

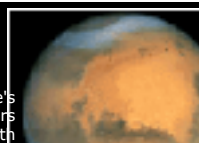


Even at 55 million light-years, the galaxy is larger than Hubble's field of view,

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

*King David: Psalm 148*

The Hubble telescope's best images yet of our 'neighbor' Mars - a mere 43 million miles from Earth



ESTD  
1997

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

# JewishTimes

Volume I, No. 26...Aug. 1, 2002

WWW.MESORA.ORG/JEWISHTIMES.PDF

Download and Print Free

## IN THIS ISSUE:

PARSHA: BLESSINGS & CURSES	I, 2
TALMUD VS. SCIENCE	I, 3
LOVE OF GOD-WHOSE OBLIGATION?	I, 4
APPEARING BEFORE GOD	2, 4
GOD CANNOT BE PHYSICAL	3
THE JEW - BY MARK TWAIN	3
SUBJECTIVISM II	4
WHY GOD MADE THE ISRAELITES	4

## SUGGESTED READINGS:

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](http://www.mesora.org/13principles.html)

### God's Existence Belief or Proof?

[www.mesora.org/belieforproof.html](http://www.mesora.org/belieforproof.html)

### God's Land Without God?

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY:  
[www.mesora.org/openletter/openletter2.html](http://www.mesora.org/openletter/openletter2.html)

## Blessings and Curses Upon the Mountains

**RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM**

What is the concept intended by Moses commanding the Jews to receive both blessings and curses upon Mt. Grizzim and Mt. Eval respectively?

There are a number of questions to be addressed:

1) What were these specific areas of blessing and curse? 2) What is a "blessing" and what is a "curse"? 3) Why at this time? 4) Why on 2 mountain tops? 5) Why six tribes on each mountain top? 6) Why were the priests, Levites and the Ark remaining in the valley between these mountains, and what was achieved by these individuals

(continued on page 2)

## Talmud vs. Science

**RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM**

**Reader:** In a recent edition of the "The Jerusalem Report," there was an article, entitled, "The Heretic." It is the story of a man, named Yaron Yadan, living in Israel, who is an ex Ultra Orthodox Yeshiva head. He is an EX orthodox Jew because of the following reasons. Using his logic, he thought that if the Talmud was the word of G-d, and that it was originally taught to Moshe, and had been passed down until it was written down by Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi and later rabbis, then the science that it talks about would be accurate according to today's science. So for example, he took a look at what our Sages have to say about Kashrut and family purity laws. He also studied human, animal biology. He came to the conclusion that the Sages understanding of animal biology was wrong and therefore the laws of Kashrut are flawed. He reached the same conclusion when he studied female anatomy and he now believes that the family purity laws are flawed as well. One more example is that of fish, and he claims that some early rabbis ate non kosher fish due to their ignorance of maritime life. And finally, since our sages thought that the world was flat, the times for the beginning and end of Shabbos are wrong.

I'm very sorry that I am being so ambiguous and I'm also sorry that I can't find this article on the internet, but this article is in the June 17th issue of "The Jerusalem Report." I'm very sorry to bother you but I am very interested in hearing your thoughts on this matter. Is this man correct in the the Talmudic Sages are flawed in their science, and therefore the Talmud could not have been from G-d? This man, Yaron Yadan, talked to Yeshayahu Leibowitz, the famed orthodox scientist, who agreed with Mr. Yadan, that the science of the Talmud is wrong. So what is

(continued on page 3)



### ALAN AND JOCELYN KEYES VISITING THE VICTIMS

An example of the highest level of human love, visiting the sick. See our special section, "Response to Terror", with a documentary by Connie Hair, producer.

### A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO JASON SALAMON

Jason's father and I learn regularly. Jason recently asked his father of the meaning behind our placement of the right shoe first as we dress each morning. His wish to understand such an "insignificant" topic, lead to his father and I uncovering some beautiful ideas this entire week. "Thank you Jason!"

