

If idolaters sacrificed animals, how does God justify His law that we “continue” this practice?

(Discussed on page 11)



ESTD 1997

JewishTimes

Dedicated to Scriptural and Rabbinic Verification of Authentic Jewish Beliefs and Practices

Volume V, No. 11...Jan. 6, 2006

WWW.MESORA.ORG/JEWISHTIMES

Download and Print Free

IN THIS ISSUE

PARSHA: VAYIGASH	1-3
FASHIONABLY LATE	1,4,5
CHAMSA & SEGULAS	1,5,6
LETTERS: ASTROLOGY	3
PARSHA: JOSEPH & HIS BROTHERS	7,8
LETTERS: MAN'S BLAME	9,10
PIRKEI AVOS: SACRIFICE II	11
CLASSIFIEDS	12

FREE AT MESORA

SEE OUR SITE FOR OTHER FREE FEATURES

MESORA.ORG/CLASSIFIEDS

Free Ads

Visit our new Classifieds page and create a free ad. It will run online & in the JewishTimes for one month. Repeat your ad as often as you like.



Weekly Parsha

VaYigash

RABBI BERNARD FOX

“And He said, “I am the Omnipotent G-d of your father. Do not be afraid to go to Egypt, for it is there that I will make you into a great nation.” (Bereshit 46:3)

Yosef asks his father to descend to Egypt with his entire family. Yitzchak decides to travel to Egypt with his family. He arrives at Beer

(continued on next page)



fashionably late

JOE SINGLE

Each time I make a date with a young woman, I make sure to be there, either on time, or earlier. I always anticipate any traffic problems, and allow that additional time as a buffer zone. Dating is important to me: this girl might be great, so my timing will express how much I value our meeting. Arriving late might negatively affect the girl, dissuading her from a second date. Why shoot myself in the foot? Being on time is not only proper: it is smart. Plus, I gave her my word. So I am never late. Never.

Surprisingly, or rather, now more unsurprisingly but disappointingly: during these past few years of shidduch and online dates...most girls

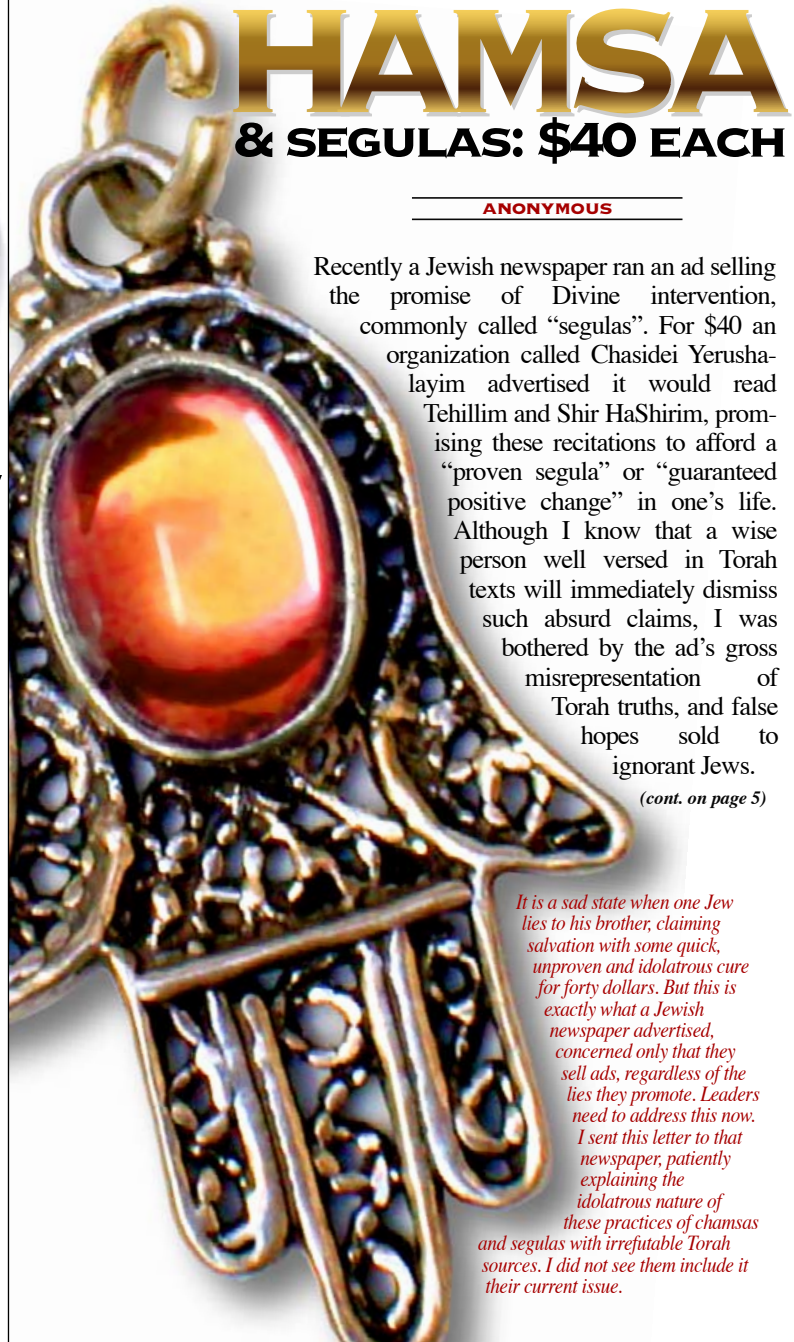
(continued on page 4)

HAMSA & SEGULAS: \$40 EACH

ANONYMOUS

Recently a Jewish newspaper ran an ad selling the promise of Divine intervention, commonly called “segulas”. For \$40 an organization called Chasidei Yerushalayim advertised it would read Tehillim and Shir HaShirim, promising these recitations to afford a “proven segula” or “guaranteed positive change” in one’s life. Although I know that a wise person well versed in Torah texts will immediately dismiss such absurd claims, I was bothered by the ad’s gross misrepresentation of Torah truths, and false hopes sold to ignorant Jews.

(cont. on page 5)



It is a sad state when one Jew lies to his brother, claiming salvation with some quick, unproven and idolatrous cure for forty dollars. But this is exactly what a Jewish newspaper advertised, concerned only that they sell ads, regardless of the lies they promote. Leaders need to address this now. I sent this letter to that newspaper, patiently explaining the idolatrous nature of these practices of chamisas and segulas with irrefutable Torah sources. I did not see them include it their current issue.

(VaYigash cont. from pg. 1)

Weekly Parsha

JewishTimes

Weekly Journal on Jewish Thought



The JewishTimes is published every Friday and delivered by email. Subscriptions are FREE. To subscribe, send any email message to: subscribe@mesora.org

Subscribers will also receive our advertisers' emails and our regular email announcements.

Contacts:

We invite feedback or any questions at this address: jewishtimes@mesora.org
Ph(516)569-8888 Fx(516)569-0404

Advertising:

<https://www.Mesora.org/Advertising>

Donations:

<https://www.Mesora.org/Donate>

Content at Mesora.org:**JewishTimes Archives:**

<http://www.Mesora.org/JewishTimes>

Philosophy Archives:

<http://www.Mesora.org/Philosophy>

Weekly Parsha Archives:

<http://www.Mesora.org/WeeklyParsha>

Audio Archives:

<http://www.Mesora.org/Audio>

Interactive, Live, Audible Classes:

<http://www.Mesora.org/LiveClasses>

Database Search:

<http://www.Mesora.org/Search>

Articles may be reprinted without consent of the JewishTimes or the authors, provided the content is not altered, and credits are given.

Sheva. There, he offers sacrifices to the Almighty. He has a prophecy. Hashem tells Yaakov that he should not fear descending to Egypt. In Egypt, Bnai Yisrael will become a great nation. Hashem will continue to protect Bnai Yisrael. Eventually, Hashem will bring the Jewish nation back to the land of Israel.

This prophecy is difficult to understand. What was its purpose? Yaakov had already decided to travel to Egypt. Why did Hashem speak to Yaakov at this point in time? It would have been more reasonable for Hashem to reassure Yaakov before he made his decision!

There is another question. Hashem tells Yaakov not to fear transplanting himself and his family. Clearly, this assurance implies that Yaakov did have some fear. What was source of this trepidation?

