



**Agreeing to any idea based on authority,  
and not your own reasoning, violates  
God's goal in granting you intellect.**

**See "Duties of the Heart" introduction, and the Sforno and  
Minchas Chinuch on this week's parshas VaEtchanan**

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**Weekly Parsha**

# VaEtchanan

**RABBI BERNARD FOX**

**"I am Hashem your God that  
has taken you out from the land of  
Egypt, from the house of  
bondage." (Devarim 5:6)**

Moshe reviews the Decalogue – the Aseret HaDibrot. Our passage is the first pasuk of the Aseret HaDibrot. Hashem declares that He is the God that redeemed Bnai Yisrael from Egypt. Maimonides maintains that this passage contains a

*(continued on page 8)*

# the DEATH of REINCARNATION

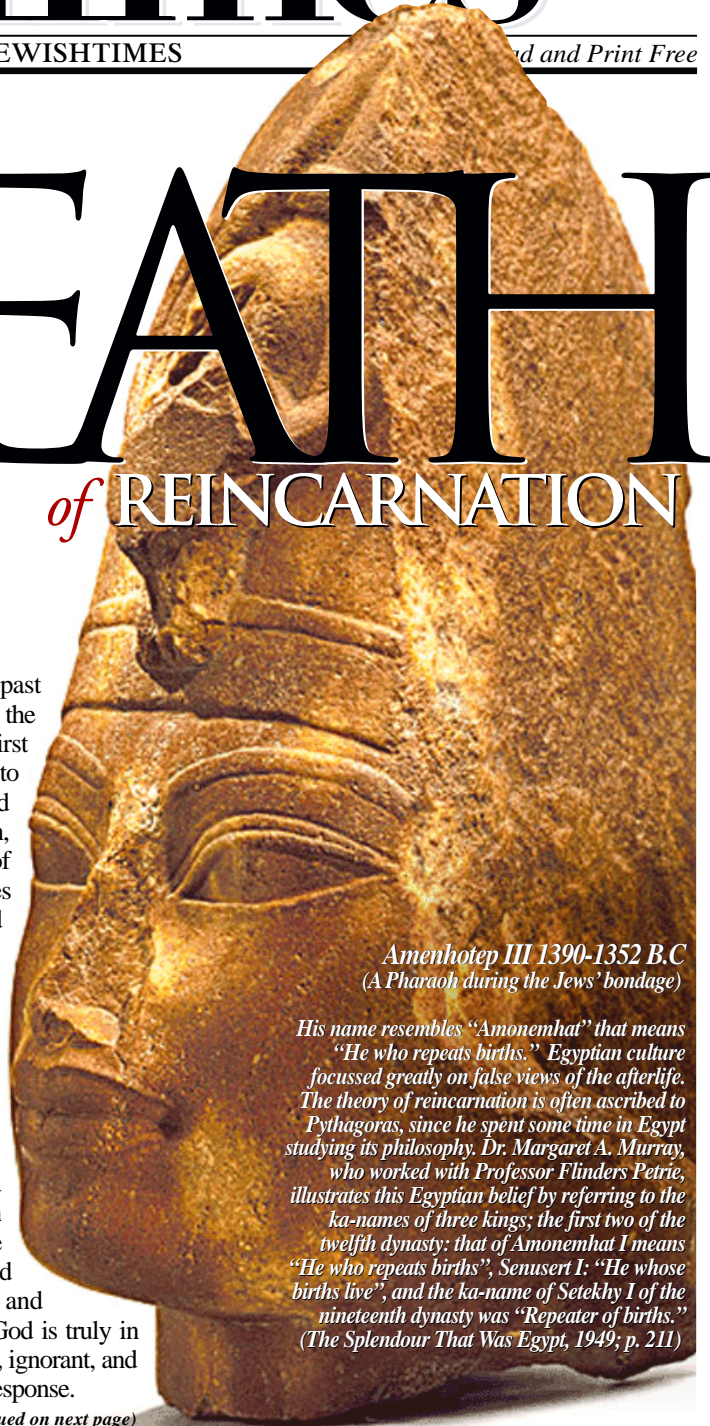
**RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM**

We concluded the Three Weeks this past Sunday, the Ninth of Av, commemorating the 40-year desert sentence prohibiting the first generation of Jews from entering Israel. Due to their corruption revealed in their fear that God could not defeat the inhabitants of Canaan, God designated that date for the destruction of both Temples. Talmud Sanhedrin 104b states God's sentiment, "You cried an unwarranted cry, [therefore] I will establish for you a cry throughout the generations." Thereby, God instructed all generations about that, which it is truly fitting to cry: back then we cried due to the consideration of our physical might alone – God's promise weighed none. Therefore, God destroyed the Temples to awaken us to what must be our true consideration: God's exclusive and absolute reign, and our relationship with God. Witnessing the dual tragedies on the same date, we admit of no coincidence, and learn that God caused the downfall and destruction of our temples and our nation. God is truly in control. Our words in the desert were foolish, ignorant, and demanded a response. Tisha B'Av was that response.

*(continued on next page)*

**Amenhotep III 1390-1352 B.C**  
(A Pharaoh during the Jews' bondage)

*His name resembles "Amonemhat" that means "He who repeats births." Egyptian culture focussed greatly on false views of the afterlife. The theory of reincarnation is often ascribed to Pythagoras, since he spent some time in Egypt studying its philosophy. Dr. Margaret A. Murray, who worked with Professor Flinders Petrie, illustrates this Egyptian belief by referring to the ka-names of three kings; the first two of the twelfth dynasty: that of Amonemhat I means "He who repeats births", Senusert I: "He whose births live", and the ka-name of Setekhy I of the nineteenth dynasty was "Repeater of births." (The Splendour That Was Egypt, 1949; p. 211)*





(Reincarnation cont. from page 1)

## Fundamentals

# JewishTimes

Weekly Journal on Jewish Thought



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When we realize this loss – and not before – we might merit the construction of the third Temple. We are also to recall the cause of our sins during the two Temple eras, which demanded God's punishments: we were idolatrous and we expressed hatred towards one another. "Hatred" is why I mention this introduction.

In our last issue of the JewishTimes, we continued our series of articles addressing Judaism's Fundamentals. And when I refer to "Fundamentals", I don't mean Maimonides 13 Principles alone, but many other primary truths, which contribute to the definition of a "Torah Life"...a life rooted firmly in, and immovable from reality. These truths include ideas, mitzvos, values, Moses' words, morality and proper thinking. Yes, proper thinking is a fundamental of Judaism. For upon it, all else rests. If one's thinking is corrupt, how can his life be of value? What this all has to do with hatred, is that one must follow what the Rabbis taught, "All arguments for the sake of heaven will ultimately be sustained. Which arguments are for the sake of heaven? Those between Hillel and Shammai. [i.e., Torah disputes]" (Ethics, 5:17) This statement endorses such arguments. Many people feel all arguments must be avoided. This is because people's egos are frail, and they wish to be liked by others, over all else. Arguments, they feel, will cause rifts in their relationships. But this

only unveils the fragile nature and worthlessness of their friendships. If a friendship cannot withstand the concerned rebuke of one party for the other, then the goal of such a relationship cannot be truth, and the value of such a relationship is questionable, at the very least. The Rabbis teach differently: they wish to see truth, and they know that conversing or hotly debating an issue with a peer in the study hall does not lead to personal attacks. Truth is the goal, and when it is reached, both Torah students leave as friends, no different from when they entered, or debated. One must argue, if he is to arrive at truth, for we all possess misconceptions, and argument is the method for ruling our fallacy and arriving at truth. Furthermore, if one hears a false idea being taught or expressed, he would be cruel to others to allow them to believe it, if he possesses the ability to prevent them from error. He must speak out.

This was the case recently. On radio, a Rabbi publicly claimed many ideas in the name of Torah, supported only by others who vocalized the identical view. He offered no reason for his views, assuming his claims sufficed that others accepted. This Rabbi said suicide bombers are actually "victims", not villains. He said God's justice is different than ours as his justification for this position. He said that one of our greatest thinkers; Rabbi Saadia Gaon meant the exact opposite of what he wrote in his works. This Rabbi possessed no rational argument. He claimed that the belief in reincarnation is an essential part of Judaism, a belief never voiced by Rambam, and a belief Moses' objected to, along with Sforno (Deut. 30:15,19):

"Behold, I place before you today; life and goodness, and death and evil." "...and choose life, so that you and your seed live." Moses says there are two options, and one is mutually exclusive to the other. That is, if one dies, he does not receive

life, and if he receives life, then he does not receive death. If one receives death, and therefore, it is not life, does this not refute reincarnation? It most certainly does. Moshe tells the people that by choosing one, you cannot obtain the other. Therefore, choosing death means the absence of life: no reincarnation. Sforno, in explaining the words "life" and "death" in this verse says one identical word for each: "La-ed," or "eternally," thereby teaching that the "death" Moshe describes

here, is eternal...no reincarnation. Most of all, reincarnation is condemned as "stupid" and "absurd" by Saadia Gaon...through rational arguments. (Reincarnation must not be confused with techiyas hamasim, "resurrection". The former is the absurd belief in an ongoing transmigration of souls from man to man, man to beast, and beast to man, while the latter is a one-time event supported by Scripture where the dead will be revived.)