Have your children email us with their questions: [questions@mesora.org](mailto:questions@mesora.org)

## Love of God - Whose Obligation Is It?

**RIVKA OLENICK**

Shimon the Righteous was one of the last of the Men of the Great Assembly. He used to say: "The world stands on three things on the Torah, service and deeds of kindness." Pirkei Avos 1:2

In developing one's love of God, avas Hashem men and women have to be involved in the three things that the world stands on Torah, service and good deeds. There is no other way to love God. A person can have an appreciation for the entire system of Torah, but how can one have an appreciation without real knowledge? A person must learn what the system is. How can anyone be involved in service, performing the commandments if we don't understand what the commandments mean? If performing deeds of kindness are based on the Will of The Creator than every person has to know what His will is, and why and how we perform it. So, doesn't everyone, male and female have a chiyuv, an obligation of avas Hashem, love of God?

"But how come I don't have an obligation to learn Torah? Women often ask. Why does one need an obligation to obtain knowledge? Obtaining this knowledge is voluntary. Do you involve yourself in learning and love of God only because of obligation? Isn't it important to know how your purpose in life relates to love of God?"

After the Torah reading on the Sabbath we say: "It is a tree of life for those who grasp it, and its supporters are praiseworthy. Its ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace. Lengthy days are at its right; at its left are wealth and honor. Hashem desired for the sake of its righteousness, that the Torah be made great and glorious." Didn't God give the Torah to us to maintain its, greatness and to continuously glorify it's greatness? The Creator has given us all the wonderful gifts life has to offer, family, our homes, our physical needs met and the means to sustain our lives. The Sabbath, the holidays, and the opportunity for continuous enjoyment that thought and wisdom provide are also gifts! We express our appreciation for the greatest gift of

(continued on page 4)

## Blessings and Curses Upon the Mountains

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

(continued from page 1)

□ placing the blessings and curses? 7) What connection if any, do both Ibn Ezra and Ramban allude to by referencing the Scapegoat thrown off of Mount Azazel on Yom Kippur?

To answer these questions, we must first take note at what time these blessings and curses were commanded to be placed. It was upon the Jewish nation entering the land of Israel for the first time.

I feel this would be an appropriate time for Moshe to urge the Jews to follow the right way of life, and more so, to put the land in perspective, the conquest of which was anticipated for decades. Perhaps Moshe's plan was to drive a point home to the Jews, that is, that the Land per se is not a goal in itself. The goal is the adherence to the Torah's philosophy. To make this point cogent and concrete, and for the sake of being seen from a distance by those who did not ascend, Moshe first commanded the Jews to stand on two mountain tops. (I do not believe all women and infants ascended.) In order for the event to be witnessed by all, elevation was necessary. Moshe desired that the people take to heart the fortune and consequences of living or abandoning the Torah. Proper conduct would lead to one retaining the gift of Israel, as is seen by the blessing being placed upon the lush Mt. Grizzim. However, if one abandons G-d, the fate of a barren Mt. Eval is certain. Moshe desired the best for the Jews, and showing them real differences between bountiful and barren geography would be the best means for opening their eyes to the truth of the purpose of the Land, and to the real results of one's actions.

Moshe decreed that people should act as models for both the correct and incorrect lifestyles. He therefore chose that six tribes stand on each mountain top, to indicate that just as there are only six tribes, and either a tribe was on Mt. Grizzim or Mt. Eval, so also, one's life can go in only one of two paths. There is no other choice. As the Talmud's analogy goes, (paraphrased) "...A man is a very sick creature, and there is a bandage he can wear. If he keeps on the bandage, all will be well. If however he removes it, his death is certain. The bandage is Torah".