Sforno answers these questions. His answer is based on one essential observation. The Almighty identified himself to Yaakov as the G-d of his father Yitzchak. Why does Hashem choose this specific appellation? In order to answer this question and our other questions, some background information is needed.

Sforno explains that Yaakov had not decided to settle in Egypt. Actually, this assumption is supported by a previous passage. Yosef had asked his father to settle in Egypt. In announcing his response, Yaakov explains that he will travel to Egypt in order to see Yosef. He does not express any intention to resettle in Egypt.[1] It seems that Yaakov's intention was to travel to Egypt, see Yosef, and return to Canaan.

Why was Yaakov reluctant to comply with Yosef's request? Why did he not wish to resettle in Egypt? Sforno explains that Yaakov was aware of Hashem's instructions to his father, Yitzchak. Hashem forbade Yitzchak to leave the land of Israel. He had specifically admonished Yitzchak against living in Egypt.[2] Yaakov was not willing to deviate from the instructions the Almighty had given to his father.

Now, we can understand the reason Hashem identified Himself as the G-d of Yitzchak. Hashem was responding to Yaakov's decision to reject Yosef's request. Yaakov was traveling to Egypt. However, he did not plan to settle there. He was following the instructions the Almighty had given to Yitzchak. Hashem began this prophecy by identifying Himself as the G-d of Yitzchak. In this manner, the Almighty acknowledged the instructions He had given to Yitzchak. He was saying, "I am the G-d that forbade Yitzchak to leave the land of Canaan." Hashem then continued. He instructed Yaakov to settle in Egypt. He should not fear that this would be a violation of the Almighty's will.

We have now answered our questions. Hashem

identified Himself as the G-d of Yitzchak in order to acknowledge the admonition He had given to Yitzchak. Yaakov did not need a prophetic message in order to make his initial decision. This is because that decision was to merely visit Egypt and see Yosef. He did not plan to resettle. However, after Yaakov embarked on this journey, Hashem spoke to him. The Almighty was not addressing the issue of traveling to Egypt. Instead, He was speaking to the purpose of this journey. Yaakov should not just visit Egypt. He should resettle. Yaakov was not subject to the prohibition placed upon Yitzchak.

This raises an additional issue. Why was Yaakov permitted – even commanded – to resettle in Egypt? Sforno explains that this was absolutely necessary for the development of Bnai Yisrael. According to Sforno, this lesson is also included in the prophecy. The Almighty told Yaakov that in Egypt He would make Bnai Yisrael into a great nation. The intent of this statement is to tell Yaakov that Egypt will not pose an obstacle to the development of Bnai Yisrael. On the contrary, the Almighty is telling Yaakov that the experience in Egypt is essential to the development of Bnai Yisrael. Why is this experience so important?

Sforno responds that the people of Canaan accepted Bnai Yisrael. This acceptance would lead to intermarriage and assimilation. Sforno explains that it was impossible for the Yaakov's descendants to fully integrate into Egyptian society. Custom would create an impenetrable barrier between Bnei Yisrael and the Egyptians. Egyptian custom even forbade the sharing of a meal with Ivrim – the name by which Yaakov, his family and followers were known. They would be segregated into a separate district. Social interaction would be limited. In this environment a small band of co-religionists could develop into a unique nation. Segregation and prejudice would prevent assimilation and absorption.

These conditions could not be duplicated in Canaan. Social barriers between the Ivrim and the indigenous peoples were minimal. Before Yaakov's descendants could develop into an independent nation, assimilation would prevail.[3]

Yaakov's descendants would eventually return to Canaan, but only after they had developed into Klal Yisrael – the Jewish nation. This evolution could only take place in exile.

Sforno's comments can be more fully appreciated if we review an earlier incident. Dina, Yaakov's daughter, was abducted and violated by Shechem, who was a prince among his people. Shechem fell in love with Dina, and, accompanied by his father Chamor, he requested of Yaakov and his sons permission to marry her. The

(continued on next page)

Letters

(VaYigash cont. from pg. 2)

Weekly Parsha

“Astrology”: A Response

Allow me to applaud your article entitled “Astrology – Disregarding the Incomprehensible.” It is tremendously gratifying and reassuring to see an article published in a traditional Jewish publication where the author seeks to (re)ingratiate the Jewish audience to the concepts of reason, proof, and perception. It is rather unfortunate that such thought is recognized for its perceived novelty when you have simply reiterated the lines of thought propounded by our great Sages (particularly the Rambam) for hundreds of years but have been relatively recently whitewashed by more popular (and backward) notions of notions of mysticism, anti-rationalism, and blind devotion to a supposed Sage despite ideas contrary to authentic Torah Judaism. I thank you for seeking to return Judaism to its glorious tradition wherein we are to own up to our responsibility of being a light onto to the nations – a task we are to engage only upon using our reason, perception, proof, and authentic tradition that will entitle us to be declared an am chacham v’ navon (a wise and discerning nation.) Your article should be mandatory reading to every yeshiva high school boy and girl (and their teachers and rabbanim) in order for them to better understand what Judaism is as opposed to the anti-rational and foolish notions so many of our brethren unfortunately hold.

–Nativ Winiarsky

brothers responded that they would not allow Dina to marry an uncircumcised person. If Shechem, his father and all of the males of the city would circumcise themselves, then the children of Yaakov would agree to the marriage.

Shechem, Chamor and the inhabitants of the city agreed, and they performed the circumcisions. Three days later, while the men of the city were recovering, Shimon and Leyve, two of Yaakov's sons, entered the city and killed all of the males. They rescued Dina and eliminated all those who might have attempted to oppose their decision.

Yaakov condemned the actions of his sons. The sons defended their behavior. They argued that they could not allow their sister to be treated as a prostitute. What was the basis of this dispute between Yaakov and his sons? It seems that Yaakov is making a compelling argument. He agreed that it would be tragic to give Dinah to Shechem. But neither he nor his sons had ever expected this outcome – that the people of Shechem would perform circumcision. However when they did perform circumcision, Yaakov and his sons were faced with the consequences of the bargain. Yaakov maintained that they should have accepted these unfortunate results and given Dinah to Shechem in marriage. Yaakov and his sons had violated their bargain. This disturbed Yaakov. The people of Canaan would conclude that Yaakov and his sons were dishonest. This would reflect poorly on their morality and ultimately on Hashem. Furthermore, Yaakov and his sons were a small family in an alien land. The other people of the land would identify with the Shechem, Chamor and their people. They would seek to avenge this wrong committed by his sons. Yaakov and his children could not defend themselves from such an attack.

The sons responded that they could not allow their sister to be treated as a prostitute. This response seems irrelevant! Yaakov shared their abhorrence for the manner in which Dina had been treated. However, he argued that the brothers had jeopardized the mission and even the survival of Bnai Yisrael. How are the sons responding to this objection?

According to Sforno, the sons disputed both of Yaakov's arguments. They maintained that the people of Canaan were not so immoral as to condone the behavior of Shechem. They would recognize the right of Yaakov and his sons to rescue Dinah. Finally, they would understand the necessity of using subterfuge. Shechem, Chamor and their people outnumbered Yaakov and his sons. They could not rescue their sister without first disabling her captors. Bnai Yisrael would not be condemned for acting unethically. Neither were they in danger of retribution.[4]

This incident is remarkably revealing. Before

Bnai Yisrael would be prepared to possess the land of Israel, the family of Yaakov would need to grow into a nation. However, it is difficult for a family to develop into a distinct nation. A single isolated family is subject to tremendous pressure to assimilate into the surrounding nation and culture. Yaakov's children would be faced with this pressure. How could they resist this pressure to assimilate into the surrounding peoples?

This assimilation could only be avoided if Yaakov's children would see themselves as separate and different from the surrounding peoples. But the debate that Sforno describes between Yaakov and his children suggests that they did not see themselves as an alien family in the land of Canaan. They believed that the people of Canaan had accepted them as their own and would respect the measures they had taken to protect their interests. This attitude suggests that the environment for assimilation already existed.

