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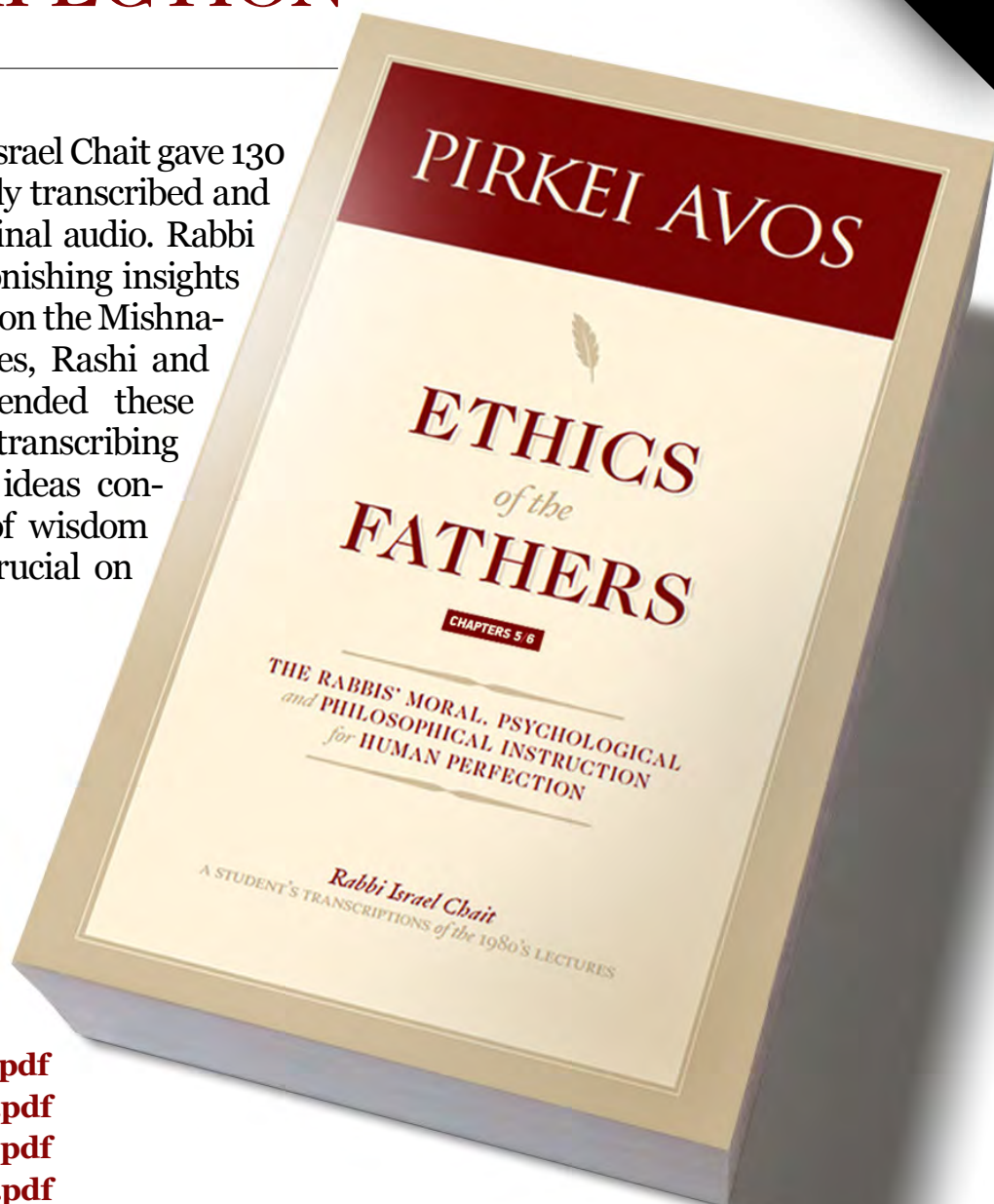
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RELIGION

How All Religions are False

PSYCHOLOGY

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim



We know how Judaism originated: 3,331 years ago, millions of Jacob's descendants witnessed a voice speaking from "inside fire" upon Mount Sinai. In Deuteronomy, numerous times Moses reminds the people that they witnessed this "voice from the fire." Had they not witnessed it, they would never have transmitted such a claim, Judaism would never have commenced, and we certainly would not possess it today. Not only has Judaism reached us, but its undeniable truth was accepted and incorporated by the two other major religions. Therefore, we appreciate why God orchestrated this is specific miracle of a voice emanating from fire: every biological life form perishes inside fire. Fire is the one element that contradicts life, unless that life is not part of creation. Thereby, God proved His existence at Mount Sinai and His will for mankind, not just the Jews. There could be no other explanation for a voice emanating from fire, unless that voice's origin is the Creator of fire and the entire universe.

So undeniable was this event and unparalleled throughout history, the rabbis explained Revelation at Sinai as the cause of anti-Semitism: "From Sinai came forth sina (anti-Semitism)." The undeniable truth of Judaism—God's singular communication of a religion to mankind—exposes the fallacy of all other religions, all of which

lack any validation for their claims of divine origin. Christianity's very claim that God is Jesus without supporting how this occurred, or that there exists an unwitnessed "trinity" is an admission of a faith system, not one based on evidence like Judaism. There's no validity that Christianity is God's will. In fact, it contradicts itself and reality.

No other religion claims mass witnesses of a miraculous event; therefore, all religions are baseless. Their anti-Semitism is a sibling rivalry of sorts; they find it unacceptable that God did not choose them. But what they should do is examine God's Bible. In it they will find that the Jew is not superior to any other people and that God's directive to the Jew is to share this Bible with the world: "Observe the laws faithfully, for that will be proof of your wisdom and discernment to other peoples, who, upon hearing of all these laws will say, 'Surely, that great nation is a wise and discerning people'" (Deut. 4:6).

The message that the Bible is intended for all mankind is repeated throughout Prophets. This will help others abandon their anti-Semitism which is based on their false belief that "chosen" equates with "better" and that the Bible is only for the Jews. That's false. The Jew is not superior, as every human is traced back to Adam and Eve; every human being shares the identi-

cal design and benefits equally from the same religion. There's only one mankind; there can be only one religion. The Jew was chosen to spread monotheism so all mankind can benefit equally and abandon false religions. And as the Jews—Abraham's descendants—were the only monotheists in the world, God selected them to be His emissaries to mankind, as no other people would follow and disseminate the monotheistic Bible system. Human equality is seen clearly as God favored descendants of converts, namely Kings David and Solomon, and His future messiah too descends from Ruth.

Why do the other religions prefer to satisfy their infantile emotions of sibling rivalry and spew anti-Semitism instead of intellectually exploring what the Bible says? The answer is in the question: man typically follows his emotions over his intelligence, "For man's inclination is evil from youth" (Gen. 8:21). But if the other religions would, for a moment, suspend their infantile rivalry and read what the Jew shares in God's Bible, they would realize their error, they would embrace the Bible and they would abandon their religions due to their realization of their falsehoods, "For our forefathers bequeathed lies to us" (Jer. 16:19). For God made this Biblical religion of Judaism reasonable and totally pleasing in all its

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ways: "Its ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its paths are peace" (Prov. 3:17).

Parshas Shoftim (Deut. 18:9-13) prohibits child sacrifice fortune tellers, horoscopists, consulting the dead, witchcraft, omens and animal whisperers. God then tells us that these sins earned these idolatrous nations to be driven out. This instinctual approach to life is precisely how all other religions originated. But exactly what were the formative steps of these idolatrous religions?

Torah is not only identifying prohibited idolatrous beliefs, but in doing so it exposes the human psyche. False beliefs are not created from thin air, but from man's inner word, his instincts. By analyzing these idolatrous prohibitions, each and every one of us learns about of our emotions. For every human being is made from the same mold. Those instincts which drove ancient idolaters to their beliefs are contained in every one of our psyches today. That is why Torah is eternal: just as man does not change, Torah does not change. We are no different than those ancient idolaters; we all share the same bodily organs and the identical psychological faculties.

Religions are Imaginary

At the root of all idolatrous practices lies human insecurity. Our greatest drive is self-preservation. But as the future is unknown to everyone, people are concerned: "What will happen to me next year, next month, or tomorrow?" Health, success, and social approval concern every normal person. The intelligent individual uses a proper plan to address these concerns. The intelligent Jew adds prayer to his plan. He finds a security in God's biblical promises to provide for those who follow Him. This gives such a person a peaceful and happy life. And even if he suffers troubles, he knows that God is aware of all and can save him at the moment he improves himself and deserves salvation. But those ignorant of God's Bible—all other religions—do not experience the security that the Bible offers. Therefore, they resort to imagination.

Their first imagination is that there exists supernatural powers, or a deity other than God. They typically imagine this to be some human form clearly expressed in Jesus and Jews who deify rebbes. They are stuck in an infantile mode where their parents were their safety net. As adults, realizing their parents are no more powerful than they are, their insecurities compel



them to project this parental image onto reality, imagining some human type of deity or power. This explains why Egypt's idols partook of human forms and why Christianity created Jesus. Once they have their imagined deity, they project onto it a human reciprocal relationship: "If I benefit my god, it will benefit me." This is the only relationship they know and the only relationship they can imagine.

How did idolaters wish to benefit their deity? They imagined their deity to have human qualities—again, because they cannot imagine anything outside of their experience—explaining why they offered sweet foods and sacrifices. They imagined their deities somehow partook of food. As Maimonides teaches, in contrast, the Bible prohibits honey in sacrifice and commands that we thoroughly salt them. The Jew understands that the true God is nonphysical and does not eat.

The idolater then hopes his god responds favorably to his sacrifice by sharing the future. This would calm his fears and insecurities concerning his life by avoiding mishap and targeting success. Due to this insecurity, idolaters created practices which they believed foretold coming events for which they could prepare. Some thought they could read the stars. Others believed there exists good times and bad times to act, or they viewed accidental

occurrences and objects as forecasts, like black cats, horseshoes, penny fountains, rabbit feet, broken mirrors and walking under ladders. Jewish versions include red bendels, evil eyes, consulting the dead by placing notes in rabbis' graves and conducting seances. Other versions are "Everything is meant to be" or "Everyone you meet is for a reason" when in fact, as Maimonides, Sforno and the talmudic rabbis taught, only perfected people under God's providence benefit from divine guidance in their lives: there is not a reason for everything unless you are an Abraham or a Moses. It's a very uncomfortable idea that a person is left to chance, and I'm sure many will reject this due to its deeply disturbing nature. But one must be honest and not follow wishes and insecurity, but the Bible and the great rabbis.

One of the strangest practices was child sacrifice; some cultures burned their children. What would drive a person to perform such a painful act? As man's greatest concern is life preservation, his emotions fabricate the fantasy that his god will only benefit him if he suffers the ultimate sacrifice: a life for a life. The idolater feels that he's not "doing enough" for his god unless he suffers the ultimate pain. Christianity also promotes subjugation to pain and loss of money as a source of Jesus' love and protection. And Jesus'

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suffering for mankind's sins embodies this value as their trademark. As religious rites, Muslim cultures today cut themselves until they gush blood. The imagined benefit drives the idolater to perpetrate the most horrific acts including martyrdom.

Dependency

In Deut. 18:9-13 Moses already identified the prohibition of child sacrifice fortune tellers, horoscopists, consulting the dead, witchcraft, omens and animal whisperers. Why then in 18:14 does Moses repeat that the nations the Jews displace listen to "horoscopists and fortunetellers?" He does so as he shares the second fundamental of idolatrous practice: the need for man. "They listen to horoscopists and fortunetellers" is Moses' critique that the nations are infantile and want to "listen to others." They have not abandoned their infantile mindset of dependency on the parent. As Rabbi Israel Chait taught, Torah says, "Cease [to glorify] man, who has only a breath in his nostrils! For what does he merit esteem?" (Isaiah 2:22). Chazal change the word "bameh" (for what) to "bammah" (altar). Chazal mean that man views others in an idolatrous light, like a bammah, upon whom he can depend, like sacrificing to gods on altars. This explains why Moses repeated these specific practices. As these two personalities are sought for their forecasts, they express the rawest form of the infantile mindset where man seeks man.

The craftsman in wood measures with a line and marks out a shape with a stylus; he forms it with scraping tools, marking it

out with a compass. He gives it a human form, the beauty of a man, to dwell in a shrine (Isaiah 44:13).

Rabbi Chait commented:

"Isaiah says what lies behind idolatry is the form of a man. This is an attempt to anthropomorphize God. Judaism is diametrically opposed to this. While Judaism makes concessions to man due to his low level, these concessions are frustrated and do not allow man to satisfy that anthropomorphic emotion" (Pirkei Avos; Chapters 5/6 p. 105).

We now understand that all other religions are expressions of human fear and fantasy and harbor human dependency; that's how they originated. They are imaginations. God taught His biblical prohibitions to educate us on our psyches as He wants man to reflect on his emotions, to censor his choices and beliefs and choose reality over emotion. Therefore, He shared His absolute knowledge with mankind.

Torah is a blissful life as it satisfies man's search for truth and provides unmatched enjoyment when discovering wisdom. But instincts and false beliefs are hurdles which we must identify and reject through our knowledge. Following truth and reality, we will detect when our own fantasies emerge, and we will reject them as false. We will avoid fantasy which does not exist and certainly can't make one happy, and we will comply with God's world which operates based on wisdom. We will experience little

conflict, we will enjoy wisdom as our life's goal, and we will find all mitzvahs pleasant and offering insight into the Creator's brilliance. Rabbi Israel Chait said, "The whole Torah is a careful study of man's nature and what is appropriate for that nature." The lesson is to be aware of our internal makeup and how it benefits and harms us. Our intellect is stronger than our emotions, and when we recognize a truth, no emotion can change that reality:

No human being can contradict what his knowledge tells him is true ... The soul is subordinated only through knowledge, and without knowledge, the soul is not moved. Therefore, while it is true that it is not logical [for a drunkard] to continue drinking, the soul is uninvolved in that decision. He has no knowledge of why drinking is detrimental [he is only acting on the fear of the effects: losing his job, his wife and kids, etc.]. The soul is moved only by knowledge, and without it, the soul is uninvolved. Therefore, the emotions can overpower this person as the soul is uninvolved. But the moment that one attains true knowledge of the harms of drinking, nothing can budge a person from that knowledge. (Rabbi Israel Chait, Pirkei Avos; Chapters 5/6 p. 425 and p. 428).

The more we learn about ourselves and about Torah, the more we make proper choices and avoid misfortune when our improper actions conflict with reality and with God. This was the reason Pirkei Avos was written. ■



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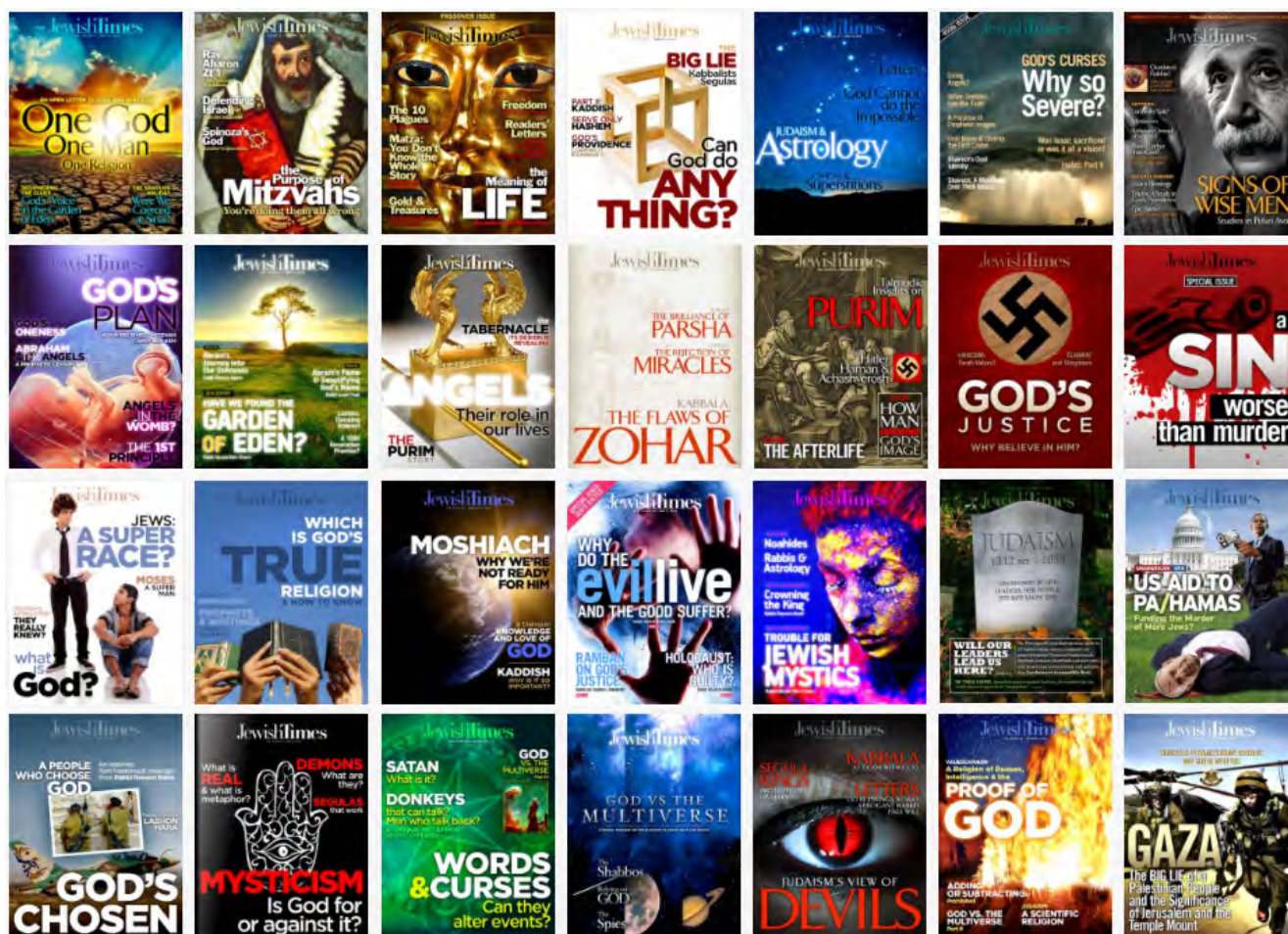
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Rabbis Failing



“Let no one be found among you who consigns his son or daughter to the fire, or who is an augur, a soothsayer, a diviner, a sorcerer, one who casts spells, or one who consults ghosts or familiar spirits, or one who inquires of the dead.”
(Deut. 18:10,11)

Rabbis remaining silent harm the community. Placing notes in graves violates this command. We can't communicate with the dead, and we are prohibited from attempting. We don't ask even angels for help. Instead, instruct your members to use the Torah's approach for seeking help: **Do teshuva and pray to God alone.**

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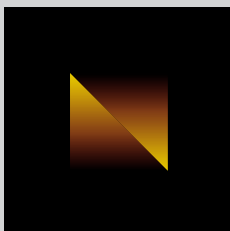
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PARSHA

Be Just to You

Rabbi Reuven Mann

This week's parsha, Shoftim, takes up the system of law enforcement that governs the Jewish nation. All the institutions concerned with crime and punishment as well as civil litigation aim, exclusively, to facilitate justice. This is not easy to achieve, nor should it be taken for granted.

The Torah adjures, "Justice, justice shalt thou pursue." Instead of pursue, it might have said dispense. However, the Torah recognizes that many obstacles stand in the way of righteous judgment and thereby acknowledges that it is something we must continuously strive for until it is attained.

The greatest enemy of Mishpat (justice) is the element of human selfishness and dread of losing. One is naturally convinced that he is always right and that the party that opposes him is plain wrong or mistaken. He can take the same set of facts used by his opponent and spin them until they support his own conclusions. The objective realities of the case are rarely dispositive, as nothing can stand in the way of man's capacity to rationalize.

To attain truthful verdicts, the best judges are required. They must be learned in all aspects of the law. They must also be intellectually sharp, analytical, and capable of deducing one thing from another. In addition, they must have an abiding aversion to falsehood and an uncanny capacity to sniff it out from its manifold hiding places.

These intellectual virtues are essential but not sufficient. The righteous judge must be absolutely "neutral" and emotionally dispassionate about the cases' outcome. He cannot be favorably or unfavorably disposed to either of the litigants before him. Therefore, even the most minute element of bribery is



disqualifying.

The Rabbis were extremely fastidious in this matter. One Rabbi recused himself from a case where he had no formal connection to the disputants. He explained that when passing through a certain town one of the parties before him had performed an ordinary gesture of respect for him and he could no longer regard himself as a disinterested arbiter of the case.

One would think that displaying common respect is too trivial to constitute emotional "bribery." However, the Rabbi sensed a certain liking of the one who had honored him and feared that this might predispose him in his favor. Such is the frailty of man, who hungrily absorbs any compliments that come his way and views with favor the one who conveys them.

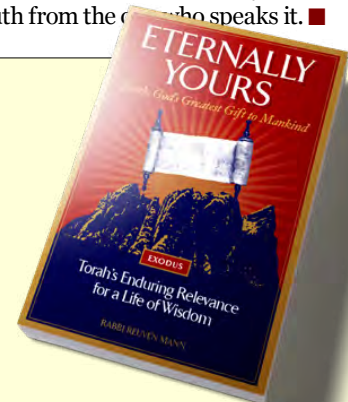
The Torah cares greatly about establishing a "just" society, because it is essential to convey the lesson to all the earth that Hashem created the world and fashioned man "in His image." The rule of the jungle is that "might makes right," but the key question is whether man is just a sophisticated animal or a unique being possessed of a divine soul. That can only be answered by his behavior. When he oppresses the weak and downtrodden, he disgraces the name of G-d. But when all are treated according to the law, and even the powerful surrender to the righteous claims of the most inconse-

quential citizen, then Hashem's name is magnified in the world.

Justice is not only a concept that is restricted to judicial proceedings. It should be the governing principle of all human relationships. One who takes, but fails to ever return, is not a tzaddik. One who withholds what is due to another, even if it be just a kind word or a thank you, violates the requirements of justice. The surest guarantee of success and fulfillment in all our relationships, even the most intimate ones, is scrupulous fairness.

The cardinal rule of justice is to give to everything its due. Thus, one must be equitable to himself as well. Most illness and suffering stem from a lack of caring for the self. One's self has legitimate claims to proper nutrition, exercise, emotional wellbeing, and spiritual sustenance. People should govern their behaviors in a planned, intelligent, and disciplined manner.

The Torah proclaims, "Justice, justice shalt thou pursue." Why is the term "justice" repeated? Perhaps it is because we must engage in two pursuits of justice, one with regard to our responsibilities toward others, and the second with regard to how we treat ourselves. A great philosopher said, "To thine own self be true". May we accept the truth from the one who speaks it. ■



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