

**SPECIAL ISSUE:**  
**Intermarriage**

This week, Parshas Lech Lecha discusses Abraham's adherence to God's command that he depart from an idolatrous culture. We certainly should not marry into one. Education of Judaism's Fundamentals and the danger of alien religions must start in the classroom. **Every teacher and Rabbi is responsible.**

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# JewishTimes

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of Authentic Jewish Beliefs and Practices*

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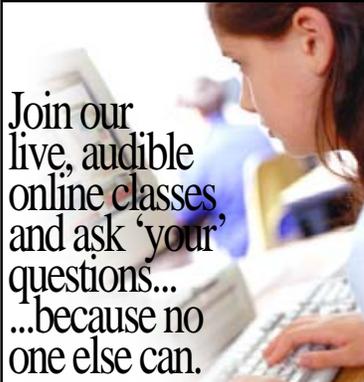
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**Weekly Parsha**

# Lech Lecha

RABBI BERNARD FOX

"After these events, the word of Hashem came to Avram in a vision saying, "Avram, do not fear. I will protect you. You have great merit." (Beresheit 15:2)

The above passage troubles the commentaries. Hashem tells Avraham that he should not be afraid.

*(continued on page 3)*

**Intermarriage:  
Are You Contributing?**

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim

If these statistics do not disturb you enough to make a change, then you contribute to the problem:

- Intermarriage among US Jews: 52%
- Children of intermarriages raised Christian: 33%
- Children of intermarriages raised in dual religions: 25%

*(continued on page 9)*

RABBI REUVEN MANN

# JEWISH LIFE REQUIRES A JEWISH SPOUSE

**SPECIAL ISSUE**

One of the most misunderstood aspects of Judaism is its categorical prohibition of intermarriage, i.e., the wedded union of a Jew with a non-Jewish partner. This is not just an ordinary injunction, but it is one which goes to the heart and soul of what it means to be Jewish. It is of the greatest importance that we seek to understand and appreciate the deeper reasons for the Torah's insistence on "marrying Jewish." We note with sadness the high rate of intermarriage, which is a byproduct of the extensive cultural assimilation of contemporary Jews.

Marriage, according to Judaism, is a divinely ordained institution, which is vital to the fulfillment of man's purpose on earth. The Torah says that Adam, when alone, was "not good" (lo tov) i.e., not in an appropriate state. He needed an "ezer k'negdo", a helper alongside him. We must recognize our limitations. No human, however talented and capable, is entirely self-sufficient. He or she requires a specially suited partner with whom to join in building the unique physical and spiritual

*(continued on next page)*

(Jewish Life continued from page 1)

## Intermarriage

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Weekly Journal on Jewish Thought



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relationship in which their life's goals will come to fruition. The life of man is not simple and one dimensional like that of an animal. It contains many diverse and complicated activities such as working, raising a family, building a community, etc. Most people regard these mundane aspects of their lives as being separate from religion. Judaism is different. It is a profound philosophy of life with values, ideals, and a deep wisdom that pertains to all areas of human endeavor. Love, marriage, children, family are endowed with holiness when they incorporate the spiritual purposes assigned to them by Judaism.

It is therefore untenable to treat Judaism as a narrow and shallow religion and say "I am only Jewish when I perform specific religious actions such as praying, fasting, etc. When that activity is concluded I go to work and what I do there has nothing to do with the requirements of my religion. When work is finished I go home and interact with my spouse and children. I do not see these activities as having any connection to my religion." Such a view is contrary to the very essence of Judaism.

The first paragraph of the "shema" states "and you shall speak these words when you sit in your home and when you travel on the road, when you lie down and when you arise." This teaches that Torah is an all encompassing philosophy which relates to and enhances every zone of the human experience. Love and marriage are not isolated ends in themselves. They are vital components of a lifestyle, which is founded upon the appropriate service of God.

The most important aspect of the partner with whom you seek to establish a life which fulfills the Torah ideals is his or her "spiritual quality". How can you marry someone who does not share your most central beliefs and ideals? How can a Jew marry an atheist and establish with that person a home whose values are based on the awareness that "in the image of God He created the human". It goes without saying that a Jew cannot, by definition, be married to a Christian, Moslem or adherent of any other religion. The Torah describes the married couple as becoming "one flesh". This means that an all embracing partnership is formed between two people who are compatible on every plane of existence and view their relationship as a means of achieving the purpose God spelled out for us in His Torah. By joining together they become one person working and striving in tandem to fulfill themselves and to give life to the next generation.

The service of God, which Judaism prescribes, demands that we do not live only

for ourselves. We are obliged to help others and share with them the benefits of life with which we have been graced. A major aspect of this obligation involves the bearing and raising of children. No mitzvah is more significant than this. By bringing more manifestations of the "tzelem Elokim" (Divine image) into the world we join with Hashem in the work of creation. While it is obligatory to help people in the material necessities of life, the highest form of compassion is that which assists them in fulfilling their spiritual purpose. One who imparts values and ideals to another person and facilitates the development of a vibrant, wise, and morally upright personality, engages in the truest form of human compassion.

Thus, the most noble and compassionate endeavor is the proper raising of children. While the parent provides for all the physical and emotional needs of the child, the most exalted expression of parenting is expressed in the verse, "and you shall teach them to your children..." One's service of God achieves its highest level when one creates new life and transmits our greatest treasure, the Torah, to the next generation. For one to benefit from Judaism and keep it to oneself would be extremely selfish. To be a Jew in the fullest sense means to live a life all of whose goals and endeavors are permeated with the wisdom and compassion of the unique philosophy and "derech" (pathway) of Torah. It is only with someone who partakes of Jewish values and is committed to the Torah lifestyle that we can truly become "one flesh". □



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## Thought

(Lech Lecha continued from page 1)

## Weekly Parsha

# Religion of Proof II

## MAIMONIDES

Guide for the Perplexed  
Book III, Chap. LIV

“Our Sages further say, that man has first to render account concerning his knowledge of the Law, then concerning the acquisition of wisdom, and at last concerning the lessons derived by logical conclusions from the Law, i.e., the lessons concerning his actions. This is also the right order: *we must first learn the truths by tradition, after this we must be taught how to prove them*, and then investigate the actions that help to improve man's ways. The idea that man will have to render account concerning these three things in the order described, is expressed by our Sages in the following passage: “When man comes to the trial, he is first asked, ‘Hast thou fixed certain seasons for the study of the Law? Hast thou been engaged in the acquisition of wisdom? Hast thou derived from one thing another thing?’” This *proves* that our Sages distinguished between the knowledge of the Law on the one hand, and wisdom on the other, as the means of *proving* the lessons taught in the Law by correct reasoning.”

Because of his great merit, Hashem will protect him. There is an obvious problem that the commentaries address. The pasuk implies that Avraham has some fear. Hashem's reassurance is a response to this fear. However, the Torah does not clearly indicate the source of Avraham's fear. What is this fear and what is the danger that Hashem is addressing?

In general, the commentaries agree that this prophecy and Hashem's reassurance should be understood in the context of the previous incident. Lote – Avraham's nephew – was captured in a war. He was held captive by the armies of four powerful kings. Avraham decided that he must rescue his nephew. He devised an intricate battle plan, executed it flawlessly and succeeded in rescuing his nephew.

Nachmanides suggests that Avraham knew that through attacking these kings and rescuing Lote, he had placed himself in opposition to the most powerful rulers of the era. He was concerned with their reaction to their defeat. His brilliant strategy had succeeded in this instance. But Avraham feared an extended conflict with these rulers. According to Nachmanides, Hashem responded that Avraham's righteousness was adequate to earn Hashem's protection. He need not fear retribution from these kings.[1]

Sforno agrees with Nachmanides' interpretation of Avraham's fear. However, he offers a different explanation of Hashem's response. According to Sforno, Hashem told Avraham, that he had acted properly in rescuing Lote. His conduct was a further expression of his righteousness. Therefore, he should not be fearful. Hashem would reward him for his chesed – his kindness – towards Lote. Hashem would protect him from any negative consequences that might naturally result from his act of chesed. Hashem would not allow these kings to retaliate against Avraham.[2]

There is a significant difference between these two interpretations. According to Nachmanides, Hashem told Avraham that He would protect him from retribution because of his overall righteousness. Essentially, this entire episode communicates a single important message. Avraham had a strong providential relationship with Hashem. This was demonstrated by his successful rescue of Lote. Lote was the fortunate beneficiary of Avraham's righteousness and this providential relationship with Hashem. Avraham was aided by Hashem in his efforts to save Lote and protected from any negative consequences. In short, the incident demonstrates the reality and extent of Hashem's providence over His tzadikim – His righteous followers.

According to Sforno, Avraham's rescue of Lote was in itself a significant act of chesed. This act was rewarded by Hashem. Hashem promised to protect Avraham from the consequences of

antagonizing the kings as a reward for his chesed towards Lote.

It seems that Sforno and Nachmanides differ on the significance that they attribute to Avraham's rescue of his nephew. Nachmanides does not attribute special significance to the act. Avraham was a tzadik. This action was consistent with his general conduct. In contrast, Sforno views the rescue of Lote as a great act of chesed that earned Avraham Hashem's protection. What is the basis of this dispute? In order to answer this question, we must consider another incident.

**“And there was a dispute between the shepherds of the flocks of Avram and the shepherds of the flocks of Lote. And the Cannanite and Perizzite were then dwelling in the land.”** (Beresheit 13:7)

The Torah relates that Avraham and Lote both lived in the same area within the land of Canaan. Both had great flocks. A conflict developed between the shepherds of Lote and those of Avraham. As a result of this conflict, Avraham insisted that he and Lote part from one another. Avraham allowed Lote to choose any portion of the land for the grazing of his flocks. Avraham would choose an alternate location for grazing his flocks. The Torah does not explain the exact nature of the conflict between the shepherds. Neither does the Torah provide a precise description of Avraham's motives for parting from Lote.

Nachmanides suggests that the conflict was created by a practical issue and Avraham proposed a practical solution. Both Avraham and Lote had large flocks. They were both attempting to graze their flocks in the same area. There was not enough pasture for all of the flocks. The shepherds were trying to share a limited resource. Eventually, they began to compete for the resource and this competition engendered conflict. Avraham recognized that this conflict would – at some point – attract the attention of the inhabitants of the land. These inhabitants would take notice of the tremendous wealth that had been accumulated by Avraham and Lote. They would covet this wealth and kill Avraham and Lote in order to seize their wealth. Avraham suggested a simple and obvious solution. He and Lote must separate. They must graze their flocks in different locations. This will eliminate the competition and conflict between the shepherds. They would attract less attention and be safer. In short, Avraham concluded that he and his nephew must choose between remaining together at the risk of their lives and separating in order to save themselves.[3]

Sforno shares Nachmanides' basic understanding of the conflict. However, he offers an alternative explanation of Avraham's concern and solution. He suggests that Avraham was

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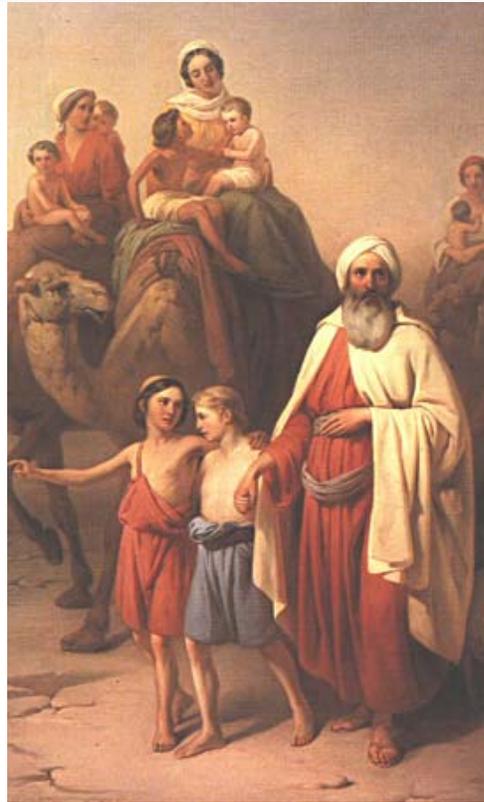
concerned that their conflict communicated the wrong message to the people of the land. Avraham and Lote were uncle and nephew. Yet, they were embroiled in conflict. The people of the land would conclude that if Avraham and Lote were not able to live in harmony with each other, they certainly would be incapable of living peacefully with their neighbors. Avraham felt that this negative impression was intolerable. As a result, he suggested that he and Lote end their public conflict by separating from one another.[4]

Again, we see a significant divergence between Nachmanides and Sforno. According to Nachmanides, Avraham was not motivated by a desire to create a positive impression. His concern was that this conflict placed their lives in danger. Sforno maintains that the issue was not personal safety. Avraham was concerned with the manner in which he presented himself to his neighbors.

In short, we have identified two disputes between Nachmanides and Sforno. First, according to Nachmanides, Avraham's rescue of Lote was consistent with Avraham's general conduct but not of special significance. Sforno disagrees. He argues that this act of chesed was of special significance. Second, Nachmanides maintains that Avraham separated from Lote in order to save their lives. But according to Sforno, Avraham demanded that they separate because an ongoing, public squabble was unacceptable. It communicated the wrong message to Avraham's neighbors. Is there a relationship between these two disputes between Nachmanides and Sforno?

We know that part of Avraham's mission was to teach the truth of the Torah to humanity. But it seems that according to Sforno, a central element of that mission was to demonstrate to humanity the practical application of the values that Avraham espoused. Avraham was required to teach with words and through action. He was expected to deport himself in a manner that would communicate to humanity the practical implications of living a life devoted to Hashem. Therefore, he could not allow his mission to be compromised by a conflict with Lote. This would undermine his message. If this conflict were allowed to continue, it would foster the impression that the values advocated by Avraham do not foster peace and harmony. But instead, allow for conflict and aggression. We can now appreciate the special significance that Sforno attributes to Avraham's rescue of Lote. This act of chesed communicated a profound message to humanity. It was moving demonstration of values that Avraham was teaching. It demonstrated the full implications of these values and the type of civilization they foster.

Undoubtedly, Nachmanides agrees that Avraham's deportment was important. But apparently he sees Avraham's overall mission somewhat differently from Sforno. The basis of



this dispute will become clearer if we consider one other disagreement between these commentaries.

**“And I will make you into a great nation and I will exalt your name and you will be a blessing.”** (Beresheit 12:2)

The opening verses of the parasha contain a rather perplexing statement. In the above pasuk, Hashem tells Avraham that he will make Avraham's descendants into a great nation; He will make Avraham's name great and that Avraham will be a blessing. The first two elements of this promise are readily understood. But the meaning of the final element – that Avraham will be a blessing – is not clear. How does a person become a blessing?

Of course, the commentaries are bothered by the meaning of this phrase. They offer a number of possibilities. Nachmanides offers the simplest explanation. He explains that those who learn of Avraham will be so impressed by his success that they will refer to him when blessing others. A person wishing to bless his child will say, “May you be like Avraham.” So, the meaning of the phrase “you will be a blessing” is that your example will be used by those who wish to bless others.[5] According to Nachmanides, this last phrase – you will be a blessing – is a continuation of the first two promises in the pasuk. Hashem tells Avraham that he will achieve great success; he will achieve fame. His success and fame will be so great and noteworthy that others will refer to him as a model in blessing others. In other words,

according to Nachmanides, Avraham will demonstrate the influence of providence. Through Avraham, Hashem will demonstrate His interaction with humanity and His involvement in the events of this world.

Sforno offers a completely different explanation of the phrase “you will be a blessing.” He interprets the phrase in a very literal sense. According to Sforno, the phrase means that Avraham will be a blessing for Hashem. Sforno explains that a person who acts properly is a blessing to Hashem. He adds that when a person acquires spiritual perfection and teaches others, he causes Hashem to be blessed.[6] Apparently, Sforno means that the manner in which we conduct ourselves individually and as a community either glorifies or desecrates Hashem's name. According to Sforno, Hashem told Avraham that He was confident that the manner in which he would conduct his life would bless or glorify Hashem. It is clear that according to Sforno, Avraham was required to conduct himself in a manner that would support and demonstrate his teachings. He must glorify Hashem through teaching the truth of the Torah to humanity and through his conduct. Avraham's actions and behaviors would be central to his mission. He must teach through words and action.

In summary, both Nachmanides and Sforno agree that Avraham was assigned the responsibility of teaching humanity. However, they differ on the precise elements of this mission. According to Nachmanides, Avraham was required to teach and live a life of righteousness. The providence that he would experience would demonstrate to humanity that Hashem is indeed involved in our affairs. According to Sforno, Avraham was not merely required to teach and live an ethical life. He was expected to supplement his teachings through active demonstrations of the significance of the values he was teaching. In every instance, at each juncture of his life, he was required to consider the manner in which his behaviors would be perceived and to act in a manner that would provide an eloquent demonstration of the values and teachings he was espousing. □

[1] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 15:2.

[2] Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno, Commentary on Sefer Beresheit, 15:2.

[3] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 13:7.

[4] Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno, Commentary on Sefer Beresheit, 13:7.

[5] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 12:2.

[6] Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno, Commentary on Sefer Beresheit, 12:2.

SPECIAL ISSUE

# Intermarriage


**Rabbi Bernard Fox**

*Dean, Northwest Yeshiva High School  
Seattle, Washington*

In the Orthodox community and beyond, a substantial effort is made to reach-out to unaffiliated Jews. I have observed that many of the families that are the target of this attention are headed by intermarried couples. I believe that these efforts have some merit. But they tax the limited resources of the community. So, we need to ask whether our investment in outreach programs is the most efficient manner in which we can use our limited resources.

Outreach efforts are challenging. Multiple obstacles must be overcome in order to bring a Jew back into the community. Reaching a Jew that has intermarried can be remarkably difficult. Should we not consider whether it would be wiser and more efficient to address the root causes of alienation, rather than attempting to combat the results?

What are these root causes? Why do Jews intermarry or abandon their Jewish identity? In many cases, these Jews have received little or no meaningful Jewish education. Frankly, we should be asking why a Jew who knows little or nothing about the Torah should remain affiliated.

We live in an open society. Any Jew who wishes to intermarry or assimilate can easily succeed. The barriers that once prevented

Jews from entry into the non-Jewish world have largely been torn down. So, in order for our children to remain faithful to the Torah, we must provide them with a reason to do so.

Let me illustrate this point. On more than one occasion I have heard parents bemoan the engagement or marriage of their child to a non-Jew. In some cases, the parents really did try to provide their child with the resources that should have prevented this marriage. But in many cases, the parents feel that they raised their child with "Jewish values." They maintained synagogue or temple affiliation and attended on occasion. Their child went to Sunday school, they were members of the synagogue youth group, and even went to the Jewish camp. How did this privileged child intermarry?

I believe that this is a naive perspective. The measures identified by these parents are totally inadequate to prevent intermarriage. Why should their child not intermarry? Do they expect their child to reject a beautiful, warm-hearted, educated non-Jew as a mate out of loyalty to the friends he played baseball with at summer camp? Do they expect their child to say, "Boy, if I intermarry, I sure will miss those Saturday services at temple!?" In other words, if the child has no real reason to reject this marriage other than the religious affiliation, then such a rejection is nothing more than an expression of prejudice and xenophobia. There are many wonderful non-

Jews. Some are even nicer, more refined people than many Jews. If our children do not have Torah values, why should they reject intermarriage?

I believe that our resources would be better utilized by providing more intensive Jewish education to our children. It is far easier to prevent assimilation or intermarriage through educating our children, than to try to reach them once they have assimilated.

Although this seems to be self-evident, Jewish education is under-funded. Most people and communities believe that it is the parents' responsibility to pay for the education of their children. This is absolutely true. It is the parent's responsibility. But what if the parent won't pay \$15,000 a year for 13 years in order to provide their child with a day school education? Do we say, "Too bad, let the kid assimilate...he is not our problem. Maybe after he intermarries we'll try some outreach"? This may sound like a bizarre response. But this is the overwhelming attitude in most of our communities.

We need to rethink our priorities. Every day, I receive a plethora of solicitations for all sorts of Jewish causes. They are all important. But we need to prioritize. Hachnasas kallah, kollelim, magnificent synagogues, Jewish community centers, Jewish camping programs are all important. But maybe we can get by with less elaborate chasunas, smaller kollelim, more modest shuls, smaller community centers, and a few less camping programs. Might we not use our resources more effectively, by attempting to enroll more children in our schools? Just a thought.

**Rabbi Steven Pruzansky**

*Rabbi, Congregation Bnai Yeshurun  
Teaneck, New Jersey*

Intermarriage and assimilation are the twin tragedies that are devastating American Jewry today, and both have caused our numbers and level of commitment to plummet. There are violations of Torah law - a detail of the system - that reflect a personal shortcoming, and others that threaten the viability of the system itself. Intermarriage is in the latter category; it is more than just a serious violation of Torah law; it endangers the entire enterprise of the Jewish people.

We have always suffered from Jews voluntarily abandoning their Jewish identity;

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## Intermarriage

indeed, such spiritual “casualties” have historically outnumbered our losses sustained through persecutions and massacres. It makes little difference whether a soldier is killed in battle or abandons the battlefield. In either context, he is lost to the struggle. The notion that a Jew can marry out and still remain an integral part of the Jewish people persists in Jewish life, despite the inherent contradiction. And the notion, further, that the sin of intermarriage is mitigated by a commitment “to raise the children as Jewish” is belied by experience and common sense. I myself was involved in a case where a child of intermarriage - “raised as a Jew” - himself intermarried, simply following the lead of his parents. The faithfulness of such a Jew is almost always quite tenuous and marginal.

What has brought us to this state, and what can be done to correct it? Certainly, American society has been uniquely hospitable both to the observance of Torah law - and to its rejection. The superficiality of much of Jewish life here - an emphasis on culture, ceremonies and forms, rather than on substance, ideas and religious commitment - has smoothed the way to the painless intermarriage process of today. In America today, Jewish identity is perceived as an ethnic affiliation, not a religious one. Since most Jews wear their Jewishness (if they do at all) as an ethnic badge - and not as obliging any religious commitment - they naturally gravitate to intermarriage as do most Americans in a multi-ethnic society. Indeed, for most Jews, intermarriage today is no longer even an act of rebellion against G-d, Torah or parents. It is simply a function of being an American.

But intermarriage is a disaster for those Jews who perceive their Jewishness not as an ethnic identity, but as a religious/national identity - for those Jews, whose lives are bounded by Torah, who perceive themselves as serving G-d in every aspect of their lives. Therefore, the major problem facing American Jews is that most no longer see the Torah or Mitzvos as the root of our identity. Torah has been “replaced” by competing visions of what it means to be a Jew - philanthropy, support for Israel, liberal politics, Holocaust commemoration, fear of Jew-hatred, etc. But all those interests are ethnic, not religion-based, and so they have spearheaded and facilitated the decline in attachment to what is uniquely Jewish: our covenant with G-d, the bond of Torah and Mitzvos, and especially the primacy of Torah study.

Intermarriage is the red line that no Jew should cross - not by marrying out, nor by attending or in any way participating in such

an event. How can one attend, and wish the couple “Mazal Tov”? And for what, joining in the destruction of the Jewish people? We are all hurt when Klal Yisrael is in a free fall, our numbers dwindle to record low levels, and Jewish ignorance soars to record heights. The greatest enemies of American Jews today are apathy and indifference, not Arabs, Moslems, Christians or neo-Nazis with spray paint. For sure, we cannot impose commitment and responsibility on those who are unaffiliated and uninterested in Judaism. But we can and should always project the beauty of the Torah life, so those with open minds can look at us and perhaps realize “how fortunate is our lot, and how pleasant is our destiny”. We can redeem souls on an individual basis, one by one. It is not enough to denounce intermarriage; it is the obligation of every Jew to present the Torah and its ideas and values in a way that will win the hearts and minds of our brothers and sisters who have been raised without it - all to strengthen our people and glorify G-d’s name.

**Rabbi Zev Meir Friedman**

*Rosh Mesivta, Rambam Mesivta  
Lawrence, NY*

Aside from the halachic violations involved in intermarriage, there are many serious philosophical problems as well. The Rambam states that relationships between Jews and non-Jews cause identification and association to idolatry. The Torah itself (Exodus 34:15) links the attraction to idolatry to intermarriage: “...lest you eat from their pagan sacrifices and take from their daughters (wives for) your sons.” There is, however, another aspect that should be addressed. Jews throughout the ages have been oppressed, tortured and murdered by non-Jews in the name of the various religions. The Christian crusades are one such example. The Nazis, with the tacit approval of the church perpetrated mass murder of millions of Jews simply because they were Jews. It is incomprehensible that any individual with a vestige of Jewish identity should condone or engage in intermarriage. Countless Jews throughout the ages sacrificed their lives Al Kiddush Hashem rather than succumb to idolatrous practices. Jews who intermarry are awarding the Nazis their ultimate goal - the destruction of the Jewish People. □



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Anti-Semitism

# Rambam Mesivta Protest Rally

## Nazi Underground Hiding in Queens

**November 9th, 1938** - The Nazis unleashed a night of terror against their Jewish citizens in a dramatic inception of the Holocaust known as Kristallnacht, the night of broken glass. That night, synagogues were desecrated and set aflame, and Jewish institutions and businesses were ransacked. Hitler, emboldened by the fact that no one pressured him to stop, began implementing his notorious plan laid out in Mein Kampf – calling for the extermination of the Jewish race.

**November 9th 2005** - 200 Students and faculty members of Rambam Mesivta High School descended upon the homes of Jakiw Palij and Jaroslaw Bilaniuk, both residents of Queens to protest their continued presence in the United States despite rulings in federal courts calling for their deportation for serving as “cogs” in the Nazi killing machine and “directly contributing” to the slaughter of Jews at the hand of the Nazis.

Both Palij and Bilaniuk served as guards at the notorious Trawniki labor camp, a training ground for Nazi Brutality. In fact, 62 years ago last week, the Trawniki guards participated in the murder of 6,000 Trawniki Jews on November 3rd and 4th, 1943 and the eventual liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto.

Busloads of students arrived at Palij’s house at 1:30 PM chanting, “No S.S. In the US,” “Just get out” while waving placards demanding his immediate deportation.

“Based on the evidence so painstakingly compiled by O.S.I. under the directorship of Eli Rosenbaum, ‘It seems clear that these are monsters who killed Jews together, lied together, lived together and continue to conspire together. They must both be brought to justice together and be removed from the US,’” said rally organizer Rabbi Zev Friedman.

Students then headed to Bilaniuk’s house to assemble once again in order to send him a clear message that his crimes have not been forgotten and to support the US government’s case that he be removed from the United States.



**EXCERPTS FROM THE  
US GOVERNMENTS CASE  
AGAINST BILANIUK & PALIJ**  
*Complete documents available upon request*

“The Trawniki Training Camp trained men to serve as guard auxiliaries for all aspects of Operation Reinhard, the Nazis’ effort to murder Jews in Poland.”

“The men trained at Trawniki were essential to the implementation of Operation Reinhard.”

“Operation Reinhard was the Nazi program to dispossess, exploit, and murder Jews in Poland.”

“As part of Operation Reinhard, the minority of Jews not immediately put to death were imprisoned in slave labor camps.”

“In the course of Operation Reinhard, approximately 1.7 million Jewish adults and children were murdered.”

“Defendant (Bilaniuk) a Trawniki-trained guard during World War II”

“Defendant (Bilaniuk) traveled to Trawniki with Jakiw Palij”

“Defendant (Bilaniuk)’s Trawniki identification number 3504 was part of a block of numbers assigned on February 13, 1943, to recruits from Galicia. Jakiw Palij, also from Piadyki, was assigned Trawniki identification number 3505.”

“As a member of Trawniki’s Guard Forces, Defendant (Bilaniuk) participated in the implementation of Operation Reinhard.”

“On November 3-4, 1943, virtually all of the Jewish prisoners at SS Labor Camp Trawniki – men, women and children – as well as those at most of the other forced-labor camps in Lublin district, were murdered. This slaughter -- carried out under the code name “Operation Harvest Festival” -- marked the successful conclusion of Operation Reinhard.”

“Defendant (Bilaniuk) is identified on four German-created rosters of the Streibel Battalion’s First Company by his name, rank, and Trawniki identification number.”

“Also listed on the rosters as serving in the Streibel Battalion with Defendant(Bilaniuk) were fellow Trawniki guards Jakiw Palij and Bronislaw Hajda”

“Defendant (Bilaniuk) applied for displaced person status on the same day in the same location as Jakiw Palij.”

“Defendant (Bilaniuk) represented to the DPC that he worked as a “joiner” in a shop in Kolomyya, Poland, from 1937 until June 1941”

“That information was knowingly false.”

“Palij also represented to the DPC that he had been in Piadyki until June 1944, when he left to work as a farmer on a farm in Koeditz, Germany.”

“That information was knowingly false.”

“Jakiw Palij, applied for a visa application in the same office on the same day as Defendant (Bilaniuk).”

“On March 22, 1957, he submitted an Application to File Petition for Naturalization.”

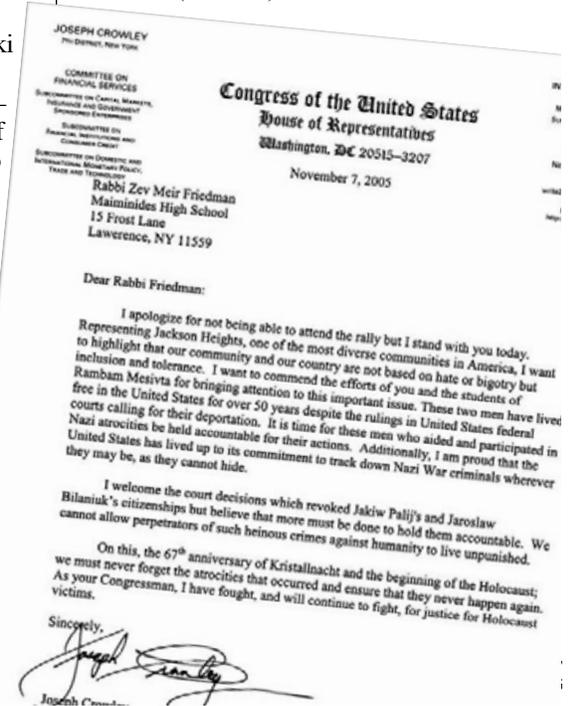
“Jakiw Palij also submitted an Application to File Petition for Naturalization on the same day”

“After entering the country, Defendant (Bilaniuk) and Palij lived together at 423 East 5th Street, New York, N.Y.”

“On April 30, 1960, Jakiw Palij married Maria Turczan in St. George’s Ukrainian Catholic Church in New York City and Defendant (Bilaniuk) served as a witness at Palij’s wedding.

“When Defendant (Bilaniuk) was deposed in connection with the Palij case in 2003, he recited Palij’s address and telephone number from memory.”

“Palij’s name and telephone number appears in Defendant (Bilaniuk)’s address book.” □



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

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PURCHASE ONLINE

# Good & Bad

**DOUG TAYLOR & RABBI MORTON MOSKOWITZ**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Huh?" I said. "What?"

"You're still alive, right?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I didn't know how to reply.

"Do you ever play pinochle?" he asked.

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

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

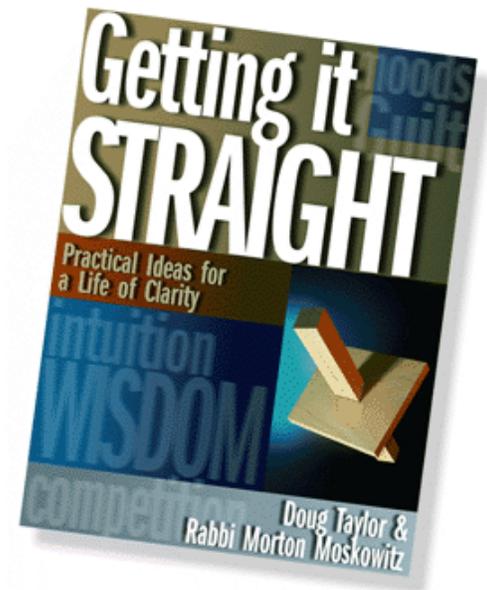
"Have you ever been dealt a hand that looked lousy, but you ended up winning?"

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

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

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

"Now do you understand what I mean? You



can't tell whether a situation is good or bad until the hand has been completely played. In life," he concluded, "that means when your life is over."

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

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

I skipped lunch and ordered dessert. □

(Contributing? continued from page 1)

## Intermarriage



# Intermarriage: Are You Contributing?

## Problems and Solutions

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

SPECIAL ISSUE

### The Problem

Classes on Judaism's Fundamental truths, and its distinction from all other religions, are still absent from school curriculums. While schools and yeshivas do a fine job teaching Hebrew, history, Jewish law, Torah, and Talmud, the subject most vital to insuring our youths' sustained commitment to Judaism, is expelled from Hebrew schools and yeshivas. This institution-wide delinquency produces students – now parents – who remain ignorant of Judaism's unique message. Although luckily married to a Jew, these parents have no sound arguments against intermarriage to offer their children, nor do they truly express strong opposition to intermarriage. They may feel this way due to the osmosis of American morals of religious equality. They might harbor a fear of losing their positions, if opinionated on religion. Before their children's eyes and at work, Jews express complete acceptance of non-Jewish friends and colleagues and this suffocates true, Jewish values and constructive critique of the false religions. Jews fear their honesty with gentiles might dissolve those friendships: something valued more than insuring their children's commitment to Judaism. This list of irrational and destructive values goes on.

But I wonder why Jews are so afraid to openly speak our view with other religionists. Not once have I heard any pope, priest, bishop, nun, or Christian or Catholic leader condemn the missionary work of countless organizations. So while these missionaries are successfully baptizing Jewish teens, stripping them bare of their Jewish identities and killing[1] off myriads of future Jewish generations, these teens' parents are afraid to openly denounce those Christian or Catholic groups? That is unforgivable.

Where is our conviction in our Judaism and in our God? Other religions are quite clear about their negative position on Judaism, and their objective to convert Jews, despite their condemnation of anti-Semitism. Inactivity on this issue is inexcusable and contributes to the problem. Moses asked God why the Jews were deserving of bondage. Moses saved a Jew from a deadly beating, by killing the Egyptian assailant. That Jew subsequently informed on Moses to the Egyptian authorities, placing Moses life at risk. Rashi says this taught Moses why the Jews were punished in bondage. Moses understood the Jews corrupted state: they were allegiant to those who would even kill them. For this, the Jews suffered bondage for 210 years. Sadly, it appears this Jewish trait is alive and well, as no one speaks out against missionaries, but just the opposite: Jews fear saying anything negative about groups converting our youth.

Jewish youths are victimized: they are not taught the flaws of other religions in school; they

never receive rational answers why they should "be Jewish"; which is compounded by the lack of answers at home and their parents' social lives that entertain Jew and gentile alike. The result: literally tens of thousands of young Jews who view other religions no better or worse than Judaism. The question is no longer "Why is intermarriage so high?" but rather, "What's wrong with intermarriage?"

Tragically, schools and parents are not taking this issue seriously. My sincere wish is that this destruction of Judaism and Jews is indelibly etched onto your minds and hearts as 'real', and disturbs you to the point, that after you finish reading this article, you literally get out of your chair and actively address this issue: call a meeting together with your school and yeshiva board members, and immediately add to the curriculum a fixed and mandatory class that educates Jewish children and teens in two areas: 1) Judaism's Fundamentals, and 2) the flaws of the major religions. (See JewishTimes issues 116-126 as support material)

Our youth must comprehend the unique nature of Judaism as God's exclusive religion: laws and ideas rooted in truths that benefit us at each turn. Our discomfort with some laws is solely based on our infantile desires that oppose them at first, not because they contain anything that harms us...God, who created us all for a good life, does not contradict Himself with "painful" laws.

