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Volume X, No. 4...Oct. 29, 2010

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Chicago	5:31	New York	5:39
Cleveland	6:08	Paris	6:17
Detroit	6:12	Philadelphia	5:44
Houston	6:20	Phoenix	5:22
Jerusalem	5:35	Pittsburgh	6:03
Johannesburg	6:04	Seattle	5:40
Los Angeles	5:45	Sydney	6:01
London	5:22	Tokyo	4:32
Miami	6:24	Toronto	5:56
Montreal	5:28	Washington DC	5:53

## Weekly Parsha

Chayey  
**Sarah**

RABBI BERNIE FOX

*"And the girl, to whom I shall say, 'Tip your jug and I will drink,' and she will say, 'Drink and I will also water your camels,' she is the one you have designated*

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## Weekly Parsha

### *The Haftorah:* **Worth Staying In For**

RABBI DR. DARRELL GINSBERG

It is a sad state of affairs that, in many shuls, during the reading of the Haftorah, some of the attendees can be found schmoozing in the lobby or eating and drinking at the "Kiddush club". To them, the Haftorah has become something of an afterthought. However, as we all know, the words of the Haftorah are filled with tremendous chachma, related both through fascinating events and deep prophecies. In this week's Haftorah, we are presented with a story that is a combination of an ailing King David, a gripping national crisis and a strange plan to solve it, all culminating in Solomon's ascension to the throne. The story itself represents drama of the highest caliber. And when studying this portion, especially the actions of Nathan the prophet, one can only be amazed at the brilliance demonstrated by this important personality.

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## Fundamentals

# SINAI Defended

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

One of the most fiercely attacked historical accounts is God's revelation to the Jewish nation at Mount Sinai. Why this over all other accounts? That is understandable: one's acceptance of God revealing Himself and giving a religion to a select few imposes numerous, unwanted obligations on the Jew, and generates resentment from other religions – they aren't the "chosen people".

Acceptance of Sinai is actually more in line with reality, than not. As God equipped mankind with intelligence, it follows that God desires humans to engage that very faculty. Granting a Torah system understood by the wisest of men to reveal deep truths and so abstractly not of human origin, God gave mankind the object with which man might engage that intellect, deriving great satisfaction in its wisdom. It would actually be more difficult to understand a God who creates the marvel of human intelligence, but

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(Chayey Sarah cont. from pg. 1)

## Weekly Parsha

## JewishTimes

Weekly Journal on Jewish Thought



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*for your servant Yitzchak. And through her I will know that you have done kindness with my master.” (Bereshit 24:13)*

Our parasha discusses the selection of Rivka to become the wife of Yitzchak. This parasha also introduces Lavan – Rivka’s brother. The Torah describes Rivka as a person of tremendous sensitivity and kindness. Lavan is generally regarded as the classical villain. However, it does not seem from our parasha that this characterization of Lavan is completely justified. As the Torah explains, Lavan and Rivka were products of the same household, and it is clear from the parasha that Lavan was not completely bereft of positive qualities. Let us summarize the Torah’s introduction of these two characters and compare the manner in which they are portrayed.

Avraham sends his servant Eliezer to Aram Naharayim. There, he is to find a wife for Yitzchak. Eliezer arrives at Aram Naharayim and prepares to fulfill his mission. He devises a test. He will stand by the town’s well. The girls of the town will come to draw water for their families. Eliezer will approach each. He will ask each to share some water with him. The girl that offers him water and also offers to water his camels will be destined to be Yitzchak’s wife. The objective of Eliezer’s test is clear. He is seeking a wife for Yitzchak who exemplifies the characteristics of kindness and sensitivity. He has created a test designed to identify a candidate with these qualities.

Eliezer has barely completed formulating his test when Rivka appears. She fulfills all of the requirements of the test. Eliezer immediately rewards her with jewelry. He does not yet identify himself or explain his mission. Instead, he asks Rivka to identify her family, and he asks if there is available lodging with her family. Rivka responds by telling Eliezer that she is the daughter of Betuel, and that there is lodging available at her home as well as provisions for Eliezer’s camels. Eliezer thanks Hashem for His assistance, and Rivka rushes home and relates her experiences to her family.

Lavan observes the gifts that Rivka has received from Eliezer and rushes to greet him. Lavan finds Eliezer and immediately insists that he lodge with the family.

It is clear that Rivka was a person of tremendous compassion. But, it is also evident that

Rivka’s home was a place where guests were welcome. As Rivka explained, their home included room for guests, and provisions were kept on hand for their needs. Lavan was eager to invite Eliezer into their home. He was very insistent that Eliezer accept the invitation. So, it is true that Rivka demonstrated remarkable sensitivity to Eliezer’s needs. But, Lavan was also eager to accommodate this guest. What precisely was the difference between Rivka and her brother?

