



Egypt viewed cats as sacred. Today, 'modern' man and many Jews still attribute powers and fortune to nature. And like the ancient Egyptians...without evidence. What does our Parsha teach concerning such practices? **Which fundamental is violated?**

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Weekly Parsha

A.Mot Kedoshim

RABBI BERNIE FOX

Yom Kipur and community harmony

For on this day you will have your sins atoned so that you will be cleansed. Before Hashem you will be cleansed from all your sins. (VaYikra 16:30)

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SINAI: Proof Removes Free Will?

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

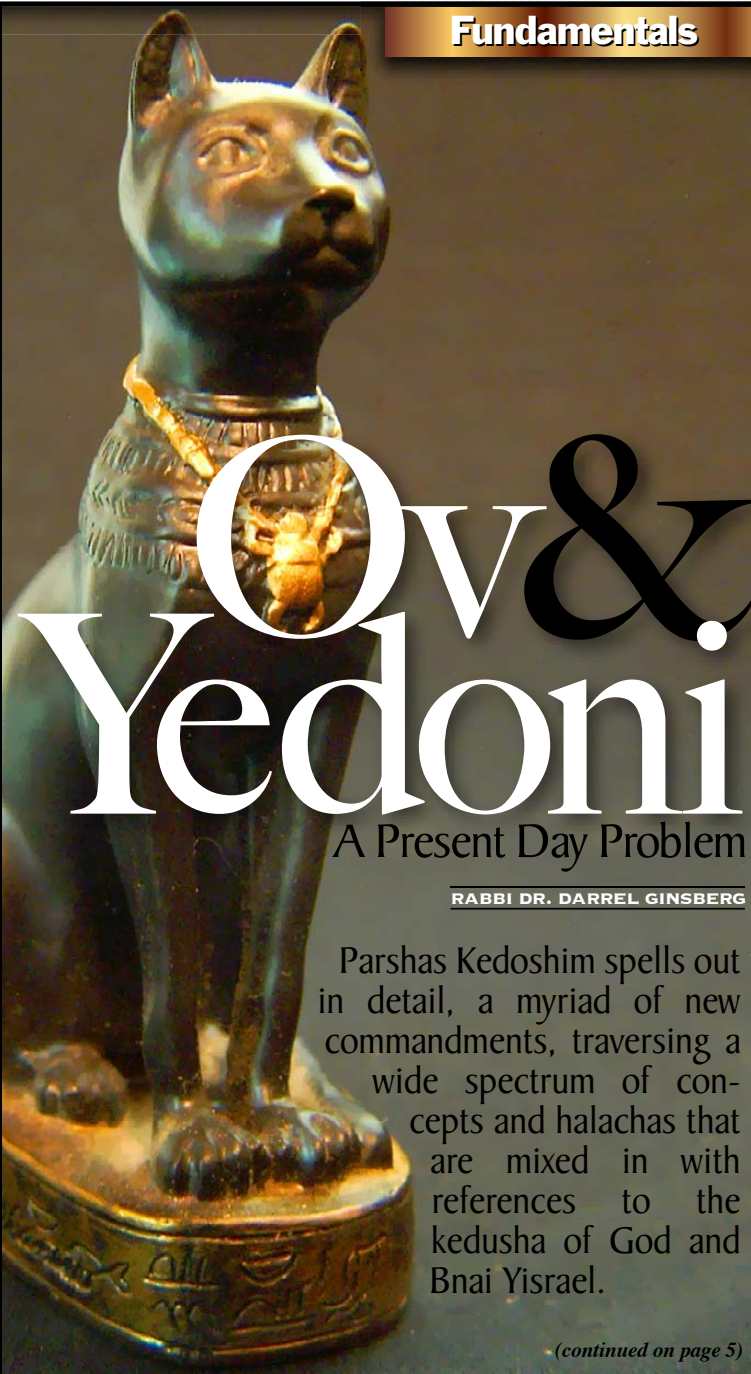
"God didn't orchestrate Revelation at Sinai in a 100% provable fashion, for the precise reason of allowing man free will."

