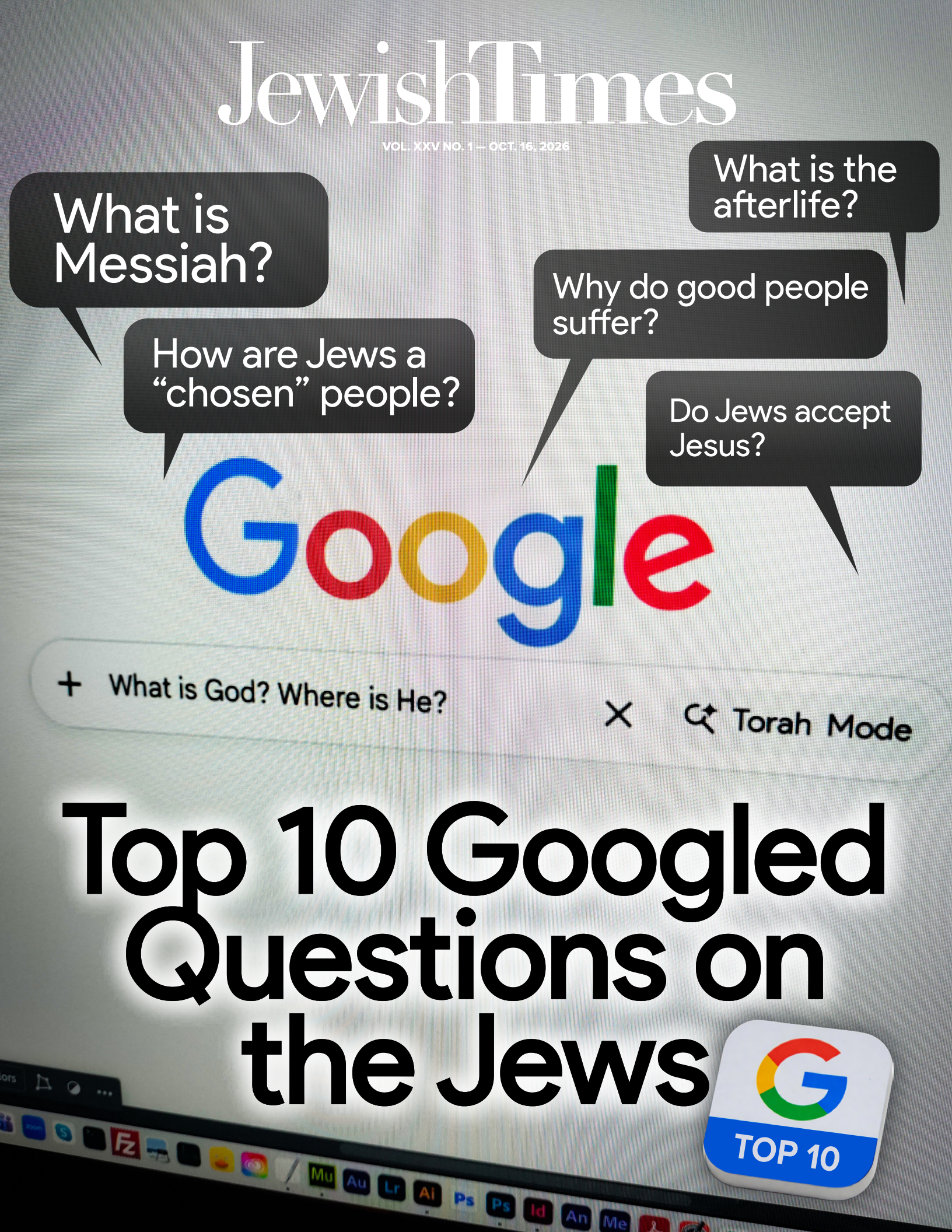
JewishTimes
VOL. XXV NO. 1 — OCT. 16, 2026



Top 10 Googled Questions on the Jews

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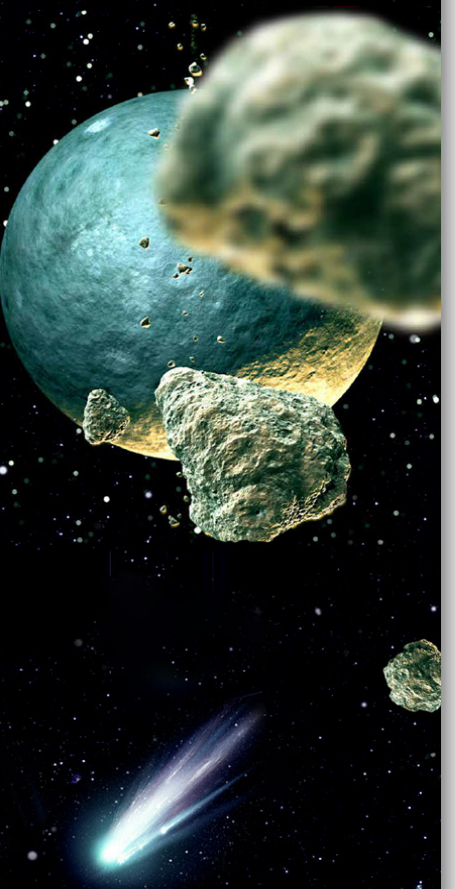