*“And it was when he saw the nose-ring and the bracelets on the hands of his sister and he heard the words of Rivka – saying this is what the man said – that he came to the man and he was standing by his camels near the spring.” (Bereshit 24:30)*



The above pasuk plays a significant role in the traditional understanding of Lavan. The pasuk tells us that Lavan saw the jewelry that Rivka had received from Eliezer and he rushed to greet Eliezer. Rashi comments that the Torah is implying a connection between Lavan’s observation of the jewelry and his eagerness to entertain Eliezer. According to Rashi, Lavan was not interested in practicing kindness. He was determined to develop a relationship with Eliezer and through this relationship devise some means of securing some of Eliezer’s wealth.[1]

However, there is a problem with Rashi’s interpretation of our pasuk. In the previous pasuk, the Torah tells us that Lavan heard Rivka’s account and rushed out of the house to greet Eliezer. Only upon leaving did Lavan notice Rivka’s jewelry. It seems the Lavan had decided to greet Eliezer before he even noticed the gifts that Rivka had received!

However, this does raise an interesting problem. Why does the Torah note that Lavan observed Rivka’s jewelry? In other words, the Torah implies that this observation had some impact on him. But, the Torah does not describe the nature of this impact. How was Lavan influenced by his observation of the jewelry that Rivka had received from Eliezer?

Sforno answers these questions. He explains that although after hearing Rivka’s story Lavan rushed to greet Eliezer, he did not initially intend to invite him to his home. He merely wished to

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(Chayey Sarah continued from previous page)

## Weekly Parsha

take advantage of the opportunity to meet a wealthy traveler. However, when Lavan saw the jewelry, his intentions changed. He recognized the generosity that this stranger had shown towards his sister and he wished to respond with an invitation of lodging. Lavan felt that Eliezer's kindness towards his sister should be rewarded.[2]

In short, Sforno's characterization of Lavan is very different from Rashi's. According to Rashi, Lavan was only interested in taking advantage of Eliezer. But, according to Sforno, Lavan felt obligated to repay Eliezer for his generosity to his sister.

Now, according to Rashi, we can see that there is a clear difference between Lavan and Rivka. Rivka was a sincere and sensitive person. She observed a traveler; ascertained his needs, and immediately acted to address these needs. In contrast, Lavan saw Eliezer's needs as an opportunity to take advantage him. He was not sincerely interested in extending hospitality to Eliezer. He was interested in bringing Eliezer into his home in the hope that he could devise a plan to take advantage of him.

However, according to Sforno, the difference between Eliezer and Rivka is not as clear. Rivka demonstrated kindness by assessing and responding to Eliezer's needs. Lavan extended his hospitality to Eliezer as an expression of gratitude for the generosity that Eliezer had shown Rivka. Why is Lavan morally inferior to Rivka?

***"And he said, 'Blessed is Hashem, the G-d of my master Avraham, who has not withdrawn His kindness and His truth from my master. Here I am, still on the road, and Hashem has led me to the house of my master's close relatives.'"*** (Beresheit 24:27)

Eliezer recognizes that his success is a result of the Almighty's providence. He offers thanksgiving and praise to Hashem. In his words of thanks, Eliezer says that Hashem has treated Avraham with kindness and truth. What is the meaning of these terms? What is the kindness and truth to which Eliezer is referring?

Radak explains that Hashem acted with truth towards Avraham by guiding Eliezer to a wife that was fitting for Yitzchak. However, Hashem acted with kindness – chesed – in guiding him to a wife from Avraham's own family.[3]

Radak explains himself more fully in Sefer Yehoshua. Yehoshua sent spies to scout the land of Canaan. The spies came to the house of Rachav. They were observed entering the house. But, Rachav hid the spies and saved their lives. Rachav asked these spies to treat her and her family with kindness and truth. She asked that Bnai Yisrael spare them in their conquest of the

land. Radak is concerned with Rachav's characterization of her own request as an appeal for kindness and truth. Rachav asked for kindness – she asked to be spared. But, in what manner was she requesting truth?

Radak responds that Rachav's request that she be spared was not an appeal for kindness. She saved the lives of the spies and she deserved to be repaid and spared. This is not an appeal for kindness; it is an appeal for truth. The spies were indebted to her. Their dedication to the truth required that they recognize their debt. But, Rachav asked that her family be spared. Her family had not done anything for these spies. They did not owe anything to Rachav's family. Her request that her family be spared was an appeal for kindness.[4]

According to Radak, Eliezer applied a similar analysis to Hashem's providence over Avraham. Avraham was dedicated to the service of Hashem. Yitzchak was committed to continue in Avraham's path. In order to succeed, he needed an appropriate wife. Hashem helped Eliezer identify this wife. This, Eliezer regarded as an act of truth. It is appropriate for one who sincerely seeks to serve Hashem to be assisted in this mission. But, Rivka was more than just a fitting wife. She was also a member of Avraham's own family. This element of Hashem's providence – Rivka's relationship to Avraham – Eliezer regarded as an expression of Hashem's chesed.

In summary, according to Radak, some acts of charity are acts of truth. They are an acknowledgment and repayment of a debt. Other acts of charity are true acts of chesed. An act of chesed occurs when we demonstrate kindness to a person who has no claim on us and no right or reason to expect our kindness.

