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The Golden Calf

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

(Transcribed by students)

Moses ascended the mountain to have a rendezvous with G-d to learn first hand the teachings of the Torah and then to transmit them to the Jewish people. Instead Moses descended to a nation of idolaters rather than a people committed to accept a moral law based upon their intellectual conviction. The Torah explains the reason for this transformation. In Exodus chapter 32 verse 1 the Torah tells us that the people saw that Moses tarried from coming down the mountain and that this precipitated their desire to build a golden calf. Rashi explains that the nation miscalculated the day of Moses's descent. He advised them that he would return in forty days. Moses was not counting his departure as day one. He meant forty complete days, thus his return would be on the forty first day, which is the seventeenth of

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Maimonides' 13 Principles

Due to the level of importance of these principles, I felt it necessary to make them available for the widest possible audience, and thank Marc Mermelstein for his efforts in this translation. These 13 Principles compiled by Maimonides include the basic tenets which one must acknowledge as truths.

Principle I. To know the existence of the Creator

To believe in the existence of the Creator, and this creator is perfect in all manner of existence. He is the cause of all existence. He causes them to exist and they exist only because of Him. And if you could contemplate a case such that He were not to exist then all things would cease to exist and there would remain nothing. And if you were to contemplate a case such that all things would cease to exist aside from the creator, His existence would not cease. And He would lose nothing and oneness and kingship is His alone. Hashem of strength is His name because He is sufficient with His own existence and suffices just Him alone and needs no other. And the existences of the angels, and the celestial bodies, and all that is in them and that which is below them all need Him for their existence. And this is the first pillar and is attested to by the verse "I am Hashem your God."

Principle II. The Unity of G-d

Meaning to say to accept that this is the quintessential idea of Oneness. It is not like the oneness of a pair (i.e. pair of shoes - one group) or and not one like a species. And not like man that has many individuals nor like a body that divides into many different parts until no end (everything keeps on being divisible). Rather God is one and there is no other oneness like His. This is the second principle and is taught in what it says "Hear Israel, Hashem your God, Hashem is one."

Principle III. The Denial of Physicality in Connection with G-d

This is to accept that this Oneness that we have mentioned above (2) is not a body and has no strength in the body, and has no shape or image or relationship to a body or parts thereof. This is why the Sages of blessed memory said with regards to heaven there is no sitting, nor standing, no

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ASK YOUR CHILDREN:

"On Mt. Sinai, why did the Jews create a golden calf, and not another animal?"

Questions & Answers

E-mail us: questions@mesora.org

Reader: I was wondering if you believe in dinosaurs, if they ever really existed, or if the bones are a trick, put here as "Gods toys" before he created humans.

Mesora: I've heard this notion before. Some people suggest foolishly that God placed dinosaur bones in the Earth to test us. But I wonder, "What is the test?" According to them, we should believe that they never existed even though our eyes see their bones, and our carbon 14 dates them to be ancient. I would ask them, "Let's say I see an elephant, should I not believe my senses?" They would of course say that an elephant is different because it is alive. I would then continue and ask them, "I'll exhume an elephant's remains and see its bones,... I see the dinosaur bones, and I'm using the same two eyes which saw the elephant's bones, so why should I say that these dinosaur bones are fabrications, while the elephant's bones are evidence of truth?" These people will have no answer as they will see their contradiction. They may claim that since they didn't read about the dinosaurs in the Torah, then they cannot be real, in which case I would say that every comet in space shouldn't be real because it is also not in the Torah. Their foolish arguments can be removed quite readily.

The Torah does not contain every bit of information in the world. Perhaps what

forces one to make such a claim is an infantile feeling about the Torah, that if it misses one point, it is not perfect, so they claim that every point is in it. This is similar to one claiming that a Rebbe never sins. If he did, they couldn't tolerate it, as they desire "angelic man", when in reality the Torah teaches that "there is no righteous man in the Earth who does good and never sins".

(I would add to this point that A rabbi mentioned that dinosaurs are in the Torah, where it says in Genesis "taninim gedolim", "great sea monsters".)

Again, these people might claim that since the world is only 5762 years old, this contradicts the supposition that the world is millions of years old. At least this is a more rational question, yet, scientists are measuring the world as old as 16,000,000,000 years. How did the scientists come up with this number?

The Hubble Constant (H₀) describes how fast the Universe is expanding (which is due to the Big Bang (1)). Since we know how fast the Universe is expanding now, we can estimate when the Universe was just a single point, just before the Big Bang. To determine H₀ you have to look at objects which are very far away, so that their velocities are dominated by the expansion of the Universe and not by any local flows.

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The Golden Calf

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

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Tammuz. Therefore their calculations were erroneous by one day. Rashi teaches us that as a result of this miscalculation, on the sixteenth of Tammuz, Satan came and brought confusion to the world, and showed the Israelites a vision of thick darkness. This caused them to say, Moses is definitely dead and it ignited their desire to serve other gods.

Upon analyzing this Rashi, two basic questions must be asked. What compels Rashi to utilize Satan as the vehicle for their confusion. Their mistake in determining Moses's return was based upon their erroneous calculations. This alone should have been sufficient justification for their concluding that Moses was dead and was not returning. Furthermore, Aaron devises different schemes to hinder their attempts to serve different G-d's. Why didn't he simply advise them of their mistaken calculation? Aaron certainly was aware of the proper count or at the very least recognized their mistake.

We must appreciate that the Israelites had recently been liberated from Egypt. In Egypt they were exposed to, and influenced by, the pagan practices of the society. Therefore, they still had an attraction to the primitive and were still subject to the insecurities of the instinctual part of their personalities. The entire event of Moses ascending the mountain to speak to God was a mystical phenomenon. They were in great awe of this unique experience. Thus, when they saw the thick darkness, rather than attributing it to bad weather conditions, their emotions overwhelmed them. They had visions of Moses failed mission which image was bolstered by their miscalculation. The Satan, as Maimonides teaches us, is the same as the yetser harah, man's evil inclinations. Their emotions, which were fostered by their insecurities and primitive proclivities, caused them to conjure these fantastic ominous visions. Chazal teach us that they saw an image of Moses in a coffin. This manifests, that they were regressing into the depths of their imagination. They were so overwhelmed by the mystical, that Chazal felt compelled to point out this image, to demonstrate that their total perception of reality was distorted.

Upon their concluding that Moses had died, the Israelites expressed their desire to make many Gods that would lead them. Their need for a God was simply a need for security to fill the void that Moses' ostensible departure created.

Rashi notes that they desired many Gods. This again reflects the primitive emotion they possessed. They had desires for different Gods, to cater to each of their diverse needs. Their basic insecurities and trepidations were expressed by their desire for different Gods, that would satisfy all their

personal whims and grant them a sense of security.

The insight the Torah affords us in delineating the story of the Golden Calf is extremely relevant. Modern man might think that these are paganistic emotions to which he is not susceptible. However, one need only observe Christianity to recognize the strong hold the emotion for idol worship has, even today. They idolize a physical statute which represents a human being whom they view as God. Objectively, it may seem absurd, but yet its appeal attests to man's primitive desire for the security of the physical.

Chazal appreciated the strength of these emotions. Rabbi Akiva did not want to learn that the "Et" of Et Hashem Elokecha teerah, as including Talmidei Chachamim because of this emotion. The deification of man is idol worship. Rabbi Yishmael argues and states that it includes the Talmid Chacham. The respect the Torah envisions for a scholar, is not for the individual per se, but rather the Chachma which he acquired. He is the embodiment of an individual who utilized his Tzelem Elokim for its true objective.

It would seem that Aaron also underestimated the strength of these emotions. Aaron recognized their clamor to create new Gods as reflective of their primitive emotions. He recognized the futility in trying to demonstrate the error of their calculations. The nation was no longer operating under their intellectual faculty. The primitive behavioral patterns which they were subject to in Egypt, was exerting its influence on the nation. The mixed multitude whom departed Egypt with them, provoked much of their regression. Rashi advises us that the Mixed Multitude used their magic to create the calf. In fact, they initiated this entire service and the Israelites followed. The Mixed Multitude had a greater yearning for the security of the physical as a means to relate to G-d. They therefore utilized the magic they learned in Egypt. Magic is not some supernatural force. It too requires a discipline, where one learns to switch the apparent relationship between cause and effect to which we are accustomed. It therefore is fascinating because it distracts the observer who is amazed since it does not function in accordance with standard causal relationships.

Aaron took an active role in the making of the Golden Calf. However, the role Aaron played was really a result of careful analysis. In reality he did not try to facilitate its construction but rather attempted to hinder its completion. He analyzed the behavior of the Israelites and tried to deal with them based upon their state of mind. He recognized a step by step regression in their rational faculty as they became under the grip of this overwhelming emotion. Aaron's observations are expressed in a Midrash quoted by Rashi. Aaron observed several things. He saw the Israelites kill his nephew

Chur, who tried to rebuke them. He observed and concluded that it would be better if the Israelites transgression was ascribed to him rather than to them. He also concluded that if they built the altar on their own, it would be finished immediately. He therefore undertook its construction hoping to tarry in his work, in order to delay them until Moses arrived. Aaron had recognized that their behavior patterns reflected the powerful sway of their emotions. The first thing the Israelites sought was a substitute leader. This reflected their need for the security of the physical. He requested their ornaments in an effort to appeal to their greed. This was essentially a delay tactic. He assumed that they would be reluctant because he thought that their greed would deter their actions. However, the Torah teaches us "Vayitparku" they readily removed all their jewelry. He thereby recognized and appreciated the overwhelming and dominating effect of these emotions as evidenced by the alacrity with which they responded to his request for their valuables. Thereafter, he observed that they killed Hur. This represented that they were no longer functioning with even a scintilla of rationality. They could not tolerate Hur's rebuke and their murderous actions evidenced their total identification with the calf. He thus observed and concluded that at best, he could only slow their progress. Any attempt by him to have halted the construction of the calf would have been futile, and surely would have caused them to regress to the depth of their primitivism.

A precursory review of his actions would indicate that he was helping them, however a more scrupulous investigation as articulated, reveals his true intentions. He desired that their guilt be ascribed to him in order to assuage the guilty feelings they would experience upon Moses's return. If the Israelites felt absolute culpability because of their actions, their feelings of guilt would render them incapable of doing Teshuva.

God still finds fault with Aaron's action. Exodus chapter 32 verse 23 states "And when Moses saw that the people were broken loose for Aaron had let them loose for a division among their enemies." This criticism is lodged against Aaron for one can not make compromises with idol worship. The emotion is so powerful that if one allows it to be expressed in his behavioral patterns, it will ultimately dominate his actions and destroy him. Moses upon his return took extremely drastic measures. He openly expressed outrage and threw the tablets to the ground and shattered them. He thereby gathered to his side the Levites, who killed three thousand men. Moses' extreme actions were purposeful to demonstrate that one can not compromise nor tolerate with the emotion for idolatry. The basic philosophy of Judaism is antithetical to these type of emotions. ■

Dinosaurs: REAL?

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

(continued from page 1)

You then find how far away these objects are and how fast they are moving away from us. Once you know this you can determine a value of H0 by dividing the velocity by the distance. In practice you do this for many objects and determine H0 from a graph of distance vs velocity.

Once you have a value of H0 you can then calculate the age of the Universe. At the moment different astronomers find different values of H0, though these values generally fall into two camps. One camp finds low values of H0 (around 50), while the other finds high values (around 80). The low value gives a large value for the age of the Universe (around 16 thousand million years), while the larger value of H0 gives a lower value for the age (around 10 thousand million years).

Einstein discovered that time is not a constant, and as matter increases velocity, time slows down. Therefore, there are different time measurements in different portions in our universe. Our measurement of the universe's age will be drastically different than time measured on a distant star that is still speeding at tremendous velocities (2). There is no contradiction to say that the world is both 5761 years old, and 16 billion years old. Time is different when measured from different portions of the universe, as proven by Einstein's law of relativity.

This vast time frame allows plenty of room for dinosaurs, and numerous other eras that we will never fathom.

It is against God's will that man being endowed with intellect, and yet suggest foolishly that God tests man in such a way that these fools say. God desired that man arrive at conclusions based on rational arguments. Therefore, to say that God would try to cause man to err by planting false evidence is complete "kfiras haTorah", a complete denial of God's will that man should use the mind he was given by God. If there is evidence, and certainly conclusive proof such as dinosaur bones, God's will is that man arrive at a rational conclusion based on such proof, accepting with 100% conviction what the evidence indicates.

Scientific knowledge and Torah knowledge both are emanations from the same Creator. The same method of rational analysis should be applied to Talmud as to science. If evidence is used in scientific knowledge, it is to be used in theological and religious knowledge as well. The Navi warned of this dichotomy in haftoras Vayikra.

Please read our article "God Testing Man".

Footnotes

(1) The "Big Bang" is the theory that all matter came into existence in an exploding, split second. At that point, the force of the bang was so enormous, that today, galaxies are still speeding away from the central location point of that explosion on the force of that bang. Scientists state that since stars and galaxies are racing away from each other, if one looks back into time, these galaxies were closer, and the further one goes back, the closer they were, until, we arrive at a point in time where all matter was located at the same exact location - the point of its creation from nothingness. At that first moment, matter was very dense, and contained all the material necessary for the entire universe as it is today. Being that all matter was so dense it required a great force - a "big bang" - to propel it out to the farthest reaches of the cosmos as we find today. Scientists estimate the speed at which these galaxies are hurtling through space based in light colors and shifts.

(2) "Genesis and the Big Bang", by Gerald L. Schroeder, pp 45-55, Bantam Books, 1990 edition.

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Maimonides' 13 Principles

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

Principle IV. G-d's Antiquity

This is that God existed prior to everything and exists after everything. This is proved many times throughout scripture and is attested to by the verse "meuna Elokei kedem"

Principle V. That G-d, blessed be He is worthy that we serve Him, to glorify Him, to make known His greatness, to do His commands.

But not to do this to those that are below Him in the creation. Not to the angels or to the stars or the planets or anything else for they are all created things in nature and in their work there is no choice or judgment except by God Himself. Also it is not fitting to serve them as intermediaries to God. Only to God should you incline your thoughts and your actions. This is the fifth principle and it warns against idolatry and most of the Torah speaks out against this.

Principle VI. Prophecy.

And this is that it is known to man that this is a type of man who are created beings of high of great stature and perfection of the character traits. Who have tremendous knowledge until a different intelligence attaches to them when the intelligence of the person clings to the intelligence of God and it rests upon him. And these are the prophets and this is prophecy and the idea of it. The explanation of it is very long and the intention is not to bring a sign for every fundamental and to explain it all is encompassing of all knowledge (i.e. God's knowledge) but it is mentioned to us in a story form and all of the Torah attests to this.

Principle VII. The Prophetic Capacity of Moses our Teacher, peace be upon him.

And this is that we accept that he was the father of all prophets that were before him and that will be after him. He was on a qualitatively different level than any other and he is chosen from all other people before and after him of any that have any knowledge of God for his was the greatest. And he, peace be upon him, rose to the levels of the angels. He was granted all areas of knowledge and prophecy and his physical attributes did not diminish. His knowledge was different and it is through this difference that it is ascribed to

him that he spoke to God without any intermediary or angel. My intention was to explain this puzzling concept and to open up the sealed areas in the Torah regarding the verses of "face to face" and other similar references but it's length would be tremendous and it would require numerous proofs from the Torah and other sources and encompass many areas. Even to write it the briefest of briefest it would require 100 pages so I will save it and write it in another book. I will now return to the intent of this seventh fundamental that the prophecy of Moshe our teacher, peace be upon him, was different from all others in 4 ways:

1) All other prophets God spoke to them through intermediaries. By Moshe it was without one as it says "face to face I spoke to him".

2) By all other prophets prophecy came to them at night while they were asleep in a dream as it says "in a dream of the night" and other such references or in the day but only after a deep sleep-like state came over them and all their senses were shut off except their thoughts. Not so by Moshe. Moshe would receive a prophecy any time when he would stand between the two figures on the ark as God attests to it "and I will make it known to you there" and "not so my servant Moshe. Face to face I speak to him."

3) When a prophet would receive prophecy he would not be able to stand the intense effect and he would shake and not be able to stand. As it relates regarding Daniel in his encounter with the angel Gabriel. By Moshe he did not suffer from this. As it says "Face to face do I speak to him as a person speaks to his friend". And even though this is the greatest connection to God still he did not suffer.

4) All other prophets could not receive prophecy at their will. Only when God wanted to tell them. Some would go days or months without prophecy. Even if they wanted or needed something sometimes it would be days or months or years or even never that they would be told. Some would have people play music to put them in a good mood such as Elisha. But Moshe peace be upon him received prophecy whenever he wanted as it says "Stand here and listen to what God will tell you what to do" and "God said to Moshe tell Aaron your brother that he can't come to the holy of holies at any time [he wants]". Our rabbis said "Aaron was prohibited to come whenever he wanted but not Moshe."

Principle VIII. That the Torah is from heaven (i.e. God given)

And this is that you believe that all of this Torah that was given by Moshe Rabbeinu, peace be upon him, that it is all from the mouth of God. Meaning that it was received by him entirely from God. And it is not known how Moshe received it except by Moshe himself, peace be upon him, that it came to him. That he was like a stenographer that you read to him and he writes all that is told to him: all the events and dates, the stories, and all the commandments. There is no difference between "And the sons of Cham were Kush, and Mitzraim, and his wife was Mehatbe'el" and "Timnah was his concubine" and "I am Hashem your God" and "Hear Israel [Hashem your God, Hashem is one]" for it was all given by God. And it is all Hashem's perfect Torah, pure, holy, and true. And he who says that these verses or stories, Moshe made them up

he is a denier of our sages and prophets worse than all other types of deniers [form of heretic] for he thinks that what is in the Torah is from man's flawed heart and the questions and statements and the dates and stories are of no value for they are from Moshe Rabbeinu, peace be upon him. And this area is that he believes the Torah is not from heaven. And on this our sages of blessed memory said, "he who believes that the Torah is from heaven except this verse that God did not say it but rather Moshe himself did [he is a denier of all the Torah]." And this that God spoke this and that each and every statement in the Torah is from God and it is full of wisdom (each statement) and benefit to those who understand them. And it's depth of knowledge is greater than all of the land and wider than all the seas and a person can only go in the path of David, the anointed of the God of Jacob who prayed and said "Open my eyes so that I may glance upon the wonders of Your Torah (Psalms 119)." And similarly the explanation of the Torah was also received from God and this is what we use today to know the appearance and structure of the sukka and the lulav and the shofar, tzitzis, tefillin and their usage. And all this God said to Moshe And Moshe told to us. And he is trustworthy in his role as the messenger and the verse that teaches of this fundamental is what is written (Numbers 16) "And Moshe said, with this shall you know that Hashem sent me to do all these actions (wonders) for they are not from my heart."

Principle IX. The Completeness of the Torah

And this is that the Torah is from God and is not lacking. That to it you can't add or take away from. Not from the written Torah or from the oral Torah. As it says "Do not add to it and do not take away from it." (Deut 3). And we already explained what needs to be explained about this fundamental at the beginning of this essay (He had a whole long essay [I'll call it essay for lack of a better word] before he began the fundamental principles.)

Principle X. That G-d knows man's actions and does not remove His eye from them

His knowledge is not like someone who says God abandoned the land but rather like it says (Jer. 32) "Great in council and mighty in deed, Your eyes are cognizant to all the ways of mankind." "And God saw for the evil of man on the land had grown greatly (Gen. 6)." and it says "The disgust of Sodom and Amorrhah is great" and this demonstrates the 10th principle.

Principle XI. That God gives reward to he who does the commandments of the Torah and punishes those that transgress its admonishes and warnings.

And the great reward is the life of the world to come and the punishment is the cutting off of the soul [in the world to come]. And we already said regarding this topic what these are. And the verse that attests to this principle is (Exodus 32) "And now if You would but forgive their sins - and if not erase me from this book that You have written." And God answered him "He who sinned against Me I will erase from my book." This is a proof that God knows the sinner and the fulfiller in order

to give out reward to one and punishment to the other.

Principle XII. The Era of the Messiah

And this is to believe that in truth that he will come and that you should be waiting for him even though he delays in coming. And you should not come up with times for him to come, or to look in the verses of Tanach to see when he should come. The sages say: The wisdom of those who calculate times [of his coming] is small and that you should believe that he will be greater and more honored than all of the kings of Israel since the beginning of time as it is prophesied by all the prophets from Moshe Rabbeinu, peace be upon him, until Malachi, peace be upon him. And he who doubts or diminishes the greatness of the moshiach is a denier in all the Torah for it testifies to the moshiach explicitly in the portion of Bilam and the portion of "You are gathered (towards the end of Deut)". And part of this principle that there is no king of Israel except from the house of David and from the seed of Solomon alone. And anyone who disputes this regarding this family is a denier of the name of God and in all the words of the prophets.

Principle XIII. Resurrection of the dead

And we have already explained it And when the person will believe all these fundamentals and his faith will be clear in them he enters into the nation of Israel and it is a mitzva to love him and to have mercy on him and to act to him according to all the ways in which God commanded us regarding loving your neighbor. And even if he did all of the sins in the Torah due to desire of the emotions, and from his physical aspect's conquering him, he will be punished for his sins, but he still has a share in the world to come and is among the sinners of Israel. However if he rejects one of these fundamentals he leaves the nation and is a denier of the fundamentals and is called a heretic, a denier, etc and it is a mitzva to hate him and to destroy him (financially - not physically to kill him. And not to steal either.) And regarding him it is said (Psalms 139) "Behold will not the enemy of God be my enemy?" "I have expounded at length many things and I have left the topic of my composition but I have done it for I saw a need in the dealings of the fundamentals of faith and I have gathered together many different and spread out areas Therefore know them and succeed in understanding them and review them many times and know them very well [i.e. not just memorization but to understand fully and to be able to support them and know their proofs] Therefore if after one or ten times you think you've understood them God knows that you are just involved in falsehood. Therefore don't read them quickly because I have not written them as it popped into my head. But rather after a deep and careful study of the whole area and after I have seen many clear and true ideas and I have seen what is proper to believe of them [as the fundamentals] and I have brought proofs and logical demonstrations for each and every one of them, may it be God's will that I have been correct that he helped me through this area on the good path and now I will return to my explanation of this chapter [in the talmud] □

The Sabbath

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Shabbos is a means by which the Jew reiterates the truth of creation, and thus, the proclamation of the existence of the Creator. Mimicking what God did - resting on the 7th day independent from other peoples - we announce God's presence to the other nations through our cessation from labor. As they ask us why we rest, and we respond and explain the historical truth of creation, and God, whereby we bring the concept of the Creator's Existence to prominence in the world. (Maimonides)

But more essential for the observer, Shabbos is a day where one is involved in pursuits of wisdom and not labor for his material needs. The Licha Dodi which we sing each Friday evening in temple states, "sof maaseh, b'machshava techila", "(Shabbos is) last in creation, first in His thought". Meaning, although Shabbos came last in creation, nonetheless, its order in creation does not reflect on its level of importance. What does this mean? It means that the physical world was created for a reason - Shabbos. More clearly, the physical world's purpose is only to serve as a means in the pursuit of wisdom. As King Solomon stated in his commencement of Ecclesiastes (Koheles), "all is futile" referring to the created world. The rabbis ask, "how can Solomon say that the world is bad when God said, 'and behold, it is very good'?" What King Solomon meant to teach is that one who seeks the physical world as an end, is missing the purpose of the world. It was only created so that mankind have the ability to procure his material needs to the point that he facilitates a life of wisdom. Without a home and food, one cannot involve his mind in learning. He must feel that his needs are met prior to engaging in loftier pursuits. Shabbos therefore is the preferred day, as its prohibition from labor directs man to study undiluted with material concerns.

Interesting, is that although we focus on the stupendous marvels of creation from nothingness - creation ex nihilo - Licha Dodi teaches us that our real focus must shift from the 6 days of creation to Shabbos. The physical world in all its splendor, and against popular opinion, was not created for itself. It was created only to enable the species of man to discover his Creator and be involved in this discovery process during his short stay on Earth. This may be a brief statement, but the concept to me is quite intriguing, that

as God created the elements of each day, they were truly unrealized in their purpose until man and Shabbos came into the picture. Only then did the physical world have purpose in its creation.

Another important point is that Shabbos is not merely the abstention of God's creative process. We read in the Torah something which seems redundant, "vayachulu...., vayishbose..." , "God completed His work.....God rested". I wonder, doesn't the first statement that "God completed His work" teach that He rested? If so, for what reason do we need the additional phrase "God rested?" I believe this is to teach that God's Shabbos was not merely an abstention from creation. That is passive. God wanted to teach that His Shabbos is actually a positive entity, it is an entity of withdrawal from the physical, and not just the mere cessation from labor. Shabbos has a positive, real quality and status as a day whose definition is not just a break from work, but primarily "a day dedicated to the involvement in the metaphysical". A day devoted to study and awe of the Creator. But this is only derived by the additional word of "vayishbose".

Our inactivity on Shabbos also demonstrates our true belief in the ability for God to sustain us, as we do not work according to His word, and do not feel we will suffer loss of business thereby. This explains why we do not make request for material needs in the prayers on Shabbos. This also ties in with the concept that the manna in the desert did not fall on Shabbos, to teach the Jews that they should have complete confidence in God's word that he would sustain them. During the 6 weekdays, the manna fell each day just enough for that day. Anything left for the following day demonstrated a disbelief by that person that it would again fall tomorrow as God promised. Leftover manna would become wormy and rot for the purpose of forcing the Jews to comply with a belief in God's word.. On Friday, the Jews were commanded to gather enough for that day, and that they may leave over for the Shabbos. When they did so, they found when they measured the manna in their homes, it miraculously doubled in size, to sustain them on Shabbos as well (Exod. 16:5 -Rashi). This miracle was enacted by God to engender the Jews' faith in His word, that God would and will sustain them. Similarly, our abstinence from labor on Shabbos demonstrates this concept today.

We are even commanded by the prophet Isaiah (58:13-14) not to talk about our business on Shabbos.

Meaning, our involvement in concern for our material needs should not exist on Shabbos. One who truly abandons discussions concerning work, and involves himself in Torah study and appreciation of the creation, is one who lives in line with God's plan that man have true faith in God's word. (See Rashi on Talmud Sotah, page 48a, Rashi heading: "Men of faith" - "Anshei emunah"). Isaiah states that the one who doesn't just refrain his speech and actions from business but rather idealizes Shabbos as a true enjoyment (involvement in wisdom) this person will be given all his physical needs, "If you abstain from going in your way, seeking your (physical) desires and don't talk about these matters, then will you rejoice in God and He will ride you on the high places of the Earth and feed you the inheritance of Jacob". It is counter intuitive, but true, that he who follows God's laws of abandoning business matters on Shabbos will actually have his physical needs addressed by God.

Shabbos then has always been elevated in distinction as, 1) a demonstration to the world that there is a Creator, 2) a representation to the Jews of what God desires our preferred involvement to be in wisdom, and 3) an affirmation in our complete trust in God's ability to provide. □

Anointing Oil

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Question: "What do the five elements of the Holy Anointing Oil represent?" (Exodus 30:22-33) Bear in mind that this unique mixture was used in the anointing of not only the Tabernacle, but All of the furniture of the Tabernacle, All of the utensils of the Tabernacle, Aaron and his sons, and the Kings. Without this unique anointing being applied, all mentioned were unqualified to be of use in the service of God.

Mesora: There are a few main questions we can ask regarding the nature of the anointing oil (Exod. 30:22-33);

1) What is the necessity to anoint the Tabernacle and the vessels? What is lacking if they are not anointed? The structure of these objects do not change subsequent to the anointing. They can function equally well without the oil. Why then is there a need?

2) The passage (Exod. 30:22-23) reads, "God said to Moses saying: 'YOU take (such and such spices...)'".

What is the nature of the oil that Moses was instructed himself to create this oil? Why is such urgency placed on Moshe here, but not in other cases? Additionally, the medrash says that the oil which Moshe made had numerous miracles performed throughout. It actually endured more usage than its volume should have realized. Again this pays homage to Moshe's exclusive involvement, but what is the idea behind these miracles?

3) Why does the passage need to mention "to minister to Me (God)"? Who else would Aaron and his sons minister before in God's Temple?

I would commence by underlining a few points: Oil is a mixture, it must be made with chochma. The length at which the passages discuss the ingredients points to this. Moshe was instructed to make the oil to the exclusion of all others. What I would ask is what significance does Moshe lend to this oil?

We know that Moshe's distinction was his unique level of prophecy and wisdom, never to be approached by any man before or after his time. Moshe is synonymous with high intelligence. There is some relationship be placed between the oil and intelligence.

I suggest that the emphasis on wisdom here is to indicate that vessels do not possess inherent value, despite their precise design. Without proper understanding of the purpose and meaning of the Temple's vessels, there is a danger that the people would project importance onto the physical structure themselves, divorced from their goals. Even after designing the Tabernacle's vessels, proper intent of their usage must exist, otherwise there is a danger that one might feel that there is something unique to these objects in themselves. To counter the notion that physical objects have inherent meaning, and additionally, to teach that all matters pertaining to the Temple and God must be approached with the utmost wisdom, only Moshe was allowed to make this oil. Displaying thereby that accurate designation of the purpose of the Temple's vessels can only be made by one with the highest level of knowledge, Moshe. Moshe represents true understanding par excellence, and by association, Moshe lent correct understanding that inauguration of the vessels was not simple, but required to be approached with wisdom. These vessels have no inherent value. However, if designated by Moshe - a wise man, and together with oil - made

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Anointing Oil

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

(continued from page 4)

with care and understanding, then man's relationship to the vessels will be guided by the overtone of Moshe's reputation. Man would understand that these vessels aren't simply entitled to be in the Temple without an understanding of their purpose.

The reason such concern for understanding is placed on Temple related phenomena, is that this is the area in which man's religious emotions can run wild and lead him astray, even though it is under the Torah's guideline. The Talmud states that the evil inclination came out as a fiery lion from the Temple's Holy of Holies. This metaphor teaches that this area is where the most danger - the evil inclination - can exist. The true approach to understanding the Temple's vessels is to realize that through them we come to understand God. Since the Temple is a vehicle by which we approach God(1) by definition, we must stress that wisdom be ever present in all areas, even the initial inauguration.

Postscript:

Perhaps also the oil's duration throughout the generations attests to the unique level of designation into which Moshe imbued this oil.

This theory also explains why the Rambam teaches in the Mishne Torah that during the Simcha Bais HaShoavah, only the chachomim - the wise men - were allowed to dance. This is to teach that they are the ones who have the accurate understanding of Torah, and therefore their gladness is the only true gladness which results in dance. To allow others to dance allows others to believe that they have arrived at true Torah knowledge. It also falsely teaches that happiness may be arrived at without perfection in Torah study. Even during the Rambam's time, men thought to be "the wise men of Israel" (2) had corrupt ideas.

When King Solomon brought the ark into the Temple, he too initially invited the elders and princes - those who portray intelligence. (Haftoras Pekuday; Malachim 1, Chap. 8) □

Marriage Equals Chessed

RIVKA OLENICK

The Sifre says: "Chesed, kindness, begins with those who are closest to us and then to encompass our neighbors and then finally the rest of the world. Jewish law requires that a man be as concerned about his wife as he would be about himself. However, it is only when each is concerned for the other, will happiness fill

their lives."

It appears that the most essential component for building a marriage and happy home, directed by Torah is kindness, chesed. The foundation of chesed is built by husband and wife, and ideally should be the primary focus of their marriage. Marriage is the beginning of chesed, because each one is obligated to shift the focus from the self to their spouse. Our natural inclination is to live by and for ourselves. A person who pursues true chesed, is sincerely concerned for their spouse's well being.

For many people this does not come easy and requires so much patience and thought. Once a person satisfies his or her emotion of "what will I get out of doing this kindness" hopefully he or she will gradually become more involved in chesed based on emotional identification with the other person. Often we forget and/or ignore the concept of "created being", selem elokim, which is the identification. This "other" person is also created in the image of God.

The next level of doing chesed is to be involved in it more objectively, meaning that the emotions do not have to be satisfied in order to do the chesed. The chesed is done automatically because this is God's will. This is a high level. However, the more each one focuses on the fact that marriage itself is perfection as God's will is perfection, the chesed can become automatic. Understanding that to live harmoniously, in service of God, according to law requires the appropriate philosophy of Torah that encourages chesed. A philosophy that follows a middle path, as Maimonides says.

The appropriate philosophy I am referring to is certainly not a societal one, although we are so influenced by society. Philosophy within the Torah "way of life" is very important for couples to discuss, before and during marriage. This "way of life" understands man's nature and this "way of life" becomes parallel to that nature. It is that man's nature needs to attach itself to a "way of life" that provides "true happiness." This happiness is not the pursuit of pleasure and fantasy, as most of the world thinks. True happiness occurs when one is involved in search of Torah knowledge, which is internalized so that growth occurs. Chesed permeates this "true happiness" that each partner contributes to.