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KNOW WHAT TO ANSWER

Jews and gentiles everywhere are inquiring about Judaism's difference from other religions. At some point, you too will be asked by someone. Maybe you will even be the one who is asking. We hope you enjoy the answers in this issue. Email your questions: comment@Mesora.org

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CHUMASH

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Moses' Death

Of Hillel's 80 students 2000 years ago, Yonasan ben Uzziel was the greatest mind. As the following verse in Deuteronomy is so brief, we must analyze the lengthy context Yonasan ben Uzziel feels is so essential which he included in his explanation:

> *So Moses the servant of God died there, in the land of Moab, at the command of God. And he buried him in the valley in the land of Moab, near Beth-peor; and no one knows his burial place to this day (Deut. 34:5,6).*

(CONT. ON NEXT PAGE)

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The Land of Moab: Moses' Burial

That's a relatively short verse. Here is Yonasan ben Uzziel's explanation with surprising additions:

> *Blessed be the Name of the Lord of the world, who has taught us His righteous ways:*
> *• He taught us to clothe the naked, as He clothed Adam and Eve*
> *• He taught us to make marriages, as He united Eve to Adam*
> *• He taught us to visit the sick, as He revealed Himself to Abraham when he was ill from being circumcised*
> *• He taught us to console the mourners, as He revealed Himself again to Jacob when returning from Padan, in the place where his mother had died*
> *• He taught us to feed the poor, as He sent down manna from heaven to Israel*
> *• He taught us to bury the dead by (what He did for) Moshe; for He revealed Himself in His Word, and with Him the companies of ministering angels Michael and Gabriel spread forth the golden bed, fastened with chrysolites, gems, and beryls, adorned with hangings of purple silk, and satin, and white linens. Metatron, Jophiel, and Uriel, and Jephephya, the wise sages, laid him upon it, and by His Word He conducted him four miles, and buried him in the valley opposite Beth Peor; that Israel, as oft as they look up to Peor, may have the memory of their sin; and at sight of the burying place of Moshe may be humbled. But no man knows his grave unto this day.*

As Rabbi Israel Chait taught, even in death, Moses functioned to eradicate idolatry. Thus, God buried him facing the idol Baal Peor so one cannot think of Peor without comparing it to Moses and his monotheistic Torah. Thereby, Moses, even in death, combats man's trends towards idolatry.

The rabbis teach in Pirkei Avos 5:6 that Moses' grave was one of the few miracles God created just before the close of Creation on the first Friday. The miracle is that if one stood atop the mountain looking downward, he would see Moses' grave at the mountain's base. And one standing at the base of the mountain looking upward would see his grave at the top of the mountain. What this means is that God obscured the location of his grave. This is because people tend to deify great leaders, violating monotheism, where God maintains the entire focus of the sole deity. Moses' death was therefore "at the command of God" — a planned event of a miraculous and essential nature, intending to deter man from deifying a human, and focussing on God alone as the source of all our fate.

We understand that in this manner, the circumstances of Moses' death was a kindness to the Jewish people. But death itself is a great kindness, as God continues our existence to its greatest state and greatest learning experience, unhindered by physical limitation. Yonasan ben Uzziel's message is that one must have a complete picture of God's kindness and therefore he cites what truths and perfections God taught mankind through His kindnesses to other deserving people, from Adam to Moses. Following God's values of clothing the naked, arranging marriages, visiting the mourner and all else, death can then realize the perfection gained by adhering to God's lessons. Thereby, death cannot be viewed in isolation. It is the culmination of a proper life and the soul's continued greater life, and explains why Yonasan be Uzziel provides this lengthy context. God was kind to Moses upon his death as a final expression of His kindness to a man perfected by all the other cited values God taught us.

The embellishment of the angels and the adorned bed teach that death of a righteous and wise man is the commencement of an adorned metaphysical existence. ■

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim

GOD'S UNITY



When reciting the Shema, after completing the first verse, one says quietly, "Blessed be the name of the honor of His Kingdom forever." He then continues to read the first section in its normal fashion, "And you shall love God, your Lord..." Why do we read it in this fashion?

It is our tradition that when the patriarch, Jacob, gathered all his sons together in Egypt close to his death, he commanded and strengthened them regarding the Unity of God and the path of God upon which Abraham and Isaac his father, had tread. He asked them, "My sons, perhaps there are flaws among you, one who does not stand with me in the Unity of God?" This is comparable to the manner in which Moses, our teacher, said to us, "Lest there be among you a man or woman whose heart turns this day from God..." (Deut. 29:17). They all answered and said, "Listen, Israel, God is our Lord, God is One." The elder Jacob responded, "Blessed be the Name of the Glory of His Kingdom forever." Therefore, the Jews are accustomed to utter the praise that Israel, the elder, uttered after this [first] verse.

(Maimonides, Laws of Reading the Shima 1:4) (CONT. ON NEXT PAGE)

Why did Jacob wait until his death to ask his children about their belief in God's "unity," His exclusive role as the Creator? Why does Maimonides repeat that Jacob was an "elder," and what role does elder play in teaching unity of God? Moses also—in old age—warned Israel against idolatry. One could say that this truth is validated best through a wise person who has experienced an entire lifetime and sees only one God. But then shouldn't any lesson require validation through an elder? Or is there some greater significance of an elder when the topic is God's monotheism?

When a wise father is about to pass away, he understands his role as only a temporary "authority model" to prepare his children to accept the "Ultimate Authority." Therefore, he directs his children to transfer his expiring paternal authority figure onto God. This explains why Maimonides mentions that Jacob referred to Abraham and Isaac, as Jacob too transferred his two authority figures onto God when they passed. That's also why honoring parents is included in the first tablet of the Ten Commandments, addressing laws between man and God. For the institution of honoring parents is precisely to prime man to first accept a human authority figure, ultimately to be transferred onto God. This also supports why in Mara, prior to accepting Torah on Sinai, Moses taught the people three matters: laws of courts, Shabbos and honoring parents, because accepting God's authority at Sinai was better facilitated by first honoring parents.

What is the meaning of Jacob's response, "Blessed be the Name of the Glory of His Kingdom forever?" Why didn't Moses say it? Moses quotes what Jacob's sons replied to their father: "Shema Israel." The twelve sons confirmed to their father that just as their father Jacob accepted only one God, so too did they follow that monotheism. At the end of Moses' life he wished the Jews to transfer their view of him as their authority, onto God, and used the phrase "Shima Yisrael" of Jacob's twelve sons. For this new nation identified with these sons, fittingly named the "Children of Israel." Moses' quotation of the twelve tribes' commitment to monotheism would help the Jews remain firmly monotheistic.
Why is Jacob's responsive "Baruch Shame" necessary in the Shima?
When there's a declaration of God's unity there must be a human response of praise and that's what Jacob did. (In the temple the priests follow this model of declaring this praise when God's name is uttered.) But as Moses didn't say this praise, the gemara questioned reciting something that Moses did not say. But as Jacob said it, the compromise was struck to recite this praise of Jacob, but quietly, indicating it was not part of Moses' words. And the reason Moses did not say the phrase is the same reason why a person does not say "Amen" to his own blessings: the person himself does not need to confirm what he just said.

"Blessed be the Name of the Glory of His Kingdom forever"
As Rabbi Israel Chait taught, as man is ignorant of what God is, the only thing we can bless about God is His name. But we can also add that He is the creator which dictates that He is eternal, so that forms part of the praise. For any king that has a term on his kingdom displays weakness. God exists beyond time. ■


Jacob's Death

Top 10 Googled Questions on the Jews

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM





1. What does it mean to be Jewish?

Is Judaism a race, a religion, or an ethnicity?

Rabbi: Being Jewish means to follow the Torah (Bible), Prophets, Writings and the Oral Law: Mishna and Talmud. These contain fundamental truths, philosophies, morality and mandatory laws. To be Jewish, one need not be born to Jewish parents, as a convert follows the identical lifestyle and is Jewish 100%. Judaism is not something genetic, racial, or ethnic. Meaning it does not depend on biology or culture. Judaism can be classified as a religion but is better stated as the only religion proven to be given by God.

2. What can't Jews eat? Why do Jews keep kosher? Why can't you mix meat and dairy?

Rabbi: One benefit of a restricted diet is that it trains one in restraint, but this is not an end objective. The objective is that one who has restrained emotions frees his mind to be involved in wisdom to a far greater degree. Since wisdom is what provides man with the most enjoyable pursuit and the most fulfilling life, the restraint of the emotions is needed to enable the mind to be free from emotional urges and choices.

You'll notice that foods restricted by Kosher laws belong only to the animal kingdom, whereas all vegetation has no restriction. This is to cause man to abstain from eating disgusting creatures, which has a negative impact a the person, causing him to lose his sense of disgust. The reason we must maintain a sense of disgust is to help us avoid disgusting behavior. For it is animals alone—living beings—that man identifies with and would copy their behavior, whereas vegetation is not alive and has no behavior to copy.

Maimonides explains the restriction of eating milk and meat is because this has idolatrous origins, and God wants man to avoid all connection to idolatry. Ancient idolaters felt that by cooking the young calf in its mother's milk, this would produce some mystical good fortune. But as mysticism is pure imagination, God wants man to live in reality and avoid fantasy.

This article gives amazing psychological insight into the reasons behind kosher laws: https://mesora.org/kosher74.html

3. What is Sabbath and when does it start?

Rabbi: Sabbath is the seventh day of the week, on which God ceased His creation, as creation was complete. God commanded those who follow His Torah to mimic God by refraining from any creative action on Sabbath, what we call work. The purpose of this refrain is to create an observable replication of the Creator's rest on the seventh day, thereby publicizing the existence of the one Creator of the universe, in order to help all mankind abandon lives seeking pleasure and success alone, and instead, finding one's true purpose in the engagement of God's great wisdom. By not being involved in creative activity and work, a person has at least one day a week he can devote to wisdom. Sabbath starts Friday evenings at sunset and ends Saturday evening about an hour past sunset.

4. What percentage of the world population is Jewish?

Rabbi: Jewish people make up approximately 0.2% of the global population.

5. What happens after we die in Judaism? What is the Jewish view of the afterlife, heaven, hell, or reincarnation?

Rabbi: When a person dies, his soul continues living, on the condition that he lived a monotheistic and moral life. His soul enjoys the afterlife in proportion to his perfection in these two areas of morality and wisdom. Torah does not speak of hell. Isaiah 64:4 teaches that no living person truly knows what the afterlife is. And this is intentional because if a person had some idea of what comes after we die, he would not focus on what God wants the person to focus on, and that is studying Torah for the enjoyment itself and not for the reward. In Genesis 15:1 God tells Abraham that his reward is great, referring to the afterlife. For the Rabbi's teach that there is no reward while physically alive for following God (Kiddushin 39b). The true reward is the eternal afterlife. Reincarnation is not found in Torah, and lacks any evidence.

6. Why do Orthodox Jewish women wear wigs?

Rabbi: As Rabbi Israel Chait taught, once a woman is married she can no longer follow the lifestyle of trying to attract men. She expresses this change towards modesty by covering her hair, her most beautiful visible attraction.

7. Do Jews believe in a Messiah?

Rabbi: Yes, he will be a descendent of King David, he will fight wars on behalf of Israel and he will build the third and final temple. He will have greater wisdom than King Solomon and will closely approximate the level of prophecy of Moses (Maimonides). All humanity will recognize that he and Israel possess the only true religion and they

(CONT. ON NEXT PAGE)

will all abandon their false man-made religions (Jer. 16:19). That era will be an eternal era of peace, success and great Torah wisdom.

8. Why do bad things happen to good people?

Rabbi: There are a number of reasons. First of all, even a good person can make poor choices that result in a negative state of affairs. And a good person who has some sins can receive punishments from God to correct him. As Rabbi Israel Chait taught, it's also important to recognize that what we feel is a bad event, could be perceived by a righteous person as an opportunity for perfection or something which doesn't impact him negatively as we imagine would harm us. People of great intelligence and moral character can go through circumstances that would break a normal person, since their value system tells them that this so-called "calamity" is not so bad and it will also come to pass. But a person who is perfectly righteous without sin has God's Providence to protect him, as King David said so often. We must be convinced that God has no shortage of methods to help a good person out of any problem.



9. Do Jews believe in Jesus?

Rabbi: Jesus defied Torah, which rejects him. And there are no witnesses to all the claims made about him. We must not confuse Christianity's mass popularity, with historical truth. To this date the only religion verified of divine origin is Judaism which was given by God, witnessed by 2 million people at Mount Sinai 3300 years ago. Without witnesses to an event, any religious claim is merely that, just a claim and not fact.

10. What does "The Chosen People" actually mean?

Rabbi: In a generation of nations following idolatry, Abraham was the sole monotheist. Through reason and proofs, he taught people that stars, idols and superstitious beliefs are powerless and that there is a single cause for the universe, and to Him alone one must subjugate himself. God desires the good for mankind, so He established a nation emanating from Abraham and his seed from Jacob as a people who would eventually receive Torah for the purpose of correcting the world. In this manner, the Jews were "chosen" by God, to share God's word with all mankind.