We can now return to our comparative analysis of Rivka and Lavan. Rav Yehuda Copperman explains that according to Sforno, Lavan and Rivka had very different values. Both showed generosity towards Eliezer. However, their generosity expressed two different principles. Lavan was capable of recognizing truth. He recognized that Eliezer had been generous towards Rivka and he deserved to be repaid for his generosity. He was eager to repay this debt through providing Eliezer with lodging and provisions for his camels. However, at no juncture did Lavan demonstrate a commitment to chesed – unearned, spontaneous kindness. Rivka acted out of chesed. She observed a stranger in need of assistance and immediately threw herself into helping this stranger. She did not owe him her assistance; she did not even know him. Her act was an expression of pure chesed.[5]

It is essential to consider the reason that repayment of a kindness is referred to as truth. When we repay a kindness, we are repaying a debt; we

are executing an obligation that we have towards the person that has acted towards us with chesed. It is not enough that we act with kindness in return. More is required. We must recognize that we have incurred a debt. We are required to accept that we are morally obligated to repay the chesed. If we believe that by demonstrating kindness in return we are performing chesed, our entire outlook is tragically flawed. We are denying our obligation and indebtedness.

Too often, we confuse chesed with truth. When one who has helped us asks for our assistance in return, we imagine that we are being asked for chesed. We do not like to be in debt – not financially or morally. So, rather than recognizing that we are required to act with truth to those that have demonstrated chesed towards us, we deceive ourselves into believing that we have no debt. This attitude is tragic. It undermines the value of our response. We may respond to the call for assistance. But, we depreciate the quality, significance, and meaning of our response if we believe that we are performing a chesed and deny that we are repaying a debt! ■

[1] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 24:29.

[2] Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno, Commentary on Sefer Beresheit, 24:29-30.

[3] Rabbaynu David Kimchi (Radak), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 24:27.

[4] Rabbaynu David Kimchi (Radak), Commentary on Sefer Yehoshua 2:12.

[5] Rav Yehuda Copperman, Notes to Commentary of Sforno on Sefer Beresheit 24:29, note 58.

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(Sinai continued from page 1)

withholds such a system as Torah. This would be akin to God creating the mouth and stomach, but not creating food.

The critiques aiming to dismiss Revelation a Sinai take on a few forms. Some lodge numerous arguments with the hopes that "something sticks". Reading one article with literally dozens of arguments against Torah, not just Sinai, one cannot help to assume an anti-Torah agenda. Certainly, when the critique ranges from archaeological, to historical, and then to writing styles. Is the author of this list of grievances really so fluent in all these sciences? And why has he not invested equal time critiquing Irish fables?

It is of utmost importance that we follow a reasonable approach to this, and all areas. Central to a rational approach is the loyalty to truth, even when faced with questions. That is, once we prove something, no number of doubts can undo that proven truth. So if we prove that a certain people's history is factual, since we find these people possessing only one account of their travels and events easily grasped by anyone...all subsequent "questions" or doubts are of no avail to undo their impregnable history. We may be left with questions, but that's all they are. Eventually we might even resolve some of them.

Here now are a few critiques and the flaws in these arguments...

### "Jews at Sinai were an Ancient, Mystical, Superstitious cult"

With these words, one wishes to portray the ancient Jew as incapable of accurately assessing a witnessed event as real. They must have been delusional. Each one of them. (That is a very difficult position, but they go on) "Since the Jews were backwards back then, they could have simply imagined the account of Sinai we have today". One person wrote, "Other races like the Irish and the Aztecs believed supernatural events happened to their ancestors. If you study history you will find other cultures that believed a false or exaggerated history of their ancestors."

I ask as follows: If this is what Sinai is, an exaggerated or false story, where then, is the "real" history of the Jews during that era? And why don't we find a few accounts of Jewish history? For if a story is exaggerated or false, 1) the true story should exist at least somewhere among nation, and 2) without orchestration of the falsified story, we should find many versions. However, mass conspiracy is an impossibility. As Rabbi Israel Chait explained in his article Torah from Sinai, fabrication is fueled by motive. And masses cannot



share a common motive, since motive – by definition – is a subjective phenomenon. We may find a few individuals with common motive to lie, like Jesus' followers, but we will then find discrepancies in their lies, as witnessed in the four conflicting Gospels. These conflicting accounts of Jesus expose the lie.

Some doubt Revelation at Sinai since they don't witness miracles today, and feel such stories are akin to the Irish and the Aztecs who believed supernatural events. However, the difference is that those races accepted such stories as "tales" and they do not claim masses witnessed such events. This sets apart fable, from history. These "stories" are either accepted or rejected. Similarly, when stories were committed to paper regarding Jesus, these too were imposed by the sword, since there were no masses witnessing these lies and transmitting them, as is so regarding Caesar and others who were witnessed by the entire population.

I would add that an equal number of people today consult palm readers, read horoscopes, and believe in the most foolish superstitions. Conversely, back then many people were thinkers: from the patriarchs and the prophets; the Greeks; the great builders of empires and bridges; those who developed navigational tools to explore the sea and the stars, mathematicians; scientists, philosophers; the list is endless. So this claim of an ancient, backwards Jew conflicts with reality. There are wise and foolish people in every generation.

One should also explore his or her rejection of miracles, and not use this rejection to abandon much of Jewish history, and Sinai. For with the acceptance of God, one also accepts His abilities to create laws, and suspend those laws...the latter being "miracle".

