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PARSHA

the Plan Behind Creation

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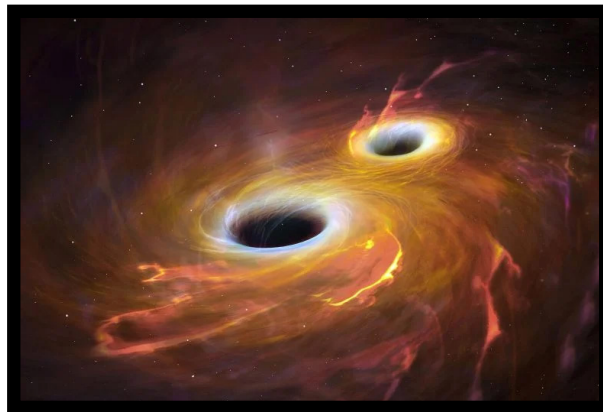
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PARSHA

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

The Plan of Creation

"Behold God owns the heavens and the uppermost heavens, and the Earth and everything that is in it. However His desire is in your forefathers that He loved them and He selected their seed after them from all other people as this day."
(Deut. 10:14,15)

God is explaining that more than creation, is His desire is in the Jewish patriarchs and in their seed after them. He says that they are chosen from all others. This discounts the other religions' claims that God abrogated this statement, because God himself never abrogated it. This amplifies what Moses said earlier that the Jews are chosen from all other nations. The purpose of the universe is the Patriarchs and all humans who follow their perfections. This explains why Genesis recounts their lives and why God gave Bible to mankind. ■

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Are You Proud to be Jewish?

RABBI REUVEN MANN



The Concept of the Chosen People

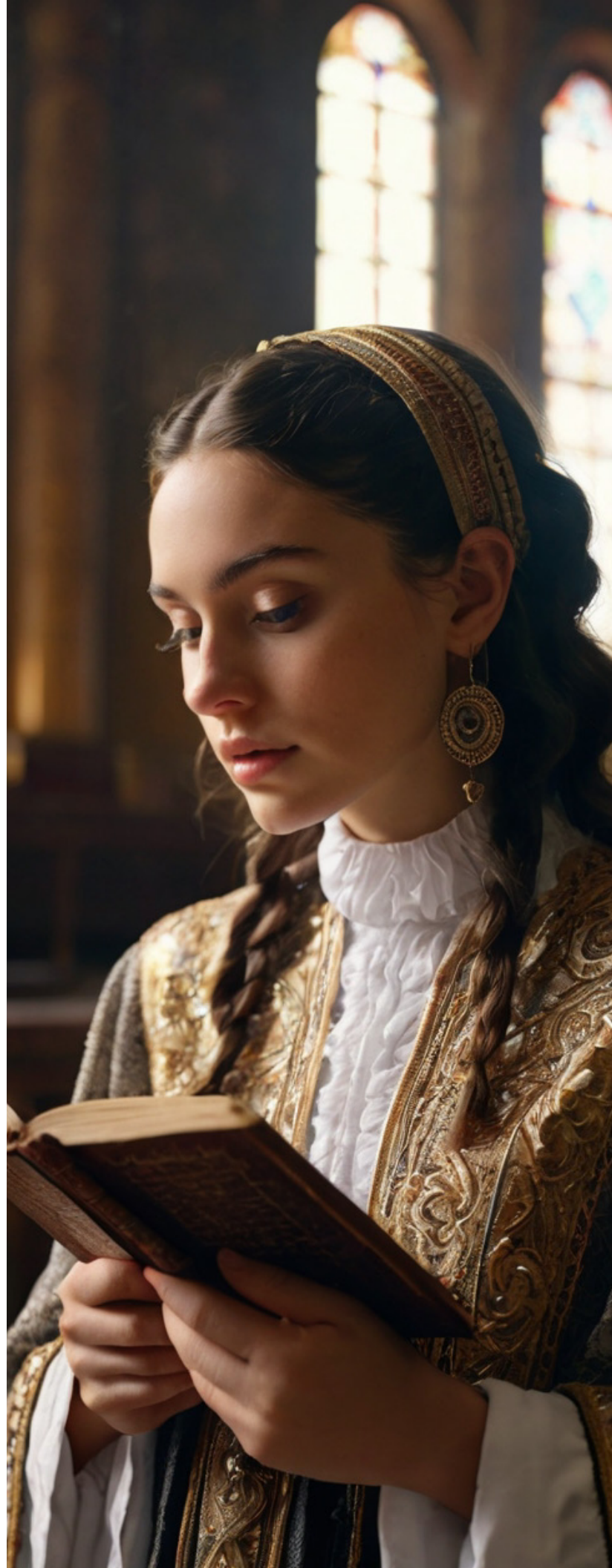
In the Book of Devarim Moshe spells out and elucidates some of the fundamental theological doctrines of Judaism. One of them is Bechirat Am Yisrael (Choseness of the Jewish People). This means that the Creator of the Universe selected one group of people from the entire human race for a special purpose. Needless to say, this idea has caused a great deal of “misunderstanding” and contributed to the hatred and persecution of Jews that has influenced all of mankind from time immemorial. On the most basic level, the notion of the “Chosen” People inevitably produces a feeling of jealousy. Nationalism is a very powerful and compelling force, which can easily be seen in the fierce competition which always occurs at the international Olympics. All countries, especially those that want to be significant players on the world stage, seek to amass as many medals as possible, as if triumph in sports is indicative of general national superiority. However, most people instinctively recognize that advanced culture and religion are far more prestigious than athletics. This is manifest by the fact that most of the hatreds and wars of history, down to this very day, have been caused by lethal religious rivalries. Each group feels compelled to believe that its theology is the true one and that the others are all false and must therefore be “suppressed”.