The tribes modeled for the rest of the Jews, as well as themselves, what would result from one of the two paths of life. This is what I believe Ibn Ezra was alluding to with the reference to the scapegoat. The 2 goats on Yom Kippur also teach man of the only two possibilities he can travel in

life. If he chooses the Torah, then he is as the goat offered to G-d. If he does not, then he is as the second goat destined for tragedy as it is sliced to death by the rocky outline of Mt. Azazel. As the priests and Levites were always involved in study, and do not inherit the land, land-related fortune does not apply to them. Further, they are above the need to do labor as Maimonides teaches in the last law of Shmita v'Yovale, "not only the Levites, but any one who enters this world - even Gentile, who dedicates himself to learning, G-d will give such a person a portion (his physical needs) as is sufficient for him". Maimonides teaches that there is a special Providence administered by G-d for any human being who sincerely spends his life in the pursuit of wisdom. For such an individual, G-d maintains his needs directly. This makes sense, as G-d's desire is just this, that man pursue wisdom. It follows that G-d will then create a situation for such a man to continue his growth of knowledge.

The concept of blessing and curse is not to be understood as anything other than the actual experienced lifestyle. Following the Torah itself is the blessing, the pure enjoyment of the pursuit of wisdom. Conversely, abandoning a life of wisdom will result in constant frustration and a life of pain.

To say there is blessing besides the Torah is false and diminishes the Torah's worth, and to suggest another pain aside from abandoning Torah is unnecessary.

**Reader:** I was reading your article on Mt. Grizzim and Mt. Eval this morning. I felt a bit confused on one point - at the end you write that the Torah life is its own reward, while simultaneously stating that the right to a bounteous (and secure!) land of Israel is the direct result of following a life of Torah. I feel sure that the answer lies not in one extreme or the other, but in a blend of the two concepts, or maybe in the idea of a result as different from reward or motivation; I would appreciate some clarification on the point though. Thanks!!!

**Mesora:** Israel is only given as a means to prolong adherence to Torah deals, as we see Divine eviction the result of abandoning Torah. But even so this is not a "reward", as a Rabbi mentioned, there can be no reward in the true sense for Torah adherence, as that would make the reward a more prized object than following the Torah itself, and this cannot be.

Even Olam Haba - the Future World - is only an increase in the same area of involvement in ideas, as the soul is the only part of us which survives death.

Therefore, there are three things discussed, 1) Torah - intellectual involvement, the pursuit of understanding reality - THE prized involvement, 2) Israel - as a secured vehicle for Torah involvement on Earth, and 3) Olam Haba, the highest level of involvement in reality - no physical limitations. □

## Appearing Before God

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

In Deuteronomy, 16:16, we find the command for males to appear before God (in front of the Temple) three times a year; on Passover, Tabernacles and on the Festival of Weeks. The passage reads thus:

"Three times yearly, there shall appear all males - to the face of God your God - in the chosen place; on the holiday of Unleavened Bread, the holiday of Weeks, and the on the holiday of Tabernacles, and you shall not see the face of God empty handed."

The Amoraim, who who succeeded the authors of the Mishna (Oral law) argued regarding to who we refer to by the term "appear". The Hebrew word "yay-ra-eh" means to appear. This can apply to God appearing to man, and visa versa, man appearing before God. Rabbi Yochanan b. Dahavai explained it as referring to God, meaning, man must place himself in the situation where God appears to him. Rabbeinu Tam explained it referring to man appearing before God.

Rabbeinu Tam explains his reasoning as follows: There are two versions of the structure of the word; There is "yay-ra-eh", meaning "to appear" before someone. And there is "yi-ra-eh", meaning "to look". The former is the actual written form located in the Torah script, while the latter is only the accepted pronunciation. We have this many times in the Torah, we call it the "ksiv" and the "kri", the written and the spoken forms, respectively. These dual word forms are Masoretic (Traditional) vehicles for passing down additional teachings, unavailable without the additional word form.