### The "Real" Jewish History

It is astounding that those rejecting Sinai do not produce support for an "alternative" Jewish history. According to those rejecting Sinai, the Exodus, the miracles and all Torah sources...where is the "real" Jewish history? The fact is that there is no other alternative history of the Jews. And this can only be so, if the singular account today is the truth.

### Altering History

Imagine someone today approaching you, or a number of your people, saying your history is false. First of all, as an outsider, this person will be rejected. Second of all, as you share one common history, you reject this attempt to alter what you have received unanimously. This will not occur instantly, nor over time; not to you or to any number of others. The transmission of a people's witnessed history will never be abandoned for any other account. People cannot lie to themselves, and they will never abandon their collective past. In fact, their past is repeated so often, that the opposite happens: their allegiance to that truth grows ever-more unwavering. This dismisses the suggestion that over time, a people's history can be altered.

### Lack of Evidence, is Just That

Some claim that the lack of evidence of 2,000,000 wandering Jews disproves our 40 years in the desert. Aren't many traces of ancient civilizations lost? And these were stationary communities....not like the wandering Jews. Furthermore, lacking evidence cannot be a disproof. "Lacking", by definition, means one is "bereft" of facts. Whereas proof is arrived at through a positive, through evidence. Were the true paths of travel of those Jews accurately located and excavated? Did the sands of time cover

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over what ever remnants the Jews left at their campsites? And perhaps evidence might yet be located. In this issue you will also find the Merneptah Stela – an Egyptian account of the Jews. We are not lacking evidence, as was previously assumed.

### Prophets & Rabbis: All Biased?

Why have the greatest minds never suggested these theories rejecting Sinai? Why did Maimonides say we, today, are so convinced as if we "saw" Revelation? What was so compelling to hundreds of great minds that they unanimously accepted Revelation? Are we to suggest that everyone, from Kings David and Solomon, throughout the prophets, the Great Assembly, Talmudic sages, medieval Rabbis, through the Rav, Rav Moshe Feinstein z"l and our current leaders are all making the same error? Or, perhaps they have reason to accept our history as truth? Should we not give these beacons of monumental wisdom the benefit of the doubt and discern what exactly compelled their conviction?

One of the most insulting critiques, was the accusation that Judaism intends to "prove the story, from the story". As if the greatest minds would make such a obvious error.

In truth, it is not the from the text where we derive the proof of our history, and Sinai, but from the unbroken chain of verbal transmission. Maimonides records the 40 transmitters: Moses through Rav Ashi. This passes through the account in Prophets where the "Torah was found" – an easy target for Torah critics. In fact, the Torah was never lost as Maimonides records.

We accept Sinai because a unanimous testimony is impossible, had the event never occurred. had Moses lied to people, surely, an alternate "true" history would have survived through today. But we don't have one.

The claim every Jew knows, of each person being an eyewitness at Sinai would never had been accepted and retold, had the people not witnessed Revelation. Yet, this is the transmission. This is our singular story. Nor would the nation have unanimously transmitted witnessed miracles, had they not experienced them.

I dare anyone today to tell any group that their history is not as they received it. I dare anyone to suggest that over time, Caesar's name was changed through careless transmission. I dare anyone today to spread reports of miracles and that masses saw them. Such stories will not survive the hour, nor will they be the unanimous account of any people 3000 years from now.

Revelation at Sinai is our only history. It would not have been accepted, transmitted and could not have reached us, had it never occurred or been witnessed by masses. And what ever criticisms follow over the next 3000 years, this, in no way undoes what has been proven – what has occurred. ■

# Love & Marriage

## *Which Comes FIRST?*

RABBI REUVEN MANN

There is no institution which is more significant to the preservation of civilization than the family. The well being of society and the cause of human progress is dependent on a firm and stable family unit. Judaism revolves around the sanctity of the mishpacha as it is absolutely vital to the proper raising of children and perpetuation of the Torah way of life. No relationship is more important in this regard than that of marriage. Happy marriages produce thriving families. Unhappy ones create misery for the parties involved and those who are closest to them. Thus the subject of choosing a spouse should be a matter of great concern. This week's parsha Chaye Sarah is almost entirely devoted to the search for a suitable mate for Yitzchak Avinu, the second of the Patriarchs. Avraham appointed his loyal servant Eliezer to embark on a search in the land of his birth for a woman who would be a suitable match for his son. He supplied him with 10 camels bearing all types of gifts as no expense would be spared in this most crucial endeavor. However, the modern reader finds it difficult to relate to the method in Shidduchim used by Avraham. How can someone else pick a wife for you? Shouldn't the principals be directly and personally involved in the search for one's "intended?"