I recently heard this quoted in the name of a Rabbi and submitted to him my thoughts below, which I feel others might appreciate.

1) Firstly, and primarily, of what benefit is it to a rational being to be left with doubts, when in fact, proof is available and preferred for all other historical accounts? Proof allows man an unshakable, rational foundation to further build on his findings. To be successful when building his home or taller structures housing human life, God does not wish man to "believe" that his cement is sturdy, lest his belief be false and the structure – and dwellers – crash to the ground killing all. God wishes life, not death, and God wishes man to operate within natural law. Testing the cement before constructing a building to "prove" it is sturdy, will prove beneficial, and save lives. God wants man to benefit. This obviously applies to all matters.

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Fundamentals



OV & Yedoni

A Present Day Problem

RABBI DR. DARREL GINSBERG

Parshas Kedoshim spells out in detail, a myriad of new commandments, traversing a wide spectrum of concepts and halachas that are mixed in with references to the kedusha of God and Bnai Yisrael.

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Weekly Parsha

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Parshat Acharey Mot discusses the Temple service of Yom HaKipurim. Our passage explains that observance of Yom HaKipurim atones for the sins of the people. The Talmud explains that Yom HaKipurim cannot atone for all sins. Sins that a person commits toward another individual are not nullified by Yom HaKipurim. The sinner must appease the victim of the sin. For instance, assume one spreads gossip about an individual. The service of Yom HaKipurim, observance of the fast, and fervent prayer cannot atone for this sin. The sinner must seek the forgiveness of the victim.

This law is derived from our passage. The passage states that Yom HaKipurim atones for a person's sin that are before Hashem. The Sages understand the term "before Hashem" as defining a class of sins. Sins that are before Hashem – committed against Hashem – are eradicated by Yom HaKipurim. Sins that are before other individuals – committed against other people – are not erased by Yom HaKipurim. The sinner must first appeal to the injured person.[1]

The Talmud also explains that even a person who only insults another individual without causing any physical harm must seek forgiveness. This follows from the lesson derived from our passage. The insult constitutes a sin against another individual and the sinner must seek the forgiveness of the insulted person. However, the Talmud does not quote our passage to support this law. Instead, the Talmud cites a pasuk from Mishle to support its ruling. As interpreted by the Sages, the passage reads, "If you have made an agreement with your neighbor and a conflicting agreement with a stranger, or if you have been ensnared by your words, trapped by your statements, do the following my son and be saved: Because you have come into the hand of your neighbor pay him his money and appease your neighbor." According to the Talmud, the passages describe the proper response to two types of conflict. If a person has wronged his neighbor in a monetary matter, he should make restitution. If he has spoken harshly to his neighbor, he must appeal to his friend for forgiveness.[2] This raises an obvious question. Why does the Talmud not rely on our passage?

Rav Chaim Soloveitchik Zt"l provides an interesting answer to this question. He offered his response in the context of a personal experience. Rav Chaim had ruled against a butcher in a monetary dispute. The butcher felt that Rav Chaim's ruling was flawed and became very angry. In his fury, he called Rav Chaim a thief. Rav Chaim tried to calm the litigant. He was unsuccessful and the butcher continued to ridicule him. Finally, Rav Chaim told the butcher

that he was insolent and ejected him from the court.

On the eve of Yom HaKipurim Rav Chaim sought out this butcher. He appealed to the butcher to forgive him. He had insulted the butcher by calling him "insolent." Not only did the butcher refuse to forgive Rav Chaim, he renewed his insults. He, again, accused Rav Chaim of incompetence and theft.

Rav Chaim explained to the butcher that he was not apologizing for any wrong he had committed. The butcher had acted disrespectfully. He deserved to be labeled as insolent and to be ejected from the court. Instead, he was appealing to the butcher for an entirely different reason. The observance of Yom HaKipurim requires that we reestablish fellowship within the community. Rav Chaim was not seeking forgiveness of a sin. He was seeking to renew the fraternity within the community.

