

NEWBORN: WE SHARE IN THE JOYOUS OCCASION OF RABBI BERNIE & SHIRLEY FOX'S FIRST GRANDCHILD. WARMEST WISHES TO THE PARENTS AARON AND RACHELI ZIMMER AND TO BOTH FAMILIES.

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Houston	7:56	Phoenix	7:10
Jerusalem	7:17	Pittsburgh	8:17
Johannesburg	5:23	Seattle	8:26
Los Angeles	7:36	Sydney	4:59
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Weekly Parsha

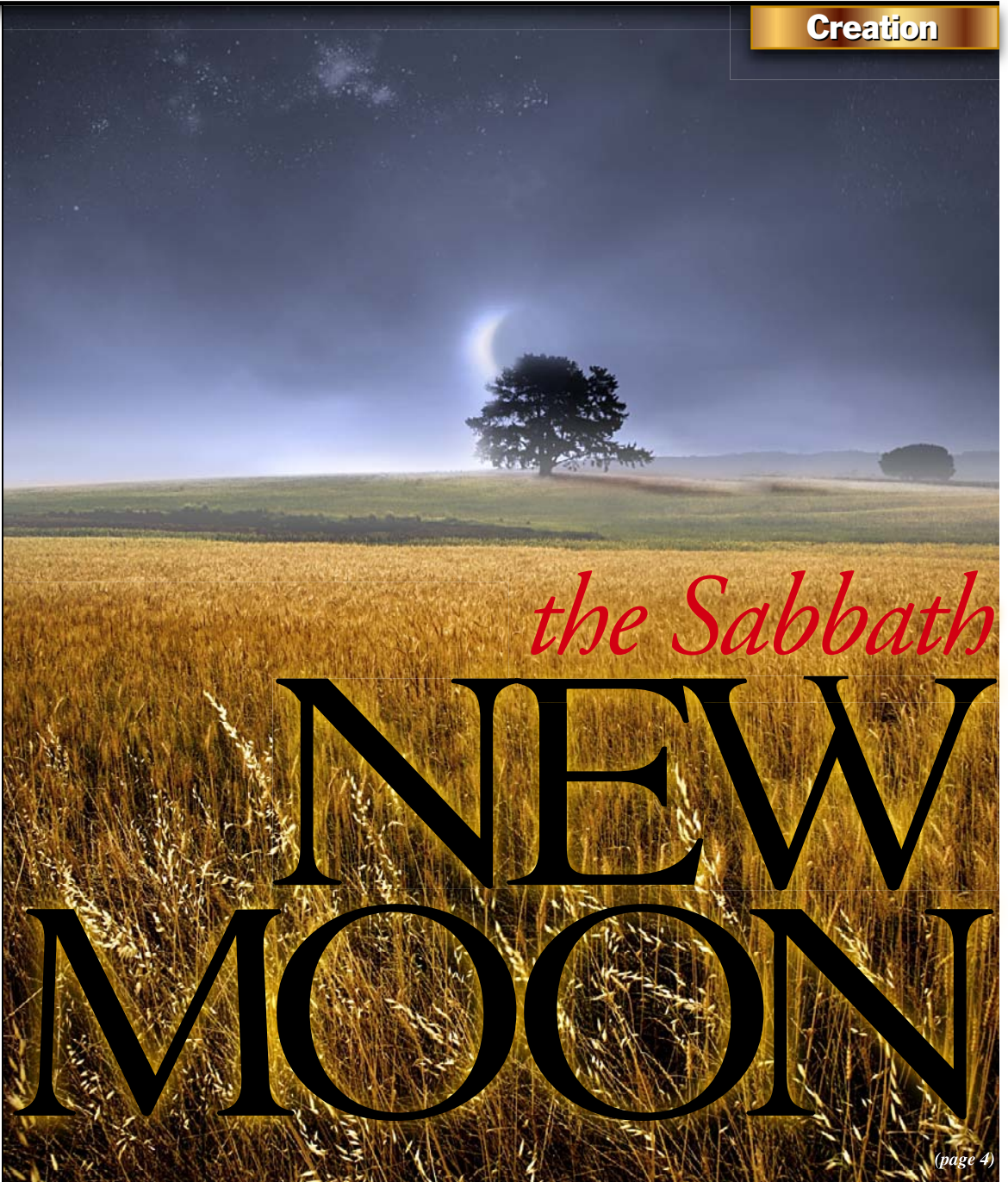
9th of Av

RABBI BERNIE FOX

"Whoever mourns for Jerusalem will be will [merit to] see its rejoicing, and all who do not mourn for Jerusalem will not [merit to] see its rejoicing." [1]

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Creation



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Weekly Parsha

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Weekly Journal on Jewish Thought



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The simplest understanding of this statement of the Sages is that Hashem operates middah k'neged middah (measure for measure). If a person acts according to God's wishes and is appropriately distressed over the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash, he will be rewarded with the opportunity to rejoice when it is rebuilt. If not, he won't deserve such a reward. In short: "If you show me you really want it, I'll give it to you, but if not, then I won't." This simple understanding might be true, but it is probably not what our Sages were getting at. There is a deeper meaning here.

In order to attain a deeper understanding of this statement of our Sages we must first examine the obligation of aveilut (mourning) on Tishah b'Av. Many people ask the question, "Why do we mourn for Jerusalem on Tishah b'Av?" This may be an important question, but it certainly is not a strong question. One could simply answer: "Because we are sad about the destruction of the Jerusalem and the Beit haMikdash," and that would be the end of it. There is a stronger, more specific question we can ask: "Is our mourning on Tishah b'Av consistent with the structure of normative, halachic aveilut?" To understand this question and find an answer we must take a brief look at the halachic structure of aveilut.

Normative halachic aveilut takes place in three stages: the seven days of lamenting, the thirty days of weeping, and final twelve months, after which no more memorials may be held for the dead.[2] In each progressive stage, the severity of the strictures imposed upon the mourner is reduced. In each stage, the mourner is expected to grieve less intensely. After the end of the period of mourning, the mourner is expected to move on with his life. The main point: normative aveilut is time-bound.

Ostensibly, it seems as though the aveilut of Tishah b'Av is not normative. Normative aveilut shouldn't last past twelve months, and here we are, still crying over the destruction of Jerusalem after nearly two thousand years – a blatant breach of the clearly defined time boundaries of halachic aveilut! Not only that, but normative mourning lessens in intensity as time goes by, but with each Tishah b'Av that passes, our mourning increases! Furthermore, the Rambam says, "One should not indulge in

excessive grief over one's dead, as it is said: "Do not weep for the dead, nor bemoan him,"[3] meaning, (do not weep for him) too much, for [death] is the 'way of the world,' and he who frets over the 'way of the world' is a fool." [4] It comes according to the Rambam that our aveilut on Tishah b'Av not only oversteps the bounds of normative aveilut but is also considered to be foolish! What is going on here?[5]

It turns out that we are not the only ones who mourn (or have mourned) excessively. We know that Ya'akov Avinu mourned for twenty-two years for (what he believed was) the loss of his son, Yosef[6]: "Then Ya'akov rent his garments and placed sackcloth on his loins; he mourned for his son many days. All his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted." [7] This is an outright contradiction to the halachic principles mentioned by the Rambam! How can it be that Ya'akov, one of the most righteous men to walk the earth, refused to be consoled, in stark opposition to the demands of halacha?

The answer lies in a distinction between normative aveilut and the aveilut of Ya'akov Avinu. This distinction is alluded to in the Midrash: "A person does not accept consolation over a living person whom he believes to be dead (savur sh'meit), for a [Divine] decree has been issued over one who has died that he be forgotten from the hearts [of the living], but this decree is not [issued] over one who is still alive." [8] The simple meaning [9] of this statement is as follows: one cannot be consoled over the death of a loved one until he has undergone yei'ush – until he has given up hope. The mourner must know and feel with absolute certainty that the person is dead and won't be coming back. When a person loses a loved one, he intellectually knows that that person is dead, but emotionally, his love still reaches out for that person. When he (emotionally) realizes that the person is no longer there, he becomes incredibly frustrated and distressed. The gap left behind by the deceased creates a gap between the mourner's mind and his heart, generating intense feelings of anxiety, confusion, and depression. Mourners tend to go through this intellectual/emotional battle for a period of time after the death, but eventually, their emotions catch up with their intellectual



(continued on next page)

realization that the person is dead. Only then do they truly give up hope in both their minds and their hearts. Only then can they fully be consoled, and continue on with their lives.

