

Parshas Ekev contains the 2nd paragraph of the Shema and the command of Tefillin that contains this text of God's promise of His intervention. Study His words and live by His promises. He created and governs the universe...and will protect His followers.

SPECIAL ISSUE
Kindness & Justice

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Weekly Parsha

Ekev

RABBI BERNARD FOX

"And if you will be obedient to my commandments that I command to you this day, and you will love Hashem your G-d and serve Him with all your heart and soul, then I will provide rain in its proper time - in the beginning and the end of the season - and you will gather your grain, oil and wine." (Devarim 11:13-14)

In these pesukim, Moshe relates Hashem's promise to Bnai Yisrael.

(continued on next page)

LEBANON

Absence of Law & Justice

WINTER

Reality; A group of Hamas terrorist marauders dig a long underground tunnel from Gaza into Israel, ambush an Israeli border patrol in Israel, kill two Israeli soldiers and capture another wounded Israeli soldier and take him into Gaza and hold him for ransom. A group of Hezbollah terrorists cross from Lebanon into Israel, ambush an Israeli border patrol, kill eight Israeli soldiers, capture two and drag them into Lebanon; and demand that Israel release Islamic terrorists from their jails if they want to see the captured Jewish soldiers alive.

Hamas is a democratically elected political movement; the Palestinian people electing them to speak and act in their behalf.

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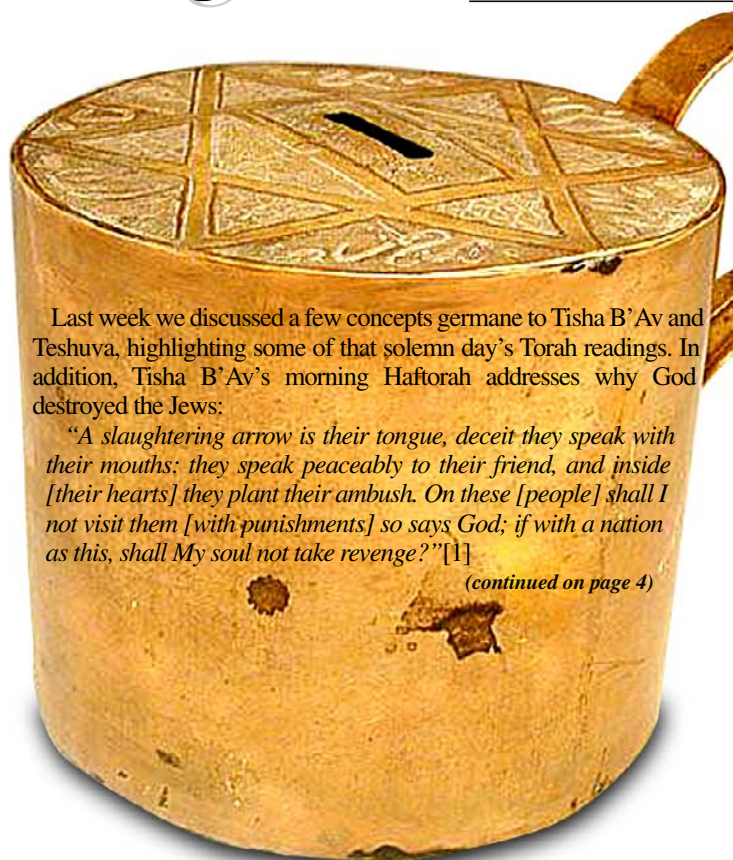
Justice Kindness & Righteousness

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Last week we discussed a few concepts germane to Tisha B'Av and Teshuva, highlighting some of that solemn day's Torah readings. In addition, Tisha B'Av's morning Haftarah addresses why God destroyed the Jews:

"A slaughtering arrow is their tongue, deceit they speak with their mouths; they speak peaceably to their friend, and inside [their hearts] they plant their ambush. On these [people] shall I not visit them [with punishments] so says God; if with a nation as this, shall My soul not take revenge?"[1]

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(Ekev cont. from pg. 1)

Weekly Parsha

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The nation must be obedient to the Torah. The people must wholeheartedly love and serve the Almighty. Hashem promises that, in return, He will assure that the land produces its bounty. These passages are recited in the second paragraph to the Shema.

In Tractate Berachot, the Talmud describes a fundamental dispute regarding these passages. Rebbe Yishmael notes that the passages above tell us that if we observe the commandments of the Torah, then we will successfully gather our harvest. The passages promise that our observance will be rewarded with abundant harvests. But the passages also imply that we will be responsible for the gathering of these harvests. Rebbe Yishmael asks a simple question. The Torah admonishes us to devote ourselves to the ceaseless and uninterrupted study of the Torah. In His charge to Yehoshua, Hashem commands him, "This Sefer Torah should not be removed from your mouth. You should contemplate it day and night." [1] It seems that Hashem is suggesting that we should strive to achieve constant study of the Torah. Rebbe Yishmael points out that this seems to contradict the message of our passages. Our passages tell us that Hashem will provide us with abundance but we must actually harvest the bounty. Hashem's charge to Yehoshua seems to indicate that we should not involve ourselves with the mundane – gathering the harvest. Instead, we should devote all of our time and energy to the study of Torah!

Rabbi Yishmael suggests a resolution for this problem. He explains that Hashem's charge to Yehoshua should not be understood literally. We are not expected to study without interruption and completely neglect the necessities of our material existences. We should devote ourselves to the study of the Torah but also give proper attention to our practical needs. In other words, we are required to care for our needs and gather our harvest. But we must not allow these material needs to become our main focus. Instead, the study of Torah must be the focus of our lives.

Rebbe Shimon ben Yochai argues with Rebbe Yishmael. His objection is interesting. He observes that mastery of the Torah requires complete devotion. If a person must plow his fields, plant his grain, harvest the crop and then perform all of the activities required to produce the final product, a tremendous amount of his time and energy will be expended in these efforts. The time and energy that remains will be inadequate for the mastery of the Torah. Therefore, he suggests that we should not concern ourselves with materials issues. Hashem will provide for us.

In short, these two authorities disagree on the extent to which we should rely on Hashem to

provide for us. Rebbe Yishmael asserts that we should not assume that we can ignore the practical necessities of life. We must devote ourselves to the study of Torah. But we cannot ignore our practical needs. Rebbe Shimon ben Yochai suggests that we rely completely on Hashem. Our responsibility is to study the Torah. Hashem will provide for our needs. We should not divert our attention from the study of Torah.

The discussion concludes with the comments of Abaye. Abaye notes that those who adopted the approach of Rebbe Shimon ben Yochai generally failed. But those who adopted the approach of Rebbe Yishmael generally succeeded. [2] Since the Talmud's discussion ends with Abaye's comments, it seems that the Talmud adopts the position of Rebbe Yishmael.

However, Maimonides seems to adopt the position of Rebbe Shimon ben Yochai. Maimonides explains that when the Land of Israel was divided among the tribes of Bnai Yisrael, Shevet Leyve was not given a portion. Why was this shevet excluded from receiving a portion? Maimonides explains that Shevet Leyve was selected by Hashem to serve in the Bait HaMikdash, to study and to teach the Torah to the nation. In order to enable the members of Shevet Leyve to completely devote themselves to this sacred task, they were not given a portion of the Land of Israel. Instead, it is the obligation of the other members of the nation to provide Shevet Leyve with support.

Maimonides continues. He explains that Hashem does not only provide sustenance to Shevet Leyve. Any person who completely devotes himself to Hashem – to His serve the study of His Torah – can enjoy the same support provided to Shevet Leyve. Hashem will provide the person with his needs. Hashem will sustain him. [3] This seems to be Rebbe Shimon ben Yochai's position! This raises a question. Why does Maimonides adopt Rebbe Shimon ben Yochai's position? Based on Abaye's objections, the Talmud seems to accept Rebbe Yishmael's position! In other words, Maimonides seems to be arguing with the conclusion of the Talmud!

