



"Praise Him sun and moon, praise Him all bright stars....
for He commanded, and they were created."

King David: Psalm 148

ESTD
1997

Dedicated to Scriptural and Rabbinic Verification
of Jewish Beliefs and Practices

JewishTimes

Volume I, No. 25...July 26, 2002

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Perfect Faith

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Reader: I was thinking that the Torah idea of "emuna" is more accurately described as trust, as opposed to faith.

When you trust someone, they have already established that they come through for you in a relationship in a general way. Since, in the past, they have come through for you, even though in this particular you don't see how, you trust that it will be the same as it was in the past.

If a stranger said to me, "Trust me, it will be fine," I would be foolish to trust him since we have no relationship and he has not established that he is trustworthy. If my husband says, "Trust me, it will be fine," and many other times in the past he has come through, then I can trust that it will work this time. Even if I can't conceive of a way that it will be fine.

Based on all of my knowledge and understanding, I can't understand how a particular situation will be successful. However, if I have established a trusting relationship with someone, and they tell me it will be successful, I can rationally trust them. Even though I don't know how the particular situation can possibly work, I am confident it will work because someone I trust says it will. I don't see the particular, but I trust the general relationship. That gives me confidence about the particular. That is emuna.

If you agree with that, I was wondering if you could explain to me if/how the 13 "Ani Ma'amin"s fit in to that. (Not each individual Ani Ma'amin; rather, the general concept of emuna of the Ani Ma'amins).

I sense that could be true, for example, with regard to Moshiach or T'chiyas Ha'meisim. It's not clear to me that Hashem will revive the dead, but if Hashem says He will, then I trust him because of our prior relationship.



TEACH CHILDREN TO APPRECIATE CREATION

Newborn stars are forming in the Eagle Nebula. This image, taken with the Hubble Space Telescope in 1995, shows evaporating gaseous globules (EGGs) emerging from pillars of molecular hydrogen gas and dust. The giant pillars are light years in length and are so dense that interior gas contracts gravitationally to form stars.

Have your children email us with their questions: questions@mesora.org

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SEE THESE AND OTHER ARTICLES AT OUR SITE

Maimonides' 13 PRINCIPLES

THE BASIC FOUNDATIONS WHICH ALL JEWS MUST KNOW AS TRUE. WE URGE YOU TO READ THEM:
www.mesora.org/13principles.html

God's Existence Belief or Proof?

www.mesora.org/belieforproof.html

God's Land Without God?

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY:
www.mesora.org/openletter/openletter2.html

Free Speech vs. Objective Morality

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Reader: Not that my opinion means anything to you, but I, as a Jew and pro Israeli, find your boycott of MSNBC just plain uncalled for. This is the same station that has Chris Matthews on it. You couldn't find a man more pro Israel if you tried! To demand the removal of any oppositional voice is to make Jews look like that there is no way to please us. Plus, you feed into the anti-Semitic perception that Jews run the media. Freedom of the press is an American right. Give the American public a little credit. If they watch MSNBC, they are informed and intelligent. The truth is out there.

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Kiddushes Hayom

RIVKA OLENICK

"You shall observe My Sabbath, and reverence My sanctuary, I am the Lord." Leviticus 19:30

The Jewish people are the one and only people that God in His mercy took out of Egypt and freed. God gave us the Sabbath to proclaim to the world His dominion and it is only through the service of God that we are truly free. We demonstrate to the world that mankind is only free when we subordinate ourselves to the will of God. The observance of the Sabbath symbolizes this freedom to serve God, which is the theme of the Sabbath. By living only according to His will God gave man the gift of dominion over the earth, and so man continuously takes from the earth what is needed to sustain life. He rules the animals and protects the plant life so that he can partake of both and enjoy his existence. However, on the holy Sabbath day, the 'kiddushes hayom', man takes nothing from the earth or the animals. On this holy day man acknowledges that everything on the earth belongs to God that whatever he has taken, he has borrowed. The Sabbath reinforces the idea that since everything belongs to God and comes from God, we realize God's ultimate authority over the universe.

Everything that we buy and use to prepare for the Sabbath and everything we set aside to wear is all for the purpose of sanctifying God's name on the Sabbath. In Synagogue we involve ourselves in tefila and in the worship of God. We mark this day specifically to restore ourselves physically and spiritually and at the same time we claim that God is the Master of the Universe. Through our mind and our heart we immerse ourselves in the holiness of the day that God designated for us and we recognize that He has given us the greatest gift! We recognize that this gift can elevate us when we engage in learning for its own sake and we invest in our own perfection. Reverence to My sanctuary. A sanctuary is a place designated for worship and service of God. The Sabbath is that sanctuary given to us by God and exists within a specific time frame, and that "place" is recreated every seventh day. It is logical to say that a person who does not observe the sanctuary of the Sabbath does not recognize or respect God's position as

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Free Speech vs. Objective Morality

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

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Mesora: Going with your line of reasoning, let's say Matthews was not on MSNBC, nor were there any other pro-Israelis as you term him. Would you then agree that we are right to reprimand MSNBC for giving voice to Cohen? If you say no, you contradict yourself. If you say yes, then you agree that Cohen is in the wrong. Which means you feel Matthews, or any pro-Israeli "balances the scales", validating Cohen going uncensored. I don't understand how the presence of a good commentator can make a bad commentator good.

Regarding free speech, am I to allow Cohen, and even a Hitler, the right of free speech? Perhaps you feel the right of free speech is an absolute. I should even encourage Hitler to take on more speaking engagements! Would you defend communism being taught to your children in school? Where does this end? What parameters have you set up which condone or condemn various forms of free speech, and by what rules are you justified and allegiant? You must say that free speech is not an absolute - indeed, it is subjugated to the government of a system of morality.

We are forced by reason to clearly define "objective morality". How shall we proceed?

There is an objective morality for man. By definition, it must not be of man's making, but yet, very much within his perception. This must be the case, as man is a designed entity. As man has been 'given' a psychological design, he is thereby limited to this sphere of function by his Designer. His Maker has thereby said, "This is how I wish you function - this is your 'good' and 'bad'. I wish you to be happy, I wish this for each man. Therefore, you must be a harmonious race, each member working to preserve the happiness and well being of the other."

Reason teaches that we are bidden by our Creator to follow a set of rules which govern all areas of our life, starting with morality, which preserves life itself.

Objective morality is limited to only that which God teaches in His Torah, His guide for mankind. Outside of this system, all else are subjective, personal opinions. God's morality makes no excuses at all for the likes of Cohen. Just as we would not allow the free speech of those who seek to promote violence or teach terrorism, we also squelch and punish those who support it in anyway,

as our president said.

Matthew's pro-Israeli comments provide no refuge for Cohen, nor do they indemnify the network.

Another reader wrote in with her response:

As for free speech, the argument is actually more complicated than that--censoring even a Hitler, y'mach sh'mo, is no simple matter. It's too sticky to address head on.

I would argue instead that MSNBC is the one threatening free speech. They took off an honest, free speaker in favor of one who has been fooled by Palestinian propaganda (WITHOUT ratings as a valid reason).

While anyone can say anything just about they like, it is downright irresponsible of MSNBC to air viewpoints that have no foundation in reality. Even a cursory review of the facts (all of them, not just the ones publicized by the press) reveals that the Palestinians' claims are unfounded. And, they have created the current crisis by refusing to travel legitimate roads for their ends, and instead pushed Israel into the position it is in today. Clever, yes, terrorists, yes, pitiable, no!

So if Cohen wants to publicize ignorance and further fuel the misconceptions that deform the Middle East situation every day, he may legally be allowed to by the Constitution, but MSNBC should know that some people - who care about truth and justice--deeply object.

The writer of this letter says, "not that my opinion means anything to you," but that isn't fair. Precisely because his/her opinion matters is why so much effort is put into this website, to educate people.

And, the writer says, "Give the American public a little credit. If they watch MSNBC, they are informed and intelligent. The truth is out there." Unfortunately, this ideal has not proven true. So many people have fallen into believing the Palestinian lies that the truth is hard to determine. That is why it is necessary to attract some attention to the Truth with boycotts such as this.