This conclusion has important implications. The antecedent for assimilation already existed in Canaan. Therefore, the family of Yaakov could only develop into the nation of Bnai Yisrael in another land – a land in which they would not be permitted to assimilate. Egypt was such a land. The Egyptians could not accept Bnai Yisrael – even Yosef – as their equals. In the environment of Egypt, assimilation would be impossible.

It emerges, that according to Sforno, the exile to Egypt was a direct result of the attitudes of Yaakov's children. They had acquired some level of identification with the people of Canaan and believed that they had been accepted by the indigenous peoples. This attitude created a perilous environment – an environment in which assimilation was a real possibility.

Based on Sforno's analysis, it is not surprising that Jewish history is replete with instances in which assimilation is followed by persecution. The exile to Egypt is a template for these latter episodes of assimilation and subsequent persecution. Yaakov's children were in danger of assimilating. Providence intervened and prevented assimilation though placing Bnai Yisrael in Egypt – an environment in which antipathy and prejudice prevented assimilation. This same pattern is then repeated throughout Jewish history. When the danger of assimilation develops, discrimination and persecution follow. This antipathy prevents further assimilation and Bnai Yisrael is preserved. ■

[1] Sefer Beresheit 45:28.

[2] Sefer Beresheit 26:2.

[3] Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno, Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 46:3.

[4] Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno, Commentary on Sefer Beresheit, 34:30-31.

(Fashionably Late continued from page 1)

Weekly Parsha

are 10-30 minutes late. My Rabbi said he has no doubt, "if these girls were going on important job interviews, they would be on time". Why then do girls "make sure" to be late, and make their date wait unnecessarily? It is clear: they wish to send a message to their date that they have "more important" things to do. Really? So why bother agreeing to the date at all? This attitude is transposed to their Internet dating profiles as well, where half the girls I read about write, "I can't believe I am doing this!" Again, these girls feel they have to show in their profiles how they are so far above all this dating "nonsense". They don't really "need" to solicit dates online (because they're doing fine without them...yeah, real fine, and SINGLE) but they do so ostensibly due to social pressures.

You really gotta hand it to these brave girls, who go against their grain, spending their precious time dating so as to make their friends and family happy. What a thoughtful bunch. I wonder, are they a new breed of females who have no psychological, emotional or sexual needs? Clones from some 1970s genetic experiment gone bad? "My friends forced me to do this"...yeah, yeah, yeah...I have heard it all. These girls will be 80 before they act like adults.

One thing is for sure: these girls lie, presenting themselves as independent, possessing no needs, and they must reiterate this independence in their profiles, and when they show up "fashionably late" for dates. This says the girl is not mature, and not ready for a relationship, which, by definition, requires apologies, compromise, and thoughtfulness. If a girl is that inconsiderate that her expression of her importance outweighs her word to meet me 30 minutes ago as planned, hey...don't waste my time. Just phone me ahead and tell me, "Hey, Joe, I am already dressed and ready, and just around the corner from the restaurant...but I don't want to show up on time. That might convey my 'need' to date, and I don't want anyone to think I need anything." I'd rather hear that, than one more date where the girl shows up so late...two more Starbucks opened up on the corner while I waited for her.

The bottom line is that if you are a girl who consistently shows up late, stop dating. You're fooling yourself that you can be in a relationship. You first need to understand your behavior, admit it is rude and selfish – two traits that healthy relationships cannot tolerate. Once you correct your feelings and behaviors, and can respect a guy as an equal to yourself, and not less worthy, then you might be ready. This same personality flaw is expressed when girls say, "Call me", and never return your call...or wait a few days before doing so. Last week a shadchan gave me a girl's number, and I called that day. Now, a week later, she has not returned my call. This girl is 33, and doesn't realize her time is running out, or that she is inconsiderate. I am surely not calling her again. Another girl I emailed last Sunday responded that she enjoyed my profile, and feels we should talk and get acquainted. I wrote back Sunday enthused, "Great, here's my number, or email yours." A week



later...Nothing, no pulse, nadda, zilch, zippo. She's clearly 35 and single with good reason. And thus one is a psychiatrist! What advice is SHE dishing out?

If a girl cannot make 5 minutes to respond within a day or two, then she is playing games, and I lose all interest. She can even look like a model, but she has no model personality and I probably will not agree to date her, without some great excuse. Girls like these are ruining good opportunities, and create poor reputation for themselves. They need to learn about themselves, either with a therapist, Rabbi, or good friend, who can show them what they're doing, and possibly why. And I'm sure plenty of guys do the same.

Conversely, an honest and healthy girl will admit that we all have needs and desires, and one of the most basic ones is to have companionship. Expressing this need in creating a dating profile, and showing up on time for a date is admirable. Girls should learn that this is what men feel: we admire an honest girl, who is not ashamed of what she should not be ashamed of, meaning her vulnerabilities which we all possess. Personally, I'd give everything to meet someone with that level of honesty, who is humble, intelligent and considerate. Such traits forge the most successful relationships.

Now, with the Internet boom, dating has a great advantage, or so I thought. One might think that this 24/7, global venue would yield more prospects, and create more opportunities. But what I have experienced first hand is that I can email literally 100 girls, with 0-2 responding. Ouch! At least when I am not interested, I always write back thanking the girl for her note, while honestly expressing my lack of interest, either because she is too old, not in my city, or what it may be...ending my response with "Best of success to us both!" This sustains this girl's dignity. For even though I am not interested, which might be a letdown, my response that I wish her success equal to my

success, removes the "personal" rejection. But 0-2 responses from women out of 100 emails? Not good stats! This Internet boom seems to be producing an online smorgasbord of men for these women to complain about, as if we're a bunch of knishes that are too well done, not hot enough, too dry, square and not round, or missing their favorite sauces! "Maybe the next tray will have something better on it?" Seems to me that the men are more flexible with their criteria, whereas women have checklists with more items than Walmart. My male friends tell me the same. How do these girls assume they will get married with such uncompromising and unrealistic standards? Unless, the really don't want to be married.

Last week my close friend dispelled my misconception: "Storks don't really deliver babies," he said...and he awoke me to what really happens... "WOW!" I said. But then I wondered, if it gets risky to have kids after 35, why are girls, who have that "ticking" going on, waiting so long? I guess "fashionably late" applies here too. With my higher rate of emails to girls, than girls who write to me...friends are starting to think "I'm" the one carrying eggs. Truth is, girls would greatly benefit if they were all born with expiration dates: "Don't use after January 2006" written right across their foreheads. Maybe then they'd realize time is running out, and compromise is due.

"So nu...what's wrong with you?" I get asked repeatedly by shadchans, in a typical shadchan drone. Yep. Shadchans and gossipers don't help the issue, with all their know-it-all catch phrases; they destroy more than they do good. They condemn single girls and guys because these "holier than thou" matchmakers feel they got it all worked out. Upon meeting someone for the first time, they kick into shadchan mode: "You're single...at your age? You must have problems. You're too picky. You're not ready to get married." They talk before they listen. That's like answering before knowing the question. Not wise. These shadchans would do more good by keeping their mouths closed, and not sharing their "well-researched", insensitive personality profiles with the already frustrated singles. Yeah, they know everything, they must. I am sure from these callous modes of talk that many shadchans are self-serving, and do so merely to feel good about themselves, or for needed social interaction with their peers. They sure as hell do not seek to help singles. I receive many emails from shadchans setting me up with girls 5-8 years older than my requested limit, or girls who don't meet other profile requests, like girls who are overweight. I am entitled to my preferences of attraction and age, but shadchans do not respect them. They figure, "He's a boy, she's a girl, it's a perfect match!"

Friends would call me relatively "good material": post collegiate degrees, slim and in shape, good sense of humor, considerate, patient (gotta be at this point) and I am fully observant. I attend shiurim, learn,

(continued on next page)

(Fashionably Late *continued from page 4*)**(Chamsa** *cont. from pg. 1*)**Idolatry**

daven with a minyan, and work daily. And although orthodox, I'm open to all categories of Jews, provided basics are observed like Shabbos, kashrut and niddah (marital purity laws). Of course I prefer Halacha to be kept accurately, but I was told by my Rabbi not to make an issue about a girl who is not yet ready to cover her hair, or dress exclusively in skirts.