Our youth must understand the lies and fabricated stories that the other religions proliferate. They must be taught that numbers does not prove a thing, so other religions whose adherents dwarf Jews, is of no consequence. Jews must know with clarity, that God gave the Torah to us...there was no other mass revelation except Sinai. God stated that Moses was the greatest prophet (Deut. 34:10); no one before or after him matches his level of perfection, or his authority. Therefore, Jesus' and Mohammed's claims that contradict Moses, cannot be divine, but are lies. And use the word "lies". One must not cover from accusing others of lying, for if you do, then it is YOU who lies to your student or child. God commanded mankind to never add to, or subtract from His Torah. (Deut. 13:1) Thus, all religions but Judaism violate this command. Statements, like a "new covenant" (Jerem. 31:30) were never understood by God's appointed prophets and sages to mean anything but His "renewed providence", previously abandoned by God on account of the Jews' sins. But the other religions use this phrase as support for their phony claim that God "renewed" His religion, evolving Judaism into "their" religion. Jewish leaders never endorsed any works of the New Testament as divine. But more to the point, God does not require a "renewal" of His system, as this implies

(continued on next page)

(Contributing? continued from page 9)

ignorance on behalf of God: He is omniscient, knowing all future events. Therefore He need not revise His system later on due to "new" considerations He was unaware of.

Jews are the teachers and the only historically proven recipients of God's Torah at Sinai. Since the Torah is never to be altered, added to or subtracted from...it is perfectly clear that the New Testament is not divinely inspired. Those originators claiming a prophetic directive to start their religions violate God's words. They are false prophets deserving of death, as God states in Deuteronomy 18:20. Similarly, Christianity's popular "proof" of Jesus' Biblical mention in Isaiah 53:5, "He was pained because of our rebellious sins" is easily refuted: "he" refers to the nation of the Jews. This entire phrase "pained because of our rebellious sins" is what the ignorant nations assumed to be the cause of our pain, and is meant to expose their flawed thinking. Isaiah is quoting the false views of other nations, he is not stating a prophecy or fact as is distorted by Christians. But Christians jump at this portion claiming it to allude to Jesus, failing to realize that the Rabbis possess the proper methods of deciphering Torah, and not one Rabbi ever agreed with their corrupt interpretation. The Christians cannot teach the Rabbis how to learn our own Book; a Book, they admit WE received, and over which, we maintain exclusive authority and commentary.

Knowing these truths, our youth will be able to refute missionaries, and take greater pride in the fact that they have the answers. Their Judaism will flourish. It is the less fortunate Jewish student who has no answers, that succumbs to missionaries' emotionally satisfying arguments. But the grim reality is that many Jewish students are "less fortunate", as intermarriage is through the roof.

Our youth must be taught all of these vital lessons, and taught from an objective standpoint: the teacher's or Rabbi's goal in this class is not to accuse other individual religionists, but to uncover the fallacy of man-made systems of faith that mislead masses to lose their one chance at life. Our youth should appreciate that such a class is intended to steer them away from a life of lies, towards a life where truth is the most prized entity. They should be taught the Proof of Sinai, which is accepted as absolutely, historically true today; just as it was in 2448 when it occurred. And we must also accept as students any other human being desirous of learning God's Torah. This is our obligation, as the HafTorah of Bereshis says so clearly.

Revelation at Sinai is true beyond any doubt, and unmatched by any other religion. The major religions do not contest that event, or the synonymous truth that God selected the Jew as His chosen people, chosen to teach our own, and all



Madison Ave. trivializes rabbis and priests, as amused Jews learn to treat Christianity as 'harmless'.

others. Surprisingly, the other religions fear tampering with the words of the Chumash – the "Old Testament" – but created new lies in the forms of Gospels, the Koran, et al. From their very support of the Chumash alone, we can disprove all religions...and we must disprove all religions so our youth gain a firm conviction in this truth: God gave only one religion, precisely, because there is only one "man".

"Conviction" is our best ally in this fight against intermarriage. For no "faith" can replace conviction, and it is "conviction" in Judaism that we must transmit to our youth. Proof outweighs faith. This is why we have been addressing "Faith vs Proof" these past few weeks in these articles. Without proof and falsely defending Judaism as a "faith", we have no argument whatsoever against those Jews wishing to intermarry. But with proof, our youth will be armed with all they need to remain firm in their Judaism.

We each have the responsibility for this generation, and to insure that future generations receive truth. If we do not act, then we are killing our children, for a life without Judaism, ends at the grave. But a life with Judaism is eternal.

With our lack of response to intermarriage, we deny God's will, as if to say to God, "I do not care for Your wish to transmit Judaism, or whether Jews exist." We must recognize and fear God's institution of "Reward and Punishment", one of Judaism's Fundamentals and therefore recited in the Shema twice daily. Ignorance of this truth is certainly contributing to intermarriage.

If one is inactive when action is warranted, and available, one is certainly culpable.

Marrying someone non-Jewish denies God, His word, and proven realities. In an era where wealth abounds, and the focus of the Jew is material collection, success and fame, it is no wonder that children of these types will also gravitate and admire such a lifestyle. The reality of God's plan becomes obscured, holidays and Sabbath trivial, as living in accord with real ideals does not make one rich or famous. We have successfully created a society of Jews who truly are no different than any other culture. We can only blame ourselves for this horrendous rate of intermarriage.

### Moving Forward

Take a positive step now and convene a meeting, talk to your principal, your Rosh Yeshiva, dean, fellow parents, Hillels, Young Israel councils and shuls, NCSY and USY leaders, and fellow students. If you are in college, convene with your peers on how to start programs to educate others, and commence outreach to non-religious Jews. Schools and yeshivas must establish mandatory classes on Judaism's Fundamentals, and as Rashi urges (Deut. 18:9), include in these classes to dissection of the major religions, their idolatrous and imaginary beliefs, and their fabricated histories. Create printed materials so when confronted, each student may review the proofs of Judaism, and the refutations of other religions.

To be clear, our tolerance of intermarriage is fatally wrong for many reasons: it denies God's command, it forfeits could-be Jewish souls, it creates lives of discord for children of mixed marriages, it reinforces religious deviance in us and others, and it displays our selection of ignorance over knowledge.

Assuming another person will act, alleviating your obligation to eliminate intermarriage as much as possible, is irresponsible and sinful. Each Jew must act to remedy this tragedy: "Kol Yisrael aravim zeh im zeh", "All Jews are responsible for one another". If we do not act, we contribute to this stoppable crime. ■

[1] "Killing future generations" must be understood. In no way do I mean that a child of a gentile mother and Jewish father (who is gentile by Jewish law) is any less important in God's eyes, than a Jewish child. Adam, Eve, Noah Abraham and a host of other great individuals were not Jewish, yet God valued them more than other Jews. Our messiah is a descendant of a perfected gentile woman, Ruth the convert. So we see that God favors perfection, not lineage. God values a person who strives for truth, who spreads truth, and God abhors those who breathe lies and mislead His creations. Now, when I state that missionaries "kill future generations", it is meant in the sense that as gentile child, the odds do not favor him being raised in God's true religion, Judaism. As such, he will most probably follow false religions. Thereby, he loses his chance to have realized truth, and fulfilling his purpose. Of course, any child – gentile or Jew – who follows either the 7 Noachide laws or the 613 Torah commands, does in fact live in accord with God's desire. So a gentile child has no inherent disadvantage: it is merely the circumstance he is thrown into being raised by gentile parents that might cause his irrevocable loss.

## Pirkei Avos – Ethics

*the*  
**MESORA**  
**PART II**

**RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT**

*Written by student*



**“Moses accepted Torah from Sinai and passed it over (masrah) to Joshua”**  
 (Ethics 1:1)

Last week we left off with an intriguing question, based on Rashi’s commentary on the first mishna in Pirkei Avos. Rashi explains that one of the reasons Joshua was selected to be charged with transmission of the Torah was that he ‘killed himself in the tents of wisdom from his days of youth’. After explaining the idea of ‘killing oneself’ for wisdom, we asked: why is it important that this take place in his youth? Why is it of interest to know at what stage in life this perfection took place?