The Roots of Anti-Semitism and Jewish Mission

Sigmund Freud made the astute observation, “Ever since the Jews were proclaimed as the Chosen People the rest of the world has responded as though, on some deep level, they truly believed it to be true.” His point was that if people thought that the Jews’ claim was ridiculous they would have simply shrugged it off as a bad joke and not taken it seriously.

The prevalence of anti-Semitism as the most ubiquitous force in history is testimony that the world, at least on the subconscious level, actually recognized the veracity of the Jews’ claim. They recognized it but could not deal with it so they had to destroy it. How so? Well, if there is no Jewish People, you no longer have to contend with the possibility that they may be the Chosen People. That, in essence, is the psychological mechanism at play.

(CONT. ON NEXT PAGE)



However, it is important to understand what the significance of being a special people is, and for what objective did G-d choose us? The answer has been formulated by the Navi (Prophet), speaking in the Name of Hashem: "This nation I have fashioned unto Me, they will declare my praises" (Yeshayahu 43:21). This means that the Jews were selected in order to be Hashem's emissaries and teachers to the world. We are to elucidate for mankind the existence of Hashem and the type of life He wants us to live. Our ultimate goal is to facilitate the perfection of Mankind when:

"Nation will not lift up sword against nation, neither will they learn war anymore (Yeshayahu 2:4). For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as waters cover the sea (Yeshayahu 11:9)."

Misconceptions of Jewish Superiority

Unfortunately, there has been a great deal of confusion surrounding this doctrine. Many contemporary Jews are uncomfortable with the assertion that they are the ones who G-d prefers for this unique mission. They feel that this constitutes some form of bragging, which itself is unseemly and causes us to be hated around the globe. But does the fact that Hashem chose us mean that we are somehow superior to all other humans? The answer to this question appears in our Parsha, Eikev. Moshe declares:

"Do not say in your heart, when Hashem pushes them (the Canaanite nations) away from before you, saying, 'Because of my righteousness did Hashem bring me to possess this Land; and because of the wickedness of these nations that Hashem drive them away from before you'. Not because of your righteousness and the uprightness of your heart, are you coming to possess their Land; but because of the wickedness of these nations, does Hashem, your G-d, drive them away from before you, and in order to establish the word that Hashem swore to your forefathers, to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Yaakov. And you should know that not because of your righteousness does Hashem, your God, give you this good land to possess it; for you are a stiff-necked people." (Devarim 9:4-6)

Moshe's words clearly negate the possibility of the Jews believing they are inherently superior to others, emphasizing that our being chosen is not due to intrinsic merit. We were selected by Hashem not because we earned this merit, but only because we are the descendants of the three Avot (Forefathers) whose philosophy



and way of life corresponded to the Will of Hashem.