Rabbi Yochanan b. Dahavai held that we use the orally transmitted forms of words as starting points in Biblical exegesis. This means that the term "to look" can apply to both God and man, as both can do the act of looking, in some sense. But this allowed Rabbi Yochanan b. Dahavai to entertain this passage as referring to God. To this, Rabbeinu Tam objected,

"...we do not form Torah explanations based on oral transmission. The primary and authentic explanation must be rooted and commenced in the written form of the Torah, and only then do we look to oral transmission for embellishment. But the primary teaching must emanate from the written form." (Paraphrased)

Since this is the case, the written text literally means "to appear". Rabbeinu Tam explained that this is impossible in application to God's actions. He cannot "appear in the Temple" to be "seen" by man, as God does not occupy space. Therefore, this written form of "appear"

must apply to man. Thereby defining the command as "man must appear before God." (The additional instance of "yih-ra-eh" in this verse also applies to man - being the same word form - and thereby is interpreted that man must also "see". The Rabbis derive from this second instance that blind men are exempt from this command). We have now clarified the command to be "man's obligation to travel to the Temple, appearing before God". Man only is commanded - as opposed to women - and only those men with eyesight.

We now observe a fascinating statement recorded by the Marsha: "Man must appear before God's two eyes, and even man must come to see God with man's two eyes." This is truly astonishing. What can be meant by "God's two eyes"? He is not physical, His knowledge is not based on vision. God has no organs.

As always, we must ask properly formulated questions to arrive at answers. How shall we formulate this question? I would suggest as follows: "What do two eyes convey, why not one eye?" Well, two eyes means to me, that something was in full vision, that is, both eyes saw it. But again, in relation to God, how can we apply the term "vision"? But perhaps, "full vision", means not that sight exists with God, but that God beheld something which occupied His 'vision', or, His interest. He was so to speak, "looking" at that which interests Him. What interests God about man? The answer is man's performance of the Torah. We may suggest that "God's two eyes" mean that God took full note of man's action by appearing at the Temple, in accordance with this Torah command. The medrash is relating to us that which "caught God's eyes". It is an important phenomena when Jews appear before God in the Temple.

This being the case, how can the medrash go on to state that we in turn must have our two eyes working - literally - in order to participate in this command? Why should the Rabbis take a metaphoric gesture, God's eyes, and incorporate it as a physical action which prohibits blind men from attendance?

Here we find a beautiful idea: The fact that God looked at our fulfillment of this command with "both His eyes", conveys, as we said, the idea that this command is set apart from all others. There is some element in this appearance before God, which "fills God's vision", i.e., it is most favorable to Him. The Rabbis interpreted the second instance of "yay-ra-eh" to mean an exclusion of all blind men. They were saying that this very concept of God's delight in man must somehow permeate the very maaseh mitzvah - the act of the command. How did the Rabbis determine that the action together with the concept makes this specific mitzvah so important? They decided to characterize our action with the element of God's delight as is

(continued on page 4)

Page 2



# Talmud vs. Science

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

(continued from page 1)

your position? Can the wisdom of science and the Talmud converge? Thank you so very much for taking the time to read my email and hopefully respond.

**Mesora:** You do not quote what exactly Yaron Yadan thought to be Talmudic facts, nor what were his facts derived from science through "his own logic", as you put it. We have two unknowns, and perhaps two errors.

Talmudic knowledge is man's own understanding, it is not from God. Is man flawless? Of course he is not. Did the Rabbis of the Talmud make mistakes based on limited scientific knowledge of their times? Yes. So Talmudic knowledge when discussing certain areas in science is limited to the Rabbi's current-day facts. The Rabbis even acquiesced to the Greeks when they saw their correct positions. They were right to investigate and base decisions on the best of their abilities, just as we do today, and how the future leaders of Israel must continue.

However, God's knowledge transmitted to us as Mosaic law differs from man's knowledge based on science. There is no divinely passed down book on science, as there is on Torah. We do not say the Rabbis had a Mishna or a Biblical verse erroneously. That which stems from what God spoke to Moses, and Moses to us, is 100% accurate. It is God's knowledge which contains no error. "He is our rock, there is no flaw in Him" (Psalm 92).

