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# Jewish Times

VOL. XVIII NO. 20 — AUG. 14, 2020

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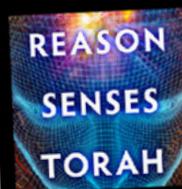
MISSION  
**God's Revelation at Mt. Sinai: One Plan for Mankind**  
The greatest event ever witnessed forces one conclusion

MESORA  
Summer 2020

**EVIDENCE EXISTS** for only one event of God revealing His religion to man. All other religions claim divine origin, yet provide no validation. This explains their requirement of "blind faith," which is absent in Judaism: a religion offering proof. 3332 years ago upon Mt. Sinai, God gave us His Bible: the only time God communicated a religion to man. Masses witnessed this, which is the only validation of any historical claim, and why the major religions accept the Bible. Mesora's mission is to share God's Biblical religion with all who seek it. As every human descends from that first couple; all humans are equals. Jews boasting "Jewish Superiority" and those who discriminate against any race violate the Bible and reason. Nearing a quarter century, Mesora helps others realize God's will for us all, sharing the beauty of Biblical wisdom. Search our 1000s of original essays, publications and audio, and write us with your questions. God determined the Jew's role is to share Torah's history, wisdom, laws and moral code with all mankind. As God created all mankind, He loves each person equally. As science has defined laws, God's will for man also has defined laws and principles, and they delight the soul. The greatest minds spent their lives studying God through Torah and science, as they found nothing that compared to its enjoyment. Let us humble ourselves before Moses, Kings David and Solomon, Maimonides, Aristotle, Newton and Einstein who taught that a life of wisdom is the most fulfilling life. We too can partake of this pleasurable existence.

THOUGHT  
**FUNDAMENTALS**

"WHAT IS UNDETECTED BY THE SENSES, REASON OR TORAH, MUST NOT BE ACCEPTED AS TRUTH." MAIMONIDES



FEATURED  
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Mankind descends from Adam. Black and white twins unveil the lie of racism. Bible denounces it: Moses' wife was black, our kings married Egyptians and Messiah descends from a Moabite. "Better is the day of A-tube", Erci, 7:9. Birth doesn't define us, but how

# JewishTimes

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| Authors may not have been advised of reprints of their essays |

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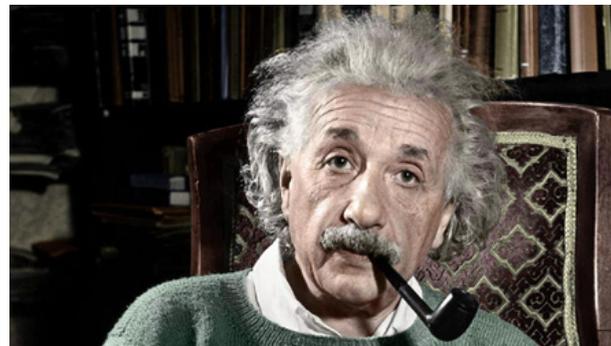
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**ALBERT EINSTEIN**

## LETTERS

**RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM**

### Is God Cruel?

**READER:** This is the only website that I know of that responds to questions, so here goes... I've studied Judaism for almost eighteen years now, but I never really knew the full story of the scape-goat ritual. I knew it was pushed off a cliff, but I didn't know (until reading mishnah) that it might not actually be killed instantly, despite being told that by rabbis before. The whole thing is remarkably cruel. It seems so hypocritical, that a book that demands compassion to animals in nearly every instance (save this one) can command such a thing. At the moment, it's seriously making me consider leaving Judaism, at least in any of its "orthodox" incarnations. I used to scoff at and condemn inhumane animal sacrifices of peoples of today, such as the Dinka of Africa who, after a funeral, torture a baby goat to death so that the sorrow of the family will pass to it. Looks like there's ZERO difference now.

As long as the "true" God commands it, its okay, and thus the Torah really isn't some divinely inspired thing, and certainly not the "rational" thing Mesora.org purports that it is; just some other arbitrary collection of primitive superstitions, with the odd quirk that it claims to be better than all the others. The only thing I can possibly think to save the Torah's sacrosanct standing in my mind right now is if somehow this custom is just that: a minhag that got passed down as law, instead of tradition, since the written Torah only says that it is to be set free into the wilderness (the "mount" of Azazel notwithstanding, since one could just as easily shoo it down or leave it there). So, what do you think? Would you say this is at least one instance of animal cruelty that Torah not only permits, but commands, or am I missing something?

*Anonymous*

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**RABBI:** Rash equations between the Dinka and Torah, based on a single comparison, are unreasonable.

The rabbis teach that earth exists only for man (Rashi, Avos 2:8); animals have no inherent purpose other than servicing man. This does not mean man can abuse animals or pain them. Torah forbids paining animals, and commands in shooing away the mother bird before taking its young so the mother is not pained at that sight (Deut. 22,6,7). Maimonides agrees (Guide, book III chap. XLVIII).

Talmud Yoma 67b describes the cliff of Mt. Azazel from which the scapegoat was hurled as a steep razor-edged precipice with a vertical drop with almost no incline (Ibid. Rashi). The Mishna (Yoma 6:6) states that the goat wouldn't descend even half its drop without already being shredded. Its death was instant. As instant death is painless, cruelty is absent. As animals exist only for man, God may command us in their sacrifice for our benefit. Now, although there is no cruelty when an animal is killed quickly, there is brutality. Why does God command man in this graphic act?

Rabbi Israel Chait explained the purpose of the 2 goats sacrificed on our day of atonement, Yom Kippur. Atonement consists in large measure by man correcting his values. One goat was sacrificed to God in Temple, the other was this scapegoat. These 2 goats represent the only 2 paths man can lead: an intelligent life dedicated to pursuing God's wisdom (Temple sacrifice), or a life of certain doom (scapegoat) if man follows his instincts. There was a designated man who "led" the scapegoat to the precipice. This teaches that a life where one ignores God and Torah must, of necessity, "lead" to man's destruction. In my opinion, a most graphic display will best impact us of our doom. And as animals exist only to serve man, God determined that such a devastating end to this scapegoat is to sharply warn man in the most severe terms. It is for man's good that he picture the scapegoat's graphic death, that he might apply this tragedy to himself if he abandons God and Torah.

Man is killed for certain sins. And not only individual man, but God killed societies and nations. He brought the Flood to those sinners. He commanded the Jews to

annihilate the 7 Nations. God allowed the Jews' enemies to slaughter us when we sinned through idolatry and baseless hate during our Temple eras, and He punished Korach by the earth swallowing him and the sinners. The unfaithful wife also suffers harshly. Torah's curses are painful to read. But such severity is a needed deterrent, without which man will not fear sin, society will be corrupted and innocent children will be led astray to sinful lives, earning their destruction too. God's punishments are not cruel, rather, their brutality intends to steer man away from self destruction. God's creation of man was the utmost act of kindness: God offered a new species the finest opportunity: life, with intelligence. God created man also possessing instincts, which, unchecked, can destroy him. To guide man towards this enjoyable existence in pursuit of God's wisdom and away from an instinctual life, deterrents are required. In His mercy, God gave mankind 120 years to repent before bringing the Flood. Against sinning, God mercifully warned Adam, Eve, their son Cain, the city of Ninveh, Pharaoh, the Jews and others. On Megillas Eichah 3:33 "For He does not willfully bring grief or affliction to man," Rashi comments that affliction is due to man's sin, not due to God. King David wrote extensively of God's kindness, knowing all cases cited above. Torah teaches of God's kindness, patience and punishments. Torah teaches God's goodness, not cruelty. And goodness includes warning man in the harshest terms. Light warnings fail.

Understanding that God created earth, man, animal, and Torah, we realize His wisdom in commanding us in the scapegoat sacrifice, His design of Mount Azazel and His design of man's psyche. God's intentional formation of certain cliffs with such dangerous topography, and His design of human dread, unite in this scapegoat practice to instill us with an aversion to sin so we might earn an eternal existence.

King Solomon said as follows:

*Keep your mouth from being rash, and let your heart be not quick to bring forth speech before God. For God is in heaven and you are on earth; therefore let your words be few" (Koheles 5:1).*

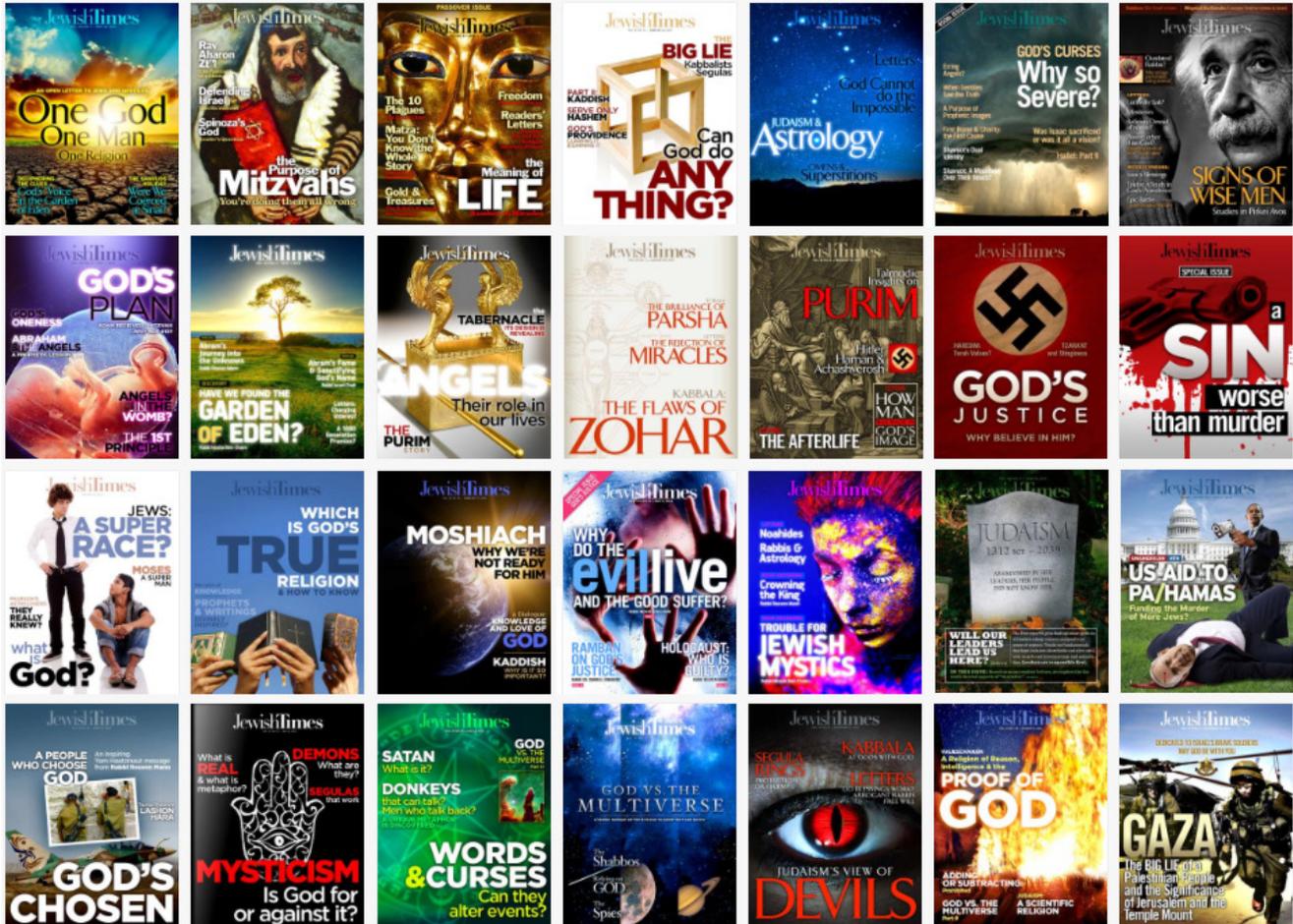
We do ourselves a disservice by failing to

appreciate that the Torah's designer is also the universe's designer. Both contain immense wisdom requiring our patient study to appreciate their depth and brilliance. The main message of this verse is the comparison: we cannot contend with God as "He is in heaven and we are on earth." Of course, God is not anywhere, as only physical entities occupy space and location. But God being "in heaven" means He exists metaphysically; His existence is of a higher (meta) nature than creation. "Higher than creation" means that He is the one who determined that the physical universe should exist, and in what fashion it should exist. As God determined what reality is, man, who is but part of that determination, cannot contend with God's will. "We should not be excited to say something" indicates that man develops his ideas from his emotional makeup, not through reason. Excitement also indicates man's conviction in his notions. Man fantasizes, his ego ignores any error, he then talks to validate his notion as something "out there" in reality. But his words are vain. "Our words should be few" means our feeble minds are not capable of suggesting God's will is wrong. Man who is part of creation (on earth) is, by definition, inferior to God. As Rabbi Chait taught, as part of creation, man operates only within that system and cannot fathom what is outside of it, that he might offer an alternative way the world should exist. As creations, we can't know God's will, so we can't suggest an alternative universe that would "better suit His will." We can't suggest the scapegoat doesn't express His will, or that it is unjust. Moses told the Jews, "For it [Torah] is not a vain thing from you" (Deut. 32:47). The rabbis stated, "Torah is not vain, and if it is vain, it is only vain from your perspective." Maimonides said, "That is to say, the giving of these commandments is not a vain thing and without any useful object, and if it appears so to you in any commandment, it is owing to the deficiency in your comprehension."

You mentioned the scapegoat to be the only case which you questioned God's mercy. Instead of a wholesale accusation of Torah based on this one case, the proper approach would have been to follow your general assessment that Torah is merciful, and then analyze this "aberration" of the scapegoat to find how this command conforms to the rest of Torah's mercy. The question is not "if" the scapegoat is just, but "how" it is just. ■

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## JewishTimes

A stylized illustration on a teal background. At the top, a large yellow hand holds a thin wire. A pair of scissors is shown cutting the wire. Below, a black silhouette of a man in a suit and hat is falling, with white lines representing his trajectory. The bottom of the image shows a silhouette of a city skyline.

# Is All Meant to Be?

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

**READER:** I reject the concept that Hashem uses people like Haman and Hitler to punish people. This all started when I read an article and also a lecture about baseless hatred. While I believe baseless hatred is hatred without a just reason or unreasonable hatred, the article stated all hatred is baseless because “All are messengers of Hashem, whether they harm you deliberately or not.” Hence you should not hate them. How is this possible? The belief that, “all happens for the good” and “all are Hashem’s messengers even if they are wicked” is contrary to free will. In the torah where God promises Israel that He would go before them to strike their enemies, like when our prophet Moshe raised his hand during the war and Israel was victorious, I believe in all these occasions Hashem played an active role in killing or destroying the Jews’ wicked enemies. While in the Holocaust, I believe Hashem did not play an active role, rather, He removed His divine providence.

I do not believe Hitler is the messenger of God, nor did God help Hitler, like in the Torah where He actively helped the Jews kill their enemies. Please correct me if I have erred in these.

*Thank you,  
Mark Stanley Gomez  
Vetturnimadam, India*

**RABBI:** Free will demands that God doesn’t force a person to sin. Wicked people are evil due to their will alone. But Torah does discuss how God “rose up” Hadad and Rizeon as antagonists against King Solomon as punishment when he did not prevent this wives from idolatry (I Kings chap 11). Somehow, God orchestrated

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events to aggravate King Solomon. But Hadad and Rizone were already wicked. Torah teaches that God will use man to execute His will, but in no manner does God force a good person to sin, or a wicked person to repent. One's perfection—his relationship with God—must be his own will. For what merit or sin is it if God forced one to repent, or another person to sin? We read another example: "If he did not do it [murder] intentionally but God planned it to befall his hands..." (Exod. 21:13). This refers to one who accidentally murders, but there were no witnesses. God orchestrates events where this person accidentally kills again, this time with witnesses, in order to obtain justice. Rashi explains:

*But why should this be brought about by God? This is just what David tells us: (I Samuel 24:13) "The proverb of the Ancient One: 'Wickedness proceeds from the wicked.'" The proverb of the Ancient One refers to Torah, the proverb of God, Who is the "Ancient One" of the world. But where indeed does the Torah say, "Wickedness proceeds from the wicked?" It says it implicitly in the verse: "but God planned it to befall his hands." For what is Scripture here speaking about? About two men, one of whom killed a person with premeditation and the other killed inadvertently, and in neither case were there witnesses to their deeds who could testify about it. Consequently, the former was not put to death and the latter was not forced into banishment to a city of refuge. Now, [to obtain justice for both men] God brings them together at the same inn. He who killed with premeditation happens to sit beneath a ladder, and the other who killed inadvertently ascends the ladder and falls upon the man who killed with premeditation, thereby killing him. Witnesses now being present testify against him, compelling him to be banished to one of the cities of refuge. The result is that he who killed inadvertently is actually banished and he who killed with premeditation actually suffers death.*

Torah teaches that God harnesses man to enact His will. But in no case is God tampering with man's free will. In this case, the accidental murderer didn't yet repent. So God enabled him to express his carelessness of life a second time, earning him his justified exile, while the premeditated murderer is killed for his crime. In King Solomon's case, Hadad and Rizone were used by God. But without God telling us, we cannot point at a specific case suggesting God planned it. For how could we know?

**READER:** I asked another Jew, and this is his response:

*A terrorist goes into a crowded restaurant and begins shooting the customers Monday morning at 8 AM. The terrorist decided to commit murder. Hashem decided if the gun would work, who would be in the restaurant at*

*the time, who missed the ride to the restaurant etc. Hashem may decide that a good person will take the bullet and be killed. But the good person has his own accounting with Hashem.*

**RABBI:** This popular view "all is meant to be" is generated from human insecurity and one's need to validate oneself: a view not stated in Torah. Maimonides explains that God's providence is in proportion to one's perfection:

*Those who approach Him are best protected, and "He will keep the feet of his saints"; but those who keep far away from Him are left exposed to what may befall them; there is nothing that could protect them from what might happen; they are like those who walk in darkness, and are certain to stumble. (Guide, book III chap. xviii)*

Maimonides means that people who are not on a required level of perfection are subject to chance/nature: God is not deciding whether they are in the restaurant or whether they arrive late. Their lives are not guided by God at all; events in their lives are not "meant to be." Sforno says this:

*Without any doubt, all gentiles and most Jews are subject to natural law with no divine providence in their lives, just like animals.*

In contrast to individuals, our rabbis teach that the Jewish nation is under God's providence. God didn't coerce Haman and Hitler to be evil, but He might have harnessed them to punish the Jews (like He harnessed Hadad and Rizone). We don't know how He orchestrates event, but we do know that national tragedy and success is God's will.

It is interesting that I Kings 11 provides background on Hadad and Rizone to validate their motives prior to God "inciting" their aggression against King Solomon. Perhaps this background is so crucial, as God wishes man to know that He doesn't tamper with free will, but that these 2 individuals acted based on their prior emotional leanings. It should be noted that there were 4 cases, where, due to the gravity of their sins, God withheld repentance from man (Maimonides, Hil. Teshuvah 6:3).

We should heed Maimonides' and Sforno's warnings about being left without God's providence, which we each need and from which we all benefit immeasurably. We start blowing shofar next week to awaken from our slumber, from our lapses in Torah study, integrity, kindness and charity. Have we been absolutely honest in business, and genuine and ethical in our relationships? Whom have we wronged? Can we mend friendships? Let us each begin to improve ourselves now, and earn God's providence in our lives so we are not those whom Maimonides and Sforno described as "exposed to what may befall them with no protection from mishap, walking in darkness, with no divine providence like animals." ■

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**We should heed Maimonides' and Sforno's warnings about being left without God's providence, which we each need and from which we all benefit immeasurably.**

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# When We Must Disobey!

RABBI RUVEN MANN

**T**his week's parsha, Re'eh, considers the subject of prophecy, which is one of the fundamental tenets of Jewish belief. Judaism insists that man must live according to the Will of G-d. We are convinced that both the Written and Oral Torah come directly from the Creator. But how does Hashem communicate with man?

G-d makes His will known to a genuine prophet who then communicates It to all who "need to know." But not anyone can qualify for prophecy. Only rare individuals who attain a very high moral and intellectual level can be eligible for divine communication.

The Prophet enjoys a very high status among the Jewish people. We are commanded to obey his words, and failure to do so may incur death "by the Hands of Heaven." There are, however, cases where it is expressly forbidden to yield to the dictates of even the most exalted Navi (prophet). For example, if he claims that Hashem commanded us to engage in idolatry. Even if this is only a one-time thing, we must not listen to that prophet but also subject him to capital punishment.

How do we know whether to accept someone as a legitimate prophet? According to the Rambam, not everyone can attain that exalted stature. Only someone extraordinarily talented, emotionally and spiritually, and in possession of great intellectual capabilities, can qualify for this vocation. But even so, Hashem may decide not to charge him with a prophetic mission.

Only if Hashem wills it, will He grant that prophet a divine communication, which he will then be obligated to share with all the relevant parties. But how are we to know if the person claiming to be a prophet is



genuine? Are we to believe the claimant simply because he appears to be genuine and sincere?

Judaism responds in the negative. When a person asserts that he is a prophet, his legitimacy is considered by the Great Sanhedrin on the basis of very exacting criteria. At the outset, they will ascertain that the individual is on the exalted level of human perfection that would make prophecy possible. If he meets that standard, how do we know that Hashem actually spoke to him?

This is addressed in the story of Moshe at the "Burning Bush." After Hashem told Moshe the special name by which He would be known to the Jews, he responded, "But they will not believe me, and they will not heed my voice, for they will say, 'Hashem did not appear to you.'"

According to the Rambam, Moshe realized that it was not enough for him to demonstrate

that he was qualified to receive a prophetic message. He also needed to provide evidence that he had actually received one.

Hashem then provided him with three miraculous signs that he would perform before the elders of Israel, "So that they shall believe that Hashem, the G-d of their forefathers, appeared to you, the G-d of Abraham, the G-d of Isaac, and the G-d of Jacob."

Parshat Re'eh talks about a spiritual dilemma that can occur when a bona fide Navi meets the requisite requirements and even provides miraculous signs to confirm his assertion of prophecy. But there is one little problem. "If there should stand up in your midst a prophet or a dreamer of a dream, and he will produce to you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes about, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us follow gods of others that you did not know and we shall worship them!—Do not hearken to the

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words of that prophet or to that dreamer of a dream, for Hashem, your G-d, is testing you to know whether you love Hashem, your G-d, with all your heart and with all your soul.”

This false prophet did not receive his nefarious message from Hashem, but made it up out of the maliciousness of his heart, intending to bring great harm to the Jewish people. Yet his words have been seemingly endorsed by successful performance of an impressive miracle. What are we to do?

The answer emphatically is to use our minds. We were all gathered at Mount Sinai and heard directly from Hashem, “Thou shall have no other gods beside Me.” We know by direct perception that the Creator has absolutely proscribed idol worship. Therefore, no ostensible messenger can attribute a contradictory imperative to Him. The messenger of idolatry must therefore be false.

What must we do? “And that prophet and that dreamer of a dream shall be put to death, for he has spoken perversion against Hashem, your G-d—Who takes you out of the land of Egypt and Who redeems you from the house of slavery—to make you stray from the path on which Hashem, your G-d, has commanded you to go; and you shall destroy the evil from your midst.”

This constitutes a severe test of the Jews. It demands that we put aside all emotions of subservience to human beings, even exalted ones. We must be prepared to challenge the veracity of even the greatest of our authorities when their words violate clear Torah norms. To

be a true servant of Hashem, we must possess significant intelligence as well as independent critical judgment, and courage.

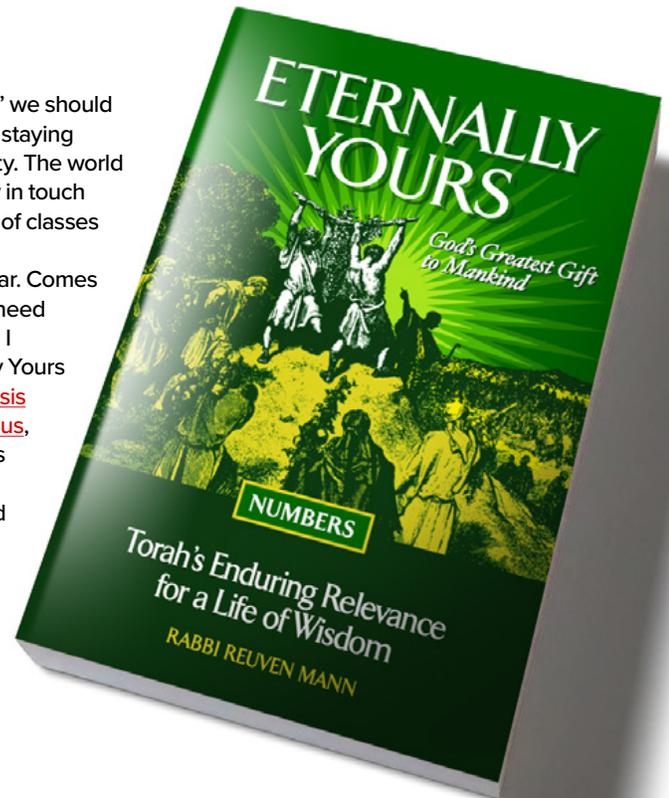
Let us pray that we be spared from this type of dangerous test. Let us strive to attain the spiritual level where, if it ever became necessary, we would pass it with flying colors.

Shabbat shalom. ■

Dear Friends,

In this time of “social isolation,” we should seek ways to avoid boredom by staying occupied with meaningful activity. The world of virtual reality allows us to stay in touch with friends and attend all kinds of classes available online.

But that can only take you so far. Comes Shabbat and Yom Tov, and you need books, especially on the parsha. I personally recommend Eternally Yours on Genesis <http://bit.ly/EY-Genesis> and Exodus <http://bit.ly/EY-Exodus>, and my newest one on Numbers <http://bit.ly/EY-Numbers2>. They are easy to read, interesting, and thought-provoking conversation starters. I am especially interested in your feedback and hope you can write a brief review and post it on Amazon.



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# Do All Mitzvahs Have Reasons?



GUIDE FOR THE PERPLEXED (BOOK III, CHAP. XXVI)

**A**s Theologians are divided on the question whether the actions of God are the result of His wisdom, or only of His will without being intended for any purpose whatever, so they are also divided as regards the object of the commandments which God gave us. Some of them hold that the commandments have no object at all and are only dictated by the will of God. Others are of opinion that all commandments and prohibitions are dictated by His wisdom and serve a certain aim; consequently there is a reason for each one of the precepts: they are enjoined because they are useful. 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 God's wisdom are incomprehensible. This view is distinctly expressed in Scripture; comp. "righteous statutes and judgments" (Deut. 4:8) "the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether" (Psalms 19:10). There are commandments which are called *chukim*, "ordinances," like the prohibition of wearing garments of wool and linen (*sha'atnez*), boiling meat and milk together, and the sending of the goat [into the wilderness on the Day of Atonement]. Our Sages use in reference to them phrases like the following: "These are things which I have fully ordained for you and you dare not criticize them," "Your evil inclination is turned against them," and "non-Jews find them strange."

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**But our Sages generally do not think that such precepts have no cause whatever, and serve no purpose; for this would lead us to assume that God's actions are purposeless.**

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On the contrary, they hold that even these ordinances have a cause, and are certainly intended for some use, although it is not known to us, owing either to the deficiency of our knowledge or the weakness of our intellects. Consequently there is a cause for every commandment: every positive or negative precept serves a useful object; in some cases the usefulness is evident, e.g., the prohibition of murder and theft; in others the usefulness is not so evident, e.g., the prohibition of enjoying the fruit of a tree in the first three years (Lev. 19:23), or of a vineyard in which other seeds have been growing (Deut. 22:9). Those commandments, whose object is generally evident, are called "judgments" (*mishpatim*): those whose object is not generally clear are called "ordinances" (*chukim*). Thus they say [in reference to the words of Moses] "For it [Torah] is not a vain thing for you" (Deut. 32:74). The rabbis stated, "It is not in vain, and if it is in vain, it is only so through you." That is to say, the giving of these commandments is not a vain thing and without any useful object, and if it appears so to you in any commandment, it is owing to the deficiency in your comprehension." ■

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*Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim*