The verse in Koheles 12:1 says “Remember your Creator in the days of your youth before the days of hardship arrive and the years where you say ‘I have no desire for them.’” People generally think that the time to get involved in the spiritual is when one is older and the body is waning. Here King Solomon teaches us the opposite - perfection must begin when one is young. The reasoning behind this is that insofar as a person perfects himself in his youth...that is how much more he will be able to perfect himself in later years. Once man’s energies find other roots, there will always remain a taint, no matter how much a person removes himself from those areas later on. The Talmud says “Whomever does not marry before the age of twenty spends all his days in sin; can you possibly mean literally in sin? Rather, all his days will be spent in thought about sin”. Here too, the Talmud is explaining that once a person’s mind is shaped in a certain way because his psychological energies are drawn to specific areas (here the specific area is the realm of the sexual instinct), he will suffer from those effects for the rest of his life.

At this point, another statement of our Sages may seem contrary to our idea; the Sages explain that “In the place where those who repent stand, the completely righteous can not stand”- this would seem to imply that although one was a sinner before, he is on a higher level than one who never sinned and if so, then would it not matter if one was a sinner in his youth?

The answer to this question lies in understanding the different frameworks of the ideas. When our Sages say that the repentant one is on a higher level, they are referring to the specific attribute of removing and distancing oneself from sin. In this context, the repentant person has achieved more because, as the Rambam says (Laws of Repentance 7:4) he tasted the taste of sin and still was able to separate. In contrast, the idea being expressed by Koheles as well as other statements of the Sages mentioned above, is that with regards to the overall general makeup of

the psyche of a tzadik, one who is righteous, is better off because he never sinned, and therefore does not direct his energies towards sin.

Rashi says that the second reason that Joshua was chosen for this role was that he ‘acquired a good name’. Here too, we need to ask: what exactly is meant by a ‘good name’? And why is it so valuable? Is the Torah endorsing the selfish concern that an individual has for his own reputation? Certainly, we would demand more from a leader of a nation!

To answer this question, we need to understand how a perfected individual relates to other people. The Rambam, towards the end of his work, the Moreh Nevuchim (Guide to the Perplexed) explains that the highest level of man is where his behavior towards others is based solely on his ‘Ahavas Hashem’, his love of God. He does not involve himself in kindness towards others for any selfish reason, but rather only out of appreciation for God’s Will. It is interesting to notice that in society, people can sense the motivation that others have for doing good deeds. There is an ability amongst people to detect whether an individual is doing something for personal reasons or for some good other than himself. We may then say that one doesn’t have a great reputation, despite the fact that he may perform many good deeds, because people recognize those selfish motivations. People generally have their own selfish considerations so that when one acts based on his selfish goal, others will sense that this person is really not so unique - he is just acting on the same motives that others have.

In contrast, one who has a ‘good name’ will be one who operates on the higher level of doing kindness out of recognition of an objective, selfless good to the extent that it is noticed as such. When people sense that this is an individual who is sincerely interested in the welfare of others, they will admire him and praise him for this so that he will develop a good reputation.

We can now explain the value of the ‘good name’ and why it was important that the leader of the Jewish nation have this characteristic: as a leader, Joshua was going to come under many pressured situations where a personal weakness would be able to express itself in a wrong decision. Therefore, not only did he need to possess the trait of perfection from youth, so that his energies were firmly rooted in the proper paths and directions, but he also needed the ‘good name’ to express the degree to which he had reached a level of love for God, such that it was also recognized by others. With these two characteristics, Joshua was fit to deal with all pressures of being a leader, internal as well as external. □

## Letters

## Oral Rules

**Reader:** Why, in connection with King David and Batsheva, does the written Torah say “wife”? Why does the prophet use the word “wife”? Why does it say that “and Hashem struck the child that Uriah’s wife had borne to David”? Your own site states in the article “Trust, Hope or Denial” the following: “When King David took Batsheva for his wife it was considered evil in God’s eyes because she was still the wife of Uriah. David had Uriah killed in battle and Batsheva mourned her husband.” This is confusing. This says to me that the Oral Law is to be taken OVER the written. When the Written Law says “wife”, we cannot really believe it. How will I know if anything that I read is really saying what it appears to say? I realized that the Oral Law “fleshed out” the Written Law, but I had no idea that I cannot trust the Written Law. I am not trying to be disrespectful; this concept just REALLY throws me for a loop. God has allowed the Written Law to be spread all over the globe, but we cannot trust what we read? With all sincerity, please help me make sense of this.

**Mesora:** Yes, the Oral Law overrides the Written Law, but in a complimentary manner, not a contradictory one. And it takes decades to master both systems. In another case, the Written Law says King Solomon served idols. But the Rabbis say he did not: Oral Law informs us that the Written Law wishes to condemn King Solomon in harsh terms, and equates Solomon’s allowance of his wives idolatry to “his” actual worship, as if he did so. There is an idea being expressed by the use of exaggeration.

I understand your confusion, and therefore urge your first step: “Arrange for yourself a teacher [Rabbi]”. (Ethics, 1:6) A Torah scholar is indispensable to our accurate understanding of both God’s and the Rabbis’ intent. □

## Why Die?

**Reader:** Moses tells the Jews they might choose one option: life or death. Choosing “one” - life or death - means they are mutually exclusive. Thus, if I choose death, which Moses says is “not life”, then life cannot be experienced by me any more: no reincarnation. My death is terminal.

Alternatively, if I choose life, and I will not experience death, this means I will experience no

successive deaths: meaning no reincarnation. Again choosing life means the alternative of death. Therefore, death will not be included in what I receive. This is great, but one must ask why do people die? Is it the case that everyone (with four notable exceptions) has chosen death? Or is it that death is natural and choosing death in the context above has to be understood in another way? This is not an attempt to prove or disprove reincarnation, but a question of logic.

**Mesora:** Up to this point, I have been discussing death, which is due to sin. But the institution of death for all mankind - even non-sinning men - came to the world due to Adam and Eve’s sin. Mortality was a necessary response to the human condition as evidenced by Adam and Eve. Therefore, based on man’s very design, witnessed in these two people, God’s wisdom decreed that man must live knowing his mortality, and then experience death. This is necessary, not because of our subjective sins, but because of man’s very nature as a sinner, seen in Adam and Eve. □

## Jewish Idolatry

**Reader:** I have a question and some comments upon which, I was hoping you could shed some light for me. Yesterday, in the live class, the subject of the “red string” came up. If the red string were a form of idol worship, then would a Chamsa be the same? I come from a Sephardic mother whose great grandparents were from Turkey. To them, the Chamsa, as was taught to me, represents the “hand of God”: the three middle fingers is Shin. The Thumb is dalet. The pinky is yod, which spells Shadai, God’s name. This is what I was taught. Is this just as silly as the red string? To me it is a symbol like the Mezuzah is a symbol. So I consider the Chamsa a way to remember we are in “God’s hand”. However, my mother does not like the eye. She says it is superstitious and goes against Torah. She says that some of our people are superstitious and have developed silly belief from the middle ages. Can you shed some light on this Chamsa and why our people are superstitious?

