

MIRACLES AND ENIGMAS IN THE TORAH

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The Torah given by God consists of many strata.
. It has the literal meaning Pshat. -The Written law . Then there exists the Oral Law that today is the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmud that is summarized by the Shulchan Aruch . Then there exists the mystical torah -Nistor the Kabbalah that is recorded in the Zohar and Commentaries. Then there is Drush. -insights that individuals through out the generations question the contents of the Written Torah and offer their own insights. This is what Aruch Hashulchon describes in laws of blessing in the morning. Jews make a blessing that God gave the Torah past tense . They also make a blessing that God gives the torah present tense. In every generation man is given an opportunity to add on to God's Torah by offering his own observations. These observations are called Drush.

I will now elaborate on some difficult passages on the Chumosh Tanach the Hhebrew Bible in Beraishis Genesis

In the first chapter of the book of Beraishis - Genesis “God worked and created the world in six days and rested on the Seventh day.” Question God is all powerful-Omnipotent. God does not get tired . Why did God have to rest?

Possibly an explanation could be the following. In the first Six Days God exercised only Divine Providence the first Six Days of Creation. The Six Days are Periods - a measurement employed by God. In human terms they could be the equivalent of zillion of years.

On God’s Seventh day another period of God’s years God did not use only Divine Providence , but mandated that man/woman participate in the continuous creations and maintenance of the universes that are being constantly created and destroyed by God as well as man/woman . That is the meaning of God rested. That

God made man/woman a partner in the creation of the universes. That is the meaning of the Talmudic statement that everyone must say because of me God created the universe. God makes man/woman a partner in creation . It is not only Divine Providence; but also the input of man/woman.

In the same sense , man/woman can create Torah -Drush by recording their observations and difficult passages or passages that beg for an explanation and present problems for the student of the Bible. As a matter of fact not only believing Orthodox Jews study the Bible ; but also non observant Jews , non Jews , Christian theologians , Muslim theologians Budhists and men /women of all faiths ,as well as, skeptics and atheists. We have Bible critics employing modern scientific technics and experts in ancient languages comparing the texts of the Bible to other ancient religious manuscripts and books who claim that the ideas of the Bible are present in other religious and ancient legal manuscripts dating back 4000 - 5000 years ago. There could have been borrowing one religion and culture from an other. There exists many schools of Bible study among Jews Christians and

Muslims that fall into two main categories traditional and reform. The traditionalists consider the words of the Bible God given and sacred, The Reform and Bible critics consider the Bible an anthology of many human authors over hundreds or thousand years that patched together what today is the Bible .

Each of the schools begin with the premise that mirrors their basic believes or disbelieves . Thus their questions certainly merit understanding and attention Their conclusions , however , are shaped differently by the believer as opposed to the the skeptic and atheist. The Bible then becomes another manifestation of the ideas and theology of the individual who studies the Bible. . Each of the queries of the skeptic and non believer and Bible critic have been examined carefully and answered . However the believer is satisfied while the non believer will remain unconvinced.

However Bible scholarship becomes richer from the wealth of questions and the attention that the Bible study elicits from a broad spectrum of the world population.

Now back to Drush and let us examine an other problematic area of the Bible . Again we will turn to Beraishis Genesis. Immediately after the Bible related that God creates the universe and creates Adam and Eve we are treated to the adventure of Eve and snake . The snake has a conversation with Eve and tempts her to partake of the fruit of the tree of wisdom. Eve hesitates at first informing the snake that God forbade man/woman to eat such fruit. The snake's logic prevails. Eve tastes the fruit and finds it delicious. Then she convinces her husband to eat. God then appears punishes both of them by driving them out of the Garden of Eden and both must now die. Would they have listened to God they could have lived for eternity.

This story is extremely problematic if taken literally. How can a snake talk?

The same question of an animal talking arises in the book of Numbers when Bilaam is hired by the King of Moav to curse the Jews. He sets out on his journey to the appointed place but in the middle of his journey his donkey lies down and refuses to move even after Bilaam strikes it several times. The donkey suddenly opens her mouth and addresses Bilaam why are you striking me.

“Don’t you know that I have always served you day and night? ” at that instant an angel with a raised sword appeared to Bilaam. Bilaam was surprised and was ready to cancel his trip to curse the Jews . However the Angel told him that he was free to proceed. However he would talk only those words that what God would place in his mouth. God forced Bilaam to bless the Jews instead of cursing them .

Since when do donkeys talk?

These are not my questions and they were not raised by Bible critics or the reform school of Bible studies. A Talmudic sage and great Jewish philosopher asks these questions. His name is Rav Saadia Gaon. He lived over 1000 years ago.

Rav Sadiaah Gaon replies that in both cases - Eve and Bilaam both individuals had dreams .that the snake talked and the donkey talked.

Reality was something else. Rav Sadye Goan’s interpretation is recorded in the Chumosh Mikoet Gedolot from one of the Commentaries

Another Commentary states that Eve knew the language of snakes . She was able to communicate with them in their language.

I favor the traditional interpretation that both the snake talked and the donkey talked.