They discovered the True G-d and the manner in which it was appropriate to serve Him, and Hashem determined to form from them an eternal People who would become a "light unto the nations" (Yeshayahu 42:6, 49:6). Because the Jewish People are the direct heirs of the Avot they were deemed by Hashem to be the most qualified people to perpetuate the ideals of the Forefathers to mankind. This does not mean to say that the virtues of the Jews played no role at all in their selection. There were specific things they had to do, such as the offering of the Passover Sacrifice to be worthy of redemption. In addition, they had to be willing to accept the Commandments and so forth; but these things were not instrumental in making them worthy of being chosen. Rather, the acts they performed revealed that they were qualified to carry out the mission that Hashem had envisioned for them. But the underlying factor which was responsible for their selection was their descent from the Avot.

The Pride of Being Jewish

This leads to the question of whether it is appropriate for the Jews to feel proud that Hashem designated them to be His Chosen People? After all, as Moshe said, this was not because of any intrinsic worthiness but only because of the "Merit of the Forefathers". In my opinion, one should be extremely proud of the fact that he or she is Jewish. There are two kinds of pride. The first is the one we experience when we celebrate an achievement that is brought about by our own prodigious talents and efforts. As we have seen, this does not apply when we consider that we are members of the Chosen People. But there is another type of pride that may be completely unrelated to anything we have done. It is based on an appreciation of the

virtues and values of Judaism and how the nation of Jews seeks to implement them in the world.

It would be the same with an individual who is born into an illustrious family of men and women who pursue advanced knowledge, provide beneficial services of many kinds and seek to promote peace and understanding among people. This person knows they had no role in establishing this unique clan but admires its great philosophy and conduct. So they are very proud of the fact that, with no credit to themselves, they are a member of this group and are happy to make their own contribution to furthering its goals. I am very proud to be a Jew. We are a very special People who were graced with G-d's Revelation and the mission to teach the world how to live a righteous existence. Few peoples have contributed as much to the advancement of human knowledge and ethics as the Jews. True, we have been hated and mistreated by all, but we have never been broken nor discouraged from pursuing the goals of wisdom and progress which will ameliorate the condition of all people.

I humbly recognize that we owe the great honor of being chosen to the illustrious Forefathers who discovered the Divine way of life and sought to perpetuate it for all future generations. I am proud and honored to be among those who joyously proclaim, "Am Yisrael Chai" (The Nation of Israel Lives). It is my hope that all Jews will recognize what an honor it is to be a member of the People which the Creator of the Universe designated to be unto Him a "Kingdom of Priests and a holy nation" (Shemot 19:6). Shabbat Shalom. ■

Questions? Comments?
Please reach out to Rabbi Mann on WhatsApp at 050-709-2372 or by email at rebmann21@aol.com

PARSHA

JEWISH BIBLE

The Only Religion Proven to Be Divine

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM



Moses addresses the Jews recalling events:

When you please inquire about the first days that came before you, ever since God created man on earth, from one end of heaven to the other, has anything as grand as this ever happened, or has its like ever been heard? Has any people heard the voice of God speaking out of a fire, as you have, and survived? Or has God ventured to go and take one nation from the midst of another by prodigious acts, by signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and awesome power, as your God Hashem did for you in Egypt before your very eyes?

(CONT. ON NEXT PAGE)





Moses then explains the lessons of those events:

It has been shown to you, to know, that Hashem alone is God; there is none else. From the heavens God let you hear the divine voice to discipline you; on earth God showed you the great fire; and from amidst that fire you heard God's words. And having loved your ancestors, God chose their heirs after them; [God] personally—in great, divine might—led you out of Egypt, to drive from your path nations greater and more populous than you, to take you into their land and assign it to you as a heritage, as is still the case.

Know therefore this day and keep in mind that Hashem alone is God in heaven above and on earth below; there is no other. Observe God's laws and commandments, which I command upon you this day, that it may go well with you and your children after you, and that you may long remain in the land that Hashem your God is assigning to you for all time. (Deut. 4:32-40)

You shall not add anything to what I command you or detract anything from it, but keep the commandments of your God that I command you. (Deut. 4:2)

Observe only that which I command upon you: neither add to it nor detract from it. (Deut. 13:1)

