes, there was one other, contemporary Rabbi who argued on the Tanya's words. But let us look to those, of whom even Tanya respects. Maimonides discusses the incorporeality of God in his 13 principles, as well in his Mishneh Torah. I will quote the latter:

Maimonides' Laws of the Torah Fundamentals (1:7)

"And since God has no body, nothing can occur to Him belonging to the occurrences of bodies, so that He might be divided and separated from another."

Maimonides' Laws of the Torah Fundamentals (1:11)

"(God possesses) no joining, or division."

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*God is in no way
subject to natural
laws, the very laws
He created.*

Maimonides is quite clear: God is not subject to the occurrence of “division”. Hence, there cannot be a “part of God in man.” It cannot be spoken of God, that He is divisible, or any other characteristic belonging to the physical world. Tanya, in this instance denies the words of the prophets, and completely corrupts the words of Job, 31:1,2:

“A treaty have I made with my eye; for what shall I gaze at a virgin? And what portion shall I have with God above, and an inheritance of God on high?”

Here, Job declares he is upright, never gazing lustfully. Job explains that in doing so, one forfeits his “portion with God”. This is reasonable, and in accordance with God’s system of Reward and Punishment. But Tanya misinterprets the word “portion”, not as the end of the verse clarifies as “inheritance”, but wrongly, ascribing “parts” to God. This verse in Job simply means that Job admits he will forfeit his “portion” (inheritance) with God. Through sin, Job says he will lose this world and the next. Job is not describing God, that He has parts, God forbid. Job is describing his inheritance.

So the question is not “Who argues on Tanya?” but rather, “Why Tanya distorted Torah?” This is not a game of popularity among Rabbis, but as always, identifying what Torah truths are, and dismissing all else. Emotionally riveted responses of “condemnation” and “banning our website” reveal that one decries our view not based on reason. Had someone a rational argument against our position, he would offer it as his most effective response. But the condemnations we hear bereft of any reason bears out the truth: reason is not on the side of those assuming “part of God is in man.”

To date, since our original article was published denouncing that statement in Tanya, not one individual who decried it offered a counter position, let alone, rationale for their disagreement. It is quite clear: many people defend a position even though they don’t understand what they defend. They believe man is infallible, and every statement of a Rabbi must be true...as if God spoke it. However, from the disputations between our Rishonim, Talmudic Rabbis and Sages, we see they did not blindly accept each other’s views. This is an important lesson. It teaches that man was given a mind, not to “follow the leader”, but to engage in his own, individual approach to the truth. What merit exists for a man, if he does not understand what he utters or performs? Aaron the High Priest, correctly argued on Moses when he disagreed with what his own mind told him was the truth. Moses was in fact in error. Therefore, if Moses can be wrong, so

too, all others are subject to error. “For man is not righteous o the land, who does good and does not sin.” (Ecclesiastes, 7:20)

No one can tell you to think something is true, if you do not think so. It is “shekker” (falsehood or lies) to agree with that which you see as fallacy. God warns us, “Midvar shekker tirhak”, “From a false matter, distance yourself”. (Exod. 23:7) Torah knowledge is the study of truth. To make allies with falsehoods and lies is to distance one’s self from truth. Therefore, we are warned to remove ourselves from lies. Such attachments corrupt our thinking, and make the search for truth all the more difficult. This search is our sole reason for our existence. Honesty demands we say something is false when it is. It is sinful to do otherwise.

What we witness today is the outgrowth of crippled minds. Jewish educators have successfully taught students not to think: “You must never oppose a reputation of a great Rabbi.” What a tragedy. How are future generations going to be led, if those being trained in today’s Yeshiva’s are trained not to think? How will these very students see the truth for themselves, when all they do is parrot statements, with no understanding? If someone has rationale for his view, let him speak, otherwise, condemnations are worthless.

It is our goal to come to a true love of God, and a realization of the beautiful ideas God has made available to us through honest, Torah study. It is a travesty of Torah to maintain reputation of Rabbis, if in doing so we blindly defend the most harmful fallacies. Accurate knowledge of God, in so far as we are capable, is the most essential of all areas of Torah knowledge. We must therefore not cower from any position that contradicts Torah fundamentals.

We must admit that man is fallible, and abandon the desire to maintain pristine reputations of men, if in doing so, we deny Torah truths.

I sincerely hope that the Torah’s words quoted herein do not fall on deaf ears. I understand that man’s respect for Rabbis carries great, emotional strength. It is quite difficult to accept that one’s Rabbi may have erred. But this emotion must not take precedence over “truth”. We must set aside reputations, and compare God’s words to those quoted from Tanya. We must compare truth to fallacy. We must be honest; training our students to use reason as their one, exclusive means of determining reality, abandoning the current state of affairs, where one accepts everything he hears, even from a Rabbi.

Our goal is to attach ourselves to God and truth – not to man. This is an obligation on all men and women, Jew and Gentile alike. □

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