In order to understand Maimonides position, we must return to the discussion in the Talmud. On a superficial level, this discussion is difficult to understand. It seems that Rebbe Yishmael and Rebbe Shimon ben Yochai are arguing over whether Hashem will provide for those individuals who are dedicated to His service and the study of His Torah. Rebbe Yishmael contends that they must provide for themselves and Rebbe Shimon ben Yochai contends that Hashem will provide for such individuals. Abaye seems to take the position that the issue can be resolved through observation. Observation indicates that Rebbe

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Weekly Parsha

Yishmael is correct.

This simplistic understanding of the Talmud's discussion presents a difficulty. It seems that Abaye is siding with Rebbe Yishmael because observation indicates that Rebbe Shimon ben Yochai is incorrect in his assessment. His position is not consistent with the observable facts! In other words, Rebbe Shimon ben Yochai does not understand how the world really works! Simply put, the implication is that Rebbe Shimon ben Yochai's position is based upon an uninformed and perhaps, naive view of the world!

Nachmanides, in his comment on our passages, provides the basis for an alternative understanding of the Talmud's discussion. Essentially, he contends that the degree to which Hashem provides for a person is proportionate to one's devotion to Hashem and His Torah. Hashem does provide for those who are completely dedicated. But one who does not achieve this ultimate level of devotion must be prepared to face the challenges of living in the material world and care for oneself.[4]

Based on these comments, we can understand the debate between Rebbe Yishmael and Rebbe Shimon ben Yochai. Both agree that Hashem provides for those who are completely devoted. However, they disagree on how we should conduct ourselves. Rebbe Yishmael suggests that – at a practical level – most of us cannot expect to achieve the level of devotion required to secure Hashem's complete and comprehensive support. We must strive to achieve the highest level of commitment that we can achieve. But we must be prepared to provide for ourselves. Rebbe Shimon ben Yochai suggests that we must strive towards the level of devotion that will secure Hashem's complete and comprehensive support. We must seek a level of devotion that will allow us to abandon all material concerns and distractions.

Abaye does not disagree with the fundamental premise outline by Nachmanides. He agrees that a person can secure Hashem's complete support. However, he questions the practicality of the average person taking this approach. He notes that the level of devotion that Rebbe Shimon ben Yochai would mandate is difficult to achieve and many have failed in their attempts to reach this level. Therefore, he suggests that – at a practical level – Rebbe Yishmael's approach is more appropriate.

Rebbe Shimon ben Yochai would not dispute Abaye's observation. It is difficult to achieve the level of commitment necessary to secure the complete support of Hashem. He would acknowledge that most people fail to achieve this exalted level. Nonetheless, we are required to strive for this commitment.

Now, let us return to Maimonides comments. According to this analysis, there is no contradiction between Maimonides' position and the conclusions of the Talmud. Maimonides is not adopting Rebbe Shimon ben Yochai's position. He is not suggesting that the Torah mandates that we forsake the concerns and distractions of the material world and rely completely on Hashem to provide for all of our needs. Instead, he is suggesting that if we choose such a path, and we are successful in achieving complete devotion,

Hashem will provide for us. This is completely consistent with the Talmud's discussion. ■

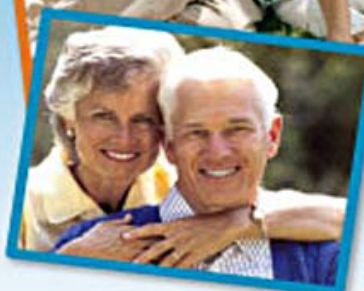
[1] Sefer Yehoshua 1:8.

[2] Mesechet Berachot 35b.

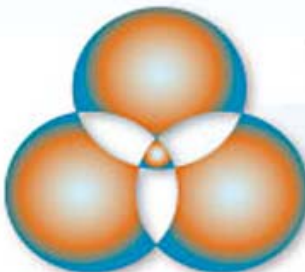
[3] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Shemitah Zve'Yovel 13:12-13.

[4] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Devarim 11:13.

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Kindness & Justice

God describes the evil for which He punished the Jews: they were two-faced and wished the destruction of their peers. We learn that baseless hatred "sinas cheenam" was the cause for the Temple's and the Jews' destruction. This sin stems from self-aggrandizement.

We then understand the conclusion of Jeremiah's words[2]:

"So says God, 'let not the wise man praise himself in his wisdom, nor the mighty in his might, nor the wealthy in his wealth. But only in this let the one who praises praise...understand and know Me for I am God, performing kindness, justice and righteousness in the Earth, for in these do I desire, so says God.'"

Since we learned that the Jews' sin was ego-motivated, the correction is to oppose the self with a true recognition of human equality through God's principles of kindness, righteousness and justice. Living as if one is the center of the universe allows one to trample underfoot another person. But recognizing another person with equal rights to one's self, we are enabled to treat them as ourselves...Hillel's very summation of the entire Torah, and Maimonides' concluding words in his "Guide".

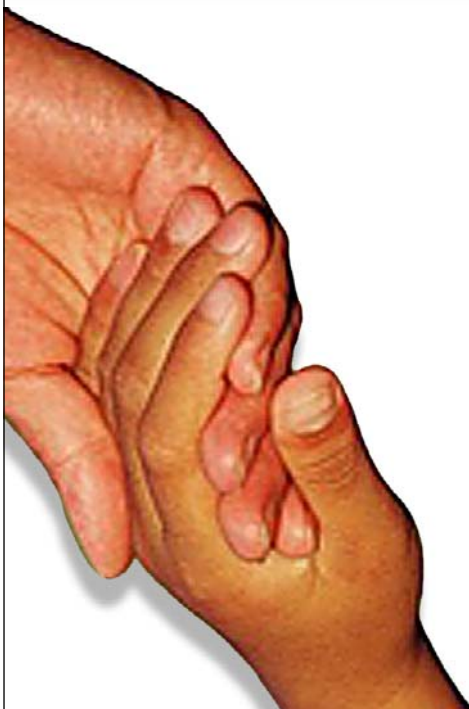
So important are these three traits, they are included in God's 13 Attributes, and they are God's consideration for giving Abraham descendants as numerous as the stars in heaven[3]:

"For I have loved him, for he commands his sons and his household after him, and he will guard God's path, performing righteousness and justice, in order that I bring upon Abraham what I spoke."

We also mention these values in our daily prayers (Shmoneh Esray) three times a day, and in Ashray, again three times a day. What I would like to focus upon is why these three values are so central to Torah.

Chessed, Mishpat & Tzedek

What is kindness, "Chessed"? Maimonides says this refers to acts of goodness towards one, upon whom nothing is due: i.e., a stranger, or even a parent, but giving him or her more than what is necessary. "Mishpat", justice, is the act of rewarding the good in others, and punishing their evil. And "Tzedek", righteousness, is acting in accord with what is morally due, i.e., giving a poor person indebted to you his only coat at nightfall, so he might not be cold...even though that coat is your rightful collateral for his debt. But we find "Tzedek" not only in connection with performing



acts for "others", but even towards one's self, and surprisingly...even towards God! How do we understand these two additional cases of righteousness? Deuteronomy 6:25 reads, "And righteousness will be to us, that we guard and observe to do all the commands..." The righteousness here refers to doing what is morally correct for "ourselves". It makes no difference that we are both, the acting and receiving party. For righteousness refers to any act, in which we uphold some moral truth. And as spiritual beings, we perform righteousness when we give our souls life through Torah observance.