Moses Crucial Message

Moses first recounts events, and then derives their meaning. First, Moses urges the Jews to review all world history to affirm that God never communicated a religion to a nation, as He had communicated the Bible to the Jews at Mount Sinai. And this remains true through today. Yes,

individuals like Jesus and Mohammed claimed “private” communication from God, but that claim cannot be verified, so their claims prove nothing. And further, to discount all other religions except the original Jewish Bible, Moses recounts God’s miraculous selection of the Jews from the clutches of Egypt, revealing their false gods were defenseless against God’s 10 plagues. God then vanquished all other nations from before the Jews en route to Israel, which rejects those other pagan religions. Moses proved it was God who performed this, as He is the only being that can produce intelligent voice from inside fire, which 2 million Jews witnessed at Mount Sinai (Saadia Gaon). Thus, the God of Bible is not a physical god that could perish inside fire. But the God of Bible is the one being that created and controls the universe. For Moses clarifies that there was never a similar event displaying control over the heavens and the Earth as God displayed at Sinai, proving there is no other creator: nothing else but God caused the existence of the universe. That communication of Bible on Mount Sinai is a religion of divine origin given by the universe’s Creator.

There never was another event where a nation witnessed God giving them a religion, thereby making the Bible the only religion God ever gave to man. All other religions are without validation.

The Lessons

God is not physical.

God gave man a religion only once: that religion is the Jewish Bible.

The Jews are the only recipients of God’s religion.

That Bible may not be altered at all (Deut. 4:2, 13:1), rejecting the New Testament, the Koran and all other religions. ■



Reasons to reject a religion as false:

- Revelation at Sinai remains the only time God revealed a religion to mankind with 2 million witnesses.
- All mankind share the identical design; an identical single religion is sensible, just as treating cancer equally in all people.
- All other religions fail to produce validation of their claims of divine origin.
- All other religions refute each other, further validating the previous reason, for a witnessed event like Revelation at Sinai cannot be refuted.
- The religion conflicts with Bible, such as the New Testament and Koran adding to God's Bible



Book Reviews

Rabbi Reuven Mann — *Rabbi of Young Israel of Phoenix*

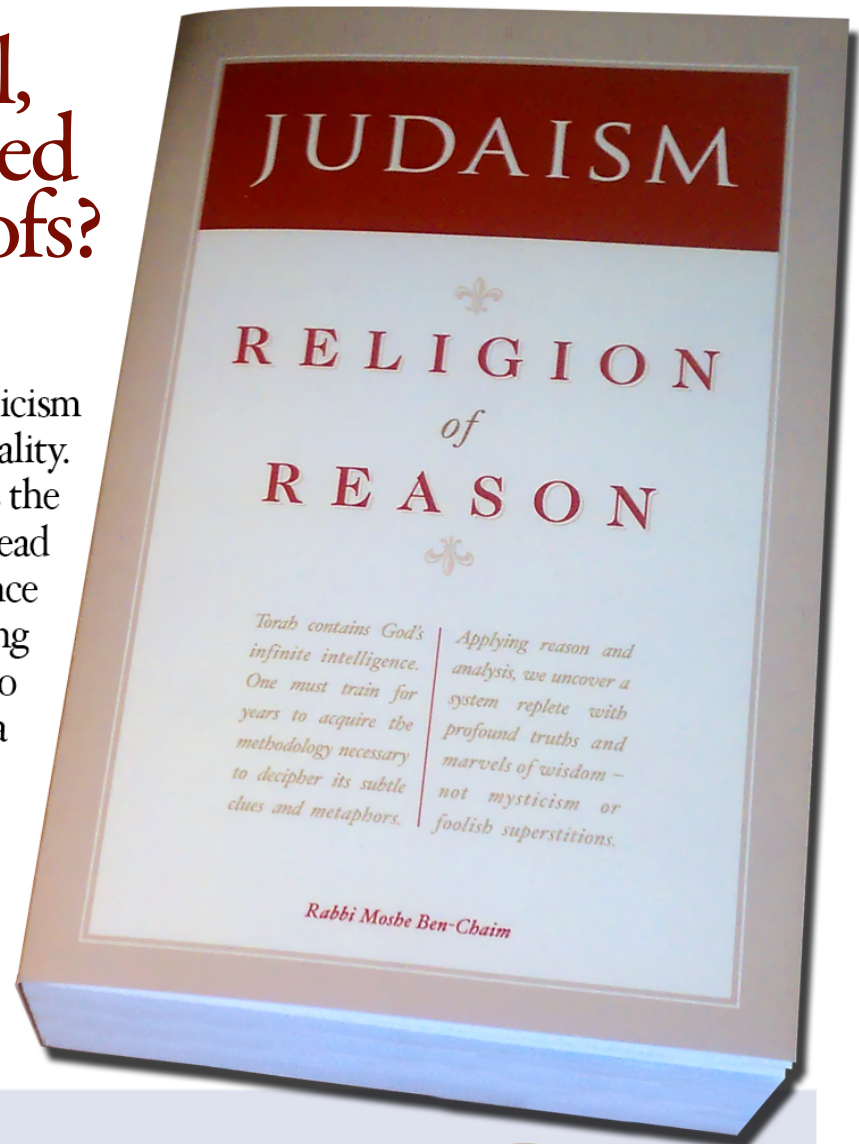
Rabbi Steven Weil — *CEO, Friends of the IDF*

Is Judaism mystical, or is it rational, based on reason and proofs?

by Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim

Jews have succumbed to mysticism and pop-kabballa, in place of rationality. Ten years in the making, the author cites the Rabbis, unveiling the fallacy of widespread beliefs. He focuses on Torah's brilliance and method of decryption; unraveling metaphors and interpreting texts to reveal hidden gems. Readers will enjoy a long overdue, rational exposé of cultural beliefs, and a unique look at Torah's deep insights.

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Can God do Anything?
Superstition
Astrology
Praying to the dead
Reincarnation
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Why the good suffer
Is God running my life?
Segulas & amulets
Shadim – “demons”
Reward and punishment

Afflictions
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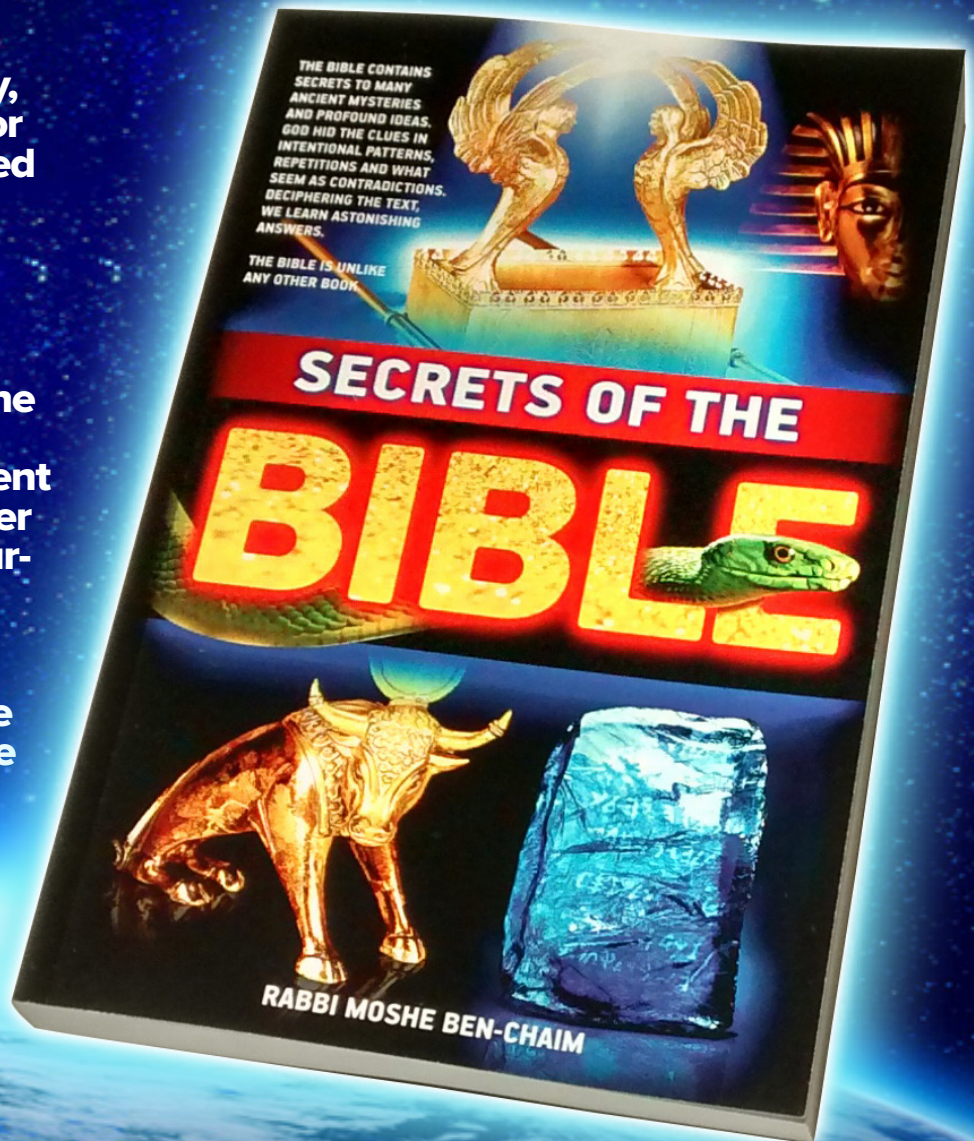
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ETERNALLY YOURS

Rabbi Reuven Mann – Deuteronomy

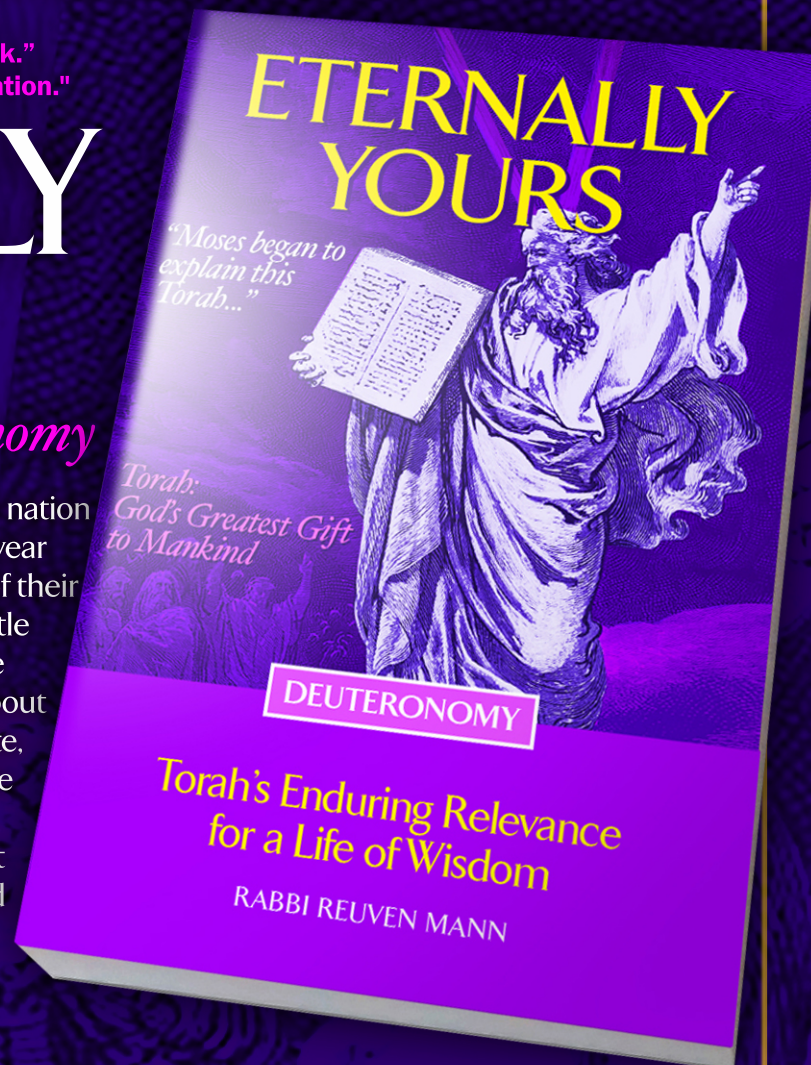
Devarim contains Moses' final communications to the nation he had led out of Egypt and guided through the forty-year ordeal in the Wilderness. The Jews were on the brink of their entry into the land which they would conquer and settle without him, their great leader. Moses' final talks to the Jews reveals his true greatness. He is not concerned about his own place in history; his only objective is to facilitate, to the best of his ability, the success of the nation in the land. He thus exhorts them to study, understand and fully implement the Torah which constitutes the surest guarantee of their longevity and well-being in the Land that God gave them so they would become a "Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation." This book focuses on those lessons.

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