So, based on the low response I receive from my emails, there's something really wrong with the amount of girls lacking a serious attitude about marriage. Why are so many girls in their 30s reluctant to just talking by phone? Forget about scheduling a date right away, let's just take 5-10 minutes and talk on the phone. But with their silence they say "Nope". I even heard last month that some girl I met a year ago, who is still single, still wouldn't date me because I don't own a black hat. I feel like telling her, "Black hats can't give you kids, make you smile, take you on vacations, provide for you, and help raise your family." So I'll buy a black hat if she wants! But I'm sure she'll say, "No, you don't already wear one, so I cannot date you." Have you ever heard such stupidity? What type of corrupt seminaries and yeshivas are training these girls to act with such foolishness? Something has got to be done, or else the next generation of singles...well...won't exist.

I'll admit that I don't find every girl attractive...who does, and what girl finds every guy her type? But after years of shidduchim and online dating, I, my Rabbi, and others, have seen a pattern: girls are not serious about a relationship. If they were, they'd surely give more guys a chance. And we are no longer suggesting spending 2 hours over dinner: a 30 minute coffee is great to determine if a dinner is appropriate.

So girls, take real-life actions to meet someone. Loosen your criteria. Realize that what you know about someone from the get go, is 1% of who he is...give him time. You don't need to now you'll marry him on date #1. And don't feel pressured: you can always end things if they don't work out 2-3 weeks down the road. My suggestion in general is to get advice from intelligent individuals as to what you are doing wrong, and what unrealistic elements you are seeking. Then, be as flexible as possible. You may just get married. But you will definitely remain single if you keep discounting guys based on unreasonable excuses.

By the way, if any of you reading this are in your 30s, observant, or at least willing to observe the basics (Shabbos, kosher and niddah, if not more) email me at "Starbucks9pm@yahoo.com" with the subject line "Fashionably Late" and attach or include your profile photos and bio, or your screen name on the Jewish dating sites. I'll keep it confidential. Even if I feel we're not a match, I'll write ya back...promise! And guys, you can email too, let's see if we can network serious minded observant singles and get us all married...fashionably on time! **-Joe** ■

This concept of a "segula" – that some action will cause an unrelated result – is alien to Torah Judaism, regardless of the masses of frum Jews who espouse such beliefs, and regardless of the segulas' inclusion of Torah verses. I've heard of people baking challas with keys inside, or praying for 40 days at a precise location, believing this will somehow locate their mate, or make them fertile. But I also know God's words, "In every place you mention My name, I will come to you and bless you." (Exod. 20:21) Thus, God states that location is inconsequential. A close friend "AS" met with a Mekubbal and did as instructed. He was guaranteed to marry within the year. Ten years later, he is still single, while the Mekubbal profited. Another close friend "MK" inquired of a great Rebbe about a sick relative, and was told she would recover. But she died.

Although inexplicable according to the precise, natural laws that God created, people believe in segulas, for they emanate from Jewish communities, and many people are desperate. And although these attempts continue to fail, as they must, they try again, never admitting as Yeshaya said, "It does not save the soul, is there not falsehood in my right hand?" Yeshaya 43 – HafToras VaYikra – rebukes man for accepting powers assumed to exist in physical objects and invented practices. The popular Red Bendel is just another permutation of this same idolatrous rite, that by performing some arbitrary act, like wearing a string, life will improve. Tosefta Shabbos (chap. VII) refers to this red string as the "ways of the Emorite" and is idolatrous. Alarmingly, frum Judaica stores and individuals peddle these strings even after being informed of Torah prohibitions. What does this prevalent, red string theory say about God's system of reward and punishment? According to supporters of challa keys, red strings and other nonsense, I might sin, but if I wear a Red Bendel...I'll be protected. Conversely, if I do not sin, but I do not wear this string, I will be harmed. Is this God's just Torah system? No. Furthermore, if my arm is amputated in an accident, donning this thread, reciting Tehillim, or any segula cannot reattach my arm. Such absurdities truly expose these practices as fallacy. Why do followers deny the string's ability to reattach an amputated limb, but accept fertility as within its capabilities? The answer: they believe what cannot be overtly disproved. In other words, they possess blind faith in their imagination, and do not follow reason and objective reality as Rambam teaches.

All these practices are adopted from idolatrous nations, and are ridiculed by God, Yeshaya, Rambam, and by the Tosefta. Yet, our fellow Jews follow them, and profit from the ignorance and insecurities of others, ignoring open sources prohibiting them.

"According to supporters of challa keys, red strings and other nonsense, I might sin, but if I wear a Red Bendel...I'll be protected. Conversely, if I do not sin, but I do not wear this string, I will be harmed. Is this God's just Torah system? No."

It is irrelevant that many Jews, or even Rabbis, place their hope in segulas, for Rambam wrote regarding astrology, "I know that you may search and find sayings of some individual sages in the Talmud and Midrashim whose words appear to maintain that at the moment of a man's birth, the stars will cause such and such to happen to him. Do not regard this as a difficulty, for it is not fitting for a man to abandon the prevailing law and raise once again the counterarguments and replies (that preceded its enactment). Similarly it is not proper to abandon matters of reason that have already been verified by proofs, shake loose of them, and depend on the words of a single one of the sages from whom possibly the matter was hidden." Also, "It is not proper for a man to accept as trustworthy anything other than one of these three things: 1) clear proof deriving from man's reasoning; 2) what is perceived through one of the five senses; 3) what is received from the prophets or from the righteous. Anyone who accepts as trustworthy anything that is not of these three species, of him it is said: 'The simple believes everything' (Prov. 14:15). –Letter to the Community of Marseille"

Rambam teaches that we do not ignore what our minds tell us is proven fact, or accept matters with no basis in reason, perception, or Torah tradition. Segulas fail to meet any one of these three criteria.

Furthermore, we do not find our forefathers or prophets assuming arbitrary relationships to exist. When the matriarchs were barren, they and their husbands prayed to God and perfected themselves. No segulas were used. When the Jews were about to be attacked by the Egyptians they prayed to God. No segulas. And when the

(continued on next page)

Idolatry

“Tell a doctor to wear a red thread, instead of administering chemotherapy to a cancer patient, and he will mock you for your idolatrous ways. And ironically enough, tell the authors of this segula advertisement to rely on their segulas, instead of placing their ad in newspapers, and they too will realize their empty claims.”

children fell sick, Eliyahu and Elisha prayed to God, and they did not use objects or amulets. We are supposed to learn from the Torah and the Prophets, not ignore them and prefer today's foolishness instead. In our precious Torah, we do not find in even the most dire of straits, that the prophets, Jews or the Avos resorted to anything outside the laws of nature, or prayer. Even when Shmuel was ordered by God to replace King Saul and anoint David, he feared for his life, that “Saul will hear this and he will kill me”. (Shmuel I, 16:2) Here, Shmuel was under God's prophetic command, yet, he did not feel natural law would change and protect him from a mad, jealous King Saul. How much less are we to assume natural laws to halt, simply because we wear dyed thread? And do not think that reciting Tehillim or Shir HaShirim are any different, simply because one utters Torah verses. For we already read Rambam's ridicule of this practice. We are not allowed to add new practices viewing them as part of Jewish life. This violates God's command to not add to the Torah. Why then are Jews manufacturing amulets and seeking quick fixes and not the path of the Avos? The answer: lack of proper Torah education on Judaism's Fundamentals. If Torah was properly taught, Jewish students, now parents and elders, would know the Fundamentals, one being that Reward and Punishment is based on perfection, not magical cures. With this conviction, no intelligent person would accept the promise of segulas, as they contradict the Fundamentals.

Tell an investor to bake a key in a challa, in place of an intellectual analysis of the market. He will laugh in your face, and will rightly not risk his hard earned dollars with foolish acts. Tell a doctor to wear a red thread, instead of administering chemotherapy to a cancer patient, and he too will mock you for your idolatrous ways. And ironically enough, tell the authors of this segula advertisement to rely on their segulas, instead of placing their ad in newspapers, and they too will realize their empty claims.