But how does this explanation fit into God's praise of Abraham[4], "And He took him outside and He said, 'Gaze now at the heavens and count the stars if you can count them' and He said, 'So shall be [numerous] your seed.' And he [Abraham] trusted in God, and He considered his trust as righteousness." God says that He considered Abraham's trust in Him, as righteousness. This offers a deep insight into Abraham's keen perfections, and that God recorded these words, indicates that God desires us to know this perfection of Abraham.

What is this perfection? It is this: Abraham's sense of righteousness was not limited to the sphere of interpersonal relationships. Rather, Abraham's sense of righteousness was of such perfection, that he expressed it in relationship to God. Abraham's knowledge of God included the primary idea that God and truth are synonymous. Abraham understood God to be the source of all knowledge, and this reality to Abraham, surpassed all others. It was this recognition that compelled Abraham to ask, "How shall I know they [the

Jews] will inherit the land?"[5] He never doubted God, but always yearned to know more about this Creator of the universe. His gravity towards this amazing truth – that the universe as magnificent as it is has a Creator – was so intense that Abraham did not flinch when asked to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac. His relationship with this Creator overcame his subjective wishes.

Now, as Abraham viewed God essentially as the One with ultimate knowledge, he knew that God's word must be synonymous with truth, for God's will is that knowledge permeates the universe, and that He created man alone with intellect, for the sole purpose of apprehending knowledge. This explains why Abraham's trust in God is referred to as "righteousness". For Abraham paid to God what was due Him: i.e., trust. We then refine our definition of righteousness as "Giving what is due to any being": giving food to the hungry, money to the poor, Torah observance to ourselves, and trust in God. All these acts would rightfully be termed acts of "righteousness".

So important is our correct understanding and performance of righteousness, that God records this praise for Abraham acting righteously...even towards God. On a deeper note, this means that Abraham was not moved by interpersonal considerations, where his self-image was central, needy of human accolades. Abraham's sense of what was most important in life was in the realm of God. His relationship with God surpassed all other concerns. It was however due to this relationship, that Abraham was so concerned for mankind, and why he risked life and health to teach others. He understood this to be God's will, and God's will was Abraham's life. Abraham's perfection is seen in his relating to God, as we relate to our friends. Just as we express kindness towards those in our lives, Abraham surpassed us, expressing trust in God, as his method of displaying his conviction in God's faithfulness. Trust for Abraham, meant conviction in God's attributes.

To Abraham, God deserved his acts of righteousness, as it is befitting God that man "trusts" the One, who is the cause of all "truths". Righteousness refers to acts befitting the recipient.

(Why didn't Abraham act towards God with "kindness"? This is because kindness is applicable only in cases when the recipient is benefited, and nothing can benefit God. He is self-sufficient.)

God's Ultimate Kindness

But now, let us understand why kindness, righteousness and justice are Torah fundamentals. One Rabbi explained Divine "kindness" as God's creation of the universe and man, granting man existence so as to realize and enjoy the truth that God exists. Thus, God's creation of mankind was

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Kindness & Justice

the ultimate act of kindness, since we did not yet exist, and therefore, had no claim on God to do anything. His creation of us was with no obligation, no justice yet existed so as to demand He create man, and therefore, His creation of mankind is complete kindness.

This was the ultimate and first act of kindness. Therefore, when we are obligated by Torah to "be kind, since God is kind, to be merciful since God is merciful" we are in essence reflecting on God's act of creation, His paradigm act of kindness. The Torah command to be kind, then, is really a means of recognizing God as "Creator". For when we are kind, we do not follow our subjective notions and expression of kindness, but we must follow what God deems as kind. We do not heal murderers, or give money to idolaters. We must study God's definitions, since He alone determines what is kindness. And when we study His methods, we arrive at the original act of kindness: His creation of us. We conclude that the command to "be kind" is truly targeting the greater goal of our recognizing God as "Creator". And this concept is essential to our observance of the most satisfying life, since subservience to God's will, means we are following the One who knows what is best for us.

Common Bond

These three values have a unifying theme: they all address the area of 'relationships'. Kindness refers to relationships where the good is not necessary, but yet helpful; righteousness is when the good we do is warranted by the recipient's condition; and justice refers to a necessary "response" to others (be it reward or punishment) with the objective of perfecting or deterring the recipient. In all three cases, we relate to another based on our assessment of what is beneficial, befitting, or warranted. In all three cases, we are sustaining what we determine is "good".

A Rabbi once taught that although Torah study is the greatest mitzvah, it is essential that we enact those ideas we study. He explained that since man's life centers around the realm of interpersonal relationships, it is in these innumerable interactions that we can express conviction on those learned Torah values. For with knowledge alone, and no expression of those values, man's convictions are lacking. Humans are designed to express that which they are convinced. So the man who praises himself must praise that He knows God, who "performs kindness, justice and righteousness in the earth". This means that just as God's perfection is not theoretical, but put into practice, man too must emulate this great Divine perfection with his own actions.

Application to Lebanon

Another common bond is that all three perfections are truly proper, only because the recipient "deserves" our good actions. Situations deserve our good response if they meet with conditions approved of by God. God created life, so He alone determines when life is to be spared, or destroyed. As we mentioned earlier, we do not heal a murderer, but he is put to death. And in war, we must adhere to God's considerations, not the opinions of world leaders, political pressures, or our emotions evoked by pictures of dead children. God destroyed all life with His Flood, and on occasions, commanded us to do so, including

children[6]. He teaches that there are times and conditions when life is not to be preserved. And if we ignore God's considerations that are based on the ultimate good for us, we will cause the ultimate harm to ourselves.

For this reason, it is vital that the IDF and Israeli leaders confer with independent thinking and well-versed Rabbis so they may learn what is considered "just" in God's eyes when in battle, so they may properly favor the lives of IDF soldiers, over alien civilians. ■

[1] Jer. 9:7,8

[2] Jer. 9:22,23

[3] Gen. 18:19

[4] Gen. 15:5,6

[5] Gen. 15:8

[6] Deut 20:16

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Israel

Hamas doesn't recognize Israel's right to exist, and therefore the Palestinian people who elected them into office also deny the Jewish people the right to exist and to have a country of their own. When you elect people into office, who act, as you would wish them to act, the voters also become responsible for their actions.

Hezbollah is also a political movement that is part of the democratically elected Lebanese Parliament that also refuses to recognize Israel's right to exist; and fervently waits for the day when their parent organization in Iran will obtain nuclear weapons so they can wipe Israel off from the face of the earth.

So far so good, and fully understandable: it is not the first time that political movements that were democratically elected into power turn into the most murderous dictatorships in history. Why should it surprise anyone if Hamas and Hezbollah also did?

Like it or not Hitler and his henchmen were elected by the German people.

The Nazis as their Islamic co-ideologist counterparts were not bothered at all by the slaughter of the hundreds of thousands and even millions of inferiors being massacred in the name of Arian superiority; yet they were thoroughly shocked to their souls when a much smaller group of Germans in the cities of Dresden and Hamburg were bombed back to the stone age by the "uncivilized Americans" and the "Barbaric Soviets"... those appellations spoken by Nazi butchers, now echoed by "victimized" Lebanese leaders under Israel's defensive fire.

I marvel as I watch these Islamic fundamentalists busy killing innocent people all over the world. While at the same time bemoaning the plight of their children and the civilian population that they themselves put under the risk of death when using them as human shields as they target civilian populations all over the globe.

What is even sadder, and to me, far more grave to watch is the demonizing by the cowardly appeasers by the European nations of Israel, for daring to survive in face of the open threats of fundamental Islam to destroy the Jews, whether in their country Israel, or their people regardless where they are located.