There is much that we can learn from the perspective of the patriarchs. Their main concern in marriage was not the pursuit of romance which is all that matters in the contemporary world. Modern man does not understand that true love is based on an appreciation

of the virtue and character of an individual. Modern man is consumed by the pursuit of self gratification. In a sense he is incapable of true love. His love is sensual and superficial and only lasts as long as it provides him with a "thrill." When the romantic feeling wears off he moves on because he never developed an attachment to the genuine qualities of the other person. Eliezer did not "arrange" the marriage of Yitzchak to Rivka. He recognized the high level that Yitzchak was on and what type of spiritual qualities a man like him would be attracted to. Moreover, Yitzchak was not searching for romance but for a suitable helpmate who shared his values and would be a full partner in achieving the exalted goals of his life. The choice of Rivka was made with great wisdom and deep insight into her ethical and moral makeup. She was the appropriate match for Yitzchak. When he learned from Eliezer about her wonderful deeds he realized that she was a true disciple of his mother Sarah. The verse says "she became a wife to him and he loved her." One may ask: "Shouldn't love precede marriage? The answer is that romantic love comes before marriage but often doesn't survive it. True love comes later. Only by her being a wife to him and he being a husband to her, working together as a team, facing the challenges of life and growing together, serving Hashem and fulfilling their unique spiritual mission was true love attained. May we merit to achieve it.

Shabbat Shalom

The Haftorah portion begins with a description of David's poor health, which effectively removes him from daily rule. Aware of the potential political vacuum, his son Adoniyahu, along with some influential members of David's circle, decided that he was to be the next king. Adoniyahu publicly offers sacrifices, calling to other members of the political class to join him. At this point, it is clear David is not aware of what is going on, leading to Nathan approaching Batsheva (Kings I, 1:11-14):

"You have surely heard that Adoniyahu the son of Haggith has reigned, and our lord, David, did not know [it]. And now come and I shall counsel you with advice, and you shall save your life and the life of your son Solomon. Go and come to king David, and you shall say to him, 'Surely, you, my lord the king, did swear to your maid saying that, 'Solomon your son will reign after me and he shall sit upon my throne.' Now why did Adoniyahu reign?'" Behold, you are talking there with the king, and I shall come in after you and I shall complete your words."

Based on this advice, Batsheva approaches David, bringing to his attention the events surrounding Adoniyahu's vying for the kingship. She also reminds David of his promise to her that Solomon would reign as king. The alternative would be drastic, as she explains (ibid 21):

"And [otherwise] when my lord the king shall sleep with his fathers, and I and my son Solomon shall be [considered] offenders."

The clear implication is that if Adoniyahu was not stopped, both she and Solomon were in danger.

At that moment, Nathan, as promised, joins Batsheva in the discussion. He again reviews the events that had taken place with Adoniyahu, going as far as to question why David had not informed Nathan about the potential of Adoniyahu taking over the throne. David's reaction to all this was directly to the point: he would abide by the promise, and Solomon would be declared king that very day.

This was quite an elaborate plan enacted by Nathan. Why not just approach David directly himself and say: "Adoniyahu is trying to be king. He needs to be stopped!" Are we somehow to assume that David would not react appropriately, and actually allow Adoniyahu to ascend to the throne??? Furthermore, why have this so-called "two-prong" approach, where Batsheva would state her case first, and Nathan come after to complete her words. Why couldn't Batsheva relate the entire message? Even more so, why not have the designer of the plan be the one to deliver the message?

To understand this, we must be aware of the context. Previously, Nathan had received a prophecy, which was revealed to David, that Solomon would be the heir to the throne. The natural course of events would be that David publicly announce Solomon's position as the new king near to his own death. Yet Adoniyahu's rebellion threw a monkey wrench into this plan. As a result of Adoniyahu's actions, it was clear one could not simply fall back on "it is Solomon's destiny" to become the next king. A passive approach would not be acceptable in this situation. Therefore, we see that Nassan's impetus to act went beyond the political realm – he realized that David had to get involved, or the implementation of God's plan was in danger.

It was with this mindset that Nathan realized how he had to clearly present to David the nature of the threat. Adoniyahu's actions merited one of two reactions. One possibility would be for David himself to put down the rebellion. It was true he was physically weak, but to gather his loyal army and stamp out Adoniyahu's revolt would not be difficult. However, the threat of Adoniyahu was not to David himself. His other son, Avshalom, openly rebelled against David, dividing the kingdom. This uprising was different. To have David "take care" of this problem would necessarily result in a perception of weakness on the part of the next king. Everyone knew the next king was about to succeed David. Entering into this exalted position in such a manner, where the dying king has to eradicate this revolt in order for the new king to emerge would be of considerable consequence. The other option would be to ensure that Solomon be the one to wipe out the revolt. If Solomon was the one to affect this result, his stature would be upheld, ensuring a united loyalty from Bnai Yisrael. Nathan sees that he must demonstrate to David not just the severity of the crisis, but who the rebellion was being directed against.

The objective then was clear – demonstrate to David that there was a threat that Solomon needed to eradicate. However, this was not enough. To emphasize the dire nature of the threat, Nathan develops a plan for both himself and Batsheva. Each of the two focused on a different element of the threat. Batsheva presented the issue from the perspective of David's wife, mother of Solomon, their son. David had promised that Solomon, "your son" (ibid 17), would be the next king. Are we to believe she was questioning David's loyalty to his promise? Rather, it would seem she was insinuating to David that the immediate implementation of his promise would be the solution to the problem. In other words, David had to declare Solomon king as soon as possible, or there would be no way his promise could be fulfilled. Yet she is not done. When she explains the details of the

events surrounding Adoniyahu's declaration of kingship (ibid 19), and who Adoniyahu called to join him, she points out that Adoniyahu did not call Solomon, without mentioning the others who were loyal to David (ie - Nathan, Binayahu, etc). Why leave out the others who were not invited? Batsheva was making sure David saw the rebellion from the familial standpoint – a personal attack against Solomon. She concludes by emphasizing that their very lives were in danger. The key here is that Batsheva was appealing to David from the perspective of a mother fearful for her son's life. Thus, David needed to act for the sake of his wife and son, and this plea could only come from Batsheva.

To complete the picture, Nathan enters and finalizes the message. Nathan presents the crisis from the standpoint of the threat to the entire kingship. If David did not make Solomon king as soon as possible, the future of the kingship was in jeopardy. Nathan, when recounting the events, specifies all the important individuals who were not invited by Adoniyahu (see verse 26), going beyond just Solomon. The implication was that Adoniyahu was creating a split amongst the influential people in the kingdom, a split which would ultimately lead to a chasm. David needed to act for the sake of the institution of kingship, and this could only occur through Solomon becoming king. If he did not do so, Solomon's ability to function as king would be compromised. This message could only be delivered by the prophet who was responsible for ensuring the kingship.

The success of the plan is clearly evident in David's response. After emphasizing his commitment to the promise, David concludes, (ibid 30) "so will I do this day." Recognizing the urgent and immediate need to declare Solomon the king, he does just that, without any hesitation. And, as we see from the end of the chapter, this action was accepted by the nation, leading to complete loyalty to Solomon.

A crisis, a plan derived from wisdom, a transition fulfilling the prophecy – the story of Solomon's ascension to the throne is certainly not lacking in excitement. However, the main concepts one should derive have to do with Nathan's ability to assess the situation and act in line with wisdom. With the future of Solomon as a person, as well as the king, in the balance, Nathan realized that it was imperative to accelerate the naming of Solomon as king. It is no understatement to say that Nathan effectively saved the kingship. So, put down the wine and food, break up the conversation, and come back inside to hear the riveting, insightful words of the Haftorah. ■



# the Merneptah Stela

*This stela (monument) bears the Egyptian Pharaoh's record of the Jews dated precisely at the time of our bondage and Exodus*

“Pharaoh Merneptah of Egypt makes the first extra-biblical reference to a people called Israel. In an inscription popularly called the “Israel stela” dating from 1207 B.C.E., Merneptah claims military victory over Ashkelon, Gezer, Yinoam, and Israel. The symbols following Ashkelon, Gezer and Yinoam indicate that they were city-states. The symbol following Israel, however, is one used to describe a more nomadic people. Thus, through this artifact, an Egyptian scribe identifies Israel as less politically established in the land – an identification that reflects the description of Israel in the first book of Judges.

Moreover, the description of contact between the Egyptians and Israelites is dated within 100 hundred years of the Exodus from Egypt.”

*That was quoted from an online source. But as Jews – students of reality – the Torah’s proof of our history, the Ten Plagues and Sinai, are undeniable. We need no corroboration. Reason is sufficient. However, now, with this stela, Torah is also proved externally.*





## All Mankind: "Created in His Image"

## Vayerah

Rabbi Israel Chait

Written by a student

Parshas Vayerah opens with these words:

*"And God appeared to him [Abraham] in plains of Mamre, and he sat in the tent's opening in the heat of the day. And he lifted his eyes and behold he saw three men standing against him; and he saw and he ran to greet them from the opening of the tent, and he bowed ground-ward. And he said, 'God, if I have found favor in Your eyes, please do not pass by before Your servant'."*

Why would Abraham – in the midst of a vision – interrupt this prophetic encounter with God to greet mortals? The latter would seem to be of inferior importance.

Abraham saw himself in this vision fulfilling an act of kindness. He was attending to others who possess a "Tzelem Elohim" – an intellect. Man can serve God in one of two ways: 1) either directly, or 2) by showing respect to one's Tzelem Elohim. The Tzelem Elohim has as its primary objective, the recognition of God. Thus, one who respects the intellect, as Abraham did in this vision, shares the very same perfection as one in communion with God. Both acts are pursuits of God's wisdom. Therefore, Abraham served God equally – whether directly in a vision, or by attending to others who possess a Tzelem Elohim. ■



## Letters

from our

## READERS



## Equality

**Jennifer:** I would like to be Jewish and sometimes I interact on a forum to discuss Judaism. There's someone there who doesn't like it when I offer an opinion, simply because I am not yet Jewish. He said that God loved the Israelites more than the Egyptians and that was why He chose them. This last statement worries me. I believe that Judaism is the true religion but I find it hard to accept that God loves one man more than another. I have three very different children and I love them all. I think that good people please God, but I don't think that God actually loves Jews by default. If I have caused offense in any way with this question, please tell me why and forgive me. None is intended.