Rambam teaches (Mishneh Torah, Laws of Idolatry, 11:12) regarding one who recites Torah verses for ulterior motives, “It is not enough that they are like enchanters and warlocks, but they are categorized as heretics, that they render the Torah a remedy for the body, when it is only a remedy for the soul. But it is permitted to recite Tehillim so that the merit will shield one from future harm.” Rambam distinguishes between reciting Tehillim so as to remove an existing negative, which is heresy, and between reciting Tehillim to be a merit somehow to avert future harm, which is permitted. However, even “permitted” does not mean it is “suggested”. For Rambam wrote in his previous law (11:11) the reciting of verses to heal snakebite “does

absolutely nothing”. Nonetheless, it was permitted for the psychological ease it affords. But with no effects whatsoever – psychological or physical – reciting Torah verses not for learning purposes would be heresy.

Following Rambam's rule, we realize the lies of segulas in all three areas: 1) “Reason” – our investor example teaches segula's nonsense; 2) “Experience” – segulas do not work practically, or conform to natural law, and 3) “Torah” – God, Yeshaya, Rambam and the Tosefta ridicule man's adherence to lies. Segulas violate reason, natural law, and God's words respectively. Such claims merely lift the hopes of the foolish and ignorant, letting them down time after time.

God granted us a Tzelem Elokim, “intelligence”, precisely that we engage it to distinguish between that which conforms to reason, and that which does not. And our barometer of reason is that which accurately explains universal laws. Chovas HaLevavos' author Rabbi Bachya states that if one does not use his mind, he sins.

We do not blindly cross a highway depending on red strings to stop a car darting at us at 90mph. Similarly, we must not accept the unreasonable practices of our fellow Jews, and rely on objects to save us, when it is only God who can do so, and only through His prescribed means: basing our actions on sound reason, proven natural law, or the words of the Torah. And nowhere in the Torah, Neveim or Kasuvim do we find the Avos or the Neveim relying on objects or practices alien to reason and natural law.

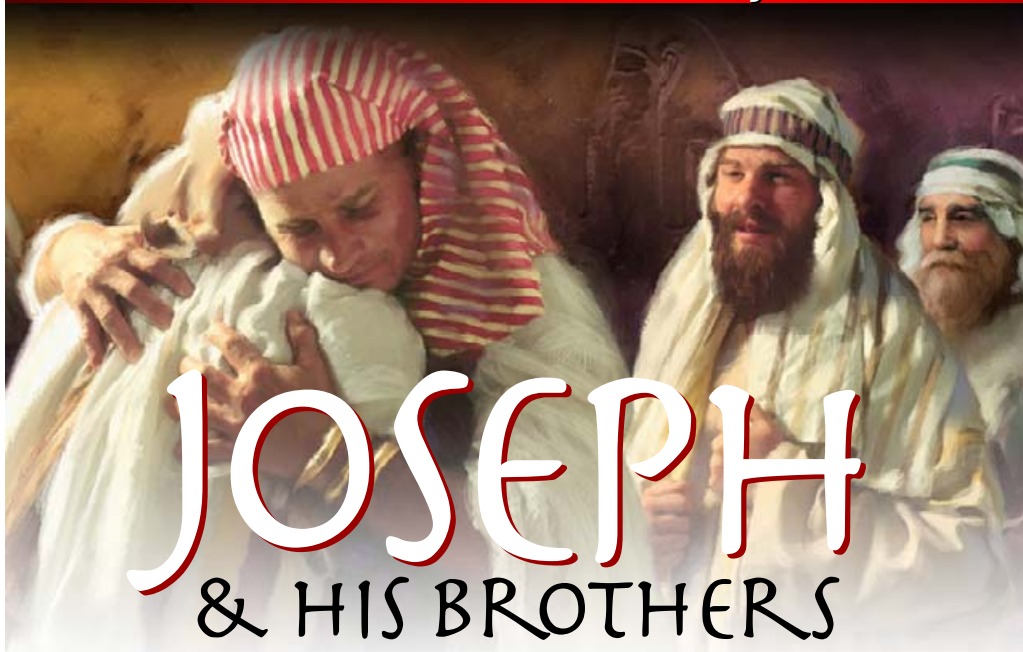
If we truly wish to help our brothers and sisters who are off the true path, we must first teach what is authentic Torah Hashkafa, not popular “cures” which in fact disappoint, circumvent the use of our Tzelem Elokim, and ignore the Torah lessons of the Avos, our Rabbis, and the Neveim. ■



Ph: 516.792.0200
Fx: 516.792.9503
JL@JLichter.com

Law Office of
Joseph E. Lichter

Real Estate Closings Contracts
Leases Wills Estate Planning



JOSEPH & HIS BROTHERS

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

In analyzing Joseph's relationship with his brothers we must ask several salient questions which will help shed light on the entire sequence of events recited in the Torah.

We must first analyze the source of the brothers' hatred of Joseph. Joseph was their father's favorite since he was born the son of his old age. However, Joseph reinforced their resentment by telling his brothers the content of two dreams that he had. This fact indicated his arrogant nature. The dreams were obviously divinely inspired. However, we must understand why there were two dreams. Furthermore, the brothers' response to each dream was different. The first dream was concerning the bundles of wheat. The brothers' response to this dream was continued hatred. The second dream concerning the constellations evoked a different response; the brothers were jealous while Jacob heeded this dream.

The difference between the dreams can help us appreciate the different responses. The first dream reflected that Joseph would rule them physically. The bundles of wheat represent physical sustenance. Thus the brothers hated him even more for they resented that they would be physically subservient. However, the second dream reflected that Joseph would be the mentor, that he would lead them spiritually as well: the constellations represent spirituality. This evoked a response of jealousy. However, Jacob heeded the dream because he recognized Joseph's potential. We must appreciate that the brothers' envy was based upon the fact that Jacob had chosen Joseph as the one who would be the leader and carry forward the tradition.

The brothers did not act upon mere jealousy. They determined, based upon Joseph's vanity and narcissism, that he was not deserving of such an honor. He constantly told their father lashon hara, derogatory talk concerning them. His revealing to them his dreams reinforced their opinion that he was arrogant and unworthy. It reinforced their image of his vanity. Jacob, however, realized Joseph's intellectual abilities and conviction and realized in time he would mature and mold his character as a wise man. As time passed Jacob's assessment of Joseph's abilities and nature was proven accurate.

The brothers sinned by misjudging the situation and not trusting their father. The dreams merely bolstered the resentment that they had for Joseph. As a result they sinned by allowing their emotions to control their actions and shape their opinion. They committed an injustice against their brother by selling him into slavery. They did not realize, because of his arrogance and vanity, that he was capable of change. This was the background that set the stage for Joseph's encounter with his brothers some thirteen years later.

At the outset, an important footnote throughout the entire ordeal must be examined. The brothers, during their entire encounter with Joseph, did not recognize him, nor suspect that the Viceroy could be Joseph, despite their intimate knowledge of him. This incongruity could be explained because of the very nature of their sin. They miscalculated Joseph's potential for greatness. They viewed him as a vain and arrogant person. Accordingly, they felt by

selling him into slavery, it would ensure that Joseph would not be the mentor. They felt that such an egotistical and vain person would succumb to the life of the physical. They thought the support and security of his father and family was essential and without it, he would desert the tradition. Therefore, the Medrash tells us that when they entered Egypt they looked for Joseph in the houses of ill repute. They never imagined nor appreciated Joseph's true intellectual conviction and ability to elevate himself to a higher level. This essentially was their "chate", sin. They misjudged his abilities and failed to realize that he was still a child at the time they passed judgment, and capable of change. Therefore, this image was still in their mind and prevented them from ever imagining that Joseph was the Viceroy.

When analyzing the entire sequence of events commencing with the brothers' descent into Egypt, and their meeting with Joseph and his ultimate revelation of his identity, one gets a rather prolonged, detached series of events without any type of logical nexus. Furthermore, many of Joseph's actions seem petty. When he recognizes his brothers he remembers his dreams and he responds by accusing them of being spies. Why didn't he reveal his identity to his brothers immediately? How come Joseph continues to place his brothers through a series of ordeals? The most encompassing question and perhaps the most disturbing, is once Joseph had the ability, why didn't he communicate with his father and tell him of his well-being. Surely he would have spared Jacob undue suffering.

In order to start to appreciate the import of these questions, we must assert one logical proposition: Joseph's entire intentions were to benefit his brothers by affording them the opportunity to do teshuva, repentance. All the events can be explained by keeping this motif in mind when analyzing each event. Joseph used his ingenuity throughout the entire sequence and did not arouse suspicions in order to enable the events to develop in a manner that would facilitate their ability to do "teshuvah gemura", complete repentance.