God created both the physical world which contains all laws of science, and the Torah. Both are reflections of His consistent and perfectly wise and rational system of knowledge. As both are rational systems, they cannot contradict each other on even one, single point. If we see contradictions, it is our own error. How can man have God's knowledge? It is ridiculous, impossible, and far more foolish an assumption than any other. To this, King Solomon referred, (Koheles, 5:1) "Don't be excited (with) your mouth, and do not hasten to bring forth words before God, for God is heaven and you are on Earth, therefore let your words be few".

It seems Yaron Yadan based his understanding Jewish law on his own, flawed reasoning, and did not perceive God's consistent and perfectly rational ideas. Many people make the mistake that they found "the reason" for such and such. They assume Kosher for example,

exists due to health considerations. When they find shrimp to be as healthy as cow, they proceed to attack the Torah for making a mistake by prohibiting shrimp. But where is their proof that Kosher is based on health? Some people attack the Torah because they feel restriction on the Sabbath too harsh. They don't realize that restriction is only to set the stage for focusing exclusively on beautiful ideas, ideas unattainable while we labor at our positions.

I would question Yadan, "Were not King Solomon, King David, Moses, and so many other prophets and Rabbis much closer to the truth than us? The Torah proves God spoke with Moses. He did not speak with you for good reason. Moses had the correct ideas, direct from God. Why then did not all of these great individuals realize your new found 'knowledge' that the Torah is inherently wrong? All the world came to hear Solomon's wisdom. Did they come to hear you? Solomon spoke endlessly on the wisdom in the Torah, and the world understood him as tremendously wise. Mr. Yaron Yadan, are they all wrong?"

Although some, few Rabbis' statements are flawed by inaccurate facts (dwarfed in number by accurate ones) why did Yadan abandon ALL of Torah? People are looking for excuses to be "free" from Mitzvos. The Jews did so in the desert, and this hasn't changed with many Jews today. At the very least, Yadan should keep the laws which "his own logic" say are error-free. The fact he does not, demonstrates that he is not consistent, and we cannot side with inconsistent 'reasoning'. Reasoning, by definition, is consistent.

It is only he who seeks with earnest, the underlying depths of knowledge, who will find it. "If you dig for it like silver, and search it out like a buried treasure, then you will understand the fear of G-d, and the knowledge of G-d will you find" (Proverbs, 2:4-5). □

## God Cannot Be Physical

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

**Reader:** I'm confused. You say that we should not come up with our own definitions of God. Yet, you say it is impossible for God to become physical. Isn't that limiting God? Where are the scripture verses that support your assertion that God can never become physical?

**Mesora:** Man cannot perceive that which is imperceptible, I refer to God. This is why one cannot come up with "definitions" of God. As Maimonides

teaches, what we know of God is always in the negative. We cannot know what He is, we can only know what He is not, i.e. He is not physical. He is not emotional, He is not governed by anything, including time, he is not affected by anything, including His creations' actions.

Following are a few arguments refuting the notion that God can be physical:

1) "Limit" is not a negative. God being limited, in that He never becomes physical, is a perfection. For example, a human judge who can never make a mistake, limited to being right, is more perfect than a judge who can make mistakes. Being limited to perfection, is perfection. Being right is clearly a good. Being physical is definitely an evil, as it subjects the one physical to all sorts of damage, decay, destruction and death. Being physical is worlds apart from being metaphysical.

2) How can that which is not physical 'become' physical? This is an impossibility. Something which exists already in a metaphysical state, means that this is its nature. As God already exists in His perfection as non-physical, this metaphysical state is His very definition. It is as if you suggest that water can become dry. Then it would not be water. But even this impossibility is more plausible than God's transition into corporeality, as water is already matter. Change in moisture is more plausible than change in God. God cannot become physical, then He would not be God. An important point for those who ascribe to the notion of the Trinity.

3) Another absurdity from your premise is as follows: God is the Creator. To become physical means He is now the 'created'. These two are mutually exclusive. Equally impossible is that something physical can become God. Since it is already a created being, by definition, it cannot be the Creator.

4) Change implies imperfection. Something changes either to become more or less perfect. If we say God changes, (which opposes the verse in Malachi, "I am God, I do not change...") we are suggesting that He is either imperfect now, and is moving towards perfection, or He is perfect now, and is moving away from perfection. In either case, we suggest a moment where God is imperfect.

5) God cannot be controlled by the very laws He created. Becoming physical means he is governed by laws of the physical.

6) I quote Maimonides' third principle: "Principle III. The Denial of Corporeality in Connection with G-d

This is to accept that this Oneness that we have mentioned above (2) is not a body and has no strength in the body, and

has no shape or image or relationship to a body or parts thereof. This is why the Sages of blessed memory said with regards to heaven there is no sitting, nor standing, no awakens, nor tiredness. This is all to say that He does not partake of any physical actions or qualities. And if He were to be a body then He would be like any other body and would not be God. And all that is written in the holy books regarding descriptions of God, they are all anthropomorphic. Thus said our great Rabbis of blessed memory The Torah spoke in man's language (i.e. using our terms so that we'd have some understanding). And the Rabbis have already spoken at length on this issue. This is the third pillar and is attested to by the verse "For you saw no image" meaning that you did not see an image or any form when you stood at Sinai because as we have just said He has no body nor power of the body." □

## The Jew

MARK TWAIN

Harper's Bazaar, Sept. 1899

"If the statistics are right, the Jews constitute but one percent of the human race. It suggests a nebulous dim puff of star dust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way. Properly the Jew ought hardly be heard of; but he is heard of, has always been heard of.

He is as prominent on the planet as any other people, and his commercial importance is extravagantly out of proportion to the smallness of his bulk.

His contributions to the world's list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine, and obtuse learning are also way out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers.

He has made a marvelous fight in this world in all the ages, and has done it with his hands tied behind him. He could be vain of himself and be excused for it.

The Egyptians, the Babylonians, and the Persians rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, and faded to dream stuff and passed away. The Greeks and the Romans followed and made a vast noise and they are gone. Other peoples have sprung up and held their torch high for a time. But it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished.

The Jew saw them all. Beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind.

All things are mortal but the Jew.

All other forces pass, but he remains.

What is the secret of his immortality?..." □

Page 3

# Appearing Before God

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

(continued from page 2)

demonstrated by requiring that we too have full vision. This full vision displayed by all attendees at the Temple, reflects the very nature of this mitzvah as one which man performs in God's delight.

What do I mean by God's delight? It is a state in man, where God commands man in this single act which epitomizes man's ultimate state of perfection. This inevitably thrusts our quest onto the specific design of this command: "What purpose may we find in the act of traveling to the Temple, simply to "appear" before God? (I isolate appearing from the obligation of sacrifice, for the passage clearly separates the two - "do not see God's face empty handed" is a subsequent embellishment on the primary obligation of appearance.) Why on the three Holidays? Why is this not applicable to women? Is it only the principle of "zman gerama" which exempts the women? Or is it something more basic in the command itself?"

Man's goal is to come to his greatest appreciation of the Creator. This - by definition - requires a 100% conviction in God's existence. Above all else, we must view this as absolute truth. We must also acknowledge that His system is perfect for man, meaning, all God's ways are just, as it is written, (Gen. 18:17):

"And God said, 'Shall I keep hidden from Abraham that which I do? While Avraham will become a great and might nation, and all there will bless him all the nations of the land. For I known in him that he will command his sons and his household after himself, and he will guard the path of God, to do charity and justice..."

God immediately informed Abraham of His plan to destroy Sodom and Ammorah. Had Abraham awakened after the destruction of the city, he would not have learned the fine intricacies of God's justice, but only that the people were corrupt and deserved obliteration - as with the Flood. However, God 'invited' Abraham to discussions, which was followed by Abraham's defense of Sodom. Abraham exclaimed, "the Judge of the Earth won't execute justice?"