Well actually the hate of Islam is not restricted to Jews only, they are an equal opportunity hate group. The blowing up of Christian churches and killing worshipers in the process, killing tourists in Luxor, Egypt, or massacring hundreds of school children in Russia, blowing up commuters by the hundreds, in Madrid, London, or India, is a mere routine and mundane exercise for the purpose of keeping in shape for the Islamic freedom fighters. The major undertaking of some earnest killings of course are reserved to the Islamic communities busy killing each other in a wholesale manner as in the past in Alger, Lebanon, and Iraq attacking Iran and Kuwait. Currently we have wholesale slaughtering taking place in Iraq, where Sunni's murder Shiite's by the hundreds of

thousands; and of course Shiite's slaughtering Sunni's with equal dedication. And we didn't even mention Afghanistan, or the Sudan where these genocidal murder-fests are ongoing for decades without respite. All these are taking place without shedding a single tear for the poor children who are falling victims to these vicious feuds that date back to time immemorial, nor is there a single tear shed for the female population of Islam that were deprived from schools, and even from the most simple human dignities.

The world of Islam sees nothing wrong with killing their own by the millions, so why would they see anything wrong with killing others? It is getting somewhat tiresome to watch the Islamic world complain if someone else lightens their burden and does a mere fraction of "their killing quota". Why be upset by the most brutal excesses of some American prison guards, when their gravest crime pales in comparison to the public hacking of heads off the innocents who were never at war with Islam, and their greatest crime was wanting to report on the plight or promises the future may hold for the following generations of Islam.

Why is it that people refuse to accept realities for what they are?

Why look for a common ground between Islam and other religions, when it doesn't exist. Islam is an uncompromising religion that is simply not designed to coexist, but designed to rule. All man-made religions are designed as such, except the others have long outgrown this self-deluding stage of their existence. Of course Christianity still would love to expand, and expand they do, except today because of the last few hundred years it was arduously courting the cultures of others to join their way of life, and they became so accommodating that they have fragmented beyond repair. Christians, Christianity, what does it mean today...Presbyterian, Baptist, Catholic, Protestant, Anglicans, and dozens of other fragments. What does it mean? What do they have all in common? The love of Jesus and the desire to love others, and be loved by others. Judaism...not searching for converts, just wants to be left alone to wallow in its self-fulfillment; and lay back and enjoy it slow miniaturization that is turning that religion from the world of reality, into realm of memory.

Islam on the other hand, may be best explained by what I did see on a French television station during the recent riots in France. A young man, looking as from Arab descent, was vigorously trying to explain to a journalist why they are upset. He was pointing to a French police unit while very agitated and vigorously explaining, "They came here to our territory to tell us what to do." For him it was no longer a French police officer in France, but a foreigner trespassing on Islamic territory.

Why look for something that doesn't exist: coexistence with Islam on equal terms.

Islam was, and is, an expansionist and imperialistic religion. Wherever Islam has come, it left no room for others. The glory of the Mesopotamian, Syrian and Egyptian cultures all gave way to the Arabs. Those conquered by Islam have lost their history, their language and their religions, all to the sword of Islam...the Arabs.

The world has a built in excuse for whatever the Islamic world does and they don't like or can't explain. Bush said after the World Trade Center attack that the "fundamentalists have hijacked Islam". Of course it was all nonsense, but it wasn't the first or the last time that western politicians were trampling over each other to exonerate Islam from it kidnappers.

Today when we talk about Lebanon it is fashionable to say that the Hezbollah overpowers the poor Lebanese as did the Palestinians in the good old days of Arafat. Of course that excuse no longer flies, since native Lebanese who are very active in the Lebanese political process, make up the Hezbollah.

So in spite of all the excuses people want to provide for the helplessness of the Lebanese political landscape, the final responsibility rests not with the Hezbollah or their sponsors Iran or Syria, but with the impotence or the lack of sufficient determination of the Lebanese political leadership.

Few remember that the Israelis in the very beginning of their existence had to make the same decision. David Ben Gurion made the choice easily: in a choice between great fighting forces at the cost of the constitutional right of a democratic government, it is a no-brainer. The choice has to be the state. It was at the time when Israel was in desperate need of weapons, and skilled fighters, and the Ship Altelena was loaded with both. The problem was that the ship did belong to the Irgun organization that was headed by Begin, while the government was represented by David Ben Gurion and Chaim Weizman. Ben Gurion insisted that any country could have only one government, and only one army. The showdown between Ben Gurion and Begin ended with Begin the famed "radical activist" leader giving into the reason of the inevitable logic of either order, or civil war. The man who translated Ben Gurion ideals into action was a small fry army officer by the name of Yitzchak Rabin.

As it relates to the history of Israel, the Jewish state had to face choices time and again that would be the catalyst of the relationship between the Jewish state and its neighbors. Israel has always guaranteed the political rights of their Arab population. Arabs, in addition to being able to participate in the mainstream political landscape, can also form their own political parties and elect representatives to the Israeli parliament. These Arab members of the Israeli parliament enjoy freedoms that are unknown to any of

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Israel

their counterparts in the Arab or Islamic countries.

How far the protection of the political rights of the Arab population of Israel extends cannot be better illustrated than the way the Israeli parliament dealt with Meir Kahana's political party. Meir Kahana did not advocate the destruction of the Arab countries, nor did he advocate the driving of the Arabs who live in Israel into the sea. He did not believe that Arabs and Jews could live in peace, he was an ardent Jewish nationalist, who was worried that the Arab population would eventually dwarf the Jewish population into a minority status, knowing what a minority status of the Jews was under the rule of an Islamic majority.

What he did propose was the expulsion of the Arab population from Israel to some other country. He wasn't proposing an inhumane forceful expulsion, without regard to humanistic values, but rather an orderly population exchange where the Arab population who were willing to go would get a generous financial compensation from the state of Israel. His reasoning was that the Jews who were forced out by the Arab countries have come to Israel without anything, having to leave all their belonging behind, and yet the newly formed Jewish

there are no short-term solutions for the problems that exist between the Jews and the Arabs.

To get an idea how deep is the divide that separates the two people from understanding even the problem so they could ponder a solution, even the name "Palestinian" is a stolen identity. It was the Jews who were the Palestinians until 1948; the others were called the Arabs.

To find the solution for all these fundamental differences lies in time, endurance and fundamental change in human thinking.

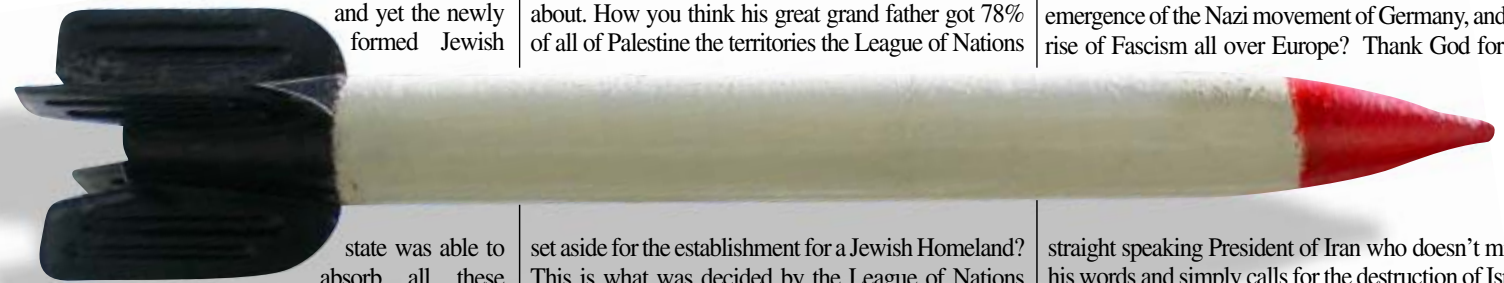
Recently the King of Jordan deciding to share the wisdom of the Arab world with us uncomprehending westerners, when saying the only alternative to a Palestinian state is violence. Meaning, create a Palestinian state and voile...no more violence.