Rav Chaim explained that this is the reason the Talmud provides a special passage for its ruling regarding insults. There are two possible reasons for appealing a person we have insulted. First, if the



insult is unjustified, we have sinned against this person. We cannot atone for this sin without attempting to appease the insulted person. This rule is derived from our passage. Second, the observance of Yom HaKipurim requires that we reestablish peace within the community. This can only be accomplished through seeking the forgiveness of those we have insulted or hurt. In this context, the justification for the insult is irrelevant. Even a completely justified insult causes animosity. This obligation is not derived from our passage. It

requires a separate source.

The Talmud, tells us we must seek to appease one we have insulted. This ruling is not referring to a sinful, unjustified insult. Instead, the Talmud is dealing with well-deserved scorn. Even in such cases, the observance of Yom HaKipurim demands that we appease the insulted individual. This lesson is not derived from our passage. Our pasuk only discusses sinful behavior. Therefore, the Talmud relies on a passage from Mishle to support its ruling. This passage is discussing relations between neighbors and the focuses upon the importance of harmony.

Rav Chaim pointed out that this interpretation of the Talmud is supported by a ruling of the Shulchan Aruch. The Shulchan Aruch indicates that we are required to appease our neighbors on the eve of Yom HaKipurim.[3] Rav Chaim explained that this obligation is an expression of the requirement to establish peace and harmony within the community.[4]

(continued on next page)

The Torah's approach to moderating sexual behavior

No person shall approach a close relative to commit a sexual offense. I am Hashem. (VaYikra 18:6)

The Torah prohibits sexual relations with various relatives. These prohibitions are outlined in our parasha. In addition to these prohibitions, the Torah legislates against approaching a close relative to commit these violations. What is the meaning of this injunction? Maimonides explains that this command prohibits lesser forms of affectionate contact. This includes even kissing and embracing.[5] In general, this injunction applies to even a friendly kiss or embrace shared between close relatives.

This command is often maligned. To many individuals it seems somewhat severe and even prudish. What harm can occur from an affectionate embrace? The perceived severity of the command often leads to its neglect. Unfortunately, this criticism stems from a fundamental misunderstanding of the command. In fact, the mitzvah reflects a profound appreciation of human nature and psychology.

Human sexuality is based upon a very strong instinctual drive. This drive can be overpowering. It can overcome social restraint and even psychological taboo. This phenomenon creates a significant difficulty from a legal perspective. All mitzvot are given with the obvious expectation of observance. It is meaningless and foolish to legislate against a behavior that cannot be controlled. The Torah is designed to provide a practical guide to life. Every command is designed to be observed! This can create a paradox. How can the Torah legislate against succumbing to a basic drive? This problem becomes obvious when dealing with sexuality. The Torah prohibits various forms of inappropriate sexual behavior. Yet, the strength of sexual drive cannot be denied; it must be acknowledged that this drive can be overpowering.

Consider an example. Imagine two individuals deeply in love. The relationship is advanced and involves a strong sexual element. These lovers are infatuated – even obsessed – with one another. They may not be able to control their feelings toward one another. A prohibition against sexual relations may prove ineffectual.

The Torah recognizes this paradox. Therefore, it prohibits the activities that function as the normal precursors to more intimate sexual relations. This is not because the Torah is prudish. The Torah does not assume that a friendly hug will inevitably result in a sexual encounter. However, the Torah does assume that the most intimate sexual relations are not initiated without preliminary expressions of physical intimacy. The more intimate behaviors emerge from more benign behaviors. The sexual

relations represent the consummation of a process that begins more innocently.

In order to prevent sexual relations, the Torah wisely begins with prohibitions directed toward these more benign behaviors. These behaviors can be more easily controlled. Through this control, the path to more advanced sexual encounters is blocked.