We do not demand the removal of "any oppositional voice." We support the rare NON-oppositional voice. It is maddening to see to that the "oppositional voices," against whom noone has objected, have spoken so loudly that the media has granted many of their arguments as fact. Keyes is a rare voice in it being wholly fair to Israel. His unjust removal is something we cannot tolerate.

As Jews we should support the Truth, even though that sometimes makes people hate us.

As for those who think we control the media, isn't "the truth out there" that we don't? - Ester Leah □



Exclusive

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Perfect Faith

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

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I heard that the emuna of the 13 is really knowledge, but I don't remember what that means.

Any input you can give me will be appreciated, "J"

Mesora: I appreciate your questions J, as you always think into the area and ask based on a framework and principles.

Your write, "It's not clear to me that Hashem will revive the dead,...". I understand it is far removed from our experiences, but I don't see why God's revival of the dead poses any problem. If we admit that the world was created from nothingness, isn't a revival from something less amazing, even more plausible? Talmud Sanhedrin takes this up, page 90b (the very last line), "An emperor said to Rabbi Gamliel, 'you maintain the dead will be revived, yet they are dust. Can dust come to life?' Thereupon the emperor's daughter said to the Rabbi, 'let me answer him'. She said (to her father) 'In our town, there are two potters, one fashions from water, the other from clay. Who is superior?' The emperor responded, 'The one who fashions from water.' She replied, 'If God can make man from water (semen) certainly he can make him from dust'. The school if Ishmael taught, it can be deduced from glassware: If glassware which is made by human breath, when broken, can be repaired, then certainly a person who is made from God's breath can be resurrected."

Getting back to your points, in all areas of Judaism, knowledge is the obligation, not blind faith. "Emuna" or "amen" do not mean to accept without rationale.

What does "emuna shlayma" mean? Does it mean "perfect faith"? Can one have "emuna chetzya" (half emuna)? Is "emuna" properly translated as "faith" or even as "belief"? Additionally, "perfect" implies an area that is subject to quantity. Faith is not subject to quantity. You either have faith, or you don't. If one argues that some possess more faith than others, I ask: Does "complete faith" shed any reflection on reality whatsoever? It does not. If so, what benefit is their to faith? One who believes, and the one who does not, are on equal footing. Neither is certain of reality until it occurs. So the mere belief in something is truly inconsequential. It

plays no role in our mission to learn about truth.

Knowledge does have degrees - not regards apprehension of facts, as that too either exists or it does not. But knowledge does have degrees in terms of the stages on the road to conviction. At first, you learn an idea, but you may not be convinced of its certainty. After study, the mind can intellectually grasp this idea as necessarily true. Subsequent to intellectual apprehension, there is yet one more step - conviction. This is the point where a person not only admits a truth, but he then incorporates its value into his life. What prevents this second step? Emotional resistance. The Torah describes the necessity of man straddling both, rational and emotional conviction, (Deut. 4:39) "V'yadata hayom, vihashavosa al livavecha". "And you shall know it this day, and you shall cause it to rest in your heart...". "Know" refers to intellectual knowledge, and "heart" refers to emotional conviction. This I believe to be the explanation of "emuna shlayma". Maimonides teaches we must have not only intellectual apprehension, but also emotional conviction.

Certainly in the foundations of Judaism, one must use his faculty of reason divinely granted exclusive to man. Why would God give only one species the faculty of intelligence, if it were not for the purpose of engaging that faculty? And if we are to use this faculty, mustn't we use this in the most crucial of areas? I mean the knowledge of God? Again, faith plays no role. Even trust is not the goal. Our goal is to use our gift of intelligence, which is the only faculty capable of apprehending truths.

Some of the Thirteen Principles have to do with recognizing realities, some with the advent of future events. How does "emuna" apply to both? Regarding realities, we have addressed that here. We must comprehend these first 11 principles based on arguments. Even regarding the 12th and 13th, which deal with the affirmation in the coming of Messiah and with the Future World, we must use rationale, just as was done by the emperor's daughter quoted above. I would say that regarding the coming of the Messiah, we do "trust" in God's fulfillment of heralding in the era of the Messiah, in the sense that we do not say God deviates from His promises, or from His nature. But again, this type of trust means conviction in principles.