Well, then what can be simpler then that...all we have to do is create a Palestinian state and the problem is solved? It sounds right, except that it has already was done in 1922, end it not only didn't solve the problem but instead made it into a much bigger problem. On the other hand, who am I to second-guess King Abdullah? He sure knows what he is talking about. How you think his great grand father got 78% of all of Palestine the territories the League of Nations

Jewish State how important it is to make Hamas happy, he leaves no stone unturned trying to eliminate the presence of Hamas from Jordan.

The most important component of the recent Hamas victory is not that the Palestinian authority was defeated, but that a party regardless how inept and insincere, wanted to have peace with Israel so they can establish yet another Palestinian state. Hamas on the other hand did not want peace with Israel and has no specific plan for statehood; instead they have a very specific and declared desire to eliminate Israel. It was with this political program that they have won a tremendous victory from the Arab population living on the territories of Palestine. It was a democratic election so no one can quarrel with the result, the people said, "we care nothing about an Independent Palestine...what's important for us is to destroy the presence of a Jewish state from our midst."

There are of course the multitudes of social engineers who are ready to explain that the Hamas victory was a vote for order to get out of the chaos and corruption that the PA left behind...and it was true. On the other hand wasn't that also the reason for the emergence of the Nazi movement of Germany, and the rise of Fascism all over Europe? Thank God for the



state was able to absorb all these Jewish refugees that numbered way in excess of the Jewish population of early Israel. The Arab nations that had the land and financial means of taking in their own, especially when they came to them with ample compensation, would be an easy task to implement. This proposition was so abhorrent in the eyes of the Israeli Jewish political establishments, that they declared the Kahana movement racist and expelled them from the Israeli parliaments. It is not the intent to judge whether Kahana was a racist or a Jewish patriot. Instead, to focus on the fact that Israel made a choice in which they found it more important to provide the full protection of their Arab citizens from the agitation against them. The Israeli parliament acted to remove even the seeds of possible racism by removing the platform from under Meir Kahana that could have promoted even the thought of separation of an Israeli citizen from its rights. Compare that to the rhetoric of the Hamas or Hezbollah, or Iran and Syria who are bent on the destruction of the state of Israel, and the extermination of its people.

So what is the solution, or is there no solution to the Israeli and Arab conflict?

Yes, the solution is to get used to the fact that there are no short-term solutions to the problems between Judaism and Islam; there are no short solutions for the differences between Israel and the Palestinians; and

set aside for the establishment for a Jewish Homeland? This is what was decided by the League of Nations after the First World War...after the British captured the land from the colonies of the Ottoman Empire. Yet no lesser man then the great Winston Churchill, a noteworthy British patriot with a keen sense of history fell as a child would, for these stupid demagogic words and set King Abdullah's great grand father of Abdullah the current King of Jordan on the throne of the freshly manufactured kingdom of Trans Jordan.

So the theory that the only way to achieve peace is to establish a Palestinian state didn't work then, and therefore we could surmise that it wouldn't work today either. As a matter of fact it wouldn't help regardless how many Palestinian states were established in the region as long as there was a single Jewish State among them...it doesn't matter how big or how small, nor does it matter how powerful or how weak, because the issue is that a non-Islamic nation is simply unacceptable to them. Thank God Israel is a super powerful nation, otherwise regardless of the support or sympathy of other countries around the globe, there would be no more Israel. So the question becomes why the King, who has more to fear from Hamas then from Israel, expresses a wish for Israeli acquiescence to a Hamas-run Palestine armed to the teeth as her neighbor.

The most amusing part of the King's advice, is that while he keeps telling to the world and especially the

straight speaking President of Iran who doesn't mince his words and simply calls for the destruction of Israel, so the Israelis at least will know and understand no peace pacts, and further giveaways from Israel will provide them with safety, but instead, their own arms and willingness to fight for their survival are the only means to ensure their continued existence.

Why can't the rest of the world understand that these Islamic terror bands mean what they say, and say what they mean when they talk about the destruction of Israel, and the cowardly compromisers of this world once again ready to sacrifice six million Jewish lives for the sake of "peace." May God give the Jewish people the moral strength not be corrupted in their resolve to fight for their right for their future existence and the right to have a homeland where their children's children can live with pride and dignity! ■

The JewishTimes wishes to make clear that the attack on the Altelena and on its own Jewish Knesset member Meir Kahana while Arab members were untouched, are despicable acts of Sinas Chinam. The writer's main point that governments must deal with opposition is accepted. But the choices of such examples to make this latter point are unnecessary and inflammatory. We thank our friend David for highlighting this issue.

Letters



Letters

from our

READERS



Letters

Mesora invites your questions, letters in response to articles, your own thoughts, or your suggestions for the JewishTimes.

"The only poor question is the one not asked."

Email us:
letters@mesora.org

Righteous Towards God

Reader: Dear Rabbi, in reference to your article "Lebanon: Tisha B'Av & Teshuva" in last weeks issue, you said it is vital to participate in "active sacrifice". Question: How do we engage in "active sacrifice"? There is no Temple to offer upon. Could we be fulfilling this concept by "sacrificing" by not eating non-kosher foods? "Sacrificing" by not driving in a car on Shabbat? "Sacrificing" by not smoking on Shabbat? "Sacrificing" by not eating chametz on Pesach?

When we obey all negative commandments, not doing things we enjoy to do, aren't we engaging in active sacrifice? Therefore you are saying that whenever we sacrifice, giving up doing the pleasurable things, are we saying, "we owe our lives to our Creator?" If I am all wrong, how do I actively engage in sacrifice? Have I "Lost Site" of this concept?

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim: The concept of sacrifice I discussed, was specifically animal sacrifice. The idea behind sacrifice is that man demonstrates his true state: that he would not exist, just as this sacrificed animal, had God not created him. This explains why Adam sacrificed an animal immediately upon his creation. Other Torah restrictions you mention do not carry this lesson for the performer. If so, are we without this realization today? Sadly, we are, but as the Rabbis instituted prayer in place of sacrifice, there is much association between prayer and sacrifice. Focusing on God in prayer, we also recognize the concept of sacrifice, that we are dependent on God. This idea of dependency is akin to the idea that we are created, since being created means by definition, that we are dependent on a Creator.

Reader: Can we expect of God; (Psalm 94: 1-95:3), to turn upon them (Hezbollah), their own violence, and with their own evil He will cut them off, when the current Israeli State's leadership is bereft of God and His Torah? Can we expect of God, for the sake of the observant Jews in Israel, to fulfill the above? If we do not witness God's intervention directly, can we anticipate His use of the IDF indirectly to fulfill his promise?

If this military campaign ends in failure, can we conclude that God is looking at the majority of Israeli non-Torah observant Jews' irreligious state and not at the observant Jews of the world's wishes and hopes and prayers? Thank you for answering these difficult questions.

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim: We must be as Abraham "righteous towards God", and pay Him the honor due Him...for claiming knowledge of God's interventions is impossible unless we witness a miracle, and such a claim mitigates God's exclusive omniscience. What we can know, are His attributes of justice, kindness, righteousness, etc.,

all taught in His Torah, and how He intervened in the lives of those righteous patriarchs and matriarchs, and the Jews, throughout history. If we live by His principles and fundamentals, we are assured a good life by means of His intervention, and also, by means of reason: since the world operates based on reasonable laws created by God, when we adhere to reason, we will experience a life that meets with no friction with the world, but rather, with serenity.