Abraham did not ask this as a question but stated it as a certainty, as God does not answer him on this. God only answers Avraham's true query, i.e., whether the merits of some, can save others. Abraham asked this, as he was not learned in certain ideas of charity. This is beyond natural observation - beyond the idea that each man pays for his own sins, and each merits his own rewards. Abraham now realized that God's invite in this decision making process must mean that there are other considerations which he could not arrive at without God's intervention. Proof of the hidden quality of this idea is that God saves people based not only on

THEIR OWN merits, is God's own words, "Shall I keep hidden from Abraham that which I do?" The reason for this engagement is also clearly taught, "that he will command his sons and his household after himself". For Abraham to be a leader, he must lead with accurate knowledge.

The answer to what the unique quality is in the command to appear before God: This act is to demonstrate that we admit to God's that we admit God's existence. We do this by traveling to a place known only for His glory. There is no other attraction at the Temple mount. Besides a desire to approach God, there is no other reason for observing this as a commandment. Additionally, observing this as a commandment simultaneously demonstrates our conviction that this command, this representation of God's system, is completely just, and ought to be followed. Men are obligated, as men are the ones charged with Torah teaching and learning. Endorsement of the system of Torah must be via those who carry the full weight of the system.

The reason this command is to be performed at the holidays, is that these holidays are samples of man acting at his most pristine level of existence. Therefore these days must be inextricably bound up with the concept of Torah adherence - this is man's sole purpose. On these days, man is prohibited from labor, he must divert his attention and activities from the mundane to the sublime - from the physical pursuits, to the spiritual. On these days, man's focus is redirected solely to God's existence, and the system of his perfection. His appearance at the Temple embodies these ideas.

Appearance at the Temple three times a year to be performed on the holidays is an endorsement of our complete belief in God, and His just system. This action is so grand, God beholds our appearance, as it were possible, with "both eyes". □

## SUBJECTIVISM II

**Reader:** My name is ----- . We have arranged for Dr. Alan Keyes to speak to our community in November. A number of influential members of our community are "up in arms" about our decision, noting Dr. Keyes' anti-Gay and anti-abortion stands. They have threatened to write letters to all board members and to write an article in our local Jewish newspaper. Would you have any suggestions as to how to best handle this delicate situation. One of the most vocal opponents of our decision is a Jewish member of the local school board who has one son who is homosexual. Thanks for your help and the work you are doing

**Mesora:** I recently wrote my thoughts on how the Torah approaches morality. Please have a read at the article below. I think you will understand from here how we must approach all areas of morality. God alone determines what is morally correct, and what is not. God determines reality. Our benefit is not to argue,

but to understand God, and the reality He designed. Do we argue that gravity should have been created differently? Do we argue that the human body should have two hearts instead of just one? No. We strive to understand the wisdom enveloped in the perfect design of nature, and we find that wisdom only after years of study. In similar fashion we must approach God's Torah. It too is His creation, containing even finer marvels.

God teaches that homosexuality is a deviation, as is abortion. Our attitude should be to study God's wisdom in these areas too, learning what the deviation is, and not contest them simply because they oppose our subjective preferences.

Realizing what and why God opposes offers unique insights into tremendously wise precepts. Opposing them cheats us out of such pearls of wisdom.

The Torah must determine all our actions. #

Read this article: Free Speech vs. Objective Morality □

## Why God Made the Israelites

**Question:** Could you please explain to me why God willed it that a nation should be formed? And why was this a reward to Avraham? Wouldn't he be long gone before the nation develops?