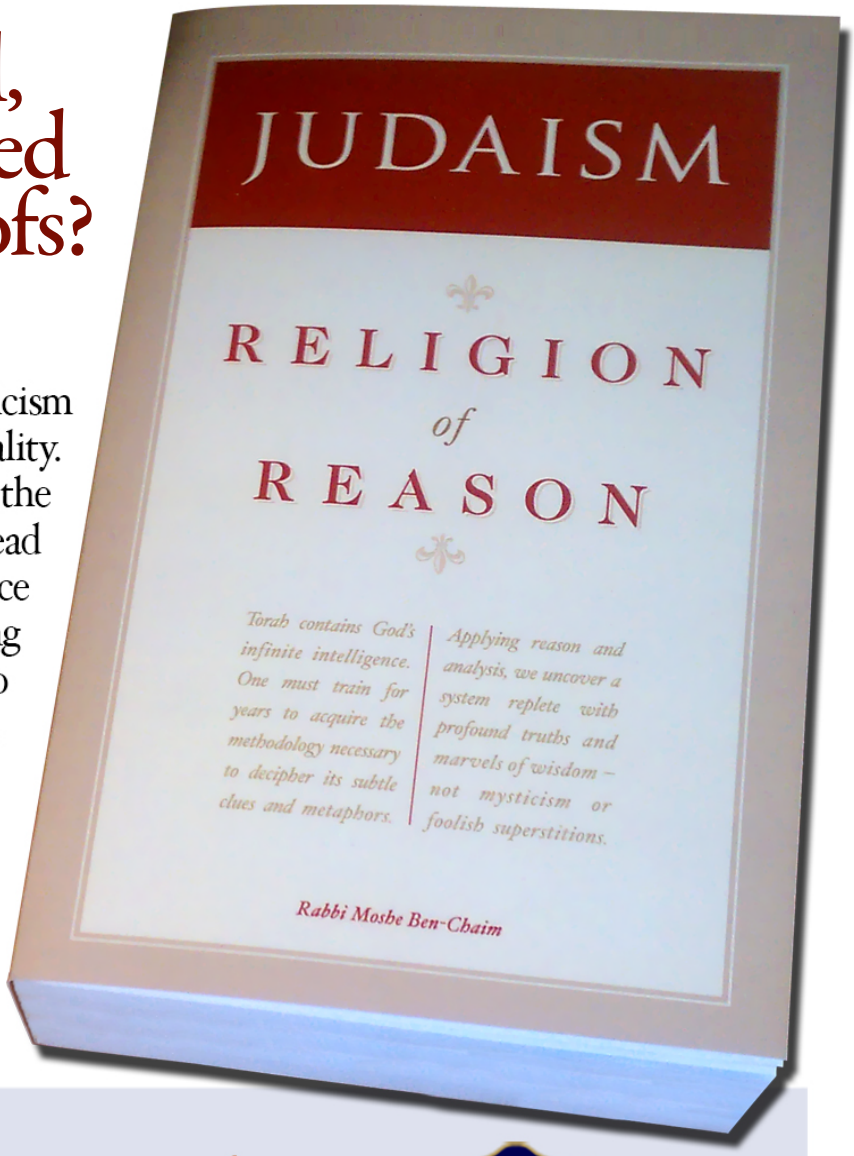
Book Reviews

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

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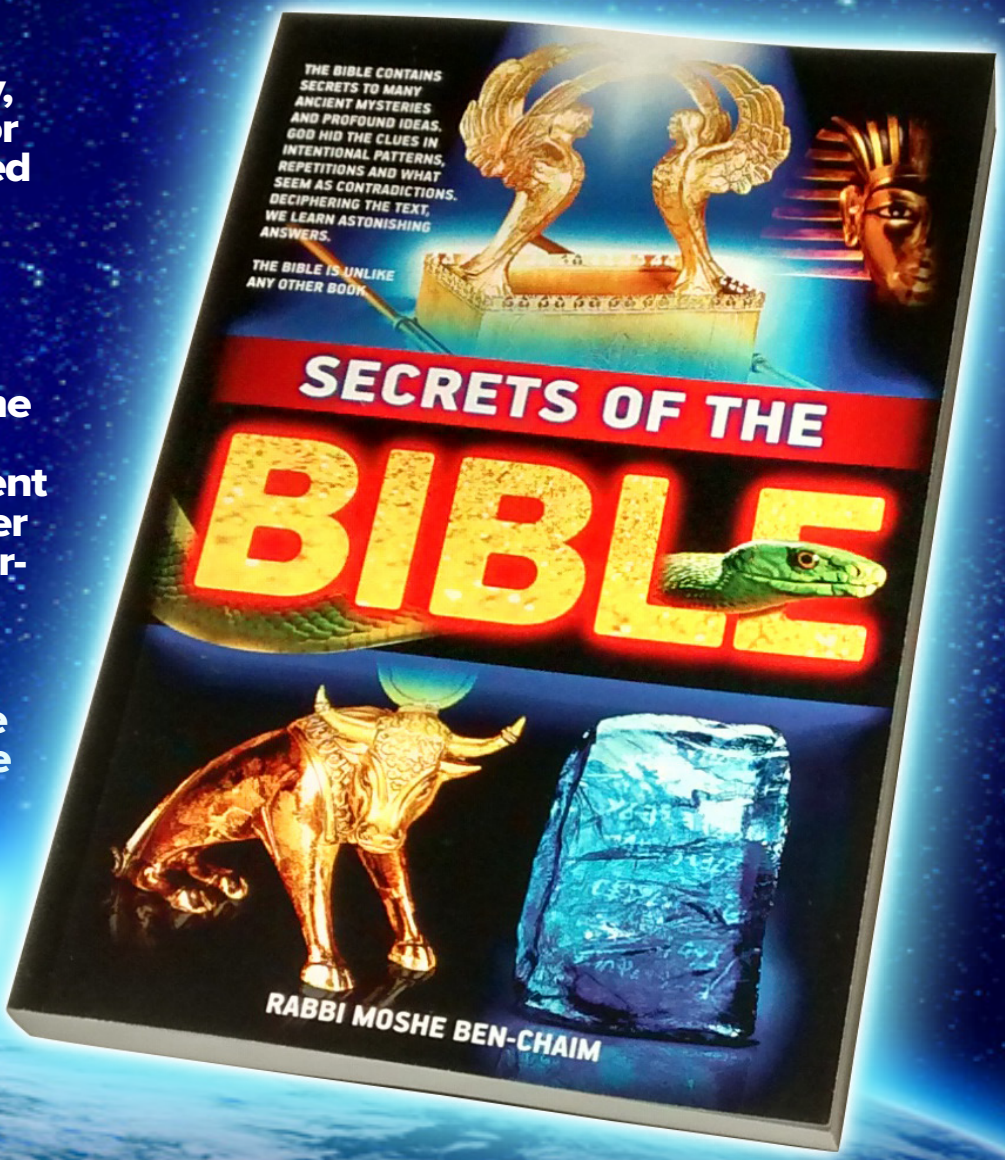
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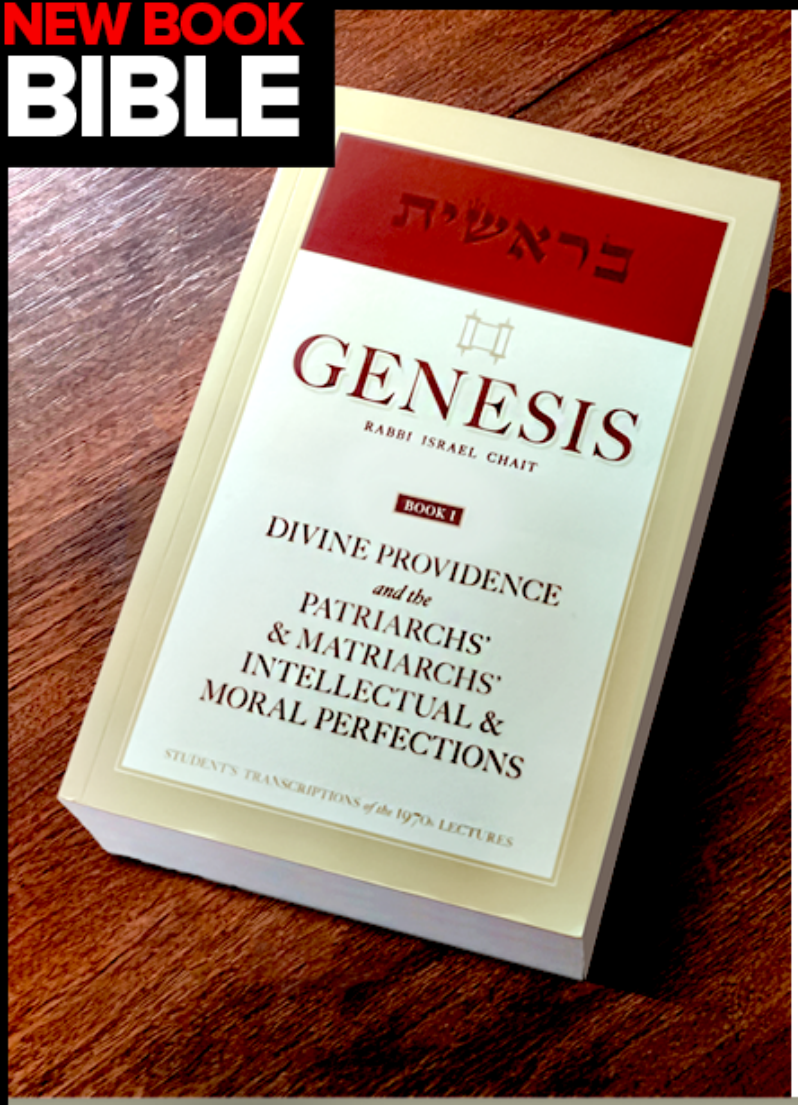
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How Judaism Differs from Other Religions