Due to the gravity of this Rabbi's statements, and sanctioned by the Rabbis' writing in Ethics of the Fathers 5:17 above, I will contend with his words so others are not mislead, and hopefully he too will admit his error. We must be careful not to speak from hatred, but to address the issues. This type of dispute is warranted, and must ensue. As the Temple's objective is to be the seat of Torah wisdom, may our endeavor contribute to the rebuilding of the third and final Temple.

(continued on next page)

(Reincarnation continued from page 2)

**SINGULAR JUSTICE:  
ARAB MURDERERS ARE VILLAINS**

To briefly recap, the Torah is firmly based in this fundamental: "What God is, so shall you be" (lit. "Ma Hu, af atah"). This principle and value system is the basis for our middos, our character traits. We learn from here that just as God is a "rachum", a "merciful" One, so too we are to reflect His perfection, by mimicking His mercy. We become more in line with reality, when we mimic reality, i.e., mimicking God. This applies to all traits we see God exemplifying in His Torah. Therefore, the Torah is unequivocally stating that God "is a certain way" as far as man's mind may comprehend. There is no room for claims that God is the opposite, that He views suicide bombers as "victims", and not villains. God tells man to kill the enemy many times, such as Amalek, and this clearly teaches that God wishes man to share in God's evaluation of Amalek's evil. The Rabbi who said suicide bombers are "victims" speaks against God. God called them evil, demanding their immediate death, while this Rabbi expresses sympathy for those who blew up his fellow Jews.

**KABBALA STUDY:  
PROHIBITED**

Much of the Rabbi's false position is Kabbala-based. Again, I recap what my good friend Rabbi Myers cited regarding Kabbala study:

*"Into that which is beyond you, do not seek; into that which is more powerful than you, do not inquire; about that which is concealed from you, do not desire to know; about that which is hidden from you, do not ask. Contemplate that which is permitted to you, and engage not yourself in hidden things." (Bereishith Rabbah, 8:2)*

*The Rambam, after discussing deep ideas regarding Maaseh Bereishith and Maaseh Merkava, writes:*

*"The topics that we have discussed are known as Pardais (lit. "garden", or higher matters). Even though the Tanaaim were great, brilliant people, they did not all have the abilities to fully understand Pardais. I maintain that one should not visit the Pardais until he is first satiated with "bread and meat", which refers to knowledge of the Mitzvot. Even though the greatest knowledge is that of Pardais, the former knowledge must come first because; 1) it is "M'yashaiv Daato Shel Adam Techila," teaches one to think clearly; and 2) it is the good that God has given to all of us to observe in this world and reap the benefits in Olam Habah, the afterlife. Everyone can partake of this*

*revealed Torah, the young and the old, men and women, geniuses as well as average individuals."*

*"Most people who involve themselves in Kabbala prematurely suffer great Divine Retribution." (Vilna Gaon, the "Gra")*

*"One must not learn Kabbala because our minds simply are not deep enough to understand it." (BeerHayTave)*

I will now quote additional words to comment on what I consider Torah violations:

**Rabbi X:** I read with interest your response to some comments published in your Jewish Times (vol. 4, no. 42). Your denial of reincarnation is very disturbing. Do you realize this denial of Divrei Torah and rulings of the Rabbis places you outside the parameters of kosher Judaism?

**Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim:** The perfection of Moses is validated by God's incorporation of his words as Torah, and the genius and precision of Maimonides' mind are unparalleled: "From Moses to Moses, none have arisen as Moses." Neither Moses nor Maimonides suggested truth to reincarnation, let alone this baseless position that reincarnation forms "Divrei Torah" or a fundamental of Judaism. As Rabbi Reuven Mann taught, Moses would not conceal something that forms a fundamental of Torah, nor would God. Yet, our Torah doesn't mention reincarnation. It only mentions resurrection, which will happen at a specific moment in time. Additionally, Sforno and Saadia Gaon denounce reincarnation, and Saadia Gaon goes so far as to call it "absurd" and "stupid". But I will not simply quote a source. I will quote Saadia Gaon's reasoning so no room is left to entertain any possibility for reincarnation. For once something is shown to be foolish, an intelligent person will disregard it.

You also err by referring to the area of Jewish philosophy as subject to "ruling". Only in Jewish law do Rabbis have jurisdiction, as stated in Deuteronomy 17:11, "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." From here the Torah teaches that Rabbis have authority only in areas of law, but not in mandating a philosophy.

On this point, a wise Rabbi once taught that no one might tell us to "believe something." Blanket belief in a philosophical principle cannot be legislated, since it is impossible for anyone to demand you to instantly believe, that which you do not. Yes, a Rabbi can tell us how to "act," but he cannot tell us what to think. Our thoughts, beliefs and ultimately convictions can only come about once we reason a given matter for ourselves. So again your position that a belief in

reincarnation is "mandatory" is not only proven false, but also as impossible. To mandate a belief without availing us to reasoning for such a belief is not possible, and hence, it is not part of Torah. Thus, the Torah obligation to know God exists, and that He is one, is not commanded separately from a means to achieve this rationally. That is why God orchestrated Sinai. Until I reason for myself using a proof of God's existence, I cannot say, "God exists", or that "He is One" with any meaning. Therefore, reincarnation, which opposes Moses' words, and which is refuted intelligently by Saadia Gaon, cannot form a Torah fundamental. Conversely, I have yet to see anyone offer a logical proof in favor of reincarnation. All that is heard are claims of reincarnation bereft of any proof. And when we have a no proof for something, we do not accept it as truth.

**Rabbi X:** The Zohar, Shulkhan Arukh and practically every other Sage for the last 800 years holds by the idea of reincarnation and you did not even bother to mention any of them in your material. This makes what you wrote one-sided and dangerous. I would go so far as to say that you are misleading fellow Jews by your apparent Christian oriented views.

**Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim:** You just condemned yourself, as you omitted Saadia Gaon and Sforno who denounce reincarnation. Why did you not present their views along with others?

You must also accuse every Rabbi throughout time – including your own Rabbis – as equally "one-sided and dangerous, and apparently Christian" for they too wrote their view alone, omitting all others. In truth, if a person sees one idea as truth, and another as false, he will not teach others what he sees are falsehoods. To wit, Ramban condemned Maimonides' words on many occasions. A concerned Rabbi desires what is best for others and therefore teaches what his mind tells him is the truth. Do you not see your glaring oversight? The very Rabbis you quote, themselves argued on others! Your Own Rabbis disagree with you.

But in fact, I disagree with your reasoning altogether. Numbers prove nothing. You must agree, either your sources are right, or Saadia Gaon is right, but both cannot be right. The question is, how do we prove who is right? According to your reasoning, I should also follow all the Kabbalistic Rabbis who tell Jews to wear red strings to ward off "evil eyes", since this too has been practiced for a long time, and by Kabbalists. Yet, another idolatrous rite that has crept into Judaism. But we read that the Talmud prohibits such idolatrous practice. (Talmud Sabbath: Tosefta Chap. VII) I cannot follow any Kabbalistic Rabbi when his words

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violate Torah. I say, what is truly Christian is this “blind faith” in reincarnation. For you have not demonstrated through any reasoning, using your Tzelem Elokim (intellect) any support for this belief. I am sure if you had any proof, you would have already mentioned it to refute me. Furthermore, you offer no argument against Saadia Gaon’s refutation of reincarnation.

Rabbi Reuven Mann critiqued your words: “Maimonides said that anyone (not only a Rishon) who found any error in his works should make it known.” Thereby, Maimonides validated this idea that the truth must be followed, not the person. Reputations are worthless, so 800 years of Kabbalists who have not matched Maimonides’ level can certainly be wrong. The ideas stand, or fall, based solely on the “idea”. Falsehoods are to be rejected, regardless of how many Rabbis or years of belief are on record supporting reincarnation.

Your support of reincarnation, based exclusively on quoting others who accepted it boils down to your inability to think for yourself. This is a grave problem with Judaism today: students are not taught to think independently. They are taught to blindly accept a great reputation, while Maimonides’ words above display him as real enough, and humble enough, teaching that anyone can prove even a great mind or Rabbi wrong. No man has a monopoly on correctness; we all err.

Think about this; at a young age, Ramban was not the great Ramban, but a mere youngster. His mind then developed, and then at a certain point years later, he challenged Maimonides on many areas. Now, what gave Ramban that right to challenge Maimonides, when after all, Ramban was not anyone recognized, until afterwards? We are forced to admit that Ramban, or any intelligent person, did not follow this path where “reputations must be feared and go unchallenged”, and “Rabbis never err.” Just the opposite is truth: all men make errors: “For man is not righteous in the land who does good and does not sin.” (Ecclesiastes, 7:20) Ramban was honest, and did not fear a reputation, if he felt that person was wrong. Can you admit that your Rabbis make errors, as King Solomon taught? I feel this is where the problem lies. In Rabbi Reuven Mann’s name, Maimonides stated in his Eight Chapters (intro to “Ethics of the Fathers”) this phrase: “Accept the truth from whoever says it.” On this point, Maimonides’ son Avraham wrote in his introduction to Ein Yaakove:

*“We should not claim about Aristotle that – since he was the supreme master of philosophy and established valid proofs of the existence of the Creator; blessed be He, and other truths which he demonstrated or found in his encounter with the way of truth – he was also correct in his views that matter is*

*eternal, that God does not know particulars, and other such ideas. Nor should we reject his ideas in toto, arguing that since he was mistaken on some matters, he was mistaken on all. Rather, it is incumbent on us, as on all understanding and wise people, to examine each proposition on its merits, affirming what it is right to affirm, rejecting what it is right to reject, and withholding judgment on what is not yet proven, regardless of who said it.”*

**Rabbi X:** Please tell me, who is your Rav, by what authority do you hold? Would you like to continue to discuss this issue of the authenticity of reincarnation in front of a Kosher Beit Din, in Jerusalem, perhaps? No, this is not a threat, but your denial of Divrei Torah is fitting for the so-called Conservative and Reform crowds, and is not fitting for someone wishing to be accepted as an Orthodox Rabbi.

**Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim:** If we all judge ideas as you do, based on distinguished lineage (yichuss) and Haskamas (third party validation) then Abraham – whose father was an idolater – and Moses’ offspring who served idols – would not past muster with you. Maimonides was correct: “Follow the truth from who ever speaks it.” Think about this: your method of inquiring of someone’s Rav, and not judging a person’s words based on their value, would disqualify Abraham, since his father served idols. Do you disqualify Abraham?

**Rabbi X:** If you wish to attack me personally, this is of no matter. I recite my forgiveness prayer every night as part of Kriyat Shema (and I forgive all those who have sinned against me in this reincarnation and in previous reincarnations; that is the language of the tefilah). However, your attack against me under the guise of quoting Maimonides and Saadia Gaon is unacceptable and wrong.

**Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim:** You mean that I should not quote great Rabbis who disprove your point? I fail to understand what you just wrote.

It appears you are bothered that someone disagrees with you. But you should be more bothered by your lack of proof for your position. Your position is transparently weak, as you fallback to projecting your attack, onto me. You impute to me, exactly what you do. I used reason and proofs, and since you have none, you desperately wish to obscure your absence of reason, by moving the topic from facts, to personal attacks. Do you truly think I would not respond identically to anyone else claiming your exact views? Additionally, I don’t think Hillel and Shammai would resort to “personal attack” accusations and tactics as you do. When they

argued, they did so to bring out truth, and did not defend themselves with statements like “you are attacking me personally”. You must, as a Torah teacher, remain loyal to the subject matter, and not bring in personalities.

**Rabbi X:** Maimonides never mentions reincarnation as he never mentioned anything Kabbalistic. This should not be interpreted, as Maimonides holding any views contradictory to Kabbalah, for this is an unsubstantiated opinion, as the writings of Avraham Abulafia attest.

**Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim:** Your thinking is not intuitive: you feel that if someone never writes about a topic, it means he may even support it? Isn’t it safer to say that when someone does not write about a topic, it is because he does not recognize it? Your attempt to support your view with a non-existent text is irrational.

**Rabbi X:** As for Saadia Gaon’s clear denial of reincarnation. This is not to be denied, but rather understood. First of all, Saadia Gaon was a Kabbalist in his own right. We have available today many of his Kabbalistic writings, including a Goral. As leader of Bavli Judaism and as a citizen living in the Moslem world, his works were read far outside the Jewish community. Indeed, many were originally written in Arabic. Islam, like Christianity believes reincarnation to be an abomination. If Saadia Gaon, the leader of the Jews were to come out and publicly endorse a religious position held blasphemous by the majority and authorities, he would have endangered his life and the lives of all Jews. If I were in his position, I might also have concealed knowledge of this sacred material, especially since the Halakha of the time was to never publicly reveal Kabbalistic material.

**Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim:** You have just called Saadia Gaon a liar. You have violated “Mak-chish Maggideha”, “denigrating the Torah’s teachers”, and you have opened the door for anyone to say that any Rabbi never meant what he wrote, in fact, that he meant the opposite. Additionally, you commit this crime merely to uphold your pristine image of your Rabbis, with no honest search for truth.

Your response is quite dangerous, that Saadia Gaon didn’t mean what he wrote about reincarnation. One can equally say the same about those who support reincarnation. Your reasoning is 1) contradictory, and 2) allows anyone to say that any Rav who wrote anything, didn’t mean it, and meant the opposite! How absurd. Equally dangerous is your view that “suicide bombers are victims.” That is inexcusable and against any moral system, and certainly the Torah.

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EGYPTIAN ORIGIN OF REINCARNATION?

— SAADIA GAON —

**“THE BOOK OF BELIEFS  
AND OPINIONS”**

Yale Judaica Series, Vol. I “The Soul” ch. VIII pp 259

“Yet, I must say that I have found certain people, who call themselves Jews, professing the doctrine of metempsychosis (reincarnation) which is designated by them as the theory of “transmigration” of souls. What they mean thereby is that the spirit of Ruben is transferred to Simon and afterwards to Levi and after that to Judah. Many of them would go so far as to assert that the spirit of a human being might enter into the body of a beast or that of a beast into the body of a human being, and other such nonsense and stupidities.”

“This in itself, however, indicates how very foolish they are. For they take it for granted that the body of a man is capable of transforming the essence of the soul so as to make of it a human soul, after having been the soul of a beast. They assume, furthermore, that the soul itself is capable of transforming the essence of a human body to the point of endowing it with the traits of the beasts, even though its form be that of men. It was not sufficient for them, then, that they attributed to the soul a variable nature by not assigning to it an intrinsic essence, but they contradicted themselves when they declared the soul capable of transforming and changing the body, and the body capable of transforming and changing the soul. But such reasoning is a deviation from logic.

*The third [argument they present] is in the form of a logical argument. They say, namely: “Inasmuch as the Creator is just, it is inconceivable that he should occasion suffering to little children, unless it be for sins committed by their souls during the time that they were lodged in their former bodies.” This view is, however, subject to numerous refutations.*

*The first is that they have forgotten what we have mentioned on the subject of compensation in the hereafter for misfortunes experienced in this world. Furthermore we should like to ask them what they conceive the original status of the soul to be – we mean its status when it is first created. Is it charged by its Master with any obligation to obey Him or not? If they allege that it is not so charged, then there can be no punishments for it either, since it was not charged with any obligations to begin with. If, on the other hand, they acknowledge the imposition of such a charge, in which case obedience and disobedience did not apply before, **they thereby admit that God charges His servants with obligations on account of the future and not at all on account of the past.** But then they return to our theory and are forced to give up their insistence on the view that man’s suffering in this world is due solely to his conduct in a previous existence.”*

Saadia Gaon’s logic is impeccable. He refers to reincarnation adherents as only “called Jews”: “I have found certain people, who call themselves Jews, professing the doctrine of

metempsychosis.” He calls reincarnation “nonsense and stupidities.” He wishes to exclude them, not I, from the title “Jewish”. Saadia Gaon says the exact opposite of what you say.

Now, once Saadia Gaon demonstrates – using clear reason – that reincarnation is absolutely false, there are 3 possibilities for your claim that “Saadia Gaon agrees with reincarnation”: 1) you did not read Saadia Gaon and lied that you did, imputing things that Saadia Gaon never uttered, or 2) you cannot comprehend what he wrote and fabricated matters in his name, or 3) you understand that he denies reincarnation, but you claim the opposite to meet your selfish and misleading agenda. Either way, you have erred and sinned greatly; either you lied, fabricated, or intentionally mislead others.

How you can say Saadia Gaon meant the opposite – when he supports his refutation of reincarnation with reasons and proofs – is incomprehensible. If something is based on reason and is proven, then it is impossible that it is false, and it is foolish for you to claim that he meant the opposite. Your position exposes your subjective agenda, and the absence of honesty. If I prove to you that  $2+2=4$ , you cannot claim I meant the opposite, for I have demonstrated a truth about reality. So too, with his reasoning, Saadia Gaon transforms his subjective opinion, into an objective display of how the world functions: it is no longer “his view”, but is now recognized as “absolute truth”. Similarly, once I prove  $2+2=4$ , it is no longer correct to say this is “my subjective view”, but now, it must be said that this proven equation “reflects reality”. And to deny reality is as ludicrous as suggesting that this proof, means its opposite.

**SUMMARY**

I conclude with a repetition of these thoughts: the life God demands of us is a life where truth is never compromised, but holds the highest status. We must admit error. We must not be loyal to reputations, certainly, when they are proven wrong, as both Maimonides and his son taught. We must speak out against falsehoods that continue to misguide Jews towards a falsified and manufactured Judaism, and not the Judaism God set before Moses. We must not feel that a title of “Rabbi” earns that Rabbi an error-free life, as King Solomon taught us.

Torah is only perceived by the humble, “Fear of God is the beginning of wisdom”. (Proverbs 1:7) Torah demands honesty in judgment, “From a false matter distance yourself”. (Exod. 23:7)

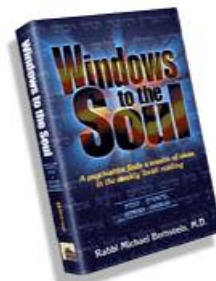
Let us all abandon our defenses and strive for truth, for the sake of truth, and let our arguments continue to reveal both falsehoods and truths, as was the pure goal of the praiseworthy debates of Hillel and Shammai. ■



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# God is One

RABBI MICHAEL BERNSTEIN



Recalling the incredible revelation at Mount Sinai, Moses tells the people (5:21), "And you said, 'Behold (hen), God our Lord has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice from amidst the fire'." In this verse, we encounter the infrequently used word "hen", behold. While it seems to add rhetorical flourish, we may still wonder if there is some additional significance in its use here. Let us examine this diminutive word.

The Talmud in a number of places (Moed Kattan 28a; Sanhedrin 76b; Megillah 9b) translates the word *hen* as one, because it is cognate with the Greek word *uni*, which also means one. This derivation is puzzling. Why should the translation of a word in the Torah be determined by its meaning in Greek, a linguistically unrelated tongue?

In *The Guide to the Perplexed*, the Rambam points out that the concept of God's oneness, as absolute unity without parts, something impossible in a physical entity, is virtually inconceivable to physical creatures. Only through the perfection that derives from Torah study can we gain a progressive inkling of God's oneness. Pursuit of this rarified understanding of one is a uniquely Jewish aspiration and accomplishment. But what does *hen* have to do with the Greeks?

We find that the Talmud admires (Megillah 9b) the Greek language, ascribing its beauty, symmetry and wisdom to the blessing Noah gave Japheth, the forebear of the Greek people (Genesis 9:27), "May the Lord beautify Japheth." In fact, Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel is of the opinion that, besides Hebrew, only Greek can also be used to write Scripture on a *klaf* parchment, reflecting

its special status among the languages.

Our Sages understood that the singularly wise nature of the Greek language would have required it to seek a word for "one" that would reflect its fullest meaning. Since the concept of perfect oneness would be expressed best in the holy language, the Greeks would have found it necessary to borrow it from Hebrew for their own language. The Greek use of a word for "one" similar to the Hebrew term *hen* indicates their language's understanding that the Hebrew term is the ideal expression of perfect unity.

The Jewish people assembled at the foot of Mount Sinai witnessed the greatest divine revelation ever and thereby achieved a singularly clear perception of God's oneness. They responded to this with the word "hen", behold, with its second meaning of one, because it implied that God had revealed His inscrutable Oneness to them in a way previously unimaginable. Appropriately, the Torah introduces the Shema several verses later, with its famous first verse (6:4), "Hear O Israel, God is our Lord, God is One."

Upon further reflection, we can discern the connection between these two meanings of *hen*, behold and one, since to behold something is to hold it visually or intellectually as a whole in one's grasp. Finally, there is another meaning to *hen*, namely "yes". We may connect this, too, to the concept of unity in the sense that by an affirmation a person expresses his willingness to accept or incorporate into himself that which he affirms and, in a manner of speaking, to become one with it.

A closer examination of the word *hen* reveals its etymological connection to the concept of one. Its two letters, *heh* and *nun*, themselves reflect a singularity in that *heh* is spelled with two *hehs* and *nun* is likewise spelled with two *nuns*. In *Netzach Yisrael*, the Maharal discerns the singularity of these letters in their numerical values. The *heh*,

with a value of 5, and the *nun*, with a value of 50, are the only letters that must be paired with themselves to reach a total of 10 and 100 respectively. All other letters must be paired with a different letter to achieve those totals. For instance, *aleph* (1) must combine with a *tes* (9) to reach 10, and *yod* (10) must pair with *tzadi* (90) to reach 100. But *heh* (5) combines with *heh* (5) to reach 10, and *nun* (50) combines with *nun* (50) to reach 100. And indeed, the very spelling out of the letters *heh* (composed of two *hehs*) and *nun* (composed of two *nuns*) equals 10 and 100 respectively, numbers the Maharal sees as expansions of the concept of unity.

Oneness is a concept that permeates the life of Rabbi Akiva. In *Pirkei Avos*, he summarizes the entire Torah in one saying, "Love your neighbor as yourself." This itself expresses the goal of creating a unity of sorts with one's fellow man.

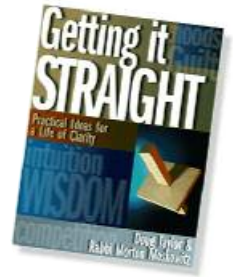
Rabbi Akiva is famous (Berachos 60b) for seeing God's unifying will behind all that is good and all that superficially seems otherwise (*kol mah d'avid Rachmana l'tava avid*). Only he among the Sages (Makkos 24a) can laugh as foxes dart among the ruins of the Temple, for he sees all history as a single, divinely directed advance. One Aggadic passage views (Menachos 29b) Rabbi Akiva as the quintessential exponent of the Oral Law, able to derive laws from the crowns of the letters in the Torah (*tagim*), thereby demonstrating the unity of the Written Law and the Oral Law. In the Talmud's dramatic depiction of his martyrdom (Berachos 61b), his soul departs as he utters the final words of the Shema, "God is One."

According to the Midrash (*Mechilta Yisro*), Rabbi Akiva debates Rabbi Yishmael as to what the Jewish people said following each command given at Sinai. Rabbi Yishmael states they said "yes (*hen*)" after hearing the positive commandments and "no" following the prohibitions. Rabbi Akiva contends that they said "hen" after all of them. Perhaps Rabbi Akiva intended the full meaning of the word *hen*: "yes", "behold" and "one". The Jewish people had beheld and affirmed all the Ten Commandments, obligations and prohibitions, as coming from a single Source, reflecting God's oneness. ■

*Taken from "Getting it Straight"*

# 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. ■





positive  
command.

What is this mitzvah?

In his Mishne Torah, Maimonides defines the commandment as an obligation to know that there is a God who is the cause of all that exists. It is clear from this formulation that blind faith in Hashem's existence does not satisfy this commandment. According to Maimonides, a person must have knowledge of the Hashem's existence.

Maimonides also discusses this commandment in his Sefer HaMitzvot. Maimonides wrote this work in Arabic. The standard translation of the Sefer HaMitzvot was composed by Moshe ibn Tibon. The first mitzvah in Sefer HaMitzvot is affirmation of Hashem. In Ibn Tibon's translation, the mitzvah obligates us to have faith in the existence of a God that is the cause of all that exists. This seems to contradict Maimonides' formulation in his Mishne Torah. There, Maimonides insists on knowledge. Here, Maimonides establishes a more general perimeter for the obligation. Faith is adequate. According to the formulation in Sefer HaMitzvot, it seems that blind faith is sufficient for fulfillment of the commandment.

Rav Yosef Kafih offers a simple resolution to this contradiction. He explains that the confusion is based in the Ibn Tibon's interpretation of Maimonides' original Arabic. Rav Kafih studied the original Arabic text of Maimonides' Sefer HaMitzvot. He notes that in the original text, Maimonides uses an Arabic word that should more properly be translated as "knowledge". According to this rendering of the original Arabic text, there is no contradiction. Sefer HaMitzvot defines the mitzvah as knowing that there is a God who is the cause of all that exists.

Rav Kafih's resolution of this problem is certainly reasonable. However, it does assume that Moshe

ibn Tibon's scholarship is flawed and that he mistranslates the original Arabic. Moshe ibn Tibon was a prolific writer and translator. He wrote

translations of various philosophical works. He composed a commentary on the Torah. He wrote on a commentary on a portion of Maimonides' Moreh Nevuchim. In short, he was an accomplished scholar and translator. He was

well aware of Maimonides' outlook and formulations. It is likely that he felt his translation of the Maimonides' Arabic was consistent with the author's intentions. It is appropriate to consider the possibility that Ibn Tibon's translation is accurate. If we accept this translation, how can we reconcile Maimonides' formulations? Why does Maimonides insist on knowledge of the Almighty's existence in his Mishne Torah and in Sefer HaMitzvot define the mitzvah as faith?

The answer lies in understanding Ibn Tibon's translation. The Hebrew word that Ibn Tibon uses to describe the mitzvah is emunah. This word is generally regarded as the Hebrew equivalent of "faith" or "belief". However, a simple analysis of the term's use in the Torah indicates that emunah indicates a firm conviction. It does not refer to a conviction based upon faith or unfounded beliefs.

Let us consider a few examples of the Torah's use of the term emunah. Yosef uses this term when speaking to his brothers. The brothers come to Egypt to purchase food. Yosef, as Paroh's regent, rules the land. He accuses the brothers of spying. The brothers deny this charge. Yosef devises a test to determine the truth. He asserts that through this test – v'yaiamnu - the brother's claim will be established.[1] Yosef uses a term that is a conjugation of emunah. Rashi explains that the term used by Yosef means that the truth of your claims will be established.[2]

Rashi provides a wonderful example to support his interpretation. The Sotah is a woman suspected of adultery. She denies these charges. She is required to drink a special potent. If she is guilty, this potent will kill her. The Kohen administers the test. He first confirms that she maintains her innocence and that she understands the consequences of the test. The woman responds to

the Kohen's query, "amen, amen". Rashi maintains that the Sotah is providing an affirmation. She affirms that she maintains her innocence. She affirms that she understands the consequences of the test.

Let us consider one final example. Bnai Yisrael are attacked by Amalek. As long as Moshe's arms are lifted in prayer to Hashem, Bnai Yisrael dominates the battle. Moshe keeps his arms lifted the entire battle and Amalek is vanquished. The Torah describes Moshe's arms as emunah. Nachmanides, Rashbam and others define this term as meaning firmly established. Moshe's arms were firmly established in their uplifted position.

All of these examples illustrate that the term emunah and its derivatives are not references to faith or unfounded belief. Instead, the term refers to a conviction that is strongly established or affirmed as true. Ibn Tibon was an accomplished scholar of the Torah. He probably used the term emunah in the manner it is employed in the Torah. His rendering does not contradict Maimonides insistence on knowledge of Hashem's existence. Ibn Tibon is indicating that we are obligated to firmly establish our conviction in Hashem's existence. This is completely consistent with Maimonides' requirement to base the conviction on knowledge.[3]

**"Comfort, comfort My people, says your God."** (Haftorah of Shabbat Nachamu, Yishayahu 40:1)

This week the fast of Tisha BeAv was observed. This fast commemorates the destruction of the Bait HaMikdash. The Haftorah for this Shabbat is a related to the theme of Tisha BeAv. The Haftorah begins with our pasuk. In this passage, Hashem offers comfort to Bnai Yisrael. In the Haftorah, the Almighty assures His nation that their suffering in exile will end. The Almighty will reveal His kingship over all of humanity. The land of Israel, Yerushalayim and the Temple will be rebuilt.

This Haftorah offers an important insight into the observance of Tisha BeAv. In order to identify this insight, an introduction is needed.

Tisha BeAv is a date that is reserved for tragedy. Both Sacred Temples were destroyed on this date. Many other misfortunes befell Bnai Yisrael on this date. All of these catastrophes are historical events. None is part of our recent experience. Yet, despite the passing of time, we continue our annual observance of Tisha BeAv. This creates a problem. The tragedies commemorated by Tisha BeAv do not seem very relevant to us. These misfortunes are part of the distant past. Nonetheless, every year we repeat our commemoration of these events. It is difficult on a beautiful summer day to mourn a Temple we never saw. We are expected to feel genuine sadness over events that are not part of our experience. Other nations have also experienced

(continued on next page)



tragedies. At first, they bemoan these misfortunes. However, with the passage of time, the memory of the trauma recedes. The nation moves on and focuses on the present and future. Why do we not place the past behind us?

Let us consider the problem from another perspective. Assume a person loses a parent. This is a terrible experience. The bereaved son or daughter is distraught. The child mourns the parent for a period of time. Halacha requires twelve months of mourning. Slowly, the son or daughter recovers from the loss. Mourning ends and life proceeds. Imagine the child could not overcome this loss. The son or daughter remained fixated upon the misfortune. We would conclude that this person is ill. We would suggest that the child seek help in overcoming this morbid depression. Are we not this child? Why do we not overcome our sorrow? Are we morbidly fixated on the tragedies of the past?

There are various answers to this question. We will consider one response. Tisha BeAv is a day of mourning. However, there is another element expressed in our observance of the day. This element is evident in an unusual halacha – law — of the day. On the eve of Tisha BeAv, the supplication Tachanun is not recited.[4] This supplication is also omitted on Tisha BeAv itself.[5] The reason for the omission of Tachanun is that Tisha BeAv is referred to in the Navi as a Moed – a festival. The prophet Zecharya prophesizes that in the Messianic era, the Temple will be restored and Tisha BeAv will be celebrated as a festival.[6] This element of festivity associated with Tisha BeAv is expressed in other laws as well.

It seems odd that in deference to Zecharya's assurance we add these elements of festivity to Tisha BeAv. We await the Messianic era. It has not yet occurred. Now we are in exile. The Temple is destroyed. What is the relevance of Zecharya's prophecy to our current observance of Tisha BeAv?

The answer is that the destruction of the Temple is not merely a historical event. Its destruction and our exile represent an aberrant relationship with Hashem. This is the message of our pasuk and the Haftarah. We are the Almighty's nation. Our redemption and the restoration of the Bait HaMikdash are inevitable. The Messianic era is only delayed by our own failure to completely repent and return to the Almighty. With our wholehearted teshuva – repentance – the Messianic era will arrive.

This is the reason for the presence of a festive element in the observance of Tisha BeAv. This element reminds us that our fasting is in response to a current tragedy. We have not yet repented. Therefore, we remain in exile and the Temple remains destroyed. We can convert Tisha BeAv into a festival through changing our behaviors and attitudes!

Now we are prepared to understand the relevance of Tisha BeAv to our current generation. Other nations experience tragedies. They move forward. They forget the misfortunes of the past and enjoy the present and hope for an even better future. We too are not fixated on the past. We are not remembering an irrelevant past tragedy. We are commemorating a present misfortune. We are in exile and the Bait HaMikdash has not yet been rebuilt. We must repent in order to end our misfortune. In short, Tisha BeAv should not be regarded as a day that recalls a past misfortune. It should be observed as a day on which we mourn an ongoing tragedy. This tragedy is our own distance from the Almighty. It is a day that should inspire us to repent and restore our relationship with Hashem. ■

[1] Sefer Beresheit 42:20.

[2] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 42:20.

[3] Based on comments of Rabbi Israel Chait.

[4] Rav Yosef Karo, Shulchan Aruch, Orech Chayim 653:12.

[5] Rav Yosef Karo, Shulchan Aruch, Orech Chayim 559:4.

[6] Sefer Zecharya 19:19.

## SINAI WHY FLAMES?

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

What is the concept intended by the numerous times the parsha states that the Jews heard God speak from the midst of the flames?

The reason why God created the event at Sinai as a voice of words emanating from a fiery mountain is as follows: God desired that this event be a proof to all generations that the Torah is of Divine origin – not man made. The one element in which a biological organism cannot live is fire. By God creating a voice of "words", meaning intelligence, emanating from the midst of flames, all would



know for certain that the cause of such an event was not of an Earthly intelligence. They would ascribe the phenomenon solely to that which controls the elements, that being God Himself. Only the One who controls fire, Who formed its properties, can cause voices to exist in fire. As the sounds heard by the people were of intelligent nature, they understood this being to be the intelligent, and metaphysical God.

The purpose of the Torah's repetition was to drive home the concept, which is supreme and more essential to man's knowledge than all other concepts, i.e., that God gave the Torah, He created and controls the universe, and that He is metaphysical.

A question was asked, "Why would the people not err and assume God to be fire itself?"

We see the first words heard from the flames were "I am the God who took you out of the land of Egypt". This means to say that the Cause of the miracles in Egypt is now claiming responsibility for this event at Sinai. The fact that there were no fires in Egypt shows that fire is not indispensable for the performance of miracles, all claimed by the voice at Sinai. The Jews therefore did not view the fire as God, as they experienced miracles prior to this event without witnessing any fires. It is true there was a pillar of fire, which led them by night, but as we do not find fires connected with all miracles, we conclude that fire is not the cause of those miracles, or of revelation at Sinai. There must be something external to fire, which controls the laws of nature, and is above nature. That can only be the Creator. ■

RAV JOSEPH B. SOLOVEITCHIK

## TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE

*Translation of a five-minute segment of the Rav's 1967 Teshuva drasha (although the drasha was summarized in "Al Hateshuva", this portion never appeared.*

*From Arnold Lustiger)*

"I don't intend here to engage in politics, but this is a matter that has weighed heavily upon me since last June. I am very unqualified to assess the extent of the deliverance that the Ribono Shel Olam accomplished on behalf of Klal Yisrael and the Jewish victory over those who hate Israel. But in my opinion, the greatest deliverance, and the greatest miracle, is simply that He saved the population of Israel from total annihilation. Don't forget that the Arabs were Hitler's students, Amalek, and in regard to the Arabs there is a Mitzvah of utterly blotting out Amalek's memory. Today, they are Hitler, they want to uproot the Jewish people, and it is possible that Russia is together with them in this regard, so the status of Amalek falls upon Russia as well.

The blood congeals when one considers what would have happened to the Yishuv, to the hundreds of thousands of religious Jews, of gedolei Yisrael, or to all the Jews in Israel for that matter--"there is no difference"--all Jews are Jews. This is the greatest salvation--but also that the State itself was saved. Because even if the population would remain alive, but if God forbid the fate of Israel would fall, there would be a wave of assimilation and apostasy in America as well as in all Western countries. In England I heard that Rothchild said that Israel's victory saved Judaism in France. He is 100% correct--this was better articulated by him than many Rabbis in Israel regarding the ultimate significance of the victory.

But one thing I want to say. These reasons constitute the primary salvation behind the Six Day War. Indeed, we rejoice in the [capture of] the Western Wall, in the Cave of the Patriarchs, in Rachel's tomb. I understand the holiness of the Kotel Hamaarovi. I studied Kodshim since I was a child: Kidsha le'asid lavo, kedushas makom, kedushas mechitzos, lifnei Hashem--these are concepts with which I grew up in the cradle. The Kotel Hamaarovi is very dear, and the Har Habayis is very dear to me: I understand the kedusha perhaps much more than many religious journalists who have written so much about the Kotel Hamaarovi. But we exaggerate its importance. Our Judaism is not a religion of shrines, and it seems from this that it lies in the interests of the Ministry of Religions to institute a [foreign] concept of holy sites in Judaism--a concept we never had. We indeed have the concept of kedushas mokom, this is the Bais Hamikdash, [but] graves are not mekomos hakedoshim. As important as kivrei tzaddikim are, they are not holy. Perhaps there is a different

halacha. To visit kivrei tzaddikim is important, like mekomos hakedoshim. I will tell you a secret--it doesn't matter under whose jurisdiction the Kotel Hamaarovi lies--whether it is under the Ministry of Parks or under the Ministry of Religions, either way no Jew will disturb the site of the Kotel Hamaarovi. One is indeed on a great spiritual level if he desires to pray at the Kotel Hamaarovi. But many mistakenly believe that the significance of the victory lies more in regaining the Kotel Hamaarovi than the fact that 2 million Jews were saved, and that the Malkhut Yisrael was saved. Because really, a Jew does not need the Kotel Hamaarovi to be lifnei (in front of) Hashem. Naturally, mikdash has a separate kedusha which is lifnei Hashem. But there is a lifnei Hashem which spreads out over the entire world, wherever a Jew does not sin, wherever a Jew learns Torah, wherever a Jew does mitzvos, "minayen sheshnayim yoshevim ve'oskim beTorah hashechinah imahem"--through the entire world.

I want you to understand, I give praise and thanks to the Ribono Shel Olam for liberating the Kotel Hamaarovi and for liberating and for removing all Eretz Yisrael from the Arabs, so that it now belongs to us. But I don't need to rule whether we should give the West Bank back to the Arabs or not to give the West Bank to the Arabs: we Rabbis should not be involved in decisions regarding the safety and security of the population. These are not merely Halakhic rulings: these decisions are a matter of pikuach nefesh for the entire population. And if the government were to rule that the safety of the population requires that specific territories must be returned, whether I issue a halakhic ruling or not, their decision is the deciding factor. If pikuach nefesh supercedes all other mitzvos, it supercedes all prohibitions of the Torah, especially pikuach nefesh of the yishuv in Eretz Yisrael. And all the silly statements I read in the newspapers--one journalist says that we must give all the territory back, another says that we must give only some territory back, another releases edicts, strictures and warnings not to give anything back. These Jews are playing with 2 million lives.

I will say that as dear as the Kotel Hamaarovi is, the 2 million lives of Jews are more important. We have to negotiate with common sense, as the security of the yishuv requires. What specifically these security requirements are, I don't know, I don't understand these things. These decisions require a military perspective, which one must research assiduously. The borders that must be established should be based upon that which will provide more security. It is not a topic appropriate for which Rabbis should release statements or for Rabbinical conferences."

—Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik

the  
Rav

RABBI DANIEL MYERS

**Question:** Rav Soloveitchik z"l maintained that regarding territorial compromise, the people, rabbis included, must defer to the judgment of the authorities. Why then do many laymen and rabbis alike, who consider themselves Talmidim of the Rav, reject and protest the disengagement plan? Mr. Yaakov Gross

**Rabbi Daniel Myers:** The Halachic Sugya of disengagement is quite a complicated one. It includes, but is not limited to, the Machloket Rambam-Ramban regarding Kivush Haaretz, (see Ramban's list of Mitzvot Asai in his Pairush on the Rambam's Saifer Hamitzvot) an analysis and application of the Minchat Chinuch's commentary on the Mitzvah of destroying the seven nations, (Parshat V'etchanan Mitzvah 425) and a thorough investigation into the military and political ramifications of territorial exchange. Such a study is beyond the scope of this essay. However, we will rephrase and address the specific question raised here: Can one who follows the psak Halacha of the Rav protest against the disengagement, or must he humbly submit to the greater authority of the government? (Editor's note: this will be addressed at a later time. For now, we will reprint the Rav's words)



# “Jewish Terror Fiend Killed by Mob Justice”

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WINTER

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THE CONTINUED  
INDOCTRINATION OF  
ARAB YOUTHS  
INTO TERROR AND  
MARTYRDOM



THE ARABS ARE NOT  
COMPLYING WITH  
PRESIDENT BUSH'S  
DEMAND TO END  
TERROR.

WHAT IS THE  
PRESIDENT'S NEXT  
MOVE?

The above headline was screaming its way from the front page of the New York Post, right in to the hearts and minds of the Islamic consciousness. Jewish terror fiend...avenged by mob justice?

Never before throughout the thousands of terror attacks, nor the hundreds of murder fests committed by individual Arabs, have we ever been so politically incorrect to call any of these Arab or Islamic murderers Arab or Muslim “terror fiends”; nor were we ever to read anywhere the response by the Israelis were associated with the word “justice”.

What happened in Israel is a deeply regrettable incident by a mentally disturbed person. Natan Zada, an Israeli army deserter who in his defiance of the planed pull out of Gaza by the Israeli government; went on a murder binge and killed four Israeli citizen of Arab ethnicity.

The general Arab reaction to the killing of Jews or Arabs by terrorist acts; is always praised and labeled “martyrdom for the cause of Islam.” In contrast, the members of the Israeli government, trampled over each other to attack the microphones to express their condemnation of the attack and their regrets about its outcome.

When a Jordanian soldier massacred some seven or eight young girls with his sharp-shooting skills, we had headlines reporting that a Jordanian soldier went berserk and that was it. Not a single accusation was charged against the Jordanian government.

When an Egyptian soldier opens fire on a group of Israeli tourists and kills seven of them, it was a regrettable incident; without anyone trying to exploit the tragic event and turning it into and additional point of friction in the long standing Arab Israeli conflict.

Today, the Palestinian President; “the peace loving Mahmoud Abbas” who doesn’t even try to disarm the terror groups of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and any of the other Palestinian terrorist organizations, had the nerve to call on Israel, “to Disarm Settlers’ Gangs’ before the Palestinian-

Israeli Coexistence will come to an end due to “Israeli Terror”. This is from a man, whose hands are still dripping from the blood of the countless Jewish victims; ranging from the massacre of the Israeli athletes during the Munich Olympics; the defenseless wheelchair-imprisoned Klinghofer, and the many other innocent victims of terror; that Abbas as the right hand man of Arafat had a hand in the planning their murders.

It is a typical, inborn reflex anti-Semitic smear that has absolutely nothing to do with Israel or Zionism; to condemn the whole Jewish people regardless of where they live or whether they consider themselves Jews only through a religious affiliation and not through nationhood. That when a crime is committed by a sick individual who belongs to the Jewish faith that the criminal is described even in pro-Israeli publications as a, “Jewish Terror Fiend.”

The other major difference between the insane act by Natan Zada, and the acts committed by Arab and Islamic terrorists is that this act of murder was not treated by any Jewish organization with the glowing hero worship. No one was calling Natan-Zada a “martyr”, nor was he buried with the fanfare of a hero, nor was there any huge monetary reward awarded to his family, as is the case at the death of Arab or Islamic terrorists. Instead, the Jewish communities around the world were treating the act with so much embarrassment; that it was difficult to even find a cemetery to bury his remains.

On the other hand no one should confuse the stupid and wanton act by a sick man with the malady and possibly suicidal act by the Israeli government of unilateral abandonment of a vital territory without any type of reciprocal act by the Palestinian authority that claims to be committed to a process of peace with Israel.

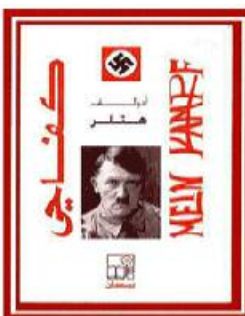
Even Yonatan Bassi, the man handling the Israeli government’s controversial plan to evacuate settlements in the Gaza Strip, can only say that only time will tell whether it is an idea that can bring Israel and the Palestinians to a peaceful solution of their conflict.

The reality is that we already have the answer: over ten thousand people demonstrated by chanting “today its Gaza, tomorrow its Jerusalem.” We already know that such Jewish stupidity only will embolden the thinking of the Arab world, and will effectively bring the borders of terror closer to Israel’s heartland.

The best indication of what is in the heart of the Arabs, is that not only that all the Jews alive have to leave Gaza, but even the dead ones have to be disinterred and reburied in Nitzanim; a new cemetery inside of Israel.

The message is clear...Dead or alive, Jews have no place in lands under Arab Administration. Promising...isn’t it? ■

## Letters



## Hitler's Mein Kampf

*Distributed by Arabs  
to their youth 1975  
and 1995*

# Hamas Summer Camp

RABBI SHEA HECHT

Imagine if an ad for summer camp read, "Give your children a summer of enjoyment! Let them learn a skill! Teach them to kill." It would be shocking, wouldn't it? The ad is imaginary, but just as other specialty camps teach children various skills; according to a recent "San Francisco Chronicle" article there is a camp that teaches children to kill.

Why do parents send their children away to summer camp? Mostly because of the things they'll gain from their stay in camp - particularly in a specialty camp. The camping experience teaches children how to get along, how to follow rules, how to work problems out with their peers, and how to clean up after themselves, among other things. Being away from home and on their own, helps children mature.

Summer camp has a particular beauty. Since no one has their parents with them children get to deal with each other on an equal keel. The poor and rich are equalized. Everyone has the same bed, same cubbies, and same food, and everyone goes home to the same "house" every night. Most children find it to be an amazing experience, which they look forward to all throughout the school year.

The "San Francisco Chronicle" article told about summer camps created by Hamas terrorists for the

poor children of the Gaza, to indoctrinate the children to be suicide bombers.

The children attending Hamas summer camps learn all the skills that other children learn in camp plus more. They also learn songs, including an intifada song urging them to "kill the Zionists wherever they are in the name of G-d." At one beach camp, attended by approximately 100 children, an instructor had a webbed belt strapped to his stomach, under his shirt. When asked by a reporter what it was, he smiled



summer camps is comparable to Hitler's youth groups." Though I don't doubt that the parents are poor, it's hard for me to imagine that they are unaware of the camp's mission when they send their children there.

It's difficult for me to view these camps as harmless in the face of comments from Hamas officials such as Gaza leader Mahmoud al-Zahar who said that in spite of the shaky truce with Israel right now, they will continue to attack Jewish settlements in the West Bank until the Jews leave. He also said he remains devoted to the destruction of the State of Israel altogether. Raising these children to be future suicide bombers fits Hamas' view of the future.