**Mesora:** God willed Bnei Yisroel to be formed as God's will was always that man should lead a life of chochmah - wisdom. Avraham spearheaded this effort by discovering God. Perhaps God desired that a nation have at its identity, a founder who came to the ideals of monotheism through his own discovery. Avraham thereby setting an example of the prime existence of man, i.e., one who searches for truth and finds it. As opposed to one who just follows someone else's teachings, Avraham proved that there is objective knowledge in the universe which man can uncover, the search of which, is man's purpose, and man's ultimate happiness. God showed this to be man's purpose by creating a nation from Avraham, thereby underlining Avraham's ability and role to uncover truths through reasoning alone. This also falls in line with God's original plan bereft of a Bnei Yisroel, but just an Adam and Eve who would populate the world and generate offspring, following their parent's method of discovering God through the study of the universe. Maimonides states that the study of the universe is what brings man to be in awe of God.

Since it was Avraham's sole desire to promulgate true ideals, later encapsulated in the Torah, Avraham's own existence is not essential for him to reap the rewards of his actions. Provided there are followers of Avraham's teachings, Avraham is satisfied that his plan continues, and this is his reward. Nothing external to mankind's pursuit of knowledge is needed by Avraham, there cannot be anything more which he could desire. □

## Love of God-Whose Obligation?

RIVKA OLENICK

(continued from page 1)

Torah through the obligation of love of God and we do this with sincere gratitude. Isn't our existence based on fulfilling a purpose? Isn't that purpose to fulfill the Will of God and have love of God? Isn't this the only reason we were created? It is. So, a woman may learn as much as she wants in any area voluntarily if that's what she desires. To enhance her love of God, she is obligated to learn and understand the commandments that were given specifically to her: Taking challa and candle lighting and the laws of family purity given to married woman. All three commandments were given to her so that she may continuously sanctify her home all of her life. The mitzvah of procreation for man cannot be realized unless it is placed in the care of women through her immersion into the mikvah. This mitzvah is absolutely essential to Jewish life and it is her responsibility to protect it carefully and to guard it. Obligation in this mitzvah is a prerequisite in fulfilling her purpose as a wife and when understood thoroughly greatly enhances her love of God. It would benefit all women to examine this commandment much more carefully whether you are married or not yet married, it is the foundation in preserving Jewish family life. It is woman alone who engages her entire being into this commandment. There are no external objects needed in this commandment she is the ritual vessel she is completely immersed in the process of purity. God has endowed her physically and intellectually with the means to perform this commandment that can have a deep and profound effect in connection to her devotion and love of God.

In the Shemonah Esri we recite the blessing for insight and we ask the Creator to provides us with wisdom, insight and discernment. Men and women, ask God that these attributes be given to us. We need them in order to fulfill our purpose, to have greater awareness and understanding of our lives and to set up our lives according to its, true purpose. Knowledge itself is a reward, a gift and it is an investment in the self, the soul that is part of one's involvement in one's perfection. This investment in the self is what keeps a person strong and brings peace of mind. Love of God is an obligation we all have. All the popular novels people "just can't wait to read" are really very empty and hollow compared to the ideas contained in Torah. When we "just can't wait to read" these novels do we make any investment in the self or in our purpose? Are we receiving any reward and do our minds really feel fulfilled and are we genuinely happy? No, there is no investment or reward, the fulfillment is momentary and happiness is an impossibility. Precious time is lost and our minds are filled with waste! It is so much more mentally exhilarating when we "just can't wait to learn ideas." The quality of the happiness that results is genuinely satisfying it is real happiness.

God commanded Jewish men to be the transmitters of the Torah. Torah is our greatest and most precious gift ever given and is absolutely essential for having love of God. Every Jewish man needs to take their obligation much more seriously and make it a priority in life if they haven't. Women are also transmitters of Torah, that begins in their home but women are not obligated in time bound commandments that men are bound by. Nevertheless, men and women need to make Torah the center of their existence and encourage each other to understand and uncover the truths of Torah. As we each align ourselves with truth, which is true reality that brings all of us onto the path of God- the path, the way, the derech that He provided for us.

"Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving the created beings, and bringing them near to the Torah." Pirkei Avos 1:12