God will keep His word to destroy His enemies, since nothing can affect God, and that He should change is also impossible. Certainly if Israel was guided by Torah principles they would find greater favor in God's eyes, and certainly, Hezbollah are God's enemies. But human capacity excludes any faculties, which can know God's mind so as to determine whether any given event was due to man, or to God.

However, the Rabbis teach that God determines the fate of the Jewish "nation" – not individuals, unless they are perfected. So it is safe to say that if Israel as a whole suffers during this time, God is not protecting the nation. We must then change our ways to comply with God's Torah-mandated commands, so as to live in Israel, and in peace. ■

Righteous Towards Man

Aurora: Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim, Mesora is like an oasis in the desert, when I come to it that half an hour every day, I enjoy the shadow of the palms and I drink all the thirst-quenching water I can. My way of reasoning is changing since I discovered Judaism throughout Mesora and I have become more rational ...I am finding God, not the man-made concept of God but the real God and I fill a happiness inside.

I would like to tell everybody about my happiness, I would like to share it with others. But every time I have tried it, people try to make me doubt, and in this moment, I don't want negative influences.

By accepting Judaism I lost nothing because there was nothing that I accepted before Judaism, I had my idea of God but it was mainly a man-made idea.

My sister on the other hand, lives in a little town in Croatia; it took to her years to learn the ways of its inhabitants. She now is appreciated by others and has become one of them. She has become very religious in the last few years, the town's life moves around Christmas holidays and celebrations. Is it right to make her doubt about her beliefs? Christmas holidays and commemorations is a way to get together for this people; without this celebration, they will feel empty. How can I say to my sister that all those celebrations are wrong? Should I? My sister always thought I would some day become

(continued on next page)

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Letters

close to Christ, she will be very disappointed when she will know Judaism has interested me and has gave me answers. I don't think however that I will be able to remain quiet. I would however want to know if it is correct to hide one's adherence to Judaism?

Thanks in advance,
Aurora

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim: Aurora, You should not hide your adherence to Judaism, for with your openness, you will, perhaps, enable others to inquire, and learn of the one, true God, just as you have. That would be righteousness towards others. We must be concerned for all others, especially when it comes to the eternal prospect of their souls.

I would talk with your sister, and anyone for that matter, and first, discover what their arguments are in defense of their beliefs. They all usually fall back on the widespread view that "I just believe". Once they do so, demonstrate how they are not consistent, and actually feel that proof is of greater value: since they do not go to anyone for medical treatments or surgeries unless proven to be doctors, you can show them how, when their physical life is in jeopardy, they desire "proof". So ask them why they forfeit the greater part of their lives -- their eternal spiritual souls -- merely relying on word-of-mouth blind faith? Using reasoning alone, show them what exactly their errors are, in specific, that they follow faith, which proves nothing...when proof will refute their notions 100%. Everyone accepts reason over faith for most of their life's decisions, admittedly because "certainty" is what people seek, and what our minds tell us is accurate. Unless someone wishes to live with no accuracy for their beliefs, they will accept proof in place of faith.

But you must be aware that they will often try to escape the conversation once you expose their errors, as no one wishes to be wrong. You must make it clear that the conversation is not about being right or wrong, but about discovering what is true and false. Personalities and egos must be left out of the conversation. You will need to keep their focus on the points, and not allow them to move off the issues.

They disagree with Judaism, since they accept Christianity. In that case, ask them for their reasoning for rejecting Judaism. Once they realize they have no reason to reject Judaism, and that both religions cannot be correct simultaneously, they have admitted that one must be wrong. Then ask them, "how do we determine which one is wrong?" They will not have any defense for Christianity. You will then demonstrate the Proof of Sinai, that we accept as true, any event "witnessed by masses", and transmitted and accepted by the

world. For this reason, Jesus, Christianity, Mohammed and Islam are rejected, as they have no event witnessed by masses.

Also demand that they respond to each of your arguments and questions, and ask them to agree from the outset to sustain the dialog until a conclusion is reached.

Aurora: Your words make so much sense to me, but things are much more complicated than they seem. It should be easy to demolish all Christian lies. I did it by myself at age 9, I refused not to use my mind, I asked so many times (without getting any answer) "why does God want us to believe in so much nonsense?"

The problem is that Christians' ideas are very appealing to some kind of people, because Christianity doesn't ask you to make much effort, you don't need to use your mind; faith is considered a virtue and reasoning about Christian's beliefs is more or less a sin. This takes away from you the very tool by which you could let them be free and see the truth. It's a very frustrating job. Can you see the difficulty?

There is another complication, and these are traditions. Christmas, Easter and other commemorations tie people together: people are not willing to renounce these festivities because these are part of their heritage; Judaism (for a non Jew) doesn't offer anything that can substitute these recurrences. They will say, "Jews have their traditions, their holidays, they want to take ours away". They will feel Judaism is offering them a second-class affiliation. Don't you think so?

For me is different. I just want to learn, I see the beauty of Torah system, it is helping me, I feel I am finally learning about the real God and this is giving me a happiness I never felt before. For me it is more than enough. I don't follow any Christian festivity so I am not renouncing anything. I am just earning.

This is the great difference. That's why I feel so unprepared to affront my sister. Do you understand my fear?

Your advices are still valid, but it's not so easy. They will not just escape the conversation, they will consider you a sinner and they will not treat you the same as before. If you don't adhere to some commandment, they still forgive you but if you try to question faith matters, this is different, they won't forgive you.

I like Judaism also because you are not afraid to speak out. We on the other hand are afraid to do it, because it's not allowed to contradict any belief, if you do this, you are evil.

I would like to talk to you about my atheist friends too. This is all another story. It could seem easier, and still, much more difficult.

Before Mesora I felt so alone (even if I was

surrounded by so many person). I am so scared to feel that sensation again.

Kind regards.
Aurora

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim: Aurora, if faith was so much of a virtue, why do they abandon faith in all other areas of their lives? Not one Christian would work for an employer for a whole year, based solely on the "promise" that they will receive pay. They would also demand a contract, and they would not even wait an entire year to receive some compensation: they would request at minimum, to receive some partial payment monthly. So ask them: "why don't you simply have the same faith in your employer, if faith surpasses proof?" The goal is to unveil their contradictions, which this example successfully achieves.

Another method is to ask them this: "If you accept Jesus based on faith, and that he alone is God's chosen, not Mohammed or others, on what basis do you accept Jesus and not Mohammed?" Since they have no "proof" as they are living by faith alone, ask them this: "Suppose a new prophet arises who renounces Jesus: why should I not follow him?" Eventually, they will recognize that they are operating without reason. This strikes the core of any human being. They might reject you openly, but they will no longer be able to deny your words internally, since every human recognizes that reason surpasses blind faith. At that point, they will either wish to hear more about your thinking, or they will become angry, as do any religionists who have no proof, and resort to hatred and baseless rejection of other people who oppose them, as their means of gaining some foothold on their security in their empty beliefs.

Regardless, you will have done them a good, by etching indelible and undeniable thoughts on their minds, and they cannot deny the tools of reason as you suggested. Now, if they resort to using holidays as their means of defending contradictory faith, ask them how holiday celebration undoes their contradiction. They will have no answer, so bring them back to your one issue, and remain firm on one issue, ask them again, "Suppose a new prophet arises who renounces Jesus: why should I not follow him? If faith as you say is supreme, why can I not have faith in another prophet...who renounces Jesus?" You may need to repeat this question many times, as they will be quite disturbed by this realization that they should agree with you, and seek to abandon the conversation. When they do so, make certain to show them they are escaping, and avoiding what they know is a problem. You will then have succeeded. ■

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(continued from page 9)

Letters

Righteous To Ourselves**Reader:** Dear R' Moshe Ben-Chaim,

An acquaintance and myself were discussing Judaism and Christianity and other related topics. This "friend" belongs to the Messianic religion (Jews for Jesus). He sent me an email with his beliefs and ideas as well as all the other members of his cult. I would like to know how one would/should respond to these ideas specifically. I know that you have dealt with these issues before, but how what is the proper method for one to approach this specific case?