The Talmud states that on the sixth day of creation God created the future mouth of the donkey to talk. Probably God likewise created all other miracles then even though they represent a change in nature for a snake to talk and a donkey to talk.

Rambam incorporates this Medrush in his Guide to the Perplexed where Rambam posits that the world we live in and the universe will continue to eternity and not change. If that is true how can one explain miracles. ? The answer is that miracles were already created in potential form at the twilight of the Sixth day of Creation. . So God decides when He wants to change the laws of nature with a miracle.

Rambam writes in his monumental legal Code Mishne Torah Book of Kings Chapter 12:2 that God never revealed the details of the future coming of the messiah.

We will not know the details until the advent of his coming. Only when Jews will be gathered from the four corners of the earth in a sovereign Jewish State will God reveal that the Messianic era has come. The details are presently unfolding.

So too, God did not reveal all the details of all the stories in the Bible that defy common sense and are open to interpretation.

We know by tradition and the testimony of millions of Jews and non Jews as to the historical truth of Revelation at Mount Sinai 3500 years ago when the Written and Oral Torah was given. We do know that the exodus from Egypt and all the miracles preceding and following the exodus are historically true. We do know that the Jews wandered in the desert for 40 years sustained and protected by God. We do know that they entered Israel 40 years later and conquered the land. After 400 years they built the first

Temple that lasted over 400 years. Ten tribes were exiled by Assyria all over the world. The remaining two tribes were exiled to Babylonia by the emperor Nevuchanezer. . The Persian Emperor Cyrus permitted them to return and rebuild the second temple after 70 years in Babylonia. The second Temple lasted over 400 years and was destroyed by the Romans. The Jews were exiled over the entire world. All these events are historical truth. However the other details of many of the stories in the Bible were not revealed and thus are open to different interpretations.

The greatest miracle of all the miracles is the fact that Jews survived 2000 years in spite of all the European hatred that lasts to this day. The fact that God did not enable Jews to establish a sovereign state Israel until 1947 is another proof of divine Providence. Would a Jewish state have been established before the discovery and use of the atom bomb in 1945 at the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan that ended the war in the Pacific by forcing the Japanese to surrender , the Jews would never have been able to survive

Anti- Semitism is a 2000 year disease that is very much alive today .as it was in 1933-1945 the period of the Nazis and World War II- that resulted in the murder of 6 million Jews and 1/2 or 1 million Jewish children.

What the world seems to forget is the link between the murder of Jews and the murder of non Jews by the same murderers of Jews over 100 million non Jews lost their lives during the Nazi plague. Over 25 million Russians lost their lives during the Stalin and Communist plague from 1917-1980. Over 40 million Chinese lost their lives during the Chinese Communist rule from 1955-1970. Most of those in Russia and China starving to death from their failed experimentation of destroying traditional tested methods.

No more than 20 years following the establishment of Israel the Jews already had an atom hydrogen and neutron

bomb in 1967.

. 7 million Jews today can hold off 2 billion Europeans and Muslims. Such is Divine Providence of delaying the resurrection of the Jewish State and protecting them to enable them to survive the murderous hatred of the Europeans for 2000 years.

The lesson of Eve Adam and the snake is that boundaries exist and must be respected. Man/woman are not free to ignore boundaries. If they ignore the they may very well self destruct. . If a person jumps from a twenty story floor he/she will die. If a person engages in unsafe sex with no protection he/she may get sexually transmitted diseases. If a person over doses on drugs they may die. .

The Torah employs animals talking to demonstrate that such a person who ignores boundaries is dumber than an animal. Animals will escape danger and will not eat any thing that is poisonous. But stupid people do.

The same moral lesson is taught in the story of Bilaam .

. The Torah is an eternal code of ethics and morality. and a code of conduct for Jews and non Jews to achieve eternity and salvation to inherit spiritual ever lasting life.

The Torah also demonstrate that the righteous man/woman will be rescued by God.

The Talmud writes and Maimonides copies in The Guide to the Perplexed that the story of Eyav Job never occurred. It is a work of fiction. only written as a philosophical text to show how one man coped with tragedy. That at the end God compensated him for his faith in God.

I personally believe literally that all the stories in the Bible did occur historically

There exists a tradition that Eljah was the Biblical Pinchos the son of Aaron.and he lived 400 years . Another opinion is that he was the reincarnation of the soul of Pinchos. So we are presented with a difference of opinions who really was Elijah.

At the end we can remain believers in all the miracles and accept the fact that we can not fathom all phenomena in the real world so much less the mystical and miracles in the Bible. All life is a miracle.

By definition a miracle is supernatural and transcends under standing. Let us be humble enough to concede this realty.

God is quite happy and wants all religions as long as they respect the rights of others to differ. Otherwise, God would reveal Himself continuously and proclaim His absolute truth. Since God does not do that , it means that He does not really care. There exists more than one path to God.

Judaism similar to other faiths believes that it possesses absolute truth.

Judaism differs from other faiths that man women who do not accept our absolute truth -and from our vantage point are wrong -can ,nevertheless , achieve salvation following their truth. When humans follow their own truth and tradition that differ from Judaism they are all the chosen by God and will achieve salvation and reach the goal in life what God created them .