Now we can see the distinction. Ya'akov's case was different. He could not be consoled. Why not? Because he had not given up hope. He was only believed that Yosef was dead, but he didn't know with complete certainty. He lacked that absolutely conviction necessary for the intellectual confirmation. If a mourner knows in his mind that his loved one is dead he may struggle emotionally, but his heart will eventually catch up with his mind. Emotional acceptance will eventually follow intellectual acceptance. But if a person lacks that intellectual conviction, consolation is impossible. As long as there remains room for doubt – even a remote possibility that the person is still alive – the mourner will invest his entire mind and heart into that possibility and refuse to let it go. The emotional acceptance will never come because the intellectual acceptance never took place. That is why Ya'akov's aveilut exceeded the normative boundaries of halacha. He was unable to be consoled because his mind had never fully accepted Yosef's death. To summarize, there are two objectives accomplished by mourning: 1) honor for the deceased, 2) closure for the living. The process of aveilut helps the living recognize and acknowledge the tragedy that has occurred, and helps them get over it. So long as that second step remains unfulfilled, the process of aveilut can never end.

Back to Tishah b'Av. The Shulchan Aruch writes, "We do not say tachanun (Rema: or selichot) on Tishah b'Av and we do not fall on our face in supplication because Tishah b'Av is described as a moed (festival)."[10] This is a very strange phenomenon indeed. On Tishah b'Av we cry, mourn, afflict ourselves with fasting and the other four forms of affliction, refrain from studying Torah, refrain from donning festive clothing, and deprive ourselves of nearly every single pleasure – yet, we modify our observance of Tishah b'Av because we recognize it as a partial moed. Why should this be? It would be understandable if we made it a point to omit all moed-aspects until the arrival of Moshiach, when all fast-days will be nullified and celebrated as festivals[11]; that way, we would be drawing a full contrast between now (exile) and the future (redemption) . . . but that is not our

practice. Instead, we take two completely antithetical themes – joyous moed and mournful fast – and bend over backwards to make sure both aspects are demonstrated and acknowledged. Why do we do this? Why try to uphold this paradox of including aspects of moed on a day of nation-wide mourning?

The Aruch haShulchan provides an insight into this conundrum. He explains that we refrain from reciting tachanun as a demonstration of our faith in the redemption.[12] Based on our understanding of Ya'akov's aveilut, we can understand the paradox. Our aveilut, like that of Ya'akov Avinu, oversteps the time-boundaries of normative halachic aveilut. Ya'akov continued to mourn because he could not be consoled. Why not? Because he had not yet given up hope over his situation. The same is true for us. The reason why we continue to mourn is because we have not given up hope over our situation. We fully trust in Hashem's promise that He will redeem us from our exile. We know that the exile is only temporary, and that the redemption can come at any moment. In fact, we are better off than Ya'akov. He was only *savur sh'meit* – he just thought that there might be hope. We know that there is hope, because Hashem has given us His promise!

Now our previous problem can be resolved. The clash of moed and aveilut on Tishah b'Av is no paradox. In fact, quite the opposite is true. By observing the moed characteristics of Tishah b'Av, we are demonstrating the reason why we continue to mourn and why we can't accept consolation: we can't be consoled precisely because we haven't given up hope! We have refused to be consoled for nearly two thousand years because we have not given up hope. We know that Hashem will redeem us.

Now we can fully appreciate the statement: "Whoever mourns for Jerusalem will merit to see its rejoicing, and all who do not mourn for Jerusalem will not see its rejoicing." Why does a person who mourns deserve to be redeemed? Because the fact that he continues to mourn is a demonstration of his conviction in the redemption! Conversely, one who does not mourn demonstrates the fact that he has "gotten over it;" by not mourning he is demonstrating that he has given up hope of redemption. Since he has demonstrated a lack of faith in the redemption and the rebuilding of Jerusalem, he does not merit to see its rejoicing ■

[1] Masechet Ta'anit 30b

[2] Rabbeinu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides), Mishah Torah: Hilchot Aveilut 13:10

[3] Sefer Yirmiyahu 22:10

[4] Rabbeinu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides), Mishah Torah: Hilchot Aveilut 13:11

[5] At this point, Rabbi Fox made it clear that he was not in any way denegrating the aveilut on Tishah b'Av. He said that all of the mourning practices on Tishah b'Av make perfect sense, and that he is merely questioning the fact that the aveilut of Tishah b'Av deviates from normative halachic guidelines.