Joseph foresaw that his brothers would be coerced to come to Egypt to buy provisions because of the famine. As a result, he viewed the situation as the opportune time to allow his brothers to repent. He was hoping that they would search for him and rectify the situation. Upon their first meeting with Joseph he acted as a stranger to them. The Torah tells us that Joseph remembered the dreams and accused them of being spies. Joseph was not vengeful. He was aware that the prophecy would become

(continued on next page)

(Joseph continued from page 7)

Weekly Parsha

true and that this presented an opportunity to allow his brothers to change and ultimately acknowledge him as the mentor. Genesis 42:3 states, "And the ten brothers of Joseph went down to Egypt to buy provisions." Rashi comments that they are referred to as Joseph's brothers because they regretted their actions and were determined to buy Joseph's freedom, at whatever price. Thus they had started on the path of repentance. In fact, they entered Egypt from ten separate entrances. This would facilitate their secondary mission of searching for Joseph and obtaining his freedom. However, Joseph's accusation of their being spies had to have a basis in order to dispel any suspicions. He knew that they entered from different entrances in order to search for him. He thus concluded that they felt guilty and realized that this presented an opportunity for him to question them. As a result of their guilt they tried to impress Joseph by telling him that they were searching for their brother. They sought to impress him with their loyalty. Thus he asked them, if your brother couldn't be bought would you fight for him. They responded in the affirmative. Joseph had thereby set a basis for his accusations. They affirmed that they would break the law if necessary. Therefore, his claim that they were spies was valid.

Joseph thereby sought the imprisonment of Shimon for two reasons. He sought to have Benjamin brought to Egypt. He also desired to isolate one of the brothers. In order for it to be a complete repentance, the same situation must arise and the person must demonstrate that he has changed by not falling victim to the same trappings of the sin. Therefore, Joseph sought to create similar circumstances to afford them the opportunity of teshuva gemura, complete repentance. This required that they must face their father and advise him of their need to bring Benjamin to Egypt. They had to countenance their fathers' despair and take responsibility for Benjamin's well being.

Upon being presented with these circumstances the brothers stated that this sad state of events had befallen them because of their unjust actions against Joseph. Joseph heard their misgivings and turned from them and cried. Rashi comments that he cried because he heard that they had "charatta", they regretted their actions. It was not a mere emotional response. He cried because he realized that one of the components of teshuva was present. They had regrets over their past actions. The Torah specifically tells us that they were upset because they did not have mercy upon their brother (Joseph) when he cried to them. They were callous to his pleas for sympathy. However, he

could not reveal himself as yet, because he wanted to ensure that they would be completely forgiven and elevate themselves to a higher level of conduct. This could only be done after his entire plan had unfolded.

The Torah also affords us an interesting insight into the process of repentance. Genesis 42:22 states, "And Rueben answered them saying, 'Did I not speak unto you saying do not sin against the child and you would not hear, and also behold his blood is required'." Rueben's statement seems to be a response to a question. However, no question was asked. It follows the verse whereby the brothers acknowledge their guilt for not responding to Joseph's pleas for mercy. It therefore appears that since Rueben was the eldest, the brothers were attempting to shift much of the blame onto Rueben. However, Rueben's response was not merely defensive. Repentance demands that the wrong doer properly acknowledge his guilt. If one denies his culpability, he is incapable of doing teshuva and to change his character. The Torah emphasizes this point by phrasing Rueben's response as an answer. The brothers had to acknowledge their guilt if repentance was to be effective.

Upon their return home, Joseph secretly returned the money to them because he intended to keep them off guard. They suspected that he would accuse them of stealing the money. However, when they returned with Benjamin, he made no such accusation, but on the contrary he befriended them. This allowed him to place the cup in Benjamin's sack without raising suspicions. They totally discounted any doubts they had because he did not question the earlier incident. Psychologically he allayed any fears that they may have possessed. Therefore, on their return, he ate and drank with them and they feasted together.

It is interesting to note that since Joseph was sold into slavery, he did not drink wine. He missed their absence. Although he was ruler of a great land and had his own children, there was still a void in his life. He respected his brothers as wise men, as individuals with whom he shared a common intellectual heritage. This vacuum was always felt and prevented him from indulging in wine. This day, with his brothers present, he allowed himself to partake.

Before sitting down to the meal he used his cup ostensibly as a tool for divination. He sat them in order at the meal based upon their ages. The brothers were amazed. They did not suspect magic but were in awe of the fact that he was totally prepared for their meeting and had obtained such detailed information about them. He used the cup because it would serve as the

perfect excuse for Benjamin's unlawful possession of the cup. Benjamin ostensibly stole the cup to help him find his brothers whereabouts. At the meal he desired to foster their emotions of jealousy, so he sat with Benjamin. He again discounted their suspicions by claiming that he would sit with Benjamin since they both did not have mothers. Joseph also favored Benjamin by giving him portions five times greater than the other brothers. Joseph was not merely expressing his fondness for Benjamin. He was recreating the same situation that existed between Jacob and himself. In furtherance thereof, he placed the goblet in Benjamin's sack. He wanted to place Benjamin in jail in order to recreate his entire ordeal, to the greatest extent possible.

The brothers responded by ripping their garments and acknowledging that G-d was punishing them for their sin of selling Joseph. Thereby, Judah made an appeal on behalf of his brothers for Benjamin's freedom. He acknowledged their guilt by selling Joseph and offered himself as a slave in Benjamin's stead. Judah's appeal was a lengthy plea to Joseph's compassion. They had to appeal to his mercy because they couldn't deny their guilt and say that Joseph set them up. They also sinned against Joseph by not acting compassionately. A complete teshuva demanded that they recognize their oversight; therefore they were coerced into appealing to his kindness. Thus, when they offered themselves in Benjamin's place, they demonstrated that they were at a higher level of perfection and their repentance was complete. Joseph immediately revealed himself unto his brothers. Upon his revelation, his primary concern was his father Jacob's welfare. Until this point he could not inform his father that he was still alive. To do so, would have prevented his brothers, the progenitors of B'nai Yisrael, of doing teshuva, repentance. Had he advised his father earlier of what transpired, the brothers might have been incapable of facing their father. They might have fled and this would have jeopardized the continued existence of B'nai Yisrael. Accordingly, Joseph was forced into remaining silent. However, after they did teshuva and elevated themselves to a higher level, they were able to face their wrongdoing. Therefore, when their repentance was complete and he was able to reveal himself, he immediately sent a message to Jacob advising him that he was still alive. This message contained an allusion to the last topic they were learning together. This served to comfort Jacob, for he realized that the tradition would be carried on through Joseph, as Jacob had envisioned. ■

Letters

When Man is to Blame for His Errors

*Independent
Thought*

NATIV WINIARSKY

Rabbi:

Towards the end of your article entitled "Astrology – Disregarding the Incomprehensible", which is an absolute "must read" for all individuals interested in religion (and not just Jews), there appears to be a rather innocuous statement that is simply stated, but carries far-reaching implications and is of supreme import. You write:

"Our methods of decision making are crucial, not who we follow in the end. This may sound odd, but provided we use our intellects granted by God, we are not to blame for concluding something God knows is false. The principle "Lo Beshamyim Hi (It is not in heaven)" teaches that our objective is not to make sure we know what God knows, but that we arrive at decisions to the best of our abilities."

While I applaud you for this courageous declaration, and am in general agreement with you (provided some caveats are first expressed which are explicated below), we should be aware that the position you expressed has been the subject of a great debate amongst the greatest minds Judaism has produced and has piqued the interest of many of our Sages.