The above basic ingredient and central tenet of Judaism - that others who are dead wrong – have the right to remain wrong - is the secret of 4000 years of Jewish survival. It is the secret for a happy marriage

positive relationship with ones children and spouses of one's children neighbors and strangers. It is the secret of nations living peacefully with each other.

It is the secret to longevity.

Another basic principle every one must believe beshvilli nivro hoolom. God created the universe just for me. I am the smartest the most important the most noble individual in the universe . Would there exist no other creations God would still have created the universe just for me.

When man woman have this elitist image of self worth about themselves who can hurt them ? You can get hurt from equals . If the ones who hurt you are your equals , they would have the common sense not to hurt you. If they do not possess such common sense then they are not your equals .They are worse than animals . You do not get hurt from animals cockroaches and grasshoppers.

One must likewise appreciate the mandated need for

every living being certainly all humans man woman even animals to feel important. People kill -legally - in duels - when someone dares insinuate that they are not important. Every statement that you address to an other person has two components or elements: [1] the subject matter [2] his her ego . When a person makes a statement and demands or refuses anything his/ her ego and reputation is on the line .

The Biblical Purim story in the Book of Esther is the perfect example.

Achiasvarus emperor of Persia usurped the throne of Persia. In order to gain legitimacy he married the deposed emperor's daughter Vashti who was one of the most beautiful women in the world. A few years later Achasvarus threw a banquet to exhibit his new found power by becoming legitimate and casting aside the stigma of usurper. He invited all the royalty of the


ancient world and the most powerful despots and military leaders all sexist males who considered all women as idiots no brains -the stupid blond and tools to gratify males' weaknesses. Ahasvarus wanted to show that he could outdo all of them . To prove his point he ordered Vashti the deposed emperor's daughter who granted him legitimacy to appear for all his guests in the nude

Vashti refused. Again Ahasvarus ordered her to appear immediately . Again Vashti refused . The third time he ordered his soldiers to fetch her remove her clothes and present her for everyone to witness her startling beauty. . Vashti was dragged screaming and presented in front of Ahasvarus. Vashti filled her mouth with some very strong wine . Instead of swallowing the wine she walked over to Ahasvarus turned and spit the wine in his face. The rest is history. Obviously Vashti did not survive very long afterwards. I confess that I edited this tale somewhat about Vashti filling her mouth with wine and spitting the wine in the face of Ahasvarus. But the rest of the story does appear in the Bible Book of Esther 1-22 ; the Commentaries of Targum , Rashi , Even Ezer , Bior Hagro , Malbim and the Babylonian Talmud Megillah 12a ,22; Sanhedrin 10 a.

I have summarized above the Persian and world mind set and set of values of the generation living at the time the Purim miracle unfolded that saved the Jewish people in 127 nations controlled by Persia from a holocaust. I have highlighted the psychological issues that controlled this historical episode. What is inhumanity barbaric and savage to the Western mind today was accepted as normal 2300 years ago. It was considered normal in 1939-1945 when the Nazis killed over 6 million Jews. This was done with the complicity of all Europeans and the Roosevelt administration in the USA .Yes, there existed hasidei umos hoolem the saints who sacrificed their lives to save Jews from the hell of the Nazis. But they were in the hundreds or at most thousands. The other billions- the overwhelming majority including Church leaders and religious heads of other religions were all silent. They were all asleep until the Nazis were defeated . Then the Vatican came to life to save the Nazis murderers and provided safe havens until they escaped to South American countries notably Argentina to escape justice.

This savage and inhuman behavior was the accepted life style toward women- half of the human race . This life style was the foundation and fore runner of the planned holocaust by Haman with the blessing of Ahasvarus the Persian emperor.

It took a woman-Queen Esther to thwart the murderous plans of a Haman.

 **Interestingly the book of Esther is the only Book in the Canon of the Bible or what Christians call the Old Testament that does not have the name of God even though the Purim story is a historical proof of Divine Providence.**

Esther , the niece and later the wife of Mordecai is forcefully taken to be one of the contestants to become

the new Queen . Esther among thousands of contestants is chosen to be the new Queen. Esther refuses to divulge her religion. If Esther kept Kosher how could she keep her religion secret. Why was it necessary to hide her identity in the first place ? . Mordecai kept in touch with Esther. Wouldn't the fact that they were communicating with each other have given her away? Haman was a brilliant strategist . Would he have not suspected that Esther is Jewish? Didn't he have spies?

Of course , keeping kosher would have been a give away. The answer is that Esther did not keep Kosher. Why was it necessary to have her identity secret. ? Mordecai was no fool. He knew and understood very well the mind set of the savages he was dealing with. He anticipated that sooner or later the Jews would be next to Vashti. If Ahasvarus could kill his wife the most beautiful woman in the world what compunction would stop him from agreeing to kill the Jews? It was only a question of time.

For such a contingency Mordecai wanted to be prepared. What better way than to have a shrewd beautiful woman at the royal court as the wife of the emperor. However the instant she would spill the news that she is Jewