

JewishTimes

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LETTERS

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

The Only True Religion?

READER: To make the statement, and I assume [you] actually believe it, that "Judaism is the only true religion" is not only wrong-headed, ignorant, and offensive but feeds into a narrative of Jewish superiority and supremacy that has fueled antisemitism for centuries. To publish it is a true case of chillul hashem. I am a proud Jew, and as one, I need to ask you, what the hell are you thinking?

RABBI: Let's review the published words: "2 million Jews witnessed God's Bible communication at Mt. Sinai. A one-time event of mass revelation. All other religions have no witnesses for their claims. Therefore they demand blind faith as they contain no proof of divine authorship. Had revelation never occurred, a history of a mass event would have never been accepted or transmitted."

(CONT. ON NEXT PAGE)

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These are historic facts. To benefit all mankind, God orchestrated this event in front of millions, as He wished to validate for eternity His only religion. God does not wish this event be a secret. And this claim of possessing God's true religion is defended by every religion; no one denies this. In this respect, the Jewishtimes does not differ from other religious claims. Furthermore, on dozens of occasions, the Jewishtimes has supported the view of human equality, and has outright rejected Jewish superiority as arrogant and false (right image). We have fully rejected Jews claiming that Jews have a superior soul. Our current issue again echoes these truths.

Our last issue was the Shavuot issue which celebrates Revelation at Sinai. We appropriately underlined therein the key significance of that event with the words above. Jews have the obligation to teach mankind God's truths with the same clarity God wrote His Bible, unapologetically. We observe the Sabbath, as Maimonides says^[1] so we may respond to others inquiring of our rest on this day, to educate them on creation and monotheism. The Jew is not to hide any truth from mankind, for that is the worst evil.

God stated that all religions will eventually admit of their fallacy (Jer. 16:19).

God stated never to add or subtract from his Bible (Deut. 13:1). All other religions violate this.

God stated by keeping Torah—all it entails—the other nations will, in fact, be impressed by God's one religion. But you wish to conceal that which God desires be revealed:

Observe them faithfully, for that will be proof of your wisdom and discernment to other peoples, who on hearing of all these laws will say, "Surely, that great nation is a wise and discerning people" [Deut. 4:6].

Here, God teaches that with our proper observance of Torah, the nations will not be offended, but in fact, will be greatly impressed, which is God's wish: that the entire world follows his one religion. Now, as God wants us to publicly follow the commandments, certainly He wishes that the proof that He gave the commandments should be shared. That proof is Revelation at Sinai, which singles out Judaism as the only true religion.

Regarding your accusation of being "wrong-headed, ignorant, offensive, claiming Jewish superiority and supremacy"... Torah and the Rabbis disagree with you.

Judaism is the only true religion, and God wishes this be known by mankind. Helping people see the truth is the greatest kiddush Hashem. ■

[1] Guide, book II, chap. xxxi



Human Equality

As Clear As Black & White

EDITORIAL — RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Black people descend from the same first couple from whom white, Asian, and Indian people descend. Adam and Eve are mankind's grandparents. God never reinvented man that one race is lesser or better. Some Jews feel they are better, and that is racist arrogance. We all have the identical psyche, body and soul. Moses married a black woman, and Abraham cared for all walks of life. Judaism does not judge a person by how we are born, but how we die; were we righteous? God is the authority, and His Torah (Bible) says "One Torah for the Jew and convert." Meaning, all humans possess the identical potential.

It behooves an intelligent person to study the words of our greatest Torah teachers, starting with Maimonides. I quote him verbatim below where he states that every human being has equal potential in God's eyes. This is not to be taken lightly, and one must have great respect for great minds, as the saying goes, "From Moshe (Moses) to Moshe (Maimonides) none have risen on par with Moshe":

Not only the tribe of Levi, but every person from anyone who enters the world whose spirit generously moves him, and he understands from his own thinking to separate himself to stand before God, to serve Him and to worship Him, to know God, and he walks uprightly as God made him, and he breaks off from his neck the many calculations that people seek, this person is holy of holies and God is his portion and his inheritance forever and eternally. And he merits in this world a means to sustain him just as the priests and Levites. Behold, King David, peace be upon, said, "God is my portion and my cup, You support my lot" (Psalms 16:5). (Maimonides, Laws of Sabbatical Year & the Jubilee 13:13) ■



Gentiles & Torah

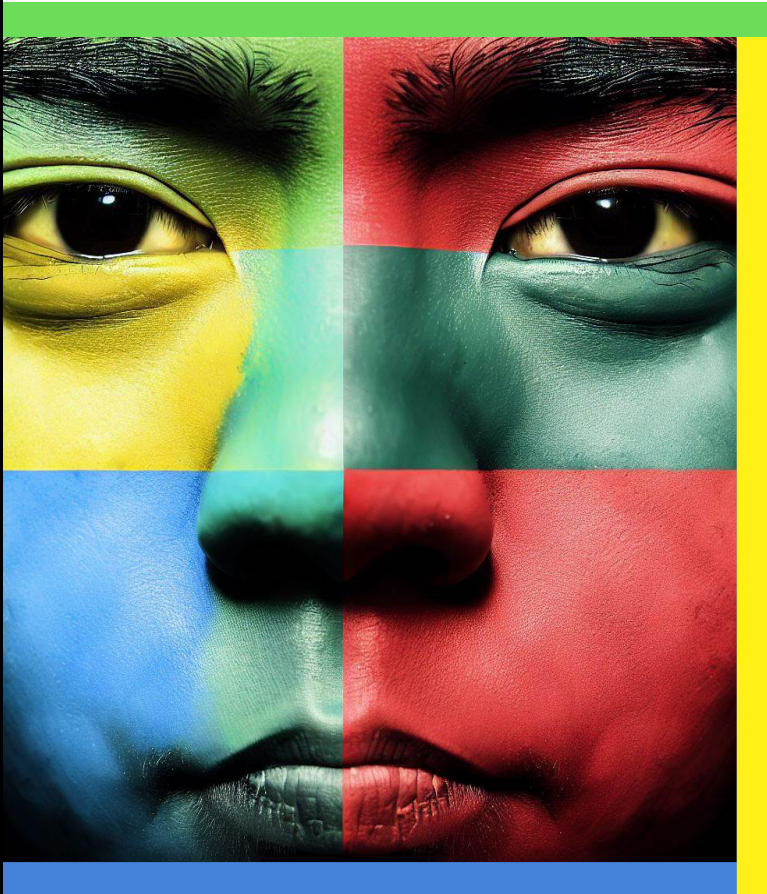
Rabbi Morton Moskowitz
Transcribed by a student

Question: Why is it prohibited for non-Jews to observe Torah laws like Shabbos and kosher? I understand they are not obligated in them, but why can't they follow them if they like??

Rabbi Moskowitz: Psalms provides insight: "Jerusalem built up, a city knit together, to which tribes would make pilgrimage, the tribes of the Lord—a testimony to Israel—to praise the name of the Lord" (Psalms 122:3,4). Rashi comments:

*For there in Shiloh the tribes ascended when they went up
ished in its midst. The heathens were talking about them (the*

*Jews) when they left Egypt, and they would say about them
that they were the offspring of adulterous unions: "If the
Egyptians ruled over their own bodies, surely [they ruled] over
their wives." Said the Holy One, blessed be He, "I attest that
they are the sons of their fathers." He bestowed His name
upon them: the "Ha-Reuben-i" — "Ha-Simeon-i" (Num. 26).
God added the letters of the name, the Hay at the beginning
and the Yud at the end (two letters creating God's name
"Yah"). The result is that this name Yah is testimony to Israel
(that all Jews were direct descendants of their Jewish parents
and not Egyptians).* (CONT. ON NEXT PAGE)



Now, if the purpose of the commands is just to keep Torah, what difference is it if we are Israelites or another nation? Why must Torah observers be descendants of the 12 tribes? Why can't Torah observers be any people who keep Torah? We also must ask what or who are the patriarchs?

The patriarchs and matriarchs did not have Revelation at Sinai and therefore they did not keep the commandments (mitzvos). They perfected their souls by coming in line with God's will without commandments. They had that ability to relate to God directly through their minds. Most people cannot do this and require a system (Torah) to attain perfection. Torah's purpose is not merely commandments, but to help mankind attain the level of the patriarchs. Thus, Israel's mission must always be attached to the patriarchs to show that the life of the patriarchs embodies the essence of the commands. If we lose the attachment to the patriarchs, that would separate the patriarchs from the commandments and people will just keep the commandments as an end themselves, without using them as a means of attaining the perfection of the patriarchs.

Question: If you keep the commandments, don't you automatically perfect your soul?

Rabbi Moskowitz: Keeping the commandments without studying Torah's philosophy will not perfect

one much. One must study Torah to gain the ideas and values behind the commandments. All these types of discussions are crucial for perfection [and the performance of commandments alone cannot provide this].

Studying Proverbs provides great insights into human behavior. Commandments do not provide this essential knowledge. Many people keep commandments but have jealousy, with no clue how to get rid of it. One must study the ideas and human traits that help you perfect your soul [a study unaddressed by commandments alone]. You must understand the nature of the emotions and how they deceive you. And regarding relating to God, if you lack understanding, you can fool yourself [cementing you in your corrupt ways as you believe you follow God]. Psalms helps us understand our emotions in relation to God. Without all these ideas, commandments alone will provide very little perfection of the soul.

Again, the Torah system includes the patriarchs to impress this idea that perfection is not only the commandments, as the patriarchs had no commandments or halacha. Now, if halacha was the essence, the patriarchs didn't have the essence! Our nation must always connect to the patriarchs to represent that idea. The patriarchs surpassed our perfection, probably greater than you could ever reach, and they did so without halacha.

To answer our original question why gentiles are prohibited to observe laws outside of civil laws, it is due to our mission. If gentiles kept the Torah, it would confuse the world to believe that all that is required, is keeping the commandments. But this would forfeit the Jews' mission, that the essence is perfection of the soul, embodied in the patriarchs. As gentiles are not connected to the patriarchs, only the descendants of the patriarchs can teach this lesson. [Therefore those who represent Torah's objective—the perfection of the patriarchs—they alone most observe the commandments to teach that the commandments isolated from the patriarchs is not God's will, and is not human perfection].

Question: As this idea seems hidden in this Rashi (Psalms 122:3,4), how do we teach this lesson?

Rabbi Moskowitz: Attaining perfection of all the emotions requires great wisdom. The basic foundation of Judaism is a religion of wisdom, which conveys the ideas. Ideas are behind all of halacha; every aspect of Judaism is [permeated with] thought. Therefore, if you are not a thinker you will lose out to some measure on many of these ideas. And if you are a thinker, you will perfect your soul through Torah study and training the mind. God designed Torah so it naturally helps you attain higher levels and perfects your soul. If one studies Torah's concepts it will perfect your soul. So even if people don't see this idea [spelled out] that Israel is unique, people must discover this and the Jew alone observing Torah conveys this. ■

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

PERFECT EQUALS

Jews, Gentiles and Noachides are perfect equals; our designs are identical. No one is better or worse. But Gentiles and Noachides cannot mimic the Jew through Sabbath observance. For by doing so, mankind will mistake him for a Torah observant individual, and seek to learn Torah from him. However, not commanded in the 613 laws, a Noachide is not fluent in Torah, as is a Jew, who does study diligently, so as to perform his greater number of Torah obligations. The Noachide will not have sufficient knowledge, thereby corrupting the identity of Torah if asked to teach it. Therefore, to help all involved, a Noachide may not observe Sabbath completely as does a Jew, thereby shielding the Torah system, and maintaining the Jew's identity as distinct, and reserving his exclusive role as a Torah educator. If however any Noachide chooses, he may convert, and observe identically as a Jew, benefiting equally as Jews.

Through Sabbath rest, the Jew sets himself apart from others, as Maimonides teaches, and attracts the attention so mankind might inquire of the nature of his rest. Thereby, the Jew responds, and teaches mankind of the Sabbath, which recalls Creation, and simultaneously, God's existence as Creator. ■



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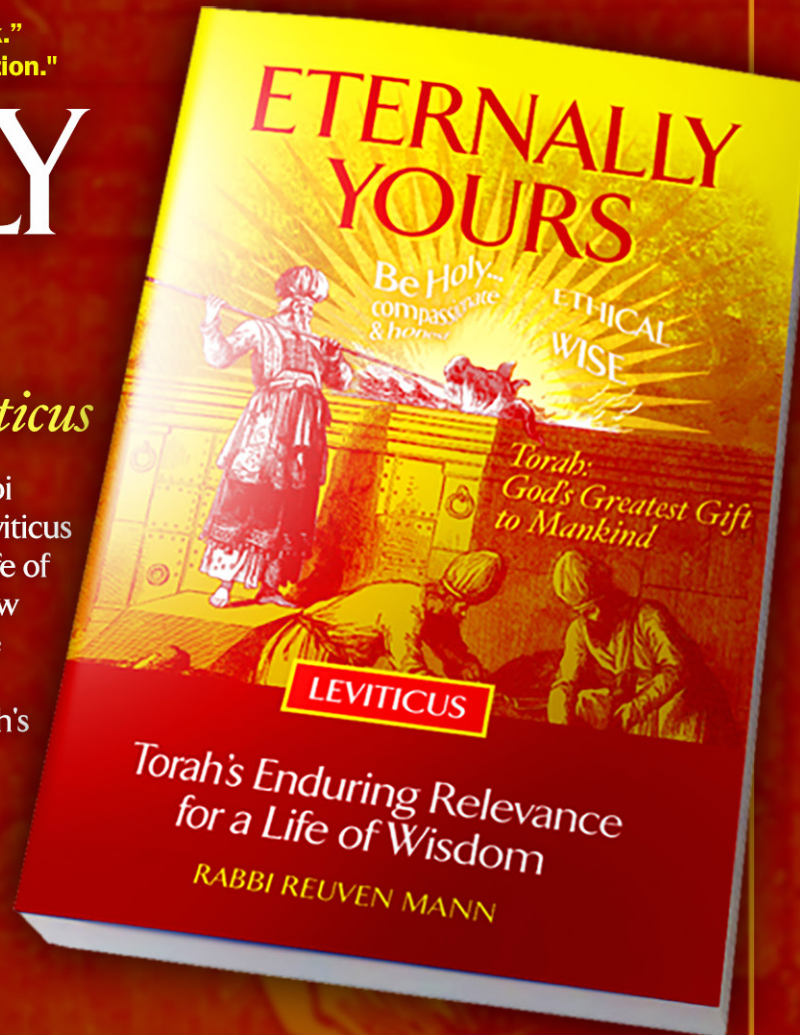
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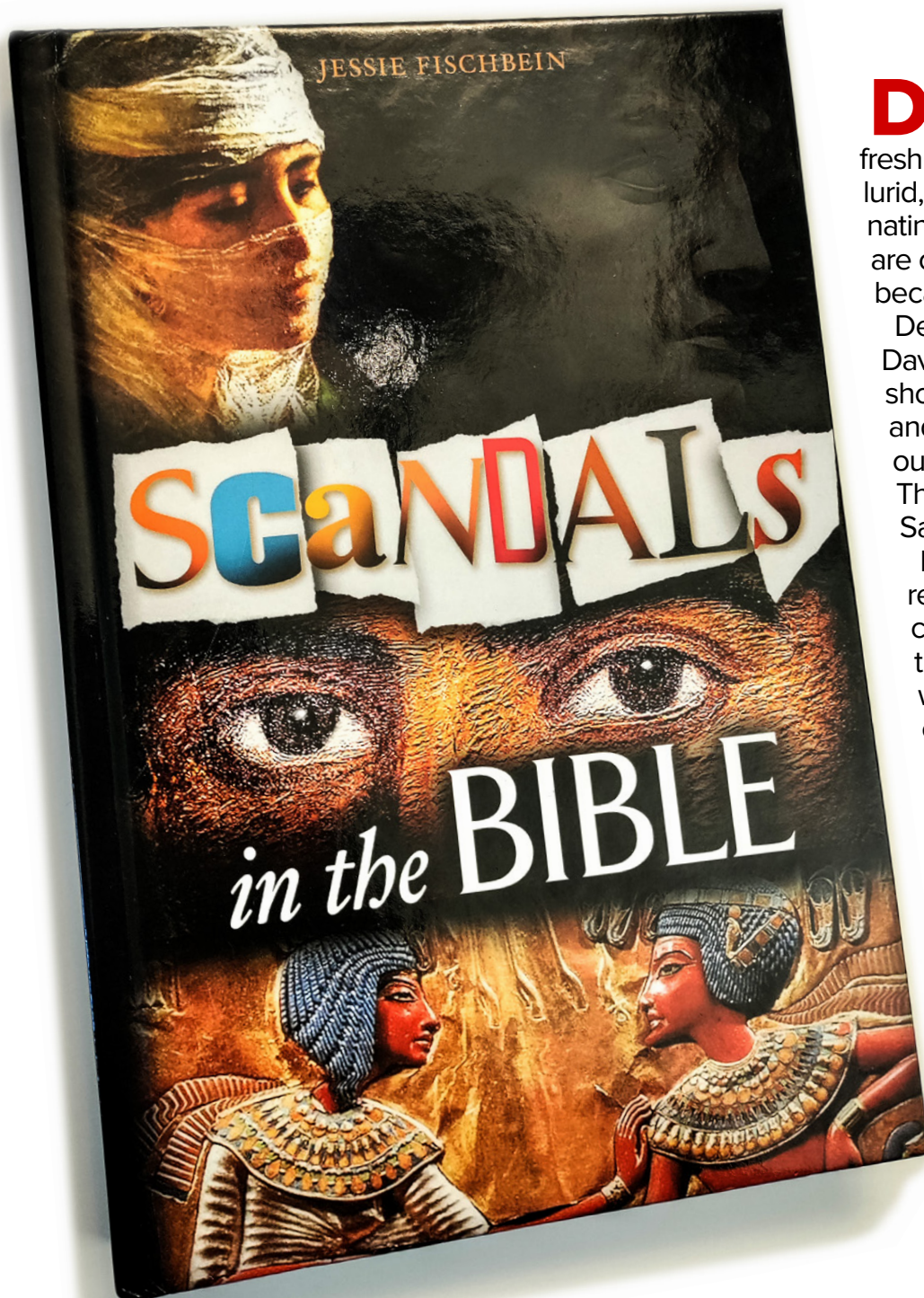
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Jessie Fischbein has a great fondness for the nuances in Biblical text and commentaries. She lives with her husband and children in Far Rockaway, within walking distance of her grandchildren and a beautiful beach, which she visits often. She also loves doing backflips and handsprings.

Gematria is a polarizing topic. While many love it, many others view it with skepticism.

What is the purpose of gematria?

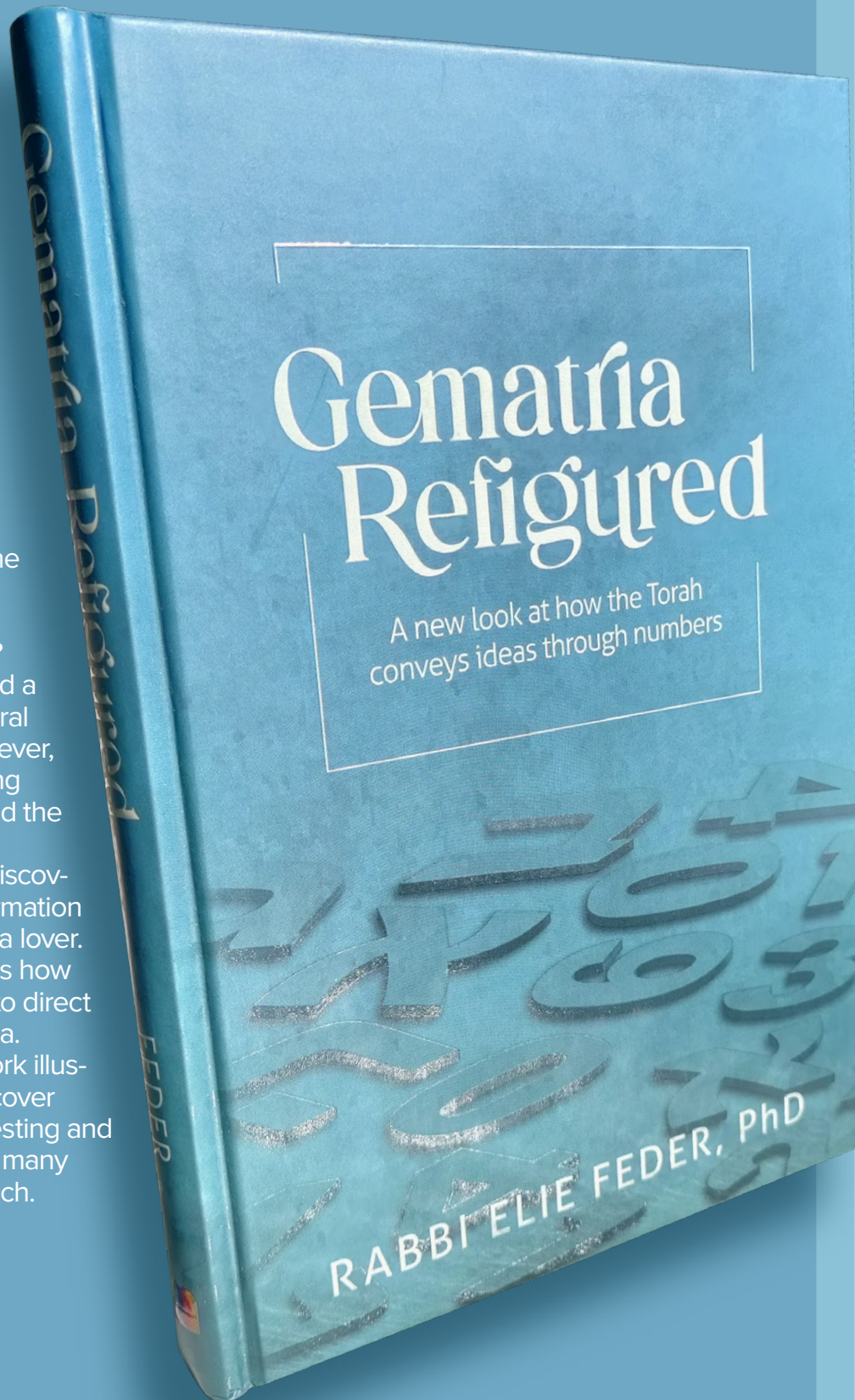
Can we truly learn anything from the numerical representation of words?

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While jointly pursuing semichah and a PhD in mathematics, it seemed natural for Elie Feder to love gematria. However, he was bothered by these compelling questions. That is, until he discovered the purpose of gematria.