My personal opinion as to one reason for the necessity of the Messiah is as follows: Over many millennia, the originally given, Mosaic Judaism has severely been distorted. Today, some people's Judaism differs greatly from others. For the sake of reestablishing

true Mosaic law, perhaps, God foresaw our era, and long ago planned the solution - the solution being a leader who is unanimously accepted by all Jews - Messiah. His authority even surpasses King Solomon - and this is no small point. Messiah must surpass great leaders if he is to have true authority. This is the definition of authority. Once established king, he will reaffirm all true concepts true to Moses' law, and nullify and dispel all false beliefs and assumptions. Judaism will return again to its pristine, unadulterated form as intended by God at Sinai.

Another question also forces us to deny the use of "belief" in relation to these Principles: Why should we translate "emuna" as belief, when we see that for each principle, Maimonides supports each with rational arguments? Which does a rational argument or a proof create: A belief, or a truth? Of course, it is the latter. Additionally, by what method did Maimonides arrive at his principles? Were they not the result of lengthy study, where he determined from areas of knowledge that these thirteen tenets are based on fundamental principles? This too teaches that the Thirteen Principles are rational ideas, essential to our knowledge of reality.

Reader: If knowledge is required, why is "emuna" used instead of the Hebrew word "daas"?

Mesora: Perhaps we must define the various terms applied to human, intellectual and psychological processes. God does not partake of human processes such as acquisition, as denoted by "chochma" which is acquired knowledge, or the knowledge to resolve issues. God has no issues to resolve. Nor is understanding - "binah" - appropriately applied to God. Similarly, God does not have the apparatus of reasoning, so we do not refer to God as using "sechel". God is somehow "knowledgeable", so we may properly say God knows, or has "daas". Man too has daas.

But perhaps Maimonides used "emuna" and not daas, as emuna means "conviction" or assuredness. Simple "daas", knowledge, is not sufficient here. Man has one component God does not. That is the instincts. For man to have knowledge alone, his dual nature as rational/instinctual is not yet permeated with an internal and complete realization and affirmation of a given principle. When do we say that a person lives by a value system, when he has 100% conviction, or "emuna" in that set of ideals. God's knowledge cannot bridge into a second framework which He has not, so emuna is not possible for Him. Man however has the hurdle of aligning his emotions with his knowledge. When he does, he has

emuna. He has "made straight" his path.

"Knowledge" is the intellectual apprehension of some ideal, whereas "emuna" means that both aspects of man ascribe to such an ideal with no conflict. □

Kiddushes Hayom

RIVKA OLENICK

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the Creator and Master of the universe. This person believes that everything they have they've gained because of their own skill and intelligence and denies the input of the hand of God. Since God does not exist physically a person cannot relate to God's authority of the physical world. At the same time this person shows us that arrogance and ignorance are the easiest traps to fall into. The person cannot avoid the thought that there must be a Creator of the universe. However, the person turns his back on God, thinking that it is he who makes his life more successful, not God. However, no blessing or benefit comes from this. Only by keeping to "My sanctuary" that which God has willed for us through the Sabbath will there be happiness and fortune. Of course, when this person's life becomes complicated and if tragedy occurs, he/she will immediately ask: "Why is God doing this to me? Where is God when I need help?" The livelihood a person thinks he is missing out on isn't really a true livelihood if one's life lacks true purpose. God proves this idea of providing our livelihood when He gave a double portion of manna on the sixth day to provide what was needed for the seventh day as well. There was no need to even think of one's needs. How perfect is the Creator?!

God has provided us with this Sabbath day on which we can elevate our soul and renew our covenant so to speak. Chazal describe this elevated state of the soul by saying that the Sabbath provides the Jew with an "extra soul" or a "super soul." We dedicate ourselves especially to His service and on every Sabbath He rejuvenates our soul and gives our lives meaning and fulfillment. So the Sabbath is a recurring time of holiness and elevation. It is the time when we are asked to refrain from all of our daily tasks and work. We withdraw from our needing security from the physical, which enslaves us and we redirect our energies to the Creator. How great is it to be free to serve God?! □

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