A religion of reason and proof, not blind faith

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

"Religion" refers to a lifestyle of submission to an benevolent authority, designed and transmitted by the author. All religions except Judaism claim to be God's only true religion, but they all lack validation. Judaism is the only religion with proof of Divine origin. This proof is demonstrated through God's revelation of His existence and His communication to 2.5 million Jews on Mount Sinai exactly 3333 years ago. The Jews witnessed an intelligent voice speaking from within the fiery mountain. Biological or earthbound life cannot exist in fire, precisely why God used fire in this event. No other religion makes such a claim to possess proof because Divine revelation never happened to others, and as Torah (Bible) says, "It will never happen again" (Deut. 4:32-34).

Judaism is the only religion whose claim is supported by world acceptance of Torah. This acceptance is a 100% proof of God's revelation to the Jewish people. Had Revelation at Sinai never occurred, it would not have been believed by that generation, and certainly not the rest of the world and all future generations. The only way Revelation at Sinai became accepted is because it was witnessed, and then all witnesses passed the story down to the following generations through today. God wished that this event remain a 100% proof throughout all generations. Had a false prophet attempted to convince any group that they witnessed what they had not, they would never accept him, nor would they replace their known history with the false prophet's lies. A unanimous identical transmission of a witnessed event occurs only when that event occurred. Unanimous transmission—a single Biblical account—is proof of the truth of Revelation at Sinai. God revealed Himself to masses only once: to the Jews on Mt. Sinai, where He gave the Jews His Bible.

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All other religions are founded on a single person's claim (or a fabricated story) that God communicated with him. Something of this nature cannot be proven, and is precisely why they formulated their religions with the demand for "blind faith." Those religions did spread, but not due to witnessed events. Those religions spread as they appealed to human emotions. People will accept what is pleasing. Someone dying for my sins is very appealing. Praying to a tangible human figure is more pleasing than praying to an invisible and abstract God. But not one other religion can provide evidence of Divine communication. Therefore, there is no basis to accept their religions. Furthermore, as God designed only one human being, multiple religions is nonsensical. Just as all people are treated identically for cancer, all people will find the happiest life with the same religious system.

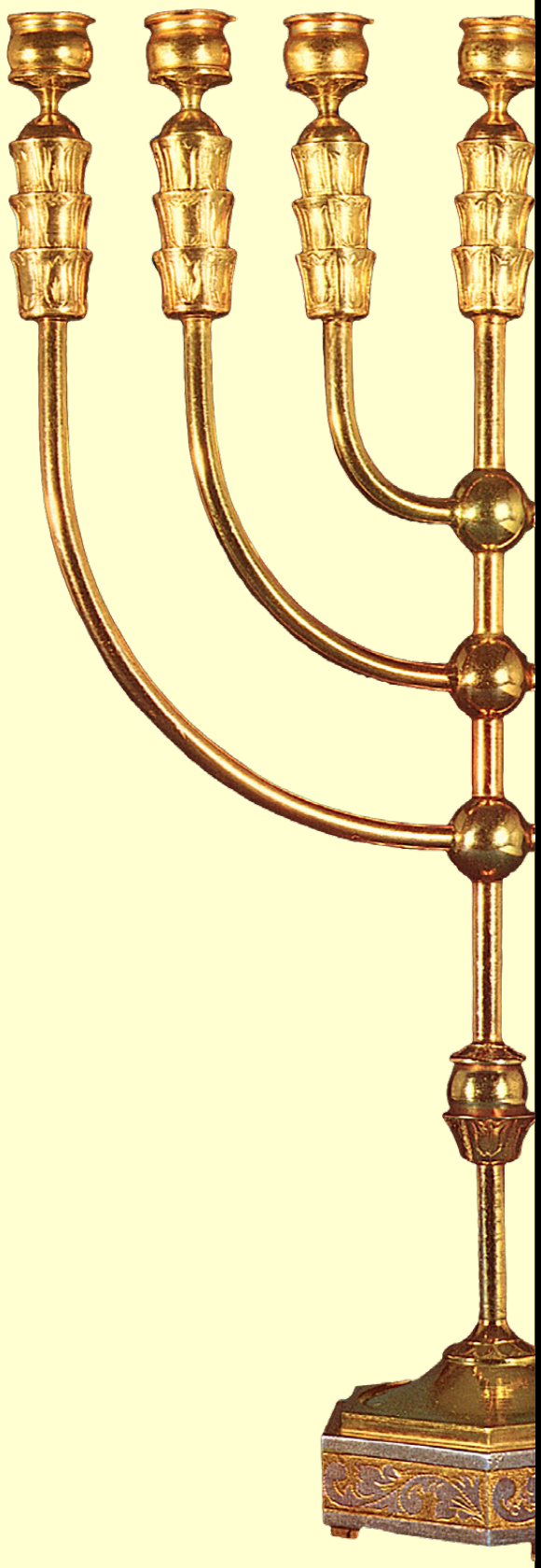
Judaism is also unique in its intellectual and brilliant design, in its basis in reason and proof, and its in full compliance with human nature, offering real happiness and no conflict with human nature. Judaism is founded on principles which are rational and comply with man's nature as a philosophical and psychological being. Not one law in all of Judaism goes against man's nature. Unlike Catholicism which frowns upon divorce and praises celibacy, Judaism embraces the need at times for couples to divorce if they will be happier that way, and Judaism also embraces man's need for sexual happiness and children. These are just two examples of how Judaism approaches life honestly. Catholicism makes man into a mystical and infallible saint or an angel, one who is above actual human drives and emotions. This opposes Judaism, and true human nature. Judaism accepts that man's happiness must stem from his being in line with his nature. And Judaism doesn't hide our leaders' sins. We have no saints, all men sin: "For man is not wholly righteous on Earth who does what is good and doesn't err" (Koheles 7:20).

Judaism realizes that besides man satisfying his psychological needs, he has a much higher part which must be addressed: his soul. By man ignoring this essential part of his nature, he will never reach his ultimate, Divine mission of approaching God. Man achieves this mission and ultimate happiness by his immersion in study of creation and Torah, actualizing his true goal and purpose in an appreciation of the Creator. Torah, Prophets and Writings, along with the Talmud, were written in a highly stylized format which takes years to master. Their style is such, that as one delves deeper and deeper, he or she finds more profound ideas. This analysis and search satisfies man in its very process, as well as through enlightenment of new insights. As God possesses infinite wisdom, man will always see new insights, provided he has toiled under the tutelage of those before him trained in the method of Talmudic and Biblical exegesis, teamed with the essential modes of interpretations only found in the Oral Law, which God also communicated to Moses on Sinai.

The system of Jewish law—halacha—is also a major component of Judaism. It guides man's every action from waking and prayers, to blessings over food, ethical and moral conduct, business practices, social relationships, and Holidays. All areas of life are always placed in check as man judges each of his actions for Torah compliance prior to commencement. This process engages man's mind throughout his days when he is not involved in study, which must comprise the majority of his waking hours.

In truth, there is no comparison between the Divinely designed system of Judaism and man made religions for the precise reason that there is no comparison between God and man: man made all other religions. God made Judaism, the Bible.

This of course is a very small glimpse into Judaism. A more encompassing appreciation of God's wisdom is only possible through much more study. ■



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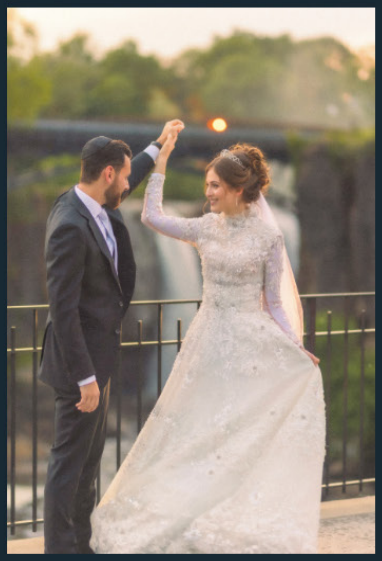
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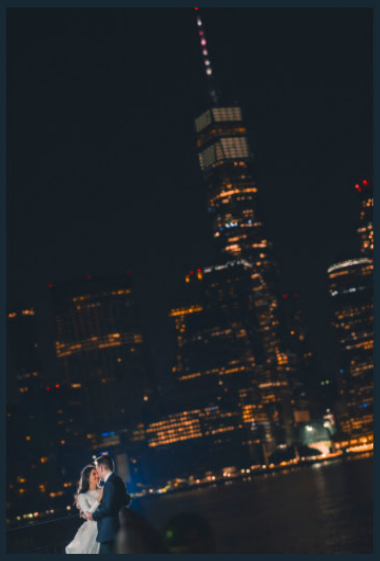
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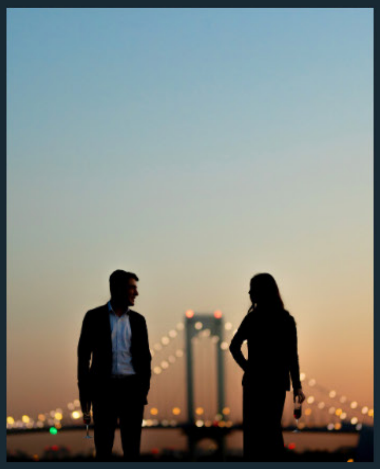


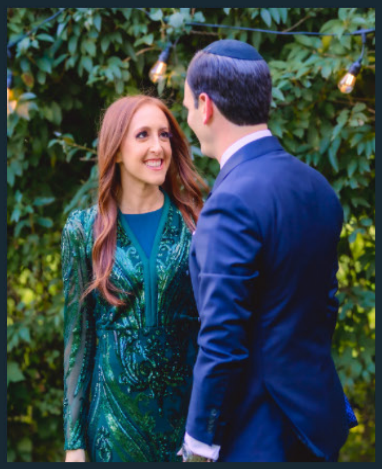


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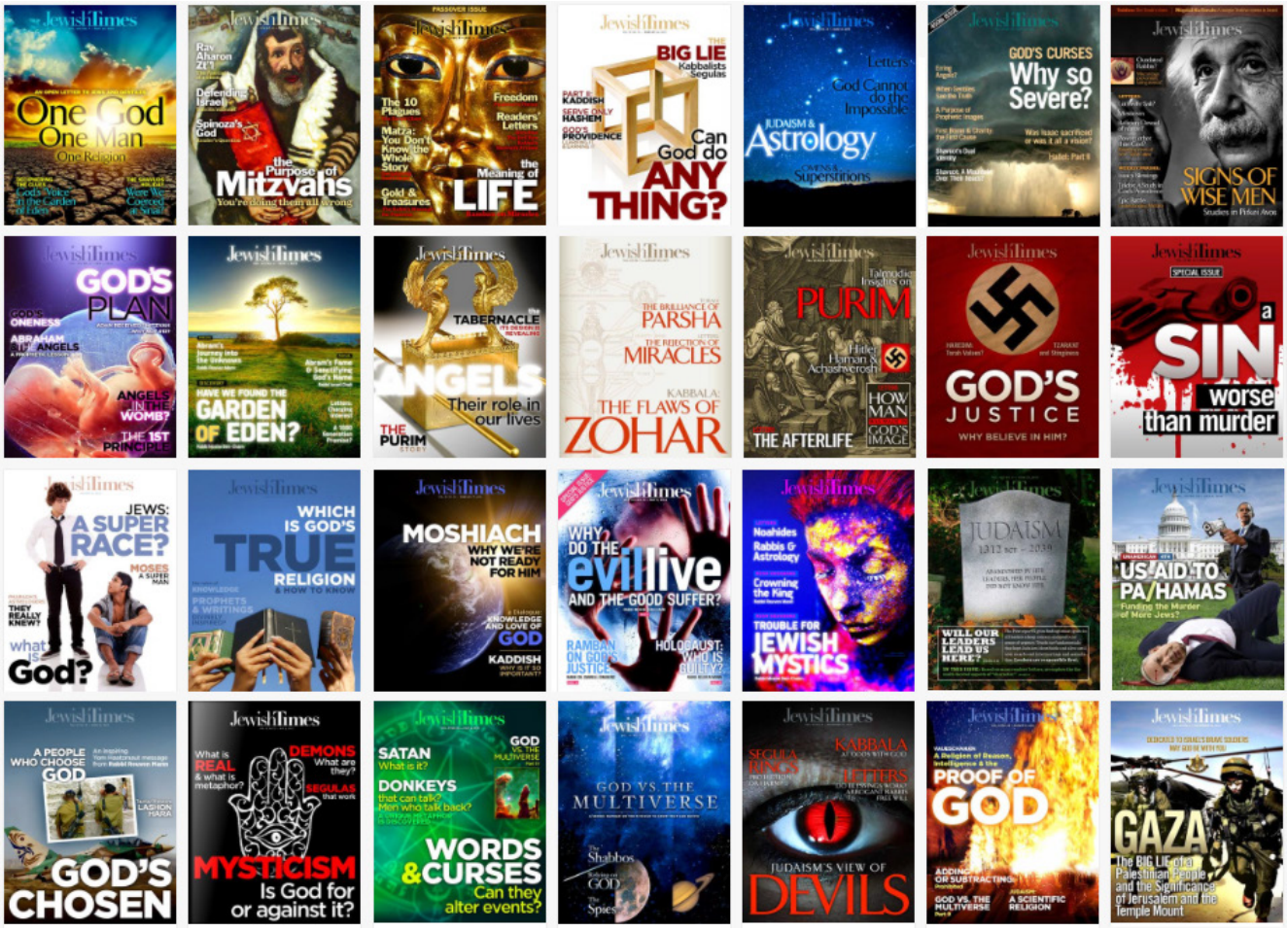
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