"Following the catastrophe of the destruction of our Temple (70 ACE), many Jewish writings were lost, but the Pharisee's writings remained (Mishna, and then Gemara, and thus, Talmud), and so have made themselves to be authentic "true Judaism", and the standard by which all other "Judaisms" are to be measured. I disagree. I hold to Tenach as authoritative, inspired, divinely revealed truth; and the Talmud as very insightful commentary, at times. I mean no disrespect,

but I do not accept that the Oral Law was passed down with the written Torah from "Moses, ...to Joshua... and ...to the men of the Great Synagogue" (Aboth 1:1).

Rather, because I hold to the eternal authority of Tenach, I therefore accept that Moses and the Prophets looked both to Messiah and Brit Chadashah (New Covenant, Yirmeyahu 31:31). I believe that Jesus is the Messiah of our people; that Moshiach has made final atonement for our people (and all who will trust in Jesus), and that HaShem has not rejected Israel as His people, and that Brit Chadasha, along with the Tenach, stands as testimony to those facts."

Thank you, Heshy

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim: Heshy, we first realize this Jew for Jesus is simply suggesting his own opinion, and not even attempting to support it with proof. This lack of proof itself tells the reader there is no reason to accept this writer's words.

Number two; the writer arrogantly disagrees with all Torah authorities, offering no explanation for his

disagreement. It is laughable that he claims authority over accepted Torah giants who unanimously agree on the chain of Torah transmitters. Where are this writer's volumes of genius insights, as provided by Maimonides, Nachmanides, Rashi et al...that he disagrees with them? Perhaps he wishes to teach Einstein science too. Where is his historical basis disproving known Jewish history?

This writer comes after the fact, as if to tell Henry Ford that "I know better what a Ford is". Those who codified the Torah are the exclusive authorities and definers of Torah...not this foolish writer.

Furthermore, these authorities unanimously reject Jesus as a charlatan, a blasphemer, and a destroyer of Torah and Judaism. The writer ignores the facts

All true thinkers provide rational argumentation for their positions...completely absent in this writer's subjective whims. There is nothing credible in his words that require a respectable response from you. If man does not operate with wisdom, be righteous to yourself, and spend that time in study which you would have used wasted on deaf ears, "Do not rebuke a scorner, lest he hate you." (Proverbs, 9:8) ■

the Afterlife

RABBI JOSHUA MAROOF

Question: Dear Rabbi Maroof,

First of all, I would like to thank you for providing this space to address Jewish matters. My question is related to the afterlife, a subject in which Judaism contains a variety of opinions. From my understanding (please let me know if I am misunderstanding any concept), according to some biblical references, more specifically, Job and Ecclesiastes, there's a place called "Sheol", an underground abyss where all souls -whether good or evil, go. There's also the concept of Gan Eden (heaven) and Gehinnom (hell), but ultimately all souls go to heaven after they purge their sins and wrongdoings, except the extremely wicked and evil, whose soul will be either ceased from existence or be eternally under suffering -this is another topic that has different interpretations. So, are Sheol and Gehinnom equivalent? Also, after the resurrection of the souls in the World to Come (in a physical form), will there be death again?

Thank you,
Carolina Castellanos

Response: Dear Carolina, These are weighty and complex questions. Let me begin by emphasizing that the concept of a soul entering a "place", whether under or above ground, is not a part of Jewish theology. The soul is not a physical object that can travel in space or be situated in a specific location. Whenever a reference is made to a soul 'going' somewhere, it is intended in a metaphoric, not a literal, sense.

The Biblical term "Sheol" simply refers to the grave, the final resting place of the physical body.

Maimonides teaches that the Afterlife is a metaphysical state of blissful existence that ensues after the separation of the soul from the body. This state can only be achieved by an individual who has perfected his or her soul through the acquisition of knowledge and positive character traits and the performance of good deeds. Because the soul has developed a spiritual, transcendent aspect, it is able to survive physical death and partake of the greatest reward imaginable - namely, an unadulterated and fully satisfying perception of Hashem's wisdom.

It is important to remember that, since we exist in a physical body during this lifetime and all of our

knowledge is based upon our experiences of the material world, we cannot possibly imagine what it would be like to exist metaphysically. This is the reason why our Sages are compelled to employ metaphor and analogy when speaking about these profound matters. Unfortunately, because we are generally much more comfortable with concrete imagery than abstract ideas, many people latch onto the metaphoric depictions of the rabbis as if they are literal facts. Thus, they develop sensual concepts of the World to Come that are of necessity inaccurate. We must accept the reality that the true nature of the Afterlife is not something that we have the ability to comprehend during our sojourn on this Earth.

Wicked people whose entire existence in this world revolves around material gain and bodily pleasure have not actualized the metaphysical dimension of their souls. As a result, their souls perish with their bodies at the conclusion of their physical lives. They suffer the ultimate punishment - the loss of the opportunity to experience the pleasure of true knowledge and understanding.

In the Messianic era, the righteous will be revived from the dead and will participate in the establishment of a utopian society that will be fully aligned with God's wisdom. Their resurrection will also afford these great men and women the benefit of living in an enlightened world community - something they did not have the opportunity to do before their deaths. In the end, though, the laws of nature will continue to reign, and the righteous -

(continued on next page)

like all other mortals - will eventually pass away once again, allowing their souls to return to a blessed state of metaphysical existence for eternity.

I would like to add two important points. The first point is that our service of Hashem in this world is inherently rewarding and fulfilling. Any additional reward is really superfluous to the wise person who enjoys truth and justice for their own sake. Similarly, living a materialistic, unenlightened life is its own punishment. Such a lifestyle frustrates human beings, denying them the actualization of their intellectual and spiritual potential while offering them an endless array of unsatisfying substitutes that fail to address their uniquely human needs.

Those who believe that the ultimate reward for study and righteousness is endless physical pleasure necessarily maintain that the pleasures of the body are the ultimate good for human beings, and that living wisely is a means to the end of material self-indulgence. Similarly, the belief in eternal physical torment for the wicked stems from the assumption that bodily suffering is worse than the pain of living without wisdom. Both of these suppositions are contrary to the core teachings of Judaism. The devoted Jew does not need the promise of extrinsic reward nor the threat of extrinsic punishment to entice him or her to live by the dictates of the Torah. Pleasures and pains of the body are simply incomparable to the contentment the soul derives from its pursuit of knowledge and virtue. By way of analogy, imagine that a wealthy individual offered you one million dollars cash, with no strings attached. Would you ask "well, what's in it for me? What's my reward for accepting the money?" Any additional reward would pale by comparison to the receipt of the funds themselves. In the same way, wisdom is its own reward, and anyone who asks "what's in it for me" has not yet experienced its beauty - a beauty so rich and overflowing that it causes all temporal enjoyments to seem base and worthless by comparison.

The second point I'd like to emphasize is that the common notion of "Divine Punishment" is derived from the theologies of other popular religions, and not from the teachings of the Torah. In these religions, God is portrayed as an angry humanlike being who cannot tolerate the disregard with which human beings treat Him and His laws. His thirst for vengeance is so all-consuming that the only way He can quell his rage is by condemning sinners to everlasting torment in Hell. This idea is, of course, based upon the assumption that God takes pleasure in our morality and religiosity and that He becomes frustrated and aggressive when we fail to placate Him with our worship. Advocates of this notion seem to maintain that God finds comfort in torturing violators of His commandments for all eternity.