[6] Rabbeinu Shlomo ben Yitzchak, Commentary on Sefer Bereisheet 37:34

[7] Sefer Bereisheet 37:34-35

[8] Cited by Rabbeinu Shlomo ben Yitzchak, Commentary on Sefer Bereisheet 37:34 from Bereisheet Rabbah 84:21; see also Masechet Pesachim 54b

[9] Rabbi Fox explained that although the term "decree" sometimes refers to miracles, that simply cannot be the case here. If this were a miraculous phenomenon, then Ya'akov should have known that Yosef wasn't dead from the fact that he was still sad after a year had passed. Furthermore, if this phenomenon were miraculous, we wouldn't have to worry about agunot (an agunah is a woman whose husband is believed to have died, but his death is not confirmed. She cannot remarry until it is established for a fact that her husband is dead). All you would have to do is ask the agunah, "Are you still sad?" and if she answered negatively, you could just say, "Yup! He's dead!" Obviously, if this phenomenon were miraculous, we wouldn't need the entire halachic process of establishing the death of the husband and we would never have to worry about agunah problems. Thus, the Midrash must be referring to a psychological phenomenon.

[10] Rav Yosef Kairo, Shulchan Aruch: Orach Chaim 559:14

[11] Rabbeinu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides), Mishah Torah: Hilchot Ta'anit 5:19

[12] Rav Yechiel Michel Epstein, Aruch haShulchan: Orach Chaim 559

Creation

This Sabbath is also the New Moon. On this day, our regular, Additional (Musaf) service is altered. Instead of the regular prayer, we recite “Atah yatsarta olamcha m’kedem”, “You formed Your world from long ago.” We must ask: Why was this prayer changed on account of the Sabbath/New Moon combination?

Looking at the altered text, we notice the concepts underlined are; 1) G-d’s creation, and 2) from long ago. The first step in approaching this question is to define the two days of Sabbath and the New Moon, independent of each other. We will then be better equipped to understand what concept their combination highlights.

The Sabbath has the unique distinction of G-d’s creation of the universe from nothingness, “creation ex nihilo”. All matter was brought into existence and completed, and G-d refrained from any additional creation from the seventh day and forward. The Rabbis even teach us that the miracles throughout time were “programmed” into Creation. G-d did not enact new changes “in time”, primarily because He is above time. Maimonides teaches that time itself is also one of G-d’s creations. We might then ask, if this is so, that Creation was complete, why then do we recite “You formed Your world from long ago” only on the Sabbath/New Moon combination? We should recite it every Sabbath!

What is the New Moon? The New Moon is different from the Sabbath. On it, we do not commemorate the completion of Creation, but the completion of the circuit of the Moon. How is the Moon’s circuit different than Creation? It too was designed by God!

There is a distinction. Creation, celebrated by the Sabbath, addresses G-d’s creation of the universe from nothingness. Sabbath addresses the “substances” of creation. The New Moon embodies a different phenomenon; not the substances of creation, but the “laws” of Creation.

G-d created two things; ‘substances’, and ‘laws’ governing those substances. On the first Sabbath, although all matter was com-

plete, the laws governing their behavior could not be seen in their completion. For example, the Moon’s orbit of the Earth is about 30 days. By definition, on the first Sabbath, the fulfillment of the Moon’s cycle had 23 more days to go. In truth, all of Creation could not be witnessed on the first Sabbath, as many of G-d’s laws would not display their complete cycles of behavior for months, and for the planets and stars, even years.

What happens on the Sabbath/New Moon combination? On this day, both systems coincide, displaying a completion of both;

G-d’s physical creation of substances (Sabbath) and the fulfillment or completion of the universe’s laws (New Moon). On this special day, it is appropriate to offer this unique praise to G-d, “You formed Your world from long ago”: “formation” of the world corresponds to the Sabbath, but “long ago” corresponds to a system which although enacted at a prior time, only fulfills its mission “in time”. “Long ago” is a reference to time, not substance, describing that which only bears G-d’s creation, after some time, i.e., the behavioral aspect of Creation. Physical creation can be beheld in a glance, but a system of operation unfolds its design only through a ‘span’ of time.

Both aspects of Creation are witnessed on this special Sabbath/New Moon: Sabbath recalls physical creation, and

the new Moon testifies to G-d’s laws operating in their completion.