If a woman could clearly see that she and her husband are the transmitters of Torah, she might be less preoccupied with what her material gain in marriage might be. She would be less demanding of her husband to make more money and more appreciative of his need for "true happiness." This is chesed. At the same time, if a man sees clearly, that his wife provides a nurturing and calm home for

fostering Torah, he might be more appreciative of her. He would be much more concerned about her needs. This too, is chesed.

Ideally, chesed should permeate all areas of life for husband and wife. In Proverbs, a verse refers to a Torah of chesed. Is there a Torah not of chesed, the Talmud asks. The Talmud answers that one who learns Torah to help others and one who allows another to learn so that others may benefit are both Torah of chesed. One who is involved in learning purely for his own growth does not represent Torah of chesed. In Judaism, for male and female spiritual growth and fulfillment lie in "service." The obligation to pursue "chesed" is incumbent upon man and woman, as the essential part of their life. No one, male or female may use the Torah for their own selfish purposes. The involvement of "chesed" in marriage is perfection - as marriage itself is perfection.

Are Mitzvos Rational

RABBI REUVEN MANN

Once again there is unnecessary confusion over a very basic issue ie. Are Mitzvos Rational?

"The Torah of Hashem is perfect restoring the soul". Every mitzvah is designed solely for our benefit and leads us to our true perfection. Whoever maintains that a mitzvah has "no reason" (even Chukim) denies Torah which states "For it is not a vain thing from you" To which Chazal add "and if it is vain (ie. you find it empty) it is "from you" meaning the defect lies in your lack of understanding.

All of the great Torah sages (Ramban, Ramban, Even Ezra, Saadia to name just a few) state this openly in their works---See especially Ramban on Kan Tzipor Devarim 22:6; Ramban: Moreh Nevuchim Part 3 ch.26 and I quote, "All of us, the common people as well as the scholars, believe that there is a reason for every precept, although there are commandments, the reason of which is unknown to us, and in which the ways of G-d's Wisdom are incomprehensible". Finally see Even Ezra on Shemos 20:1 and I quote, "...and the second kind are 'concealed' mitzvos, it is not explained why they are commanded, and Chollila chollila to say that any of those mitzvos are contrary to human reason, rather we are obliged to keep everything which Hashem commanded whether the secret is revealed or not....") "Hashem your G-d is True". Hence, everything which comes from G-d is true.

In most cases we can, with diligent study, discover the purpose and benefit of mitzvos and when we do so we must

incorporate the underlying values into our personality for this is how we improve our soul and get closer to Hashem. However, all mitzvos are perfectly rational even if our intelligence is too deficient to discover the hidden wisdom of any specific one. Hence it is rational to keep a mitzvah which on it's surface makes absolutely no sense to you. For since you know that it comes from G-d you know that it is rational and beneficial even though you cannot demonstrate how. This is similar to one who follows the advice of a great physician even though he does not understand how the medicine works. We say that such a person is acting rationally and one who (ignorant of medicine) refuses to take the advice of a great doctor because it makes no sense to him is a fool.

Such is the case with Torah. We know that it is true because we know that it comes from G-d who revealed Himself on Sinai to the entire nation in a manner which would leave no doubt to those present and to all future generations that the Torah and it's authentic exposition by Moshe and the subsequent Masters of The Oral Law is from G-d. Moshe commands the people to remember the events they witnessed at Sinai (as the cornerstone of commitment) in Devarim. He never calls on them to have faith that the Torah is from G-d, but only to take heed of what they saw with their own eyes.

What could be clearer than Devarim 4:35 "You have been shown to KNOW that Hashem, He is the G-d, there is none beside Him". See also Ramban: Yad: Yesodei Hatorah Ch. 8, where he explains that the purpose of Sinai was to remove any possible doubt as to the Divine source of Torah. Hence we do not have faith, but know that the Torah comes from G-d and is therefore perfect and rational in every respect. As such we keep all the mitzvos and do not subject them to the scrutiny of our deficient intellects to determine whether they make sense or not. That would be sheer arrogance and stupidity. Rather we devote all our energies to uncovering the wisdom of Torah with a sense of humility and with the guidance of our authentic sages and teachers. As the genuine scientist knows that everything in nature has a cause and explanation so too the genuine Ben Torah knows that everything in Torah has a perfect explanation and he studies diligently and endlessly and prays to G-d: "Open thou my eyes that I may understand the wonders of your Torah". (Psalms 119:18)

As we approach the holiday of the Revelation may we merit to incorporate it's lessons and return to Hashem and His Torah and expound it's wisdom in a manner which will cause all who hear it to proclaim, "what a wise and discerning nation is this great People". □

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