By contrast, the Jewish view is that righteousness and wickedness - as well as reward and punishment - are exclusively for human benefit. God does not become 'angry' when we sin, nor does our goodness provide Him any satisfaction. When we make the right choices, then God may assist us in furthering our development so that we more fully actualize the potential for genuine happiness that He implanted within us - not because He needs us to continue, but because it is His will to provide the best for His creatures.

At the same time, when we choose to act immorally, we do a disservice to ourselves alone. God, in His infinite mercy, may punish us to correct us and steer us back onto the proper path, but not because He takes some sinister, vengeful pleasure in our suffering. We can see this from the fact that God only intervenes to punish individuals whom He knows are sufficiently close to Him to respond appropriately to censure, as King Solomon wrote, "The ones God loves, He rebukes." If a person is so far from God that there is no hope that he will repent as a result of Divinely imposed punishments, then God will not implement them. Hashem does not mete out consequences to make us suffer for our sins; His purpose in chastising human beings is to educate and uplift those of us who are at least potentially receptive to His message.

From this standpoint, it is clear why subjecting human souls to everlasting torment in the Hereafter would be meaningless. Once our lives are over, all hope of repentance is lost - so what use would

punishment serve after death? Only a religion that views God in human terms - as a sadistic father-figure who is insatiably angry with his children and needs to 'vent' - could possibly embrace such a concept.

I should mention that there are some Rabbis, such as Nachmanides, who subscribe to the concept of 'Gehinnom'. 'Gehinnom' is understood here as a process of purification of the soul - metaphorically denoted by a 'place' to which it goes - that occurs before that soul enters its final state of spiritual existence. We all have ties to the material world that serve as obstacles to our spiritual growth, interfering and even tampering with the proper development of our souls. The idea of Gehinnom is that a profound experience of self-awareness and intellectual clarity after death - revealing, as it would, that any attachment to the realm of the physical is utterly meaningless - may enable a person to become freed from some of these limitations and thus to enjoy a more complete and gratifying metaphysical existence in the Next World.

For a more detailed and in-depth discussion of these ideas, I would encourage you to read Maimonides' "Introduction to Helek", which can be purchased in English translation from Moznaim Publishers (It appears as an appendix in the volume of the Rambam series entitled "Pirkei Avot"). ■

You may write Rabbi Maroof at his blog: <http://askrabbimarooof.blogspot.com>

Media



Notice the green hat in both photos, "holding" it even when "dead".
Then, the dead man is alive.

little green
footballs

aish.com

"If you don't read the paper, you are uninformed. If you do read the paper, you are misinformed."

Mark Twain

Anti-Semitism in the Media

Originally reported by the Little Green Footballs blog, and picked up by Aish.com, Reuters and AP distort news stories with retouched photos, to increase sympathy for the Lebanese, and anti-Semitism.

Above: A dead Lebanese man is suddenly alive; **Right:** The same Lebanese woman "crying" for losing her home, makes same claim 2 weeks later in response to a completely different destruction; **Below:** Both Reuters and AP conveniently place childrens' dolls into scenes of bombed-out towns to paint Israel in an unfair light. Notice the dust-free dolls amidst filth, and all in upright doll positions to show their faces, and that the doll is the foreground focus of the photos. (Story and photos: Aish.com)



A Lebanese woman wails after looking at the wreckage of her apartment, in a building that was demolished by the Israeli attacks in southern Beirut.

July 22, 2006
REUTERS/Issam Kobeisi

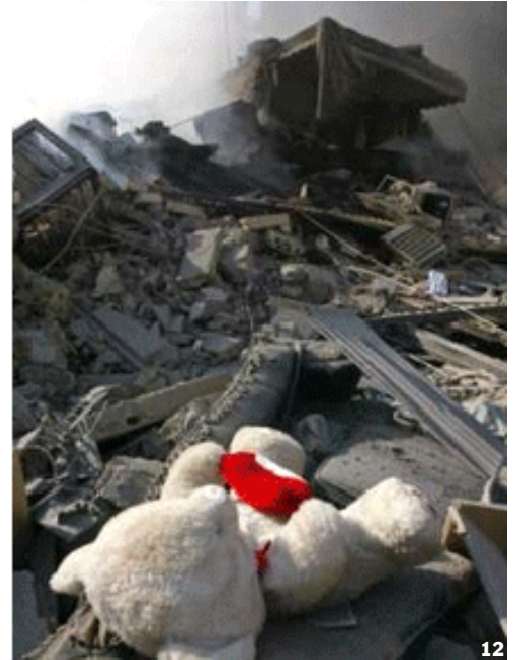
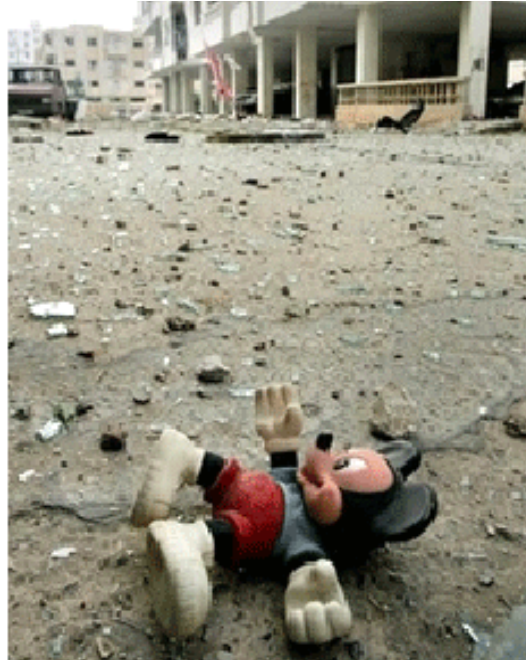


A Lebanese woman reacts at the destruction after she came to inspect her house in the suburbs of Beirut, Lebanon, after Israeli warplanes repeatedly bombed the area overnight.

Aug. 5, 2006
AP Photo/Hussein Malla

Dust-free dolls placed in these scenes to increase anti-Semitism

REUTERS



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65 year old Connecticut resident is now able to accept and is in need of a kidney donor with blood type B+. His current treatments include Peritoneal home dialyses four times daily. The transplant procedure is minimally invasive and done laparoscopically with a short recovery time at Westchester Medical Center. The Transplant Center offers innovative, state-of-the art evaluation and treatment for patients of all ages who require kidney, liver, pancreas, corneal and bone marrow transplants and is home to the largest Kidney Transplant Program: www.wcmc.com
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expectancy is extremely limited without a kidney donor. None of us are a match. Help us give to a man who has always given to us, help us give him a tomorrow. We are pleading with everyone to please help save our father. If you or anyone you know can find it in your hearts to give the gift of life, a most selfless and humane act, please contact us toll free at 1-877-489-6567. Only O blood type please. There is no expense to the donor. www.kidneyfordad.com

Assisting the Disabled

Middle age partially disabled woman needs financial assistance with her health insurance to assist with her disability. If you would like to contribute to help cover her monthly expense, please donate with the cents amount as ".01", viz, \$25.01, 35.01". Donate here:

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

The depth of our love for our father can only be matched by the depth of the pain that we feel for his suffering. How do you watch the man, who has given his life for his family, lay night after night hooked up to the dialysis machine and fighting sleep because he fears that the morning will not come for him. This is our father living with kidney failure. Our Dad was diagnosed with kidney failure and placed on dialysis, which for many is a lifeline. But, our father is in the small percentage for which dialysis has not helped. His life

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