Postscript

While it is true that sunrise or sunset can teach this idea observed in the New Moon, perhaps its frequency and familiarity diminishes its significance in man’s eyes. Therefore, the New Moon was selected by the Rabbis as the more impressive phenomenon on which to establish praise to G-d.

I believe this second aspect of Creation - its laws - are alluded to in Genesis 2:4. ■



Noachides

But what about authorities or “experts”? Shouldn’t we believe them? Let’s look at that. Why would we believe an authority or expert? Well, they may have more knowledge than us. This is true in many classroom situations. If I’m trying to learn mathematics, and I’m just a beginner, and the teacher has an advanced mathematics degree, then it would seem reasonable to listen to what they have to say. But should I just trust them? Should I trust everything they say? Consider this. Why does a five-year-old child not cross the street when cars are coming? Because Mommy or Daddy said so. The child obeys its parents. But what would we think of an adult who gave the same answer to the same question? We would wonder why he never grew up. You would think that an adult would say, “Because there are cars coming and I don’t want to get hit.” Not, “Because Mommy told me so.” So let’s extrapolate that principle. We may accept known authorities or experts temporarily until we attain enough knowledge to test their statements and establish our own knowledge. As an actuary, if I were questioned on why I used a particular mathematical formula in a particular situation, it would be ridiculous of me to answer, “Because my college professor said so.” Rather, I would be expected to explain the mathematical basis for my use of that formula and why it is appropriate in that situation.

Likewise, we are all ultimately responsible for our own knowledge and the decisions we make. We can’t push that responsibility off on someone else. Flip Wilson’s classic line, “The devil made me buy that dress!” just doesn’t cut it. We’re responsible; each of us for our own lives. So I have to decide who I’m going to trust as an expert and how far I want to go to confirm that knowledge. A perfect example of this is health care. If I have a skin problem, I may need to go see a dermatologist. Do I need to learn everything that the dermatologist knows in order to follow his advice? Of course not. But I’m responsible for researching at least enough to choose a dermatologist who knows what he or she is doing. Otherwise, I’m the one who will endure the consequences.

So, in certain specialty areas like medicine, I may choose an authority and follow their advice without fully understanding all of the knowledge underlying that. In other areas, I

may choose an expert and accept what they’re telling me temporarily while I’m learning. Ultimately, my goal should be to develop enough knowledge to test the expert’s conclusions and prove them for myself. Then those conclusions become mine. So far, so good. Given that we have a method for establishing what’s true, can we prove that the universe has a Creator? Note that this is foundational. We need to establish this before we proceed any further. Going with the idea of “I know that G-- exists because I feel it or sense it” doesn’t cut it. We need to be able to demonstrate it. If we use the method we’ve just described to identify what’s true in every area of our lives, why would we abandon it when it comes to the area of the Creator of the universe? It’s important that we not skip this important step (or any steps).

Let me suggest first a demonstration. This is not, technically, a proof, but I find it to be so compelling as to virtually constitute a proof.

Suppose you walk into a room, and there is someone standing beside a piece of paper that is taped to the wall, and as you look closely you realize that the paper is a freshly inked copy of the United States Declaration of Independence. And the person in the room says to you, “You’ll never guess what just happened! I tossed this bottle of ink against the wall, and it formed itself into this flawless copy of the Declaration of Independence!”

The first question is, would you believe him?

If your answer is yes, why would you believe him? If your answer is no, why wouldn’t you believe him?

Ok, now hold that thought and let’s consider this second scenario. You walk into the large board room of a big corporation. The room is dominated by a long table that has 24 chairs, all perfectly lined up. At each seat at the table, there is a blotter, a yellow pad of paper, a pen, a coaster, and a coffee mug, all perfectly aligned. Standing at one end of the room next to a window and a large supplies cabinet is the person who obviously manages the room. As you stand there surveying this perfectly aligned scene, that person says to you, “You’ll never believe what happened. I accidentally left the window open last night and a big wind came along and blew the supplies cabinet door open, and then the wind blew all of these blotters, pads, pens, coasters, and coffee mugs

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Fundamentals of Torah for Non-Jews

Part II of II

BY DOUG TAYLOR

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Noachides

from the cabinet onto the table in perfect alignment.”

Same questions as before. First, would you believe him? If yes, why? If no, why not?