Every person that will perform these disgusting acts will be cut off from their nation. (VaYikra 18:29)

Our pasuk discusses the punishment of karait – being cut off. This is not a consequence that is enforced by the court. Karait is a punishment imposed by Hashem. What is this punishment? The commentaries differ on this issue. Maimonides seems to maintain that karait refers to exclusion from the afterlife – Olam HaBah.[6] Nachmanides disagrees. He argues that the term karait has three different meanings. The appropriate interpretation of the term is determined by its context. Sometimes, the Torah refers to a person experiencing karait. According to Nachmanides, this means that the person dies young and does not live a normal lifespan. This consequence is directed against the material element of the human being. The sinner's soul is not punished. Upon death, the soul partakes of the afterlife. At other times, the Torah refers to the karait of the soul. This means that the soul of the person does not experience the afterlife. After this sinner dies, the soul is destroyed. This consequence is strictly spiritual. The sinner may live a long a prosperous life. However, all existence ends with death. Finally, sometimes the Torah states that a person will surely be cut-off. This emphasis communicates that the sinner will experience both the material and spiritual forms of karait. This person will die prematurely and also not experience the afterlife.

Nachmanides observes that the Torah never explicitly discusses the reward of Olam HaBah. Yet, the Torah tells us that certain individuals are punished with karait – exclusion from the afterlife. Of course, it is true that the punishment of karait implies the existence of the afterlife. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that the Torah discusses the negative – the punishment of karait and not the positive – the reward of Olam HaBah. Nachmanides explains that the Torah only elaborates on rewards or punishments that involve some miraculous element or are at least counterintuitive. However, rewards or punishments that are natural, expected outcomes do not require discussion. Therefore, the Torah elaborates on the material rewards we are promised for observing the commandments. This is because these rewards represent a subtle miracle. Any such reward

requires that Hashem interfere in the natural chain of cause and effect. For example, Hashem promises that our observance of the Torah in the Land of Israel will result in abundance and prosperity. This is not an outcome that is consistent with the laws of nature. Hashem must manipulate nature to produce this outcome. A hidden miracle is involved. Therefore, the Torah specifies this reward.

Similarly, the Torah does not discuss Olam HaBah. This is because this reward does not involve any miracle. The soul of the human being is not material. It is a spiritual element. The demise of the material body does not destroy the spiritual soul. Furthermore, there is no reason for a purely spiritual entity to ever cease to exist. Material objects can degenerate. However, there is no reason for the natural degeneration of a strictly spiritual entity. Therefore, the eternity of the soul is a consequence of its very nature. There is no need for the Torah to elaborate on this reward.

However, spiritual karait is not a natural event. Hashem interferes with the “natural” outcome of death. He destroys the soul of the sinner. He deprives the soul of the existence that it was capable of achieving. Therefore, this punishment is noteworthy as a deviation for the expected and natural. It deserves mention and elaboration.[7],[8] ■

[1] Mesechet Yoma 85b.

[2] Mesechet Yoma 87a.

[3] Rav Yosef Karo, Shulchan Aruch, Orech Chayim 606:1.

[4] Rav Ahron Soloveitchik, Perech Mateh Ahron, volume 1, p 186.

[5] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam/Maimonides) Sefer HaMitzvot, Mitzvat Lo Ta'aseh 353.

[6] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam/Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Teshuva 8:1.

[7] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban/Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer VaYikra 18:29.

[8] Nachmanides comments are consistent with his position that every reward and punishment implies a “hidden” miracle. This is his intended message in his comments on Shemot 13:16. In these oft quoted comments he states, “A person has no portion in the Torah of Moshe our Master unless he accepts that all of our matters and affairs are miraculous and are not expressions of nature or chance occurrence – whether these relate to the multitude or individual.” If these comments are considered in isolation, without reference to Nachmanides' overall outlook as expressed in his commentary on Chumash, the reader can conclude that Nachmanides denies the existence of natural law – at the very least in regard to the affairs of the

(Acharey Mot continued from previous page)

Parsha

Jewish people. However, a more comprehensive study of Nachmanides' commentary provides a clearer understanding of his intention in these comments.