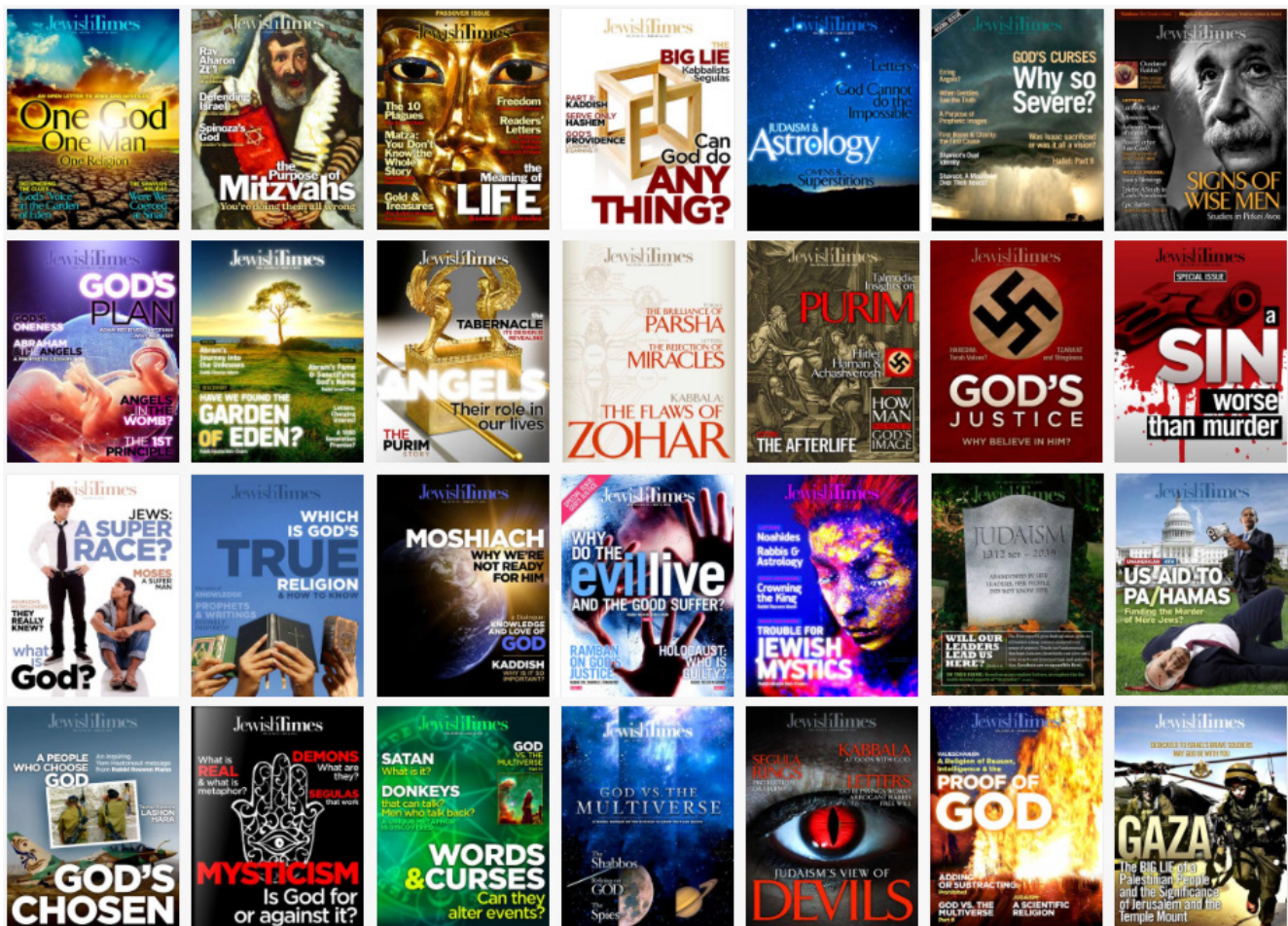
Gematria Refigured presents the discoveries that led to the author's transformation from a gematria skeptic to a gematria lover. It develops a theory which elucidates how the Torah and Chazal use gematria to direct us toward a very specific type of idea. Through its many examples, this work illustrates how gematria can help us uncover novel insights, while providing interesting and clearly formulated perspectives into many mitzvos, themes, and stories in Tanach.

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