Given the utmost veneration I know you have for the Rambam, I begin with his famous commentary to Perek Helek of Tractate Sanhedrin of the Mishnah wherein he sets forth Judaism's thirteen (13) principles of faith. After setting forth all thirteen (13) principles, he states:

*"When all these foundations are perfectly understood and believed in by a person, he enters the community of Israel and one is obligated to love and pity him and to act towards him in all ways in which the Creator has commanded that one should act towards his brother, with love and fraternity. Even were he to commit every possible transgression, because of lust and because of being overpowered by the evil inclination, he will be punished pursuant to his rebelliousness, **but he has a portion of the world to come.** But if a man doubts any of these foundations, he leaves the community of Israel, denies the fundamentals, and is called an apikores (heretic), and one who 'cuts among the plantings.' One is required to hate him and destroy him." (Emphasis added)*

Thus Rambam holds that the individual who accepts his 13 principles is entitled to join the community of Israel and as a result thereof, he is

entitled to be treated with love, pity, and fraternity. Moreover, and perhaps of even more far reaching impact, one's entitlement to the world to come is solely conditioned on his accepting of the 13 principles as propounded by the Rambam. Critically, and in stark contrast to the position expressed in your article, denial (or rather the mere "doubting") of any of the principles causes one to be excluded from the community of Israel with the consequence that a Jew is halachally obligated to hate and destroy such a person.

Therefore, we see that Rambam denies the very possibility deduced from your article, specifically, "the objective is not to make sure we know what God knows, but that we arrive at decisions to the best of our abilities." Thus, there is no room within Rambam's system for the inadvertent or accidental heresy (kefirah be-shogeg). Accordingly, even if a person denies a Torah teaching (or affirms a teaching denied by the Torah) because he thinks that is what the Torah demands of him, he is still a heretic, cut off from the Jewish people, and denied a portion in the world to come. In order to be considered a heretic it is sufficient to question the principles for any reason and Rambam makes no distinction between the adoption of incorrect beliefs intentionally, and the adoption of incorrect beliefs unintentionally. It is assumed that Rambam's position is predicated upon the position that if one's faith is defined by the specific beliefs one holds, then, if one holds incorrect beliefs, for whatever reason, one is a heretic.

Nor can it be asserted that we are taking Rambam out of context or making too much of the matter. In fact, the position being ascribed to the Rambam is supported by the Rabad of Posquieres. In attacking Rambam's position that anyone who believes God has a body is an apikores (heretic), the Rabad comments:

"Why has he called such a person an apikores (heretic)? There are many people greater than and superior to him who adheres to such a belief on the basis of what they have seen in verses in Scripture and even more in the words of those aggadot which corrupt right opinion about religious matters." (See Twersky, Rabad of Posquieres, pg. 282)

It is very much doubted that Rabad sought to validate belief in the corporeality of God. It was clearly his point, rather, that even though God was incorporeal, a simple soul might be led by the highly anthropomorphic accounts of God in the Bible and in the midrashim to believe that

(continued on next page)

(Blame continued from page 9)

Letters

God had a body. Such a person whose misbelief (as you would define it in your article) was occasioned by honest mistake, and who thought that he was believing what the Torah thought, ought not to be considered a heretic.

In accord with the Rambam's position on this issue, Abravenel, while emphatically and pointedly disagreeing with Rambam's reduction of Judaism's principles to a mere thirteen (13), states in his Rosh Amanah, xii (p.122) "...for a false opinion about any one of the principles of faith (which includes every teaching and proper interpretation of the Torah) turns the soul from its true felicity and will not bring one to life in the world to come, even if the opinion is held without intention to rebel." This must be so, for if it were otherwise:

"Even one who unintentionally denies every principle will acquire a portion in the world to come...It would be possible, according to this, to find a man who does not believe in any of the principles or beliefs in the Torah and yet who should not be called an apikores (heretic) if he were brought to this blind foolishness by his failure to understand the meaning of the Torah."

In further support of this position that inadvertent heresy is not an option within Judaism, Abraham Bibago states in his Derech Emunah, iii, 5:

"Rabad's statement is really amazing to me since if it were correct everyone who denied a principle without meaning to would have an excuse and a portion in the world to come. Even the belief of the Christians would not be inconsistent with true felicity since they understand Scripture literally and that think the intention of the verses as they believe it. On this basis, they would not thereby be called heretics and sectarians. It would be possible to find a man who does not believe in any one of the principles or beliefs of the Torah because of his failure to understand the meaning of the Torah. On this position such a one would be called neither a sectarian nor heretic. All this opposes reason and faith."

Taking a position far more cognizant of the positions expressed in your article, Rabbi Shimon ben Zemah Duran expressed quite different ideas in his Ohev Mishpat (Chapter 9) that were quite remarkable for his times (and ours as well). For the sake of brevity, I have excised the full quote, which touches not only upon this important topic but also on many critical matters of Judaism that are at the heart of our faith and strongly encourage readers to seek out his work.

"You also ought to know that one who has properly accepted the roots of the Torah but was moved to deviate from them by the depths of his speculation and who thereby believed concerning one of the branches of the faith the opposite of which has been accepted as what one ought to believe and tries to explain the verses of Scripture according to his own belief, even though he errs he is no denier. For he was not brought to this deviation by heresy at all and if he found a tradition from the Sages to the effect that he ought to turn away from the position he had adopted, he would do so. He only holds that belief because he thinks it is the intention of the Torah. Therefore, even though he errs he is not a denier and apikores (heretic) according to what is agreed upon by our people since he accepted the roots of the Torah as he should."

This discussion has now brought us to the point where we can rise to the defense of the scholars of our nation who adopted alien ideas which we are forbidden to believe. We are not permitted to denigrate them because of this and say that they belong to sects which reject the Shechinah, heaven forefend – may there be none like that in Israel – for they have perfect faith, they are careful to avoid violating the commandments of the Torah, and they strengthen themselves to observe the commandments properly."

In this brilliant and rather courageous analysis, Duran's position that concerns us here depends upon the well entrenched distinction between transgressions committed purposefully (be-meizid) and transgressions committed inadvertently (be-shogeg). Only that person who purposefully rejects a Torah teaching, Duran thus maintains, can be considered a heretic. A person who rejects such a teaching without meaning to rebel against the Torah (the very same person described in your article) is no heretic.

Joseph Albo, in the first chapter of his first treatise of his Sefer ha-Ikkarim, further supports the quite startling, if not sympathetic, conclusions reached by Duran (although in seemingly less enthusiastic terms) and opens the chapter with the following statement:

"But a person who upholds the Torah of Moses and believes in its principles, but when he undertakes to investigate these matters with his reason and scrutinizes the texts, is misled by his speculation and interprets a given principle otherwise than it is taken to mean at first sight; or denies the principle because he thinks that it does not represent a

sound theory which the Torah obliges us to believe; or erroneously denies that a given belief is a fundamental principle, which however he believes he believes the other dogmas of the Torah which are not fundamental principles, or entertains a certain notion in relation to one of the miracles of the Torah because he thinks that he is not thereby any of the doctrines which it is obligatory upon us to believe by the authority of the Torah – a person of this sort is not a heretic. He is, rather, classed with the sages and pious men of Israel, though he holds erroneous theories. His sin is due to error and requires atonement."

All this having been stated, the position you expressed in your article and adopted by Duran, Albo, and Rabad (and probably Cresces whose position from his Or Adoni I omitted for sake of brevity), to wit, that one who rejects a Torah belief by mistake and with no intention to rebel against God is neither cut off from the community of Israel nor excluded from the world to come – is not necessarily a position of theological anarchy. I do not believe it is your nor their position that there are no correct theological beliefs or the concept of Orthodoxy as we know it today. Rather, and correct me if I am wrong as it relates to you, the position of the among mentioned Sages seem to be that the criterion of true orthodoxy is not the rigid acceptance of certain carefully formulated catechismal beliefs so much as the general acceptance of the Torah and trust in God.

It ought to be further noted that the position attributed to the above mentioned Achronim does not maintain that a person who mistakenly rejects a belief taught by the Torah, or a person who mistakenly accepts a belief rejected by the Torah, ought to be allowed to persist in his mistake. Such a person, apparently, should be corrected, but critically, ought not to be castigated as an unbeliever and condemned to perdition.

Accordingly, perhaps we should conclude this analysis by stating that while Rambam and Abravenel would reject as heretics persons who even mistakenly adopted incorrect beliefs, the other Sages cited (and you perhaps) would condemn as heretics only those Jews who consciously rejected Torah teachings as an act of rebellion against God.

Which theory is correct? As one Rabbi once said, "Our allegiance to theory must be based on proof, perception, or Torah Traditions."

–Nativ Winiarsky

SACRIFICE



SOCIETAL ORDER II

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

Written by student

“On three things the world stands: Torah, avodah, gemilut chasadim.”