Nachmanides discusses the issue that is the subject of the above comments on other occasions – for example: Beresheit 17:1 and Shemot 10:2. He explains the blessings received for observance of the Torah and the punishments for its disregard all involve miracles. The Torah tells us that if we observe its commandments, we will enjoy prosperity. This prosperity is not the result of a natural causal chain of events. Instead, Hashem intervenes in nature and orchestrates a prosperity that would not have occurred otherwise. Similarly, our disregard of the Torah will result in experiencing afflictions. These afflictions are expressions of providence and as such are the result of Hashem's intervention into the natural causal pattern. These miracles are not readily evident. Nonetheless, these rewards and punishments reflect providence operating on a subtle, invisible level.

Nachmanides defines as a miracle any intervention into the natural causal chain. Therefore, every expression of providence – no matter how subtle – is a miracle. This is his message in his comments on Shemot 13:16. The existence of miracles is a fundamental premise of the Torah. It is the basis of the rewards and punishments described by the Torah. Denial of the reality of miracles will result in rejection of the Torah's promises of reward for observance and its warnings of punishment for disregard of the commandments. Nachmanides also notes that miracles are testimony to Hashem's omnipotence which in turn demonstrates that He created the universe over which He exercises His dominion.

Nachmanides explains in his comments on Devarim 11:13 that providence does not guide every event in our lives. Instead, many events whether positive or tragic are the result of nature blindly running its course. Providence expresses itself in the rewards of the righteous and the punishments of the wicked.

Nachmanides regards the laws of nature as an expression of Hashem's infinite wisdom and kindness. In his comments on Shemot 25:24, he explains that Hashem does not disregard the natural law that He fashioned and created even when performing a miracle. Instead, He performs His miracles in a manner that minimizes His intervention into and conflict with these laws. In Devarim 18:9, Nachmanides explains that the Torah teaches us to respect the system of nature that Hashem created. This is the basis for the prohibition against cross-breeding and related activities.

In short, the contention that Nachmanides denies the existence of a natural order or that he believes that all events in our lives are expression of

Hashem's direct and immediate providence is based upon an incomplete reading of his commentary. In other writings, he discusses this issue even more extensively – including his commentary on Sefer Iyov (Job).

The position there is no natural law is reflected by certain passages of the Talmud if they are understood on a simplistic basis. The classical Sages from the period of the Geonim and Rishonim were masters of the Talmud and tradition. They are the scholars most qualified to interpret the meaning of difficult homiletic sections of the Talmud and Midrash. None of these Sages conclude that the Torah denies the existence of a natural order and accepts the position of comprehensive providence permeating every event in our lives. In fact, in terms of Jewish scholarship, this idea represents a radical departure from the perspective shared by all of these Sages. Like Nachmanides, they regarded the natural order as compelling testimony to the wisdom and majesty of Hashem and appreciation of this system as a means of drawing closer to Hashem.

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Letters



Letters

from our

READERS



Josh: I've heard some Rabbis say that converts won't be accepted after Moschiach has arrived, does this make sense to you; do you agree with it?

Rabbi: Talmud Yevamos 24b:

"In Messianic times, converts will not be accepted...as was so in King David's days and in King Solomon's days. Rabbi Eliezer asked, 'What is the scriptural source?' 'Behold they [converts] will surely convert; without Me those who will convert to you will fall into your lot'. (Isaiah 54:15) Otherwise, they will not'."

Rashi explains "without Me those who will convert to you will fall into your lot" to mean that those who are accepted as converts are those who convert even when God is not with the Jews, i.e., in current times prior to the Messianic era. If gentiles join the Jewish nation while we are yet oppressed, then they will truly join in the Jews and our lot of Olam Haba (afterlife) as all Jews. Attachment to an oppressed Jewish nation must be due to a sincere desire.

But if gentiles convert once we are catapulted to success in Messiah's times, we are suspicious of an ulterior motive, and we do not accept them. Similarly, in the days of King David and King Solomon converts were not accepted, for they were suspected of ulterior motivation: desire for power and wealth respectively.

But see Tosfos (Yevamos 24b) who implies that we view each individual based on his own merits.

I cannot offer a definite answer on your question. But I hope this opens the area to your own further study. ■

There is also considerable mention of the area of nichush (superstitions, the belief in signs and omens, etc.), both the prohibition itself and its different manifestations. One of these involves the use of ov and yidoni, which is mentioned three different times in the parsha. It is the last mention of this prohibition that stands out.

As the parsha comes to a close, God explains how Bnai Yisrael must separate between the different types of animals (tahor or tameh), and the necessity to avoid those that are tameh.

The Torah (Vayikra 20:26) then tells us:

"You shall be holy to Me, for I, Hashem, am holy and I have distinguished you from the [other] peoples to be Mine [and to serve Me]."

This would seem to be a fitting end to the parsha, an accentuation of the concept of our being a sanctified nation. Yet, the following pasuk brings the parsha to a close:

"If among the men or women there will be a medium (ov) or an oracle (yidoni) they shall surely be put to death. You shall stone them to death, their blood is on them."

With this, Parshas Kedoshim comes to an end.

Why end with this warning? Rashi (ibid 27) points out that this is the third mention of this sin, with the Torah now clarifying that the punishment (with witnesses and a warning) is stoning (sekila). While certainly it is crucial to know the punishment for this act, how does it tie in to the previous verse? On a thematic level, it seems completely out of place.

What exactly is the Torah referring to with ov and yidoni? There is considerable debate as to the particulars, but a general consensus exists in the Torah Shebal Peh (Oral Law) as to the overall concept. The ov, according to many, involved a person claiming communication with the dead, but channeling the voice of the dead through his armpit. The yidoni would use a bone to project a voice, whether from the dead or not. In either case, the person would address the purveyor of this information, asking questions about his future, and the answers would be communicated through these mediums.

Today's sophisticated, refined, culturally advanced society would laugh at such nonsense. The average Jew could easily see through a trick like this. Who would believe that a voice projecting from an armpit can tell the future?

Why the insistence by the Torah of this prohibition? Are we to worry about this today?

The Sefer HaChinuch (255) offers an enlightening explanation as to the problem of ov/yedoni. He writes as follows:

"At the root of this commandment lies the reason we wrote about the prohibition on practicing nichush. For all these forms of vapid nonsense cause a man to leave the essential, true religion and belief in the Eternal Lord, and he will thus turn to follow the nonsense; and he will believe that all that happens to him comes upon him by way of chance, and it lies in his power to better his fortune and remove every harm from himself by those questions [to the medium] and those tricks that he will do. Yet all this will avail him nothing, since everything is decreed by the Lord and Master of the world, and according to the worthy or sinful activity that a man will do, new events, good or bad, will occur for him - as it is written, 'For according to the work of a man will He requite him' (Iyov 34:11). It is fitting for a man to center all his thoughts and attune all his affairs about this. This is the way of thinking of every man among good, worthy Israelites..."

In writing about the general prohibition of nichush (249), he explains again that a person who apprises himself of this type of thinking will "reckon that all his good and bad fortune, all that happens to him, is a matter of chance occurrence, not by the watchful care on the part of his Creator..."

The Chinuch is elucidating an important foundation of Judaism – the existence of a system of schar v'onesh – Reward and Punishment – and our conviction in this system. The belief in this is one of the fundamental concepts in Judaism. The Rambam bases his eleventh foundation, as noted in his thirteen foundations of faith (Introduction to Perek HaChelek), on the acceptance of this concept. We understand there is a system of reward and punishment based on God's justice, and that this is tied into man's actions, good or bad. In other words, that which happens to mankind is always tied into his actions. The specifics – how the infinite causes and effects play out, why one person is deserving of this or that – are beyond man's comprehension. The Torah, given to us by God, outlines for us that which is the "good" and that which is the "bad." The guide, the derech Hashem, directing us in how to live our lives properly, is contained within the Torah. One who follows the Torah and internalizes the concept of this being the derech Hashem, is demonstrating an adherence to schar v'onesh.

It is important to note that a person should not believe that the performance of a mitzvah will necessarily produce an immediate, tangible reward (and vice versa regarding sin). Our dedication to the Torah is based on the concept that it brings us to a greater knowledge of God and helps perfect

ourselves. To perform a mitzvah on the expectation of a reward removes the value of the mitzvah and intimates that man has detailed knowledge of God's providence, which he does not. The main idea here is that a person should recognize that there is an overall system of schar v'onesh, and it is tied into man's overall performance of mitzvos and aveiros.

However, when a person turns to nichush, he is abandoning the belief in the system of Reward and Punishment. A person who relies on this false method is conceding that God's justice has no link to man's actions. Accordingly, living life correctly or incorrectly, has no bearing on that which occurs to him. He asks the baal ov about what will happen to him – he seeks information about the good or bad that will occur. He believes that the good or bad has nothing to do with his actions – the "chance" the Chinuch speaks of – which indicates a disbelief in God's justice. To be punished or rewarded must be tied into one's correct or incorrect actions – otherwise, there is no justice regarding that which occurs to mankind. Once a person disengages from the belief in man's actions affecting his "standing" with God, he is denying the fundamental foundation of schar v'onesh.

We may scoff at the more primitive-sounding methods; after all, who today would make use of a person who claimed to determine one's fate through a voice emanating from a bone? Yet the same silly, nonsensical thinking, as characterized by the Chinuch, is still prevalent in many religions, and even within Judaism. There are many Jews who attach their fates to actions involving inanimate objects or unworthy human sources. They want to ascribe causal relationships that distinctly deny any semblance of a system of Reward and Punishment. Superstitions abound, the segula business is thriving, red strings are everywhere and people are continually shying away from the firm concept that it is through the understanding and observance of the derech Hashem that will ultimately determine our fates. The ideology of the ov/yidoni is as manifest today as it was thousands of years ago.

One could therefore see why this warning ends the parsha. The basis for kedushas Bnai Yisrael stems from our acceptance of the system of mitzvos. It is a system predicated on our using our minds in the pursuit of serving God. It serves as the moral compass, guiding us towards the good and far from evil. Our acceptance of the Torah – by definition – is an admission of schar v'onesh that reflects God's justice. It is an integral part of our belief in God – God is the one and only source of power in the universe. To pursue one's fate through these other means is completely contradictory to the entire acceptance of mitzvos, usurping the element of kedusha – sanctity – that is tied to our identity as God's chosen nation. ■

(Sinai continued from page 1)

And to arrive at an ever-growing love for God, God wants man to have an accurate view of Him. So if man were to believe that God were physical, he would be invoking "belief", yet he would forfeit his Olam Haba as a heretic.

Belief is simple emotion, unworthy of praise in this regard, and subject to shifting 180° at a whim, when a greater emotion attracts us. If belief is all God wants, we do not require intelligence. If belief is what Torah asks, we are akin to Christianity, which also asks for faith, and not proof.

2) Scientists subject their hypotheses to batteries of tests. They demand proof, because this is how they "know" what is not coincidence, but actual law. They wish to know what is true in the universe. They do not apply belief at all. Shall we seek less basis for God's existence?

3) Belief, as demonstrated by Avram (Gen. 15:6) is part of Torah, but is limited to our trust in God "keeping His word". While belief that God is truthful is warranted, belief that God "exists" is not part of Torah, but it is as Rambam, Kuzari and others teach, God wishes man to possess "proof" of His existence. I cite Rambam (Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah 8:1-3) who said that Sinai is in fact "the" event of which we have no doubts, in contrast to the miracles performed in Egypt and en route to Sinai, which do leave doubts.

4) Torah actually teaches that God in fact said He was about to perform Revelation at Sinai for this precise purpose: "I will come to you in a thick cloud, so that all the people will hear when I speak to you. They will also then believe in you forever." (Exodus 19:9) God said Revelation will serve as an "eternal proof". In fact, if all God desires is belief, Revelation was unnecessary.

5) Finally, free will is not conditional, based on a given events, but it is an inherent faculty in every man and woman by "design". God could create any event He desires, and this in no way impacts human design. We possess free will by design, independent of events that are external to ourselves. No matter how Revelation at Sinai was orchestrated, this can in no way impact human free will. To suggest "God didn't orchestrate Revelation as 100% provable, to allow free will" ...runs contrary to facts.

The following is an important read, authored by Rabbi Israel Chait, "Torah from Sinai" (www.mesora.org/god):

"The very concept of a proof or evidence for the occurrence of the event at Sinai presupposes certain premises. It sets the system of Torah apart from the ordinary religious creed. The true religionist is in need of no evidence for his belief. His belief stems from something deep within himself. Indeed, he even senses in the idea of evidence for his belief a mixed blessing, as it were, a kind of alien ally. He does not enjoy making recourse to reality.

Judaism, on the other hand, doesn't just permit evidence; it demands it. If one were to say he believed in Torah from Sinai and does not need any evidence, he would not be in conformity with the Torah. The Torah demands that our conviction that it was given to us by God be based on the specific formula of the demonstration He created for us. Nachmanides states further that were it not for the event at Sinai we would not know that we should reject a false prophet who performs miracles and tells us to abandon any of the laws or ways of the Torah. It is written in Deuteronomy 18:20 that we should not follow such a prophet. But, says Nachmanides, were it not for the demonstration at Sinai we would be totally in a quandary, unable to know whether we should follow the Torah based on miracles that occurred in Egypt or follow the false prophet based on his miracles. (4) The event at Sinai resolves this dilemma. After the event at Sinai the Jew remains unimpressed even by miracles that would lead an ordinary person to conclude that the words of the false prophet are true."

(4) From both Maimonides and Nachmanides who concur on this point, as well as from the plain meaning of the Bible itself with regard to the objective of Revelation, it is clear that Judaism does not give credence to



the existence of an authentic inner religious voice. Were this the case, there would be no need for the demonstration at Sinai in order to discredit the false prophet (Deuteronomy 8:2-6). On the contrary, this would be the exact test spoken of, to see if one will be faithful to this inner voice. For Judaism this inner voice is no different from the subjective inner feelings all people have for their religious and other unwarranted beliefs. It stems from the primitive side of man's nature and is in fact the source of idolatry. This is clearly stated in Deuteronomy 29:17, 18:

"Today, there must not be among you any man, woman, family or tribe, whose heart strays from God, and who goes and worships the gods of those nations. When [such a person] hears the words of this dread curse, he may rationalize and say, "I will have peace, even if I do as I see fit."

Why does the Torah here as in no other place present to us the rationalization of the sinner? The Torah is describing the strong sense of security these primitive inner feelings often bestow on their hosts and is warning of the tragic consequences that will follow if they are not uprooted." ■



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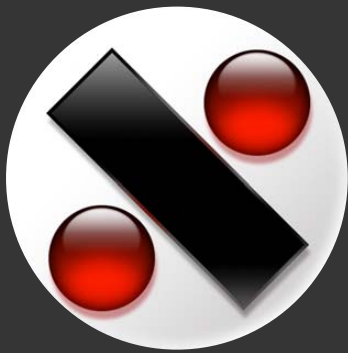
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