

# JewishTimes

VOL. XIV NO. 2 — NOV. 1, 2014

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## PARSHA

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Charging  
Interest

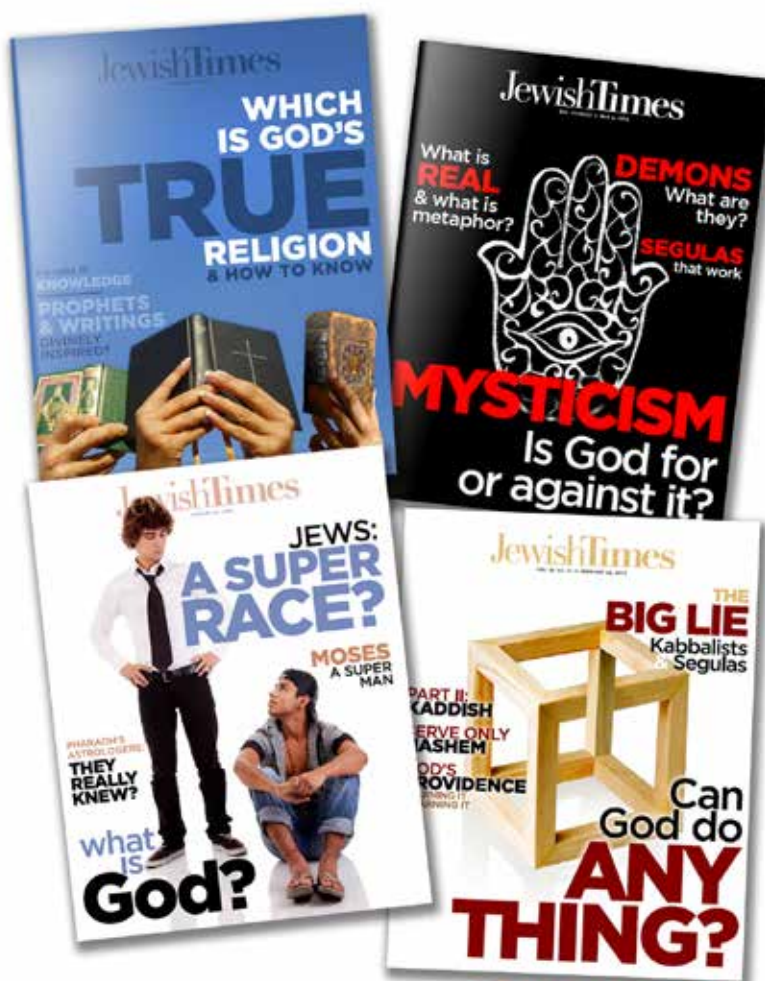
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## LETTERS

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

### Charging Interest to Gentiles who then Convert?

**Question:** Richard is converting to Judaism but doesn't have any money at all; so he goes to his friend Moises and tells him: "Look, I am getting my brith milah in two weeks but I am unemployed and cannot afford it. Would you lend me the money? Next month I will start to work and I will repay you." Can Moises charge him

(CONT. ON NEXT PAGE)

interest or not? When Richard asked him money, he was still a gentile so a Jew is allowed to charge interest; but he will be Jewish when he'll be able to pay back his debt and Jews cannot charge interest on each other. Many thanks.

**Rabbi:** I would say the violation of interest is the "acceptance" of it. Not the mere conditional agreement at the time of the loan. For at that time of the loan, there was no interest yet to speak about. Interest only comes into the picture once the borrower performs the act of repayment. Therefore, he cannot accept the interest from the man who is now a Jew.

## A Treaty of 1000 Generations?

**Reader:** Hashem makes covenant with Abraham, "These words which I have given you I shall keep for a thousand generations." This is my question: When does this time period end? If each generation is 30 years,  $30 \times 1000 = 30,000$  minus 5775 years = 24,225? Is this literal? Or, is one of God's "generations" different than one of man's generations?

**Rabbi:** You quote Psalm 105 verse 8, where God references a "treaty He made for 1000 generations." Ibn Ezra explains this means that God's treaty with Israel is one that will be eternal, that the Children of Israel will never cease to maintain the fame as God's chosen. Also, that the land of Israel will remain eternally in our possession. Therefore, Ibn Ezra explains 1000 generations to mean "eternal." ■

# Sanctifying God's Name

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

**T**he Medrash states that Terach informed on Abram, his son. (God had not yet changed his name to "Abraham") Terach reported to Nimrod that Abram was a societal deviant, not adhering to the philosophies of the masses. We learn from Maimonides' history of Abram, (Laws of Idolatry 1:3) that Abram realized and educated many on monotheism. Abram exposed the flaws of idolatry to the masses. These included the entire generation in which Abram lived. Understandably, Abram was not particularly liked, and his father too did not tolerate him. Terach then informed on Abram to the current leader Nimrod. According to Medrash, Abram was then cast into a furnace, but was miraculously saved.

Informing on his son, Terach did not display normal, parental behavior. It is normal for a child to rebel against the father, but not the reverse. However, later on, Terach had a change of heart and took Abram and his nephew Lote from Ur Kasdim: (Gen. 11:31) "And Terach took Abram his son, and Lote, son of Haran, son of his brother, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, wife of Abram his son, and they exited with him from us Kasdim to travel to the land of Canaan. And they came to Charan, and they dwelled there."

Terach's remaining in Charan - not continuing on to his initial destination of Canaan - teaches that Terach's goal was not so much to reach Canaan, but rather, to leave Ur Kasdim. In Charan, he decided he was far enough out of reach of Ur Kasdim.

Abram's influence in Ur Kasdim was tied to his identity as a citizen of Ur Kasdim, who was a revolutionary in religion. The authorities considered him an irreligious person, who had renounced the religion of the state. He was nevertheless influential. People came to him to hear his ideas. After his conviction and miraculous escape, he assumed another identity: an exile, who had convinced his greatest adversary, his own father, to stand along side him. Terach did not really repent; he did not really embrace the ideas of his son's new religion, but was sorry for acting against him. He felt guilty as a father for wronging him, and took him out of

Ur, together with the son of his deceased son who died at the hands of Nimrod. Although Terach acted out of guilt, to the world, it appeared that Abram's former prosecutor was converted to his supporter. This was Abram's new platform for the world. People would no doubt be curious to meet with such a person; a former rebel against the state, who had escaped miraculously, and had won over his greatest adversary, his own father.

Abram expected to use his new identity as a means to influence people and teach them the true idea of God. At this point, God intervened through prophecy and told him to leave his land and all the attachments he had to it, and to leave the house of his father. He would concern himself only with attaining his further perfection by breaking all attachments and emotional ties to his roots, and emerging as a totally independent individual - not only intellectually, but emotionally as well. As to his identity and public platform, which would be lost due to his travels, God would supply this for him. "...I will bless you and make your name great." (Gen. 12:2) This injunction freed Abram to work only on the world of his inner perfection, while the platform for his success would be supplied by the Almighty.

Why does the Torah not reveal anything about Abram's greatest accomplishments, his own discovery of the true idea of God, the Creator of the universe? The Torah is not a book about personal accomplishments. It is a book about the sanctification of God's name, by making Him known to the world. This could only be accomplished through God's assistance and constant providence. As great as Abram's personal accomplishment was, it would have vanished in time, were it not for God's intervention, which began with the injunction, "Lech Lecha" ("Go forth") to Abram, and found its culmination in the giving of the Torah to the Jewish people.

Thus, the Torah introduces us to Abram under the injunction of "Lech Lecha" - the means through which the eternal sanctification of God's name became possible. ■

PARSHA

# Journey into the Unknown

## Lech Lecha

RABBI REUVEN MANN  
Rabbi, Cong. Torat Emet, Phoenix, AZ



**T**his week's parsha, Lech Lecha, begins with Hashem's instructions to Avraham to "go forth from your land, your birthplace and father's house, to the land that I will show you." Avraham had discovered G-d by his observations and rational study of the cosmos. His inquiries began when he was a precocious 3-year-old and concluded when he was 40, absolutely convinced of the existence of a Creator Who ruled the world and Whom man was obliged to recognize and serve.

Avraham's enchantment with G-d impelled him to communicate his knowledge to his contemporaries. He was able to repudiate their idolatrous beliefs and convince them of the truth of Hashem via the cogency of his arguments. According to Rambam, Avraham was not, as is commonly assumed, a "knight of faith," rather a unique religious personality. It is quite obvious that he did not go through a sudden emotional transformation, which is often referred to as being "born again." Such a process does not require 37 years of constant effort. Avraham was a great thinker who was wholly engaged in the search for truth. He might be regarded as the first person who was a rational believer.

Does this mean that he was not a man of faith? At first glance, it seems tempting to make this assertion. After all, one who is rationally convinced of the existence of

atoms, or any other thing we cannot perceive with our senses, does not need faith. One who has proof of a person's innocence does not have to resort to how he "feels" about the matter. As one's knowledge increases, the arena of belief recedes. If Avraham had an absolute intellectual conviction about G-d's existence, what role could faith play in his religious approach?

Our parsha provides the answer. It is the first installment in the story of the "adventures of Avraham Avinu." He embarked upon a journey that would remove him from the security of his home and family to the place where Hashem would lead him. How did he know what would happen to him in his wanderings? What dangers would he encounter? And what effect would this move have on his life?

He did not even know what land he was headed for, and thus had no inkling of the challenges he would have to deal with. Yet, he accepted the Divine charge without any hesitation. Why would a rational person, who needed to be absolutely convinced of G-d's existence before committing to Him, seemingly abandon all reason and embark on a life-changing adventure about whose details he knew nothing?

The answer is that Avraham had absolute faith, not that G-d existed, but

that He could be trusted without reservations. Hashem does not reveal too much about His plans for mankind. He requires that we develop confidence in Him. In every area of human endeavor, trust is necessary. We are always placing our faith in spouses, friends, relatives, and institutions. As we go through life, we are inevitably surprised and disappointed by those on whom we rely. Especially great is our sorrow when we are mistreated by those to whom we provided great benefit. "Why did you repay goodness with evil?" is a constant refrain in the annals of human experience.

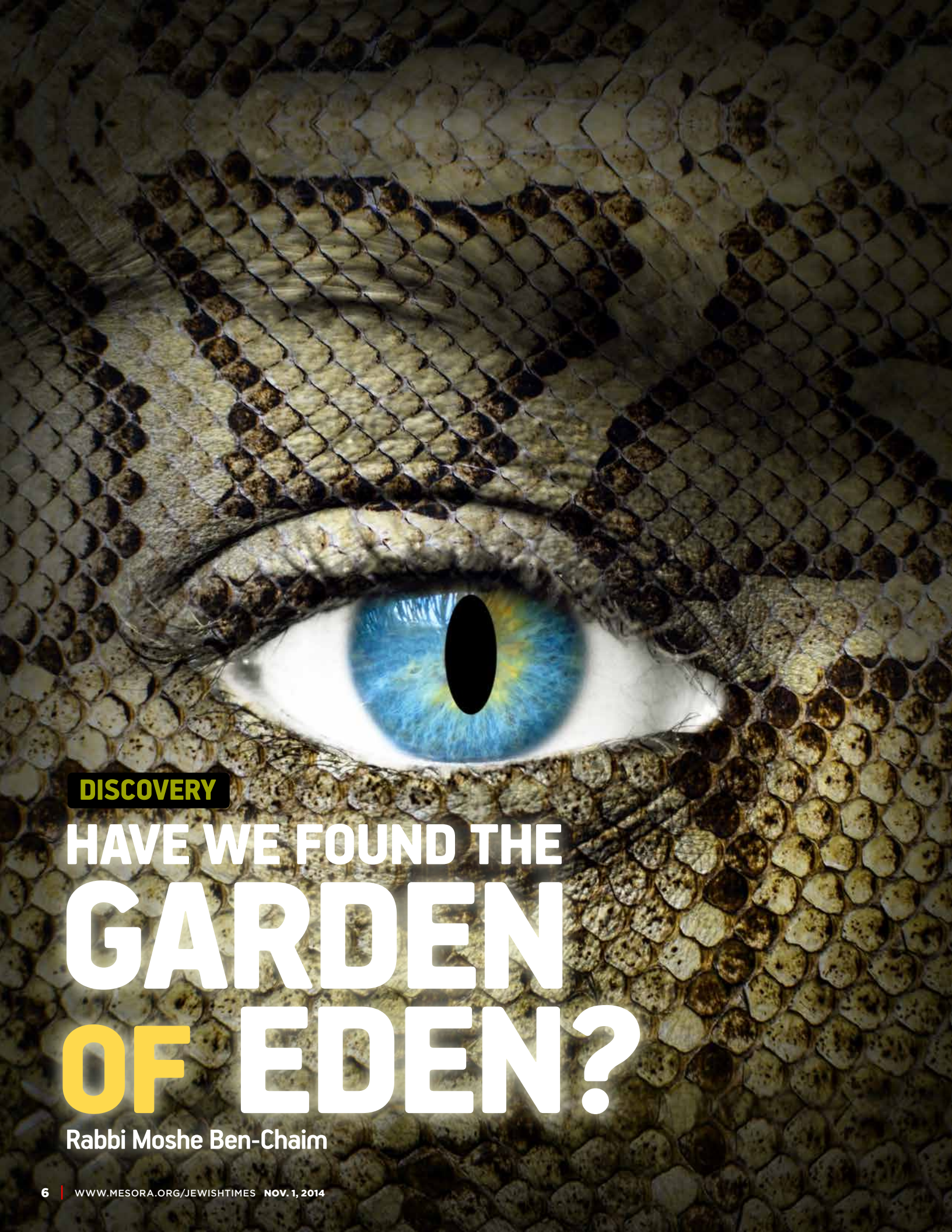
The greatest mistake we make is to invest our faith in people. The Torah teaches that we are to rely only on Hashem. The prayers declare, "Do not put your trust in princes or the son of man, in whom there is no salvation." The life of Avraham is a lesson in true emunah (faith). It demonstrates how G-d's protection was always with Avraham, to extricate him from the most difficult situations.

Avraham was capable of his pure faith because it was rooted in his absolute and unwavering conviction of the existence and supreme goodness of the Creator. May we merit to achieve this exalted level of trust in Hashem.

Shabbat shalom. ■

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**DISCOVERY**

# HAVE WE FOUND THE GARDEN OF EDEN?

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim



# The Garden of Eden: It's True Location.



The High Holidays and Succos have flown by, and so did our attention to the most fundamental Torah books read during these precious days. I refer to Genesis and Koheles. What compounds our lack of attention to both books, are their many cryptic riddles. We feel more grounded studying stories of Abraham and Sarah. But as God included Genesis in His Torah, and King Solomon toiled over writing Koheles, both demand our attention.

There are many questions, which I will first outline. I will proceed to suggest how, in these questions, we detect direction to the answers. And then I will return to answer these questions.

Genesis contains many themes. The topics of my inquiry are limited to the Garden of Eden, the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life, the snake, man's sin, God's punishments, and God's plan which will emerge from understanding the elements just cited.

To commence, what was God's purpose in giving Adam and Eve a command? God specifically states that man can eat of "all" the trees of the Garden of Eden. But of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil, man must not eat...the punishment being mortality. This teaches that Adam had complete permissiveness, barring one fruit tree. God permitted all vegetation to man, except one fruit. What was this precise plan? Also, why was the punishment that man would become mortal? God apparently offered Adam to choose between obeying God and retaining his immortality. Or, if he disobeyed through unrestrained physical gratification by eating of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil, he would sacrifice his immortality.

Interesting...there are two accounts of Creation: the first account is the Six days and the second is man in the Garden of Eden. We notice that the prohibition on eating of the fruit is found in the second account of creation. How is this account different than the Six days of Creation recorded earlier? What new category of creation is God describing? There are other details, such as the river that exited Eden and became four "heads." Mirroring the beginning of Genesis, King Solomon too, in the beginning of Koheles also discusses "water flowing." Is King Solomon duplicating God's lessons outlined in Genesis?

God places man in the Garden of Eden twice; Gen. 2:8 and 2:15. Why this duplication? In the first instance (2:7,8) man is described as "dust from the Earth" and that God "blew into his nostrils a living soul, and man became a living being. And God planted a garden in the east of Eden and He placed there the man whom He formed"...a physical description. Whereas in the second placement of

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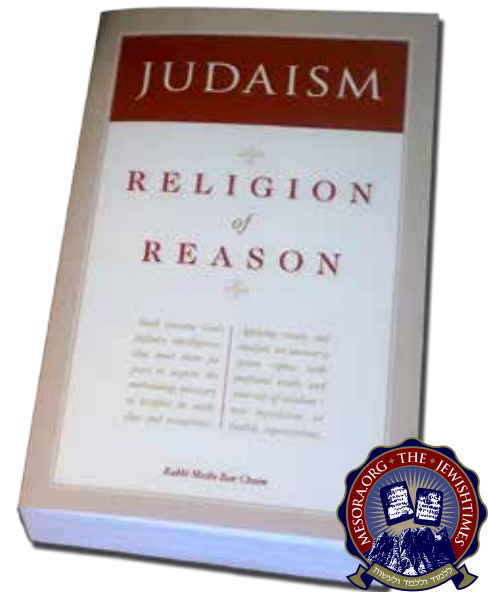
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**RABBI REUVEN MANN** — Rabbi, Y. Israel of Phoenix

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim has written extensively on Jewish philosophy for many years. His ideas are rooted in a rational approach. He follows the great philosophers like Rambam and Saadia Gaon. He is opposed to all forms of "mysticism" and seeks to debunk all practices and beliefs which are rooted in superstition and contrary to reason. This work covers a wide variety of topics, of interest to contemporary; insightful analyses of Biblical narratives as well as the significance of many mitzvot. Rabbi Ben-Chaim demonstrates that Judaism can be harmonized with human reason. He is not afraid to ask the most penetrating and challenging questions as he is convinced that Torah is the Word of God and based on the highest form of wisdom. Jews who have a profound desire to make sense out of their religion will benefit greatly from reading this book.



**RABBI STEVEN WEIL** — Executive Vice President, The Orthodox Union

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim asks critical, crucial and defining questions that any thinking Jew needs to ask. His method enables the reader to explore and engage our theology in a meaningful and serious way. Following the Rishonim, he forces us to define, weigh and analyze each phrase of chazal, showing there is no contradiction between an investigation of Science and an investigation of Judaism. Rabbi Ben-Chaim has written a work that addresses the thinking person of all faiths. This work speaks to the scholar and lay person alike and will help you gain insight into how the great Rishonim define how we view the world. Rabbi Ben-Chaim's website, Mesora.org is a very serious tool and resource for thinking human beings who want to engage and explore the Almighty, the Almighty's universe and do so within the realm of wisdom, rationality and intellectual honesty.



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man in Eden, God omits any details of man's form. Why is God placing Adam in Eden two times? Maimonides briefly discusses this: "Another noteworthy saying is this: "And the Lord God took the man, i.e., raised him, and placed him in the Garden of Eden," i.e., He gave him rest. The words "He took him, He gave him" have no reference to position in space, but they indicate his position in rank among transient beings, and the prominent character of his existence[1]."

The Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge are not mentioned in Genesis 1:29, when God first describes the permitted trees of fruit; it is only here in this second account of Creation, and Adam's second placement (omitting a description Adam's physical form) that God prohibits the Tree of Knowledge. This is significant. "Eden" sounds similar to "Adam." Any hint here? And why are these two trees "in the center of Eden" (Gen. 2:9)? What are these two trees, and why must they both exist? God does not prohibit Adam from eating of the Tree of Life...until he ate of the Tree of Knowledge. Why? And if God is concerned man will eat from the Tree of Life, why cannot God simply destroy it? Why does God, instead, create the "cherubim and the flaming spinning sword to guard the path to Tree of Life"? What are these two entities?

What was God's purpose in creating a snake, an animal "more cunning than all other beasts of the field"? This creature caused the sin. Why was it necessary? And what precisely was Eve's sin? God tells us how exactly what Eve responds in her thoughts: "the tree was good to eat, it was visually desirable, the tree was enticing for understanding...(Gen. 1:6)" Where else in Genesis are we told of something being "good"? What is God sharing with us here?

Further, Maimonides teaches that it was not the snake, but its "rider" that enticed Eve[1]. What is this rider? Maimonides states this rider was Samael. In Hebrew, Samael means blind from seeing God (sama-el). Maimonides further states that just as Samael has a meaning, the Hebrew term for snake, "nachash" has a meaning. What is Maimonides' message?

Why does God record Adam's blame of Eve, and her blame of the snake? What is this lesson God sees so essential for us to learn? What is meant by God's punishing the snake? And what is the justice in God's punishments to Adam and Eve?

## DETECTING THE CLUES

Let's focus on a few of our observations, and elucidate them.

1) Maimonides said the snake has a "rider"...but the Torah text does not mention any rider.

2) Maimonides calls this rider "Samael" and then says Samael and the instincts are the same being: "The serpent had a rider, the rider was as big as a camel, and it was the rider that enticed Eve: this rider was Samael." Samael is the name generally applied by our Sages to Satan. Thus they say in several places that Satan desired to entice Abraham to sin, and to abstain from binding Isaac, and he desired also to persuade Isaac not to obey his father. At the same time they also say, in reference to the same subject, viz., the Akedah ("the binding of Isaac"), that Samael came to Abraham and said to him, "What! hast thou, being an old man, lost thy senses?" etc. This shows that Samael and Satan are identical[1]."

3) God places man in the Garden twice. How can that be? And only the first placing refers to man in his physical form. What does this say about the second placing?

4) There are two accounts of creation, the second is introduced as, "These are the products of the heavens and earth...(Gen. 2:4)". This section goes on to explain the behaviors or laws of vegetation, and then discusses man...as if saying, man too is discussed in his own productions, or behaviors.

5) A river is described that flows out of Eden

and divides into four "heads". Since when is a river called a head? One river called Pishon encompassed all of the land of Chavila, where there was "good" gold. Of what concern is this, and why state this here? After concluding the rivers, God places man a second time in Eden. As if to say, only now can we address man...but the man with no reference to his physical form. Which man is this?

6) There must be deeper meaning behind a literal spinning, flaming sword, and cherubim...and also why God didn't simply destroy the two trees.

## TWO ACCOUNTS OF CREATION

Creation had two parts: 1) creation of physical entities from nothingness, and 2) creation of their governing laws. When commencing Koheles, King Solomon says, "All the rivers go to the sea, but the sea is not full, to the place where the rivers go,

there they return to go (1:7)." A wise Rabbi explained that the king was first educating us on how man's psyche works. Man has energies that "flow", but man is rarely satisfied, or "full." Man seeks accomplishments, novelty, happiness, success, and many other emotions. God and King Solomon commenced both books, Genesis and Koheles with lessons on human nature. For if we are to appreciate God's Torah guide to human life, and King Solomon's

studies in happiness, we must first know the subject of these books, that being man's internal makeup. Only once we recognize our natures, can we appreciate the rest of His Torah and how each law benefits us. Torah is not to perfect our mortal bodies, but our immortal souls.

Just as God commenced the second account of Creation with a description of how plants behave, and in that same account refers to

**"God places man in the Garden twice. How can that be? And only the first placing refers to man in his physical form. What is this second placing?"**

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man, this suggests that God is describing man's behaviors as well. This theory finds support that man's sin is recorded, and also God's second placing of man, which does not make sense literally since man is already there in Eden. Furthermore, in the second account of man being "placed in Eden", God omits man's physical description. This leaves only Adam's non-physical components to somehow be termed as "placed." As Maimonides stated, "This has no reference to position in space, but indicate his position in rank among transient beings, and the prominent character of his existence." So, this account is not discussing a location of man, but man's internal design. God does place the real, physical Adam in Eden, "And [God] blew into his nostrils a living soul, and man became a living being. And God planted a garden in the east of Eden and He placed there the man whom He formed (2:7,8)." But then in 2:15 God placed man in Eden again. Here, it is not the physical man put into a location, but God is placing man in a certain state of being, for no reference is made to man's physical form.

As a wise Rabbi said, "Man lives in his mind" or in his head. As is true in Koheles, the river in Genesis too indicates man's energies that flow toward various lifestyles, or "four heads". A primary drive is success. Man's energies first flow to Pishon, which encompassed a land called Chavila (when changed from vav to vais) means bundles. This land contained gold that was "good." But gold cannot be good, that is a moral value. Gold is either pure or impure. However, God is teaching that man's primary drive, what he values as "good", is wealth. Eve too said the tree was "good to eat". Man "encompasses" this bundling of wealth; he is quite attached to it. We are thereby taught that for man to pursue anything, he must value it as a "good." Eve too had to justify her violation, calling the fruit "good." We are also taught that bundling, or heaping up wealth, is a fundamental attraction of wealth. Thus, King Solomon teaches, "One who loves wealth will not be satisfied with wealth... (Koheles 5:9)." This is because the drive is not to attain a fixed amount; rather, it is the the process of "amassing", or "bundling"

that one yearns for. We witness many wealthy people who cannot stop from piling up more and more, despite their inability to spend even a fraction of what they have attained.

Other people are driven by desires, to satiate their senses and fill their bellies. Gichone was the second river, and it means belly. It encompasses the land of Cush, and chush means the senses. The third river flows toward Ashur, and ashray means happiness. Other people long to simply be carefree and happy without conflicts; wealth and lusts are not their objective. They prefer instead a simplified euphoria. The energies of Adam flow towards many drives.

## EDEN: A BLUEPRINT OF MAN

### THE SIN AND PUNISHMENT

It appears God wishes mankind to know why we were not initially created with a conscience. It was due to our inability to follow God's commands without it. Had God created Adam and Eve at the outset, including a conscience (the cause of man's shame of his nakedness) we would question its necessity. As God's wish for man is to engage our intellect – the one gift man possesses over all other creatures – we could engage our intellects and ponder the marvels of creation to a far greater degree, if not burdened with concerns

for moral choices. We would declare it unjust to be burdened with this extra faculty. However, now that God recorded the account of man's sin, we appreciate that the conscience was actually a much needed gift. Adam was without a conscience; he viewed his nakedness as nothing different than a stone on the ground. It was simply a fact, with no moral value attached to it. He was initially enabled to have his mind 100% free

to explore creation and uncover God's beautiful laws. He had no concerns about moral issues to cloud scientific inquiry. But God gave him one command. The command was so slight. He could enjoy literally all trees of the garden, except one. But Eve became fixated on satisfying her drives, instead of retaining immortal life in the Garden. Adam too succumbed to this desire. Both man and woman demonstrated their inability to abide by even the most minute limitation.

This is the lesson for mankind: man seeks unbridled gratification, even at the cost of his mortality. This is how powerful our instincts are. By gifting man and woman with a new faculty – the conscience – we now have one additional chance to abstain from sin. We now feel guilt, a new emotion. Adam and Eve hid once they ate, feeling ashamed of their nakedness. This shame can be applied to any wrongdoing, assisting us in refraining from self-destructive actions. So we appreciate that God initially

created man without morality, which diverts our energies from worldly scientific study, towards internal conflicts. But this diversion was necessary, if we are to abstain from sin, and earn continued life.

God also converted man from immortal, to mortal. Man's attachment to the physical gratifications was now severely curbed due to our recognition of our limited time on this planet. Mortality is the perfect response to a being seeking unlimited

earthly gratification. We are thereby diverted somewhat back towards Adam's state prior to the sin: a being focusing less on gratification and more on God's wisdom. God's plan was that man invest all his energies into pursuing wisdom as this will offer him the greatest satisfaction. To redirect man back to this lofty goal, God created the conscience, so as to slow us down before violating His will, and He also



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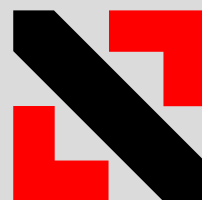
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made us mortal, so we are less attached to this physical world. Coming to terms with our limited stay here, we are better equipped to focus on what is truly eternal, and that is God and His wisdom. The greatest good was not taken from Adam and Eve. They could have lived eternally in Eden, had they remained on the path of naming the animals and other pursuits of wisdom. But now as mortals, this eternal attachment to wisdom will occur only in the afterlife.

Regarding man's other punishments, man sought unbridled gratification, and therefore God cursed man with thorns and thistles, and farming his daily bread. Meaning, we would no longer find complete satisfaction when seeking physical gratification: food takes toil to attain, things rot, metal rusts, and we find aggravation in our daily tasks. Man is preoccupied with farming or work, and less energies are available to sin. All this is a blessing, to redirect our energies away from physical

gratification, and towards the world of wisdom.

Eve dominated Adam in her act of causing his sin, and was therefore made subservient to man to a degree to correct this. She was made to be absorbed emotionally with birth pangs, difficult pregnancy and child rearing. This too disengages her from dominating man.

When confronted by God after they sinned, both man and woman shifted blame from themselves. Although a "great intellect"[2] Adam did not readily accept responsibility for his sin. Maimonides states there is meaning in the word "nachash", snake. Nichush is the same word and refers to superstition, a false imagined reality which man wrongly accepts as equal to what his senses detect. Eve created her own reality, despite the snake's deception. It was Eve, not the snake, that caused her sin: "the tree was good to eat, it was visually desirable, the tree was enticing for understanding...(Gen. 1:6)"

Her powerful emotions and imagination, termed by Maimonides as the "rider on the snake" are to blame. "Rider" means that there was something other than the snake that caused her sin. This something, was imagination. The snake deceives Eve, and Eve is blinded by her own fantasies, what Maimonides stated earlier is identical with Samael, that which "blinds one from God." Eve's imagination blinded her.

Now, as the snake was closely tied to Eve's sin, although a real creature, Sforzo suggests it also embodies the working of the instincts. God curses the real snake, but simultaneously teaches us the modifications He now makes in man's instincts: the instincts will now "go on their belly and eat dust (Gen. 3:14)." Meaning, God slowed the movement of our instinctual drives and also made our attainment of our lusts as distasteful as eating dust. These two measures minimize gratification in the attainment of physical desires, helping us again to redirect our energies towards wisdom. But God curses the snake further, "Man will crush your head, and you will bruise his heel (Gen. 3:15)". This occurs literally, but there is an additional lesson as Maimonides states, "More remarkable still is the way in which the serpent is joined to Eve, or rather his seed to her seed; the head of the one touches the heel of the other. Eve defeats the serpent by crushing its head, whilst the serpent defeats her by wounding her heel [1]." Man defeats his instincts by crushing it at the "head" of the battle. Only if we thwart our emotional urges upon their very onset, do we succeed over them. But if we allow our emotions to swell, they eventually become too powerful to defeat, and the instincts defeat us in the "heel" of the battle.

Man still shifted the blame after the sin, and did not confess he caved to his instincts. God records both Adam and Eve shifting the blame, to teach us that they were less in touch with their internal words., despite God's efforts in creating a snake that they could use as a model of their instincts, to apply to themselves.

(CONT. ON PAGE 13)





## THE TREES

Eden has two primary trees, I say primary, as God placed them in the “center” of the garden. Center denotes prominence. At the center of man’s psyche is his feeling of immortality. It is this feeling of permanence that enables us the fortitude to progress in life. If death were a reality, we would live a morbid existence. King Solomon says “And also the world [God] planted in man’s heart (Koheles 3:11)”, meaning God saw it necessary that man feel a sense of immortality, as if eternity were planted in his heart. The Tree of Life is appropriately named. As man was immortal before his sin, he had no urge to eat of this Tree. It would do nothing for him. The tree alluded to what is in the core of man’s psyche. Only once he was sentenced with mortality did this tree have any appeal, as God says, “So it is, man has become as one of us to know good and evil, and now perhaps he will send his hand and take the Tree of Life and eat and live forever (Gen.3:22).” Meaning, man sinned, and due to his sentence of mortality, man will deny this mortality. It was very disturbing, and so he yearned to recapture his immortality. God could not destroy the Tree of Life, as this would mean God is removing from man his vital sense of being, of enjoying life for a while. Go did not want man to live a morbid existence, He desired man to retain some sense of permanence on Earth. The solution is that man retain some sense of immortality, but also guard him from investing too much of his energies into a temporal Earthly existence. This balance was struck by giving man some realization of his mortality, while also allowing him to feel a sense of youth. God created an unapproachable, spinning flaming sword and the childlike cherubim that guarded the path to the Tree of Life.

At his center, man possesses two faculties or counsels (etz). Man is essentially a moral being, and a mortal being. The Etz Hachaim and Etz Hadaas, the Trees of Life and Knowledge, are in the center of the Garden of Eden.

## SUMMARY

Man is complex. Our psyche contains energies that flow towards many lifestyles. We live without realizing our instinctual urges, to which we succumb after some time of conflict with them. Underlying all our imaginations and plans, are feelings of morality, immortality and a need to accomplish. Many of us ignore or even deny this internal world. Yet, we must know about it, confront it, and manage it, if we are to succeed and live based on reason, not our instincts. The Torah is our guide to navigate this course in life, informing us of values and actions our Creator deems most beneficial, and from what we must steer clear. Ultimately, we must choose between our drives and our intellects. We can.

The Garden of Eden is on earth. Yet, it embodied many lessons for understanding what type of creatures we are, providing us insight not available on the surface. ■

### Footnotes

[1] The Guide, book II chap. XXX, p 217  
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[2] Ibn Ezra describes man as a “chocham gadol” – a great intellect (Gen. 2:16)



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