After having setup the framework of the Mishna as referring to the maintenance of social order, we last explained how Avoda, sacrificial service, applies to this framework according to the opinion of the Ramban. We would like to now understand the position of the Ramban on sacrifices in general and his explanation of sacrifices being relevant to our Mishna. Let us review the various statements of the Ramban and the questions we were left with.

The Ramban on our Mishna says that Avoda refers to the safekeeping of commandments in general which are the sacrifices. We pointed out that this statement is quite problematic: sacrifices themselves are a type of commandment. Therefore, how could one term refer to both, commandments in general and a specific type of commandment?



The next step is to understand the general institution of sacrifices according to the Ramban. We started with the Ramban's commentary on the Torah where he quotes the Ramban from the Moreh Nevuchim (Guide to the Perplexed, Book 3, Chapter 46) who says that the Jews had lived amongst idolatrous nations, such as the Egyptians, who would use animals to sacrifice to their gods. Therefore God commanded the Jews to use those animals as sacrifices so that we redirect those animal offerings which they used for sin, in order to serve God. In this way, says the Ramban, there can be a cure for the 'sickness of the soul' by going to the opposite extreme. After quoting the Ramban's opinion, the Ramban launches a number of criticisms on this approach. We will focus on one of those criticisms. The Ramban says that according to the Ramban's idea, sacrifices won't be a 'cure' but rather will be even more harmful. He explains this as due to the idolaters' assumption that these animals have power, so they were used in worship, and now the Jews are going to give honor to this belief by using those very animals in the worship to God! The best method to counter idolatry would have been to eat those animals, while it was forbidden to them, in order to show how stupid are their beliefs.

To fully appreciate the Ramban's opinion we need to look at another comment of his on sacrifices, also written in the Moreh Nevuchim (Book 3, Chapter XXXII). The Ramban says that it is impossible for beings to suddenly go from one extreme to another, and that is the reason for certain commandments. An example he gives is that in those times it was customary to perform sacrificial rituals to idols. Therefore, God did not prohibit these types of worship, since that would be against the nature of man. Rather, God commanded that these activities be performed to Him alone and to no other being.

When we compare this explanation with the one quoted above by the Ramban, we are faced with two seemingly contradictory reasons why sacrifices are required. According to this last statement, it seems the commandment of sacrifices was given because the Jews were not be able to cleanly break from their attachment to that form of worship, so God had to allow for it in some context; namely that they only be brought to Him. However, according to the Ramban, the reason for the commandment seems to be the exact opposite: sacrifice was a method of teaching the correct ideas through breaking the emotion towards idolatry. Is sacrifice a way of breaking the emotions toward the primitive form of worship or not?

The Ramban says it would have been too difficult to give up sacrifices as a method of worship so what had to be changed was the object of worship. Clearly, the Jews had to be removed from the primitive framework of idolatry and directed towards true ideas. How was this

done? The sacrifices commanded in the Torah have a unique system of the Temple and the Priests: only with these circumstances and with certain people could sacrifices be brought. In this way, the primitive emotions would always be in check, subordinated to the guidelines and ideas of Halacha (Jewish law). Halacha safeguards our correct use of the Temple; it is regulated by logic and ideas. Conversely, primitive emotions (expressed in pure idolatrous sacrifice) are attached to particular actions and objects. It was vital that man remove himself from that emotional mindset and relate to the universal ideas of halacha. This is also the reason why only the Priests could bring the sacrifices – as they were the ones who were entrusted with the system of Halacha, and they generally worked only two weeks a year in the Temple so that they were involved in Torah study the rest of the time. Thus we see how the two statements of the Ramban work well together in defining the overall framework of sacrifice. While man could not give up worship through sacrifices quickly, the system given by God was constructed in a way where it broke the primitive emotions of man and directed them towards reality.

Now we are in a position to understand how the Ramban would answer the Ramban's question. The Ramban argued that allowing sacrifices to be brought would only encourage the false ideas of other nations and religions. The Ramban may answer that when done according to Halacha, the primitive emotions cannot prevail. The Temple is diametrically opposed to primitive religions because now the primitive emotions are subjected to a rigorous intellectual system in Halacha so that they will be broken. The criticism of the Ramban is based on the premise that the same emotions from idolatry will carry through into the Torah's system of sacrifice. However, according to the Ramban, though the action may look the same as those of the other nations, the demanded framework of Halacha changes it. Thus the benefit of sacrifices is to break the primitive emotions of man.

With this understanding of the institution of sacrifice, we may now understand the Ramban's comment on our mishna. What does he mean that Avoda refers to safekeeping of commandments, which are the sacrifices? Sacrifices sublimate the emotions of man towards God. This idea is applicable for all commandments, though sacrifices are a specific, unique form of it. The term Avoda in the Mishna represents the removal of the primitive emotions in man, which is accomplished by all commandments, but by sacrifices to the highest degree. The commandments are for all man's basic needs whereas the institution of sacrifices is a specific response to a specific primitive emotion in man.

In the end, though, all commandments have the common denominator of removing man from his basic instincts. It is this idea that is necessary for 'the world to stand' as it essential that man perfects himself, raising himself to a higher level of existence, thereby permeating society with morally and intellectually correct ideas, and individuals. ■

JewishTimes Classifieds

Business Services

NYDesign.com
New York

Email: info@nydesign.com
Ph: 516-569-8888

Marketing and Design Services for Print and the Web. Free quote on your current marketing needs. Visit us online: www.NYDesign.com

Neshama

Cleveland, Ohio
Email: Fred Taub
Ph: 216-319-0688

Visit www.Neshama.org and see how you too can help save a life.

BRAEMAR TRADING

Edgware, London
Email: ALAN GINSBERG
Ph: 00447950780791

COLLECTOR WISHES TO BUY AND SELL NEW BANKNOTES OF SOUTH AFRICA, SOUTH WEST AFRICA, RHODESIA & PALESTINE MANDATE PREFERABLY DATED BEFORE 1950. CONTACT ALAN

Home Lighting Fixtures

Spring Valley
New York
Ph: 888-523-1999

Designers of custom lighting fixtures. Visit us online for great savings and free gifts: www.customlightingfixtures.com

Your Ad Here Free

See us online: www.Mesora.org/Classifieds
Your ad remains online for one month, at which time, you can repeat it as often as you wish.
Another free service from Mesora.org

The Yeshiva Gedolah Of West Hempstead
Presents:
The Chinuch Crisis:
Are Our Yeshivos Really Preparing our Children
for the 21st Century?
An Engaging Lecture & Q/A Session
Given By Rabbi Pinchas Rosenthal

Explore...

- How Children feel about Limudei Kodesh
- The connection between a positive Chinuch experience and a lifetime as an observant Jew
- The challenges your child faces that you did not



Rabbi Pinchas Rosenthal:

holds an M.A. in Educational Administration from Columbia University, Teachers College and has been a *mechanech* for the past twenty years.

He is currently the Dean of Torah Academy of Long Island in Syosset, NY.

Leave with...

- A sense of empowerment for dealing with the challenges of effective chinuch
- The realization that a positive and effective Chinuch experience is obtainable

Sat Night * January 7, 2005 * 7:30PM
Congregation Anshei Shalom
472 Hempstead Avenue
Admission is Free - Suggested Donation \$10.00
Light Refreshments Will Be Served
For Further information call The Yeshiva At: 516-882-3765
This Event Is Being Co-Sponsored By Congregation Anshei Shalom

Manage Your Finances Wisely:

- Understand & control finances.
- Invest for your child's education.
- Create emergency funds.
- Plan for your child's wedding.
- Build a diversified portfolio.
- Make a budget and stick to it.

Everyone dreams of the day they will retire. Make sure you are financially ready for those golden years. We provide comprehensive assistance. Or, if you are self directed, we can simply look over your shoulder to make sure you are on the right path. Contact us today: arif@fortunefinancialadvisors.com

FortuneFinancialAdvisors 718-327-8294

Free Ads!

Our Classifieds are free!
Just logon and type your ad:
www.Mesora.org/Classifieds

Your ad will appear on our website Classifieds, and here in the JewishTimes for a full month free. If afterwards you like the results, run it another month free!