Actually, the Hamas-sponsored summer camps are a double-edged sword. These children deserve the chance to enjoy the camaraderie of a summer experience while exploring their talents and abilities. Hamas, by providing what would otherwise be a luxury for these kids, is getting away with feeding them poison that will unavoidably bring further sickness to the region. When the children are finished with all their years in camp, they are full-fledged members of Hamas, ready to sacrifice themselves as suicide bombers. Palestinian children as young as 11 have tried killing Israelis. It makes me wonder: What summer camp did they go to?

There are so many different summer camps all around the world many of them with their own specialty: swimming, dancing, arts, horseback riding, or even religion. Yet no summer camp does what the Hamas camps do - take an impressionable child and mold him into a murderer. ▣

## School Rules

RABBI SHEA HECHT

On visiting day I traveled to camp to see my sons. While sitting and speaking with my children, I overheard a child telling his mother about one of the camp rules. His mother replied, in quite a loud voice, "What a stupid, insensible rule!"

Later that day without realizing I had an interest in this particular child, my son pointed the boy out and said, "His mother told him he can't go swimming because of an allergy to chlorine, but he goes swimming anyway. He said his parents have stupid rules."

I didn't hear which camp rule the child told his

and said, "Boom."

According to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's spokesman, Ra'anana Gissin, "Hamas takes advantage of the dire economic straits of the Gaza families by offering to care and feed for their children while concealing the organization's true motives. The indoctrination in these

mother about, so I can't comment if that specific rule is smart or not, but I run summer camps and I know that most camp rules were created based on specific experiences, parent complaint or expectation, or for 'child safety'. Summer camps don't make nonsensical rules and regulations.

Regardless of the sensibility of the rule, what message was this mother giving her child about rules and authority? At the end of the day, what was she telling her son about her own rules and authority? She trusted the camp enough to send her son there for two months, yet by speaking negatively of camp rules she immediately put the authority of the adults involved in her son's care in question.

This incident got me thinking. The summer is soon coming to an end and school will be starting again. Children attend school for ten months of the year. Schools make rules; some rules are universal and some are exclusive to a specific school. Not all school rules make sense to every parent. Yet, when parents challenge a school's rules, what are they saying about adult authority?

Educating our children from books is the school's responsibility. Educating our children to be respectful *mentschen* - which is more important than book learning - is our responsibility. I have heard parents say that educational institutions today don't do their job and that children are not adequately prepared for the real world. Yet how many parents have given serious thought to their own responsibility to prepare their children for their schooling by opening their minds and hearts to the adults that will teach them? How many parents fail that course, thereby coloring their child's entire educational experience?

Parents chose their children's school carefully. Often the choice is made by viewing the end product - the students leaving the school. By questioning a school's or a teacher's authority parents hinder the schools from doing their job of molding and shaping their children.

In today's day when disrespect for authority is so rampant the best thing a parent can do for their children is to support those in authority. When a child walks into a classroom his attitude - which is important to the atmosphere of a classroom - is a reflection of his parent's attitude. From my own work in the classroom as well as from speaking to and advising teachers, I know that more often than not, teachers get to witness the old adage 'the apple doesn't fall far from the tree'. At PTA when teachers get to meet many parents for the first time, they understand their student's behavior - be it positive or negative.

Children who are educated by their parents to sit in a classroom with a proper attitude gain the most from their time in school. Parents will find that they gain from this attitude as well. Children will have no respect for authority when their parents disparage that authority - and surprisingly enough many times that disrespect of authority transfers to the parent's authority as well - especially in teenagers. ▣



# Reincarnation

**Joe:** I agree with your claim that the idea of reincarnation is not Jewish, but I question your interpretation of pasukim. For instance “I place before you today; life and goodness and death and evil,” which you interpret as final death. That is OK for the case of choosing death, but what does it mean to choose “life”? Could one not interpret that “life” in this context means reincarnation; that is, life over and over again? I don’t see how logic forces the conclusion you draw.

Secondly you point to Karase as proving the end of the soul therefore foreclosing the possibility of reincarnation. OK again, but could one not logically conclude that only those subject to Karase don’t come back, and others do? Again I don’t see how logic forces your conclusion versus one that proves reincarnation.

I look forward to understanding how these pasukim conclusively prove your point.

—Joe Rinde

**Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim:** Joe, I agree. You ask a good question, and a further explanation is required. Let us consider: Moshe said one might choose life or death. You suggest that perhaps, “life”, refers to a cycle of reincarnations. However, let’s analyze this: Reuven sins, and then returns as a reincarnated “Shimone”. But inside Shimone is Reuven’s corrupted soul, now reincarnated to fix (tikkun) his past life’s flaws.

Now as Shimone, Reuven reads the Torah anew, never recalling his past life. In it he finds rewards and punishments for what he must do NOW. But reincarnation proponents argue against the plain meaning of the Torah: they suggest that even if Shimone is sinless now, he will receive punishment because of a past life’s sins, as Reuven. So a sinless Shimone find himself receiving punishment for things he never committed! This violates Torah and reason, and why you cannot read that verse that “life” means a cycle of reincarnations.

Reincarnation is the opposite of what our Torah discusses everywhere, and we may use Job (Iyov) as an example. Job is smitten with blisters from head to toe; he lost his wealth and children, and is accused by one of his close friends that he deserved what befell him due to his sin. Job insists that he is sinless. But our Torah says “What is hidden (sins) is God’s, and the revealed (sins) are ours and our children’s...” (Deut. 29:28)

Meaning, one is held responsible for what he recalls, “they are ours” to atone for. But for the hidden sins – those we forgot – man is exempt. God does not punish a man for a sin that he forgot, and on which he is humanly incapable of repenting. Thus, according to reincarnation proponents, that which man forgot – even if a previous life were tenable – he is not held accountable. So the Torah refutes this view that one must atone for any forgotten, previous sins.

But keep in mind that just because many people echo a belief in reincarnation or anything else, this does not place the burden of proof on those who never considered reincarnation real. Those suggesting something not vocalized by our Written or Oral Torah are the one’s who deviate; I need not disprove reincarnation, an idea never before proven, just like I need not disprove the existence of fire-breathing dragons. For this reason your latter question is also answered. To suggest that, which the Torah did not, is not the proper method of proof. If I follow your line of reasoning, I too can suggest something; that animals are reincarnated, since Karase only applies to man. But you see, this is faulty reasoning, which leads to a corrupt view of reality. So we do not follow this path where anyone may suggest, “since it is not ruled out, it may be true.” No, we admit truth to only that which is proven.

As one final thought, when anyone in our Torah experienced any punishment, what does the Torah say the cause was: a previous, corrupt life as another person, or a current sin? In all cases, it is the latter. God always punishes a person in this life for his sins, in “this” life, as this is the only life we each have. This is so clear in innumerable instances in Torah. I will leave you with some additional statements of the Rabbis

Chazal said, “Yaakove and Moshe “lo mase”, “did not die”. Only certain people didn’t die - not ALL people. (And even this is metaphoric, for the Torah says Moses died at 120 years of age.) Thus, all others do in fact die.

Chazal said, “Repent one day before your death. But does one know when he dies? No, therefore, repent everyday.” Chazal teach there is death. Why repent if one returns?

“Rabbi Tarfone said, ‘The day is short, the work is great, the workers are lazy, the reward is greta and the Owner is impatient.’” (Ethics, 2:15) Now I ask you, how can Rabbi Tarfone say “the day is short” if one returns via reincarnation? ■

**Reader:** Not everything works in a method that man can comprehend.

**Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim:** With this statement, you admit of another method. But how can you admit of that which you cannot “comprehend”?

**Reader:** Many Ashkenazim are taught that we are born with faults that we did not correct in previous lifetimes, and now we have to correct them in this lifetime, or run the risk of either having to come back yet again, or maybe chas v’scholom not meriting even the permission to return and try again. The Chofetz Chayim writes that a person should never complain about his situation, like being lame, because many times a neshamah in shamayim begs Hashem Yisborach to allow him to return and be born again under certain difficult situations that might help him overcome sins he did in a previous lifetime. Therefore, a person should be aware that his own problem may have been something HE HIMSELF asked for before being born, in order to correct sins of a previous lifetime. Furthermore, the Steipler Gaon wrote a letter in which he told someone that the troubles and pains he is suffering are probably a kapara (atonement) for sins he did in a previous lifetime, and he must be mekabel (receive) those yisurin b’avahah.”

**Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim:** And Saadia Gaon, Sforno, and Moshe Rabbeinu say otherwise. So now, how do you decide whom to follow? The answer: we are not to follow a “person” (regardless of distinguished reputations which I do not belittle) but rather, we must follow “truth”. This mode of following the leader, to which you adhere, is crippling Jewish minds. When faced with the question of following Moshe or the Chofetz Chaim, Jews are dumbfounded, and understandably so. But this dilemma is borne out of the poor teachings of today’s leaders, as they train students in the falsehood that anyone with a title of “Rabbi” is infallible. But this is strikingly false, as our Torah exposes the sins of Moshe, Aaron, and all errors of our leaders. As a Rabbi one taught, “Torah has no hero worship.” Had Jews followed this “follow the leader” thinking during the times of Jeremiah, they would follow those Jewish prophets who followed Baal, an idolatrous cult. They would stumble, with your

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## Letters

opinion, saying, "we must follow the prophets". Yes, the Jewish prophets followed idolatry, as stated in last week's Haftorah of Maasey. Now, if God called "prophets" false, then someone titled a "Kabbalist" has no monopoly on truth. I personally know a case where a Kabbalist told a close friend that he would wed in that year, and he did not. I know of another case where a woman went to a "Rebbe" and asked if her cancer-smitten sister would survive her ordeal, and the Rebbe said she would...but she did not, and died.

As we stated, when Moshe told the people to live proper lives, he said "And choose life". This means that the correct life is that which one must "select", he must use his free will. Now, if, as proponents of reincarnation claim, that man may return as an animal, so he may be sacrificed on the altar, and this will atone for his previous life's sins, where in the slaughter of an animal is man following Moshe's words to "choose life"? Where is man perfecting himself via his free will, if an animal has no free will? From where in our precious Torah, upon which we are forbidden to add or subtract, do these proponents of reincarnation find God saying that He changes man to an animal and returns him to be sacrificed? This idea is alien to Torah and defies all reason, and as Rav Saadia Gaon stated, is "absurd" and "stupid".

**Reader:** What the Chovos Halevovos says there, in what I see, is that we should follow our own reasoning in order to UNDERSTAND what the Rabbis say, not that on the basis of our own understanding we may disagree with the Gedolai Chachomim. Quite the contrary. We may NOT disagree with the Gedolai Chachomim.. But we must use our own sechel to understand what they say. The Torah says "Ahrai rabim lihatos." When the majority of Gedolai Torah say something, that's who we are supposed to follow. Certainly we cannot say that the majority of Gedolim believe in something that is against the Torah.

**Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim:** As I already stated, we follow the majority as a means of deciding "halacha", Jewish law, not what we are to know as a truth in philosophy. Chovos Halevavos says this:

*"Devarim 17:8-10 states: 'If a case should prove too difficult for you in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, between (leprous) mark and mark, or other matters of dispute in your courts, you must act in accordance with what they tell you. The verse does not say simply accept them on the authority of Torah sages,...and rely exclusively on their tradition. Rather, (Scripture) says that you should reflect on your own mind, and use your intellect in*

*these matters. First learn them from tradition - which covers all the commandments in the Torah, their principles and details - and then examine them with your own mind, understanding, and judgment, until the truth becomes clear to you, and falsehood rejected, as it is written: 'Understand today and reflect on it in your heart, Hashem is the G-d in the heavens above, and on the Earth below; there is no other'. (Ibid, 4:39)*

Look at what he writes, "examine them with your own mind, understanding, and judgment, until the truth becomes clear to you, and falsehood rejected". This means that one is to reject that which his mind says is false. And man cannot operate otherwise; for if you see something as false, you cannot fool yourself that it is truth! Even if stated by a Rabbi. God recorded Aaron's disagreement with Moses to prove this very point. And Moses was wrong. Aaron did not simply follow everything he heard, but he used his mind, and detected in Moses an error, and then conveyed this to Moses. Moses acquiesced.

**Reader:** I think that the fact that such Gedolim believed in reincarnation tells me that there is a very good reason to believe in reincarnation, even if I don't know what that reason is.

**Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim:** So you deny King Solomon's words that all men err. What is worse is you also earn no reward, as you do not follow what your Tzelem Elokim says is real and true. You are absent minded, and say, "whatever he says is truth." But that is foolish, for such a statement is meaningless. It is as if you say, "what is in that black box is of value", when you have never looked inside.

**Reader:** I do not have to bring a proof that reincarnation is true. I'm not even trying to make you believe in it. I'm just saying that we must be careful of how we speak about the Gedolai Torah. I am sure you will agree that Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, the Arizal, the Ramchal, and the Shelah, even if they were mistaken about reincarnation, did not violate any principles of the Torah and said nothing that was against the Torah. I am sure you will agree that they were not heretics.

**Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim:** My discussion is not about labeling someone as a heretic, or condemning any Rabbi in specific, other than the Rabbi who spread falsehoods on national radio. When this Rabbi said suicide bombers are "victims" and not villains, that God judges man differently than what He writes in His Torah, that aliens roam the Earth, and that reincarnation is a Torah Fundamental and disbelievers are "placed outside the parameters of Judaism", anyone who knows the truth must speak out. It is intolerable to a true Torah student to allow lies and fabrication about Torah to go unopposed. Abraham our forefather spoke out for this very reason, for his concern that truth be revealed.

In general, any Rabbi should be praised for his earnest work in caring for the minds and hearts of his fellow Jews, or proven false when he errs, so others are not misled by reputation alone. My concern is how we are to arrive at truth. And what I have heard thus far from the followers of reincarnation is no intelligence whatsoever. Conversely, the only sound reasoning has emanated from Saadia Gaon, Sforno and Moshe, for they expose reincarnation as riddled with problems, and in violation of God's words. You must now decide for yourself. □



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# Conflict

RABBI DANIEL MYERS

I thank Rabbi Adam Berner for many ideas and references contained in this essay.

Chazal (Avoth 5:20) write that Korach's dispute with Moshe typifies the Machloket Shelo L'shaim L'shaim, a dispute that is clearly not for Heaven's sake. This is to be contrasted with the Machlokot between Hillel and Shamai, which were L'shaim Shamaim. We would like to analyze five different levels of dispute, ranging from the base Machloket of Korach V'chol Adato to the noble one of Hillel and Shamai:

1. The statement in Parshat Korach (Bamidbar 16:12) "Lo Naaleh," (we will not have any dialogue with you) which Datan and Aviram made to Moshe, after the latter requested a meeting with them, typifies the Machloket Shelo L'shaim Shamaim, where the parties (or party) simply do not want to discuss or debate the issue. The position is already a foregone conclusion, the lines have been drawn, and the fight has begun. This conflict usually results in Sinah, hatred, and has plagued Klal Yisrael ever since the times of the Churban. (Yoma 9b)

2. We term the second level of conflict 'unmanageable conflict.' Here, the two disputants cannot establish a functional, working relationship, and decide to part ways in a friendly, courteous manner. This is typified by the dispute between Avraham and Lot, where the two had a wide gap in their ideologies and deeds. Avraham suggested that the two parties separate from each other, but offered Lot his help if it would ever be needed. (Braishit 13:9) Subsequently, he saved Lot's life when the latter was taken hostage. (Braishit 14:16) He still related to Lot, but did not want to maintain a daily, constant relationship with him. If a divorce in a relationship must occur, ideally it



should be in this manner.

3. We identify the next level of Machloket as 'conflict management.' Here the two sides are attempting to discuss the issues and arrive at some kind of mutual understanding, compromise or resolution, but are simply incapable of achieving their goals. They must settle-at least temporarily-for conflict management, where they have not resolved their issues but agree to have a functional, manageable relationship for the time being. This may apply to a couple, to a parent and child, etc. when they, unfortunately, cannot see eye-to-eye on certain important issues but they agree to continue the relationship in a cordial and respectful manner.

4. The fourth level is known as conflict resolution. Here, the two parties involved work through their issues until they resolve their issue, either through Hakarat Hachait, (understanding that a mistake was made), clarification of a misunderstanding or miscommunication, etc. Often, the Mitzvah of Hachaiach Tochiah Et Amitecha (Vayikra 19:17), rebuking a fellow Jew, is essential for the resolution. This

approach is evident in the Machloket between Avraham and Avimelech when Avimelech unintentionally took Sarah as a wife. Avimelech was quite critical of Avraham for allowing this to happen until the latter pointed out his critic's flaws. At that point, Avimelech backed off, and accepted blame for the decrepit society that he was responsible for. (Braishit 20:9-11) They then continued their warm and friendly relationship. (Ibid. 20:14-17)

5. We will call the final level of Machloket 'conflict-growth,' where the two parties actually seek out conflict in order to refine their positions and insights. This is characterized by the Gemara in Baba Mezhiah (84a). The Gemara states the following:

"Rav Shimon the son of Lakish passed away, and Rav Yochanan grieved after him considerably. The Rabbis said 'Who shall go to bring comfort to his mind?' They answered that Rav Elazar Ben Pedat should go, for he is a brilliant scholar.' Rav Pedat went and sat before Rav Yochanan. To every statement of Rav Yochanan, Rav Pedat would respond that there is a Braita supporting his position. Rav Yochanan eventually said to him: "You are supposed to be like Raish Lakish; when I would make a statement to him, he would raise twenty four objections, to which I would give twenty four answers, and as a result of the debate we would have a deeper understanding of the Sugya, the topic under discussion. However, you constantly say 'we learned a Braita that supports you.' Of what use is this? Do I not already know that I have said well?!" Rav Yochanan would go about, tear his clothes, cry and say 'Where are you, son of Lakish' and he would scream...and then he passed away."

This may be the explanation of the term, Aizer K'negdo (2:18), referring to a wife as a helper who is against her husband, a most paradoxical term at first glance! (See Rashi ibid.) It is possible to say that this is not meant in a hostile manner; rather, it refers to natural differences that a couple-whose lives are thoroughly intertwined-will have, in many areas of life, which, when dealt with properly, will hopefully lead to growth, maturity and heightened spirituality.

A relationship, whether familial, social or economic, can partake of any of these levels. Even if one senses that he is 'stuck' at one of the first levels, he should never have Yaiush, assuming that the relationship is doomed, Chas V'shalom. With hard work and help from Hashem, an individual can gradually transform the nature of the relationship from "Lo Naaleh" Sinah, hatred, to one of growth, mutual respect and love. ■