(Please take a moment to think deeply about this before proceeding. There's an important principle here.)

My guess is that you're answer to the first question in both cases is no, you wouldn't believe what the person is telling you. Your answer to the second question as to why you wouldn't believe the person probably centers around the preposterous unlikelihood that these events could actually happen.

So what's the general principle operating here?

Whenever we see order, we assume there is intelligence behind it.

Let me repeat that. Whenever we see order, we assume there is intelligence behind it.

Think about that. Anytime we see things that are orderly, or that are stacked up, or that operate within an obvious system, we assume that someone with intelligence made it that way. We never see order and assume that it's random. So when we look out at the world, or at the wonder of our own human bodies, what do we see? Incredible order! Systems that operate in an amazing and harmonious way. From the cellular systems within our bodies, to the nervous system, digestive system, reproductive system, muscular and skeletal systems, to the atmospheric systems, ecological systems, plants, animals, tides, and an almost limitless array of systems in nature that act in harmony and allow our planet to exist.

How is it, then, that we look at the board room and dismiss the idea that the wind blew that into existence, yet we look at the complexity of the world – not to mention space! – and actively consider the possibility that all of that incredible order came into existence without intelligence behind it?

It would be ridiculously inconsistent of us to do this. So let's look at a proof that there is a Creator of the universe, the world, and its inhabitants.

I'm taking this proof from the classic book, *Duties Of The Heart*, by Rabbi Bachya ben Joseph ibn Paquda. This book is highly recommended for non-Jews interested in



Torah and is published by Feldheim (www.feldheim.com).

There are three statements that we need to establish in order to construct our proof. The first statement is, “A thing does not make itself.”

So what's the proof of this statement?

Consider the following. Any thing that exists after having not existed must either (A) have made itself, or (B) been made by something else. No other possibility exists. It has to be one of these.

Does this make sense?

So we have two alternatives, A and B. We see that the answer must be one of them because no other alternatives exist in this case. Thus, if we can show that one of the alternatives is impossible, then we have proven the other.

So let's consider alternative A, which states that any thing that exists after having not existed must have made itself. Now if this is true, we can continue further and say that any thing that made itself must have either made itself (a) before it existed, or (b) after it existed. No other possibility exists. It has to be one of these.

But if we look at (a) and say that the thing made itself before it existed, that is impossible. For at that time it was nothing, and you can't get something out of nothing. On the other hand, if we look at (b) and say that the thing made itself after it existed, it really did

nothing, because it already existed. Therefore, since both of these possibilities are impossible, then it is impossible for a thing to have created itself, which means that A is impossible. Therefore, the answer must be B; that is, any thing that exists after having not existed must have been made by something else. So we have proved our first statement, which is, “A thing does not make itself.”

Please review this proof carefully to be sure you understand it before you continue.

Now, our second statement is, “Causes are limited in number; since their number is limited, they must have a first cause before which there is no other.”

Let's think about causes for a moment. A rock was perhaps caused by a volcanic reaction, which was caused by some energy forces under the ground, which was caused by

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something else. A person was “caused” – in a sense – by his or her parents, who were caused by their parents, who were caused by their parents, and so forth.

Now, how far back does all of this go?

To answer that, let's consider this idea. Whatever has an end must have a beginning. That is, the effect of a cause must have a first cause. Why? Because anything that is infinite cannot be made up of discrete (that is, individually separate and distinct) parts. And anything that is made up of discrete parts can't be infinite. Here's why.

Imagine something that is infinite. Now if it has discrete parts, then you should be able to take away one of those parts. If you could, then the remaining thing must be less than what it was before you took away the discrete part. Now if this remainder is still infinite, then we would have one infinite thing that is greater than another, which is impossible. If, on the other hand, the remaining thing is finite, then adding back in the discrete part that you took away would still make it finite. Yet we started out with the assumption that it was infinite. So we would have the same thing be both infinite and finite. This is an impossible contradiction. Thus, it is impossible to take away a part from that which is infinite, and therefore whatever has a part must be finite. Now in looking around at the world, we see that everything is made up of discrete parts. Take people for instance. There is you, your parents, their parents, their parents before them, etc. Since these “causes” are discrete parts, it follows that these causes are finite in number and that there must be a first cause before which there is no other cause, for as we just demonstrated, the causes cannot go back infinitely. Otherwise, we run into the impossible contradiction explained in the previous paragraph.

That establishes our second statement, which is, “Causes are limited in number; since their number is limited, they must have a first cause before which there is no other.” Then there is

our third statement, which is, “Anything that is composite was brought into existence.” Here's the proof. Anything that is composite is made up of more than one component. Those components had to exist before the composite thing. And the one who put the composite thing together had to exist before

the composite thing.

In addition, everything must be either infinite or brought into existence. No other possibilities exist here.

Now, we showed above that something that is infinite cannot have parts. Yet something that is composite is, by definition, made up of parts or components. Furthermore, something that is composite had a beginning, and something infinite cannot have a beginning or else it would not be infinite. Therefore, something composite cannot be infinite and therefore must have been brought into existence.

So we have now proven our three statements:

- (1) A thing does not make itself.
- (2) Causes are limited in number; since their number is limited, they must have a first cause before which there is no other.
- (3) Anything that is composite was brought into existence.

Next, let's take these three statements and see what they lead us to regarding the existence of a Creator.

When we look at the world and space, we

see that it is made up of many parts. There are the stars, the sky, the earth itself, rocks, mountains, water, plants, animals, birds, the oceans, rivers, lakes, etc. All of these things are made up of parts. For example, we can see that a bird is made up of feathers, bones, organs, etc.

Thus, it's clear that the world – and all that is in it – is made up of parts; that is, it is a composite. Now we showed above that anything that is composite was brought into existence. We also showed that a thing does not make itself. Thus, the world (and the universe) has to have had a Creator who brought it into existence.

In addition, since we showed above that causes are limited in number – that is, there cannot be an infinite series of causes – then the world had to have had a beginning before which there was no other beginning. That is, it had to have had a first cause before which there was no other cause. That cause is the Creator, as identified in the previous paragraph.

Thus, we have shown that there must be a Creator of the world and, similarly, the universe. ■

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New Moon & Forgiveness

Reader: I am studying New Testament Survey in Bible School. I am doing a research paper and I need to ask. My question is Rabbinic Theology as regards the doctrine of Forgiveness in contrast to the Gospel of Jesus.

Mesora: Forgiveness is granted to a person by God when the person does the following; 1) He recognizes the error in his actions - that it removes him from a relationship with God, the Creator. (Knowledge of the true definition of God must precede all of our acts). 2) He therefore regrets the performance of the sin, and 3) he resigns himself to never perform the act again.

If one regrets doing something, but does not resign himself from ever committing that act again, it displays an attachment to that sin, and he is therefore not convinced of the destructive qualities of such acts. His knowledge of the error is absent, God knows this, and cannot view the person as a changed individual. Forgiveness only can follow true, absolute repentance.

My old friend Rabbi Shmuel Moskowitz once suggested why the new month carries the element of forgiveness: As one looks at the new month as a "starting period", he can view himself as one who is starting over. If he repents, and views himself as a "new person", he thereby divorces himself from the "old him". He does not identify with the person who sinned last month. This divorce frees him from an attachment to his old values. God sees this, and does not need to punish him to correct his flaws since he is no longer attached to his old ways. God says this in Ezekiel, chapter 18. The Talmud also states that one who becomes married, or is promoted in position (viz, a military position) is also forgiven for his sins. The reason is the same. In all three cases, the

individual divorces himself from his previous self image. This break in self image can free the person from his old attachments - if he works on himself - using his new status as a springboard.

Forgiveness then means that God sees that a person honestly understands his error, that he no longer values sinning in a particular area. In fact, God says his previous sins will no longer be remembered. Conversely, if one is pure and then sins, God says that his good will not be remembered.

See our related article: New Moon Blessing

New reader's follow up question:

Reader: What does a new military position (or any other) have to do with the "old self"? What if before the new position he had a greater position-then he got this position but hasn't sinned... why is the new position part of the "new self"?

Mesora: We are only dealing with a "promotion" in status, this effects one's self image positively, a springboard for an entire personality overhaul.

Reader: Also, I can see in marriage-one takes on new mitzvot- so his perfection is enhanced. I don't see how a status change can be a springboard - that's ties into the ego -a personality change is one of the most difficult things to change according to Chazal - even a small change.

Mesora: Why can't one use an ego emotion to catapult him towards proper performance? The Rabbis teach, "Im lo lishma ba lishma", "although one does good not for the good, he eventually will come to the good for the good" ■