**Rabbi:** Jennifer,

Not to worry: the other person is 100% incorrect. I have addressed the equality of all people many times on Mesora. A Jew is not superior. Here are two articles:

[www.Mesora.org/perfection2.htm](http://www.Mesora.org/perfection2.htm)

[www.Mesora.org/dirshu.htm](http://www.Mesora.org/dirshu.htm)

There's many more articles under "Noachide Philosophy" at this link:

[www.Mesora.org/Philosophy](http://www.Mesora.org/Philosophy)

Please quote me to the group so all may read, correct their error, and cease from spreading fallacy. All I have written is not my own belief, but it is based on the Torah and Prophet's very words. Additionally, we do not judge a person based on who their parents are (Christian, Jew, etc) but based on the content of their words. Judging you less because you are not Jewish, is foolish.

**Jennifer:** Thank you for your reply. I was feeling broken-hearted but now I feel stronger. I read the first two essays (in the links you gave) and they have been of great value. I will quote you so that people won't believe the fallacy.

Kindest regards, Jennifer ■



# "I AM MY BELOVED'S AND MY BELOVED IS MINE"

## The Experiential and the Man/God Relationship

MORDY OBERSTEIN

Often as Jews we attempt to seek ways to distance ourselves from other religions by emphasizing the rigor of Judaism intellectually. Our first association to knowledge, intellectualism, and the mind tends to take a staunchly scientific, hyper-logical, and absolute path. Our approach to problem solving almost by instinct seemingly tends to take a strict mathematical approach, where concepts are talked about absolutely, where we know through unbreakable step by step systematic logical proofs what is true and what is not.

Is this really the sum of what it means to be Jewish, to have certain proofs and logics bound up within the recesses of our minds? Is Judaism merely a venture in academics, devoid of meaning and beauty? Is knowledge merely an exercise in understanding logics and proofs? Is the end all of the entire human mind proofs and formulas or is rationality more dynamic, more profound, and vastly more subtle? What does it mean to even truly know something?

There is often confusion between understanding and knowing. A person could certainly understand something yet at the same time not incorporate it into his life at all.



Understanding is an aloof, distant and disassociated way to perceive a thing. Knowledge on the other hand is intimate. It is a bond between your entire being and that which is known. Knowledge is a deep, infinitely strong and, familiar connection between the knower and that which is known. Furthermore there cannot be knowledge without action. Knowledge grips the person and, like a powerful wave forces his movements to flow with it. Logics and proofs alone are insufficient as they are unable to permeate the soul itself, to elevate one's life and uplift one's being. It seems as though there is another part of the mind at play, a part of the mind that senses truth, that knows truth, that perceives what is true and what it means for something to be true. Logics and proofs are necessary, they show how something is true, but they cannot communicate what it means for something to be true, they cannot relate the significance of the reality and as such they cannot create the intimate bond between man and truth. Take for example beauty, beauty is almost incommunicable, yet it is real. It is real because it is the recognition of what the beloved object signifies, what it means, its value and worth. What proof can afford man

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## Thought

such an understanding? In his work *And From There Shall You Seek* Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik relates, “the great non-Jewish philosopher (Anselm of Canterbury) fasted for three consecutive days, praying and beseeching his creator to enlighten him with a valid proof of his existence. Kierkegaard ridiculed him saying “You fool, does a baby in his father’s arms need proofs or signs that the father exists? Does the person who feels the need to pray to God require philosophical demonstration?” (pg 16, *Ktav*). Knowledge is not a mental exercise, knowledge is an experience, you know something as Kierkegaard relates because you are connected to it. You are in a sense one with it, knowledge is an act of familiarity, it is an act of cleaving in every sense of the word and from every part on ones being, *B’chol Livavcha UviChol Nafshecha*, with all of your heart and with all of your being. Knowledge is not a concrete experience – it is a majestic one.

One need not look hard in our *Mesora* to see that the Jewish experience is far more meaningful than cognitive recognition and concepts. Dovid HaMalech through *sefer Tehillim* boldly blows any idea of purely aloof intellectualism out of the water. Beyond even the style of his expression with its vivid poetic expressions, his very relationship to God was not conceptual it was actual, it was not theoretic, it was tangible, it was not scholastic, it was personal. How often does Dovid relate to us the intimacy he experienced with God “My soul He restores, He directs me in paths of righteousness for the sake of His Name. Though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death. I will fear no evil for You are with me” (*Tehillim* 23). “

Only for God my soul waits silently, for my hope comes from Him” (*Tehillim* 62). “God is your Guardian, God is your Protection at your right hand....God will guard you from all harm. God will guard your soul, your going and coming, from now and forever”. (*Tehillim* 121). “God is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? God is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” (*Tehillim* 27). The very relationship between man and God in Judaism is not only relegated to formal proof but intimate experience, it is a relationship not based on understanding alone, but of knowledge, it is not simply a recognition of God’s existence but an awareness of His presence. A Jew knows God not only because he can prove he exists, a Jew knows God because God is present with him. A Jew knows God not only formally, a Jew knows God because they share a deep relationship. In regards to the *Mitzvah* of the *Arbah Minim*, of *Lulav* and *Etrog*, Rabbi Sampson Raphael Hirsh states; “Take these four (species) as standing for all that God offers you as gifts of nature... acknowledge and acclaim that it is God who vouchsafes unto you all that is good in life” (*Horeb* pg. 131-132, Soncino Press). How can a person view all of their sustenance as coming from God, how can a person with just abstract logical knowledge even be expected to make God as his provider, to appreciate God’s loving-kindness without knowing him out of a relationship, without knowing him in an intimate personal way?