Thank You,  
Rivka

**Mesora:** The Mezuzah is God’s intelligent commandment: make no equation between it, and the man-made Chamsa. And yes, the Chamsa is akin to the red string idolatry prohibited in Torah (Tosefta Sabbath 1:7) where man seeks objects for security...instead of the true security: God. All suggested meanings of letters you cite, are mean-

ingless, unless sourced in Torah. But there are no sources for red strings and Chamsas. It makes no difference whether the Chamsa has an “eye” as your mother opposes. It is an “object”, and unless commanded in the Torah, we are not to create objects, as violated by the Jews who created the object of the Golden Calf. Many Jews hide behind attributed “meaning”, as in this case, where the Chamsa supposedly refers to God’s name. Chamsas and red strings have years of allegiance...many Jews adhere to them as if they are Torah Law. However, shall this influence our thinking or behavior? Or, shall God’s commands decide the matter?

But most damaging is the idea that Chamsa is God’s hand as you mention. Above all else, we must possess the truest meaning possible regarding God, and he is not physical. He has no hand. And when the Torah states “the hand of God”, we understand that metaphorically, meaning “the workings” or “actions” of God.

God does not endorse Chamsas or red strings, but prohibits one from living a life where he or she attributes ANY power or meaning to objects or ideas, other than God Himself. Follow the Torah: “Do not add or subtract from it”. (Deut. 13:1) □

## Mind Over Masses

**Reader:** Rabbi, if the Jews are called Jews (Yehudim?) because they descend from the tribe of Judah (Yehudah), (or is it the Kingdom of Judah?) why is Abraham called the first Jew?

Thanks,  
Hector Fernandez  
Little Rock, AR

**Mesora:** The first Jews are called “ivrim” plural for “ivri”. Abraham was termed “Abraham the Ivri”. The word ivri means the “other” [side] or “limb”. Meaning, Abraham was from another view (limb), i.e., he was “other” than his generation who were idolatrous. Abraham was uniquely monotheistic. Abraham may be termed the first Jew, since he was selected as the forerunner of the Jewish nation based on his discovery of monotheism. In this weeks parsha Lech Licha, God grants him a nation numerous as the stars. My understanding is that God desired the Jewish nation to be synonymous with someone who was able to extricate himself from the idolatrous masses, and reach the great level he did. Thereby, Abraham stands as a prime example for all of mankind, that with a mind alone, and no teacher or books, man can discover the truth. □

## Letters

FALSE

is

FALSE

POLYTHEISM:  
PROHIBITED

FOR

MANKIND,

NOT JUST

JEWS

**Reader:** Dear Rabbi Ben-Chaim, I understand from your article, "Christianity: OK for Christians?" ([www.mesora.org/christianity2.html](http://www.mesora.org/christianity2.html)) that *shittuf*, or polytheism (plural gods) is forbidden for Gentiles, not just for Jews. This makes sense to me. Therefore, I'm confused by the argument proposed by some who use the Talmud (Chullin 13b) to say that "Gentiles who practice Christianity outside Eretz Yisrael are not idolaters - that they only continue the customs of their ancestors". Would you please clarify this Talmudic reference?

Also, I'm told that Rabbeinu Tam (Rashi's grandson) holds that Christianity is okay for Gentiles. Is this an accurate reflection of his position? If yes, then would you please explain his reasoning? Many thanks.

**Mesora:** The Talmudic portion quoted does not isolate "Christians", but "necharim", translated as "strangers", or gentiles. What the Talmud recorded 2000 years ago concerning gentiles of that era, can not accurately be equated to current-day Christians: these are two distinct groups. Of essential importance to Talmud study, is the "study" and not cursory reading. I will highlight the significant points of this portion of Talmud in Chullin 13b.

The Talmud characterizes gentiles outside Israel, at that time, as not idolatrous, but simply "following in the paths of their fathers". Meaning, they were not diligent about the underlying fundamentals of their religion, and therefore, did not carry the prohibitions connected with true idolaters. We then wonder why they are distinguished from gentiles living "inside" Israel proper, who, by deduction, would in fact be considered true idolaters.

I would suggest that gentiles 'closer to the truth' (i.e., gentiles living next door to Jews) would show greater opposition to Judaism, via their true, idolatrous practice. Thus, gentiles inside Israel would be rendered idolatrous, while those outside of Israel would not be viewed as true idolaters. We learn a new idea: idolatry, or any formal code, opposes one's freedom of expression. Thus, most people would rather be unrestrained in all activities. However, when confronted with the reality of the Jew's great gift of Torah, in such close quarters, a gentile will then seek alien religion as a denial of his jealousy for the "chosen Jew" and the truth of Torah.

The Talmud in another section supports this idea: prior to his acceptance of religious life, Rabbi Akiva possessed such hatred for the Torah scholars; he said he would bite them like a donkey, which bites through the bone. Thus, prior to Rabbi Akiva's conversion to an observant lifestyle, his close proximity to Torah scholars stirred his suppressed recognition that he was missing the true good in life. This deeply disturbed him, to the point that he, like Christians, possessed animosity towards Torah and observant Jews. Another Talmudic portion states as follows: "One who learns Torah before an ignorant Jew (*am ha'aretz*) is akin to having intercourse with his fiancée." Again we are taught that just as the groom views his fiancée as "his", and is outraged if another man sleeps with his fiancée, so too, a non-observant Jew feels outraged when another Jew learns Torah in his sight: he knows the Torah is equally his, like a fiancée, and is enraged with jealousy when another person has what he feels is his. In our Talmudic portion, the *necharim* (gentiles) living in Israel proper are no different. Their true attachment to idolatry may be explained as

their method of denial of Torah, and they need to deny it, since down deep, they know Torah is true.

Having been raised with little or no moral instruction and certainly, no Talmudic training, we cannot be surprised at another lifestyle, the idol worshipper. Aside from above where man's free wheeling emotions seek no code at all, and not in contradiction to it, man also seeks other emotional satisfaction, such as security. With no moral training, a human being remains anchored in psychological infancy, seeking security, with no ability or demand for intelligent explanation. Thus, many gentiles are attracted to idolatry and alien religions, which were created by other infantile minds, and appeal to like-minded individuals.

Christianity is idolatry, as it maintains the view that God inseminated a mortal with "Himself" and other nonsense. Originators concocted amazing stories about this Jesus character, "supporting" these fables with distorted, Biblical nuances, they re-write the Bible adding numerous, false books – the Gospels, which contradict each other. Then Jesus takes over God's role, and they pray to this man-god and worship him. Jesus is then killed. Since this is a failure of their "god", they concoct a "Second Coming" theory to patch over their religion's gaping hole. To accept this, one cannot be further from reality. Many Christians also realized the contradictory and nonsensical nature of Christianity, which explains their doctrine of "Blind Faith". So some Christians live a blind life, while many others have become Noachides, or Jewish, having seen the rational ideas God gifted to mankind.

Christians were not the population discussed in the Talmud, "necharim" were. Christianity is heresy, and could not have been condoned by any wise mind, for any person, including Christians and gentiles, for they too must follow God's Torah, i.e., "reason", albeit 7 laws at the minimum. But before anything, all members of mankind must, by definition of their receipt of intelligence, acknowledge truth; the true concept of God, which Christianity obscures and replaces with nonsense and heresy. Rabbeinu Tam would not condone idolatry or Christianity, for any man. The bottom line is that if something is false, and this is why as Jews we do not accept it, then no intelligent mind would say such fallacy is permitted for others.

There is no debate among Rabbis whether Christianity (idolatry) is 'permitted' for anyone. Reason demands that all notions denying truth must be avoided. What is false is false, for everyone. ■