In fact, I would even question the entire concept that *Mitzvah* is merely an intellectual prognosis for daily human life. Is *Mitzvah*/*Halacha* all but distant, motorized actions, does it not have a more weighty involvement? Is our relationship to *Mitzvah* an isolated, one-sided, dichotomized, utilitarian phenomenon, simply to benefit us in a practical, ethical, or philosophic way? I am quite aware of the benefit philosophically or ethically of *Mitzvah* in terms of its benefit to our very daily lives in a pragmatic way. I simply question that this is the fullest extent of *Mitzvah*, that this is *Mitzvah* in totum. Such a proposition in

my mind lacks a full awareness of God who has given *Mitzvah* to us, and neglects to account for any significant form of relationship between man and God. The question is not linear, the question is not only what does *Mitzvah* do for my persona per se, but how does *Mitzvah* function in terms of a cognizance of God. That is, if we take *Halacha* not as its particulars but a sum of its parts, what does it evoke in man? *Halacha* is like its root meaning, a *mehalech*, a *derech*, a way of operating, but it is not just a *derech* in terms of specific ideas, or a general direction of action and behavioral morals or ideals, it is *derech* to God; it itself embodies a dynamic in the Man/God relationship. It on its own, without any explanation per se offers man a unique formulation, even be it on a subconscious level as *Halacha* is a formidable existential force. *Halacha* by its very constructs forces man into defeat, man the great force of this world is defeated, muted, and herded by God to act, to think, and even to feel according to God’s will not man’s. *Halacha* is a *mehalech* into the very dynamic of the Man/God relationship. “*Kol Yisroel Yaish LeHem Chelek*”, how so, because the *Halacha* itself bonds man and God in an intimate, unique, and dynamic relationship of human defeat and submissiveness to the Almighty. In regards to the dynamic of *Halacha* the Rav writes; “Again *Halacha* encourages man to pursue greatness etc. .... And again, *Halacha* will command him to halt and make an about-face” (“*Catharsis*”, Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, pg. 44. *Tradition Magazine* 17 No. 2, 1978).

I’ve heard a story numerous times, that I suppose must be true, as I have heard it from many various people. Regardless if it is true or not it’s point is still sharp and accurate. The story goes that it was asked of the great Reb Chaim from Brisk that if every emotion that God created is good, what is the benefit in the emotion to be a heretic. Reb Chaim responded, that a person, when learning *Tosfos* should not trust the great commentators, rather they should question and verify everything the sages say.

What then is the benefit of the religious emotion, why unlike all others has it become a taboo? Why while the drive to be a heretic has a manner in which it is validated, does the religious emotion not? Is it not one thing to understand something, yet another to live it? How can religious observance be lived if it is not accompanied by a sublime emotional experience? How can one have a state of being if only a specific part of the self is inspired? It is one thing to understand, it is another to be in an existential state. To know God is to experience God. ■



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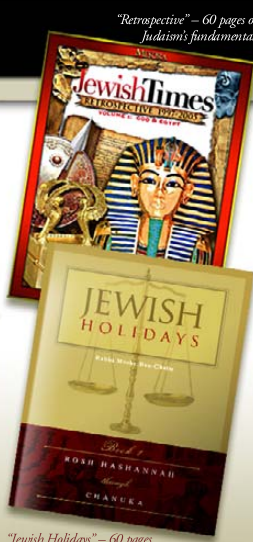
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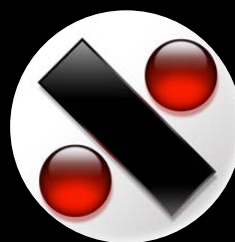
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## Employment / Singles



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### The Orthodox Union Singles Connection and Young Professionals Network

We will be hosting three events in Manhattan between October 25 and November 9, customized for the enjoyment of participants of various ages and interests. The events are organized by the OU Department of Community Services.

Singles ages 40+ are invited to Shalom Bombay, a new glatt kosher Indian restaurant under OU kosher supervision, on Monday, October 25 at 7:00 p.m. for a full buffet of delicacies, including: chicken tandoori, beef curry, basmati rice, assorted salad, chutneys and breads, dessert and soda. Pre-paid registration is mandatory; no walk-ins will be allowed. The restaurant, located at 344 Lexington Avenue (between 39 and 40 Streets), has been reserved exclusively for the OU.

Young professionals ages 25-35 are invited to an evening of shared laughs and networking with theatre games and improvisation at 9 p.m. on Saturday night, November 6 at Congregation Ramath Orah, 550 West 110 Street. Whether someone is an extrovert who can't wait to act-out, or a quiet observer who likes to sit back and watch the activities, all can enjoy the interactive entertainment, led by acting teachers Isa Freeling and Shellen Lubin. Admission is \$15 in advance, \$20 at the door. Light refreshments will be served.

Goldy Krantz, author of the book "The Best of My Worst" will present a lighthearted and introspective view on the dating world for singles in their 40's and 50's at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, November 9 at the Park East Synagogue, 164 East 68 Street. Light refreshments will be served. Admission is \$10.

**To register and for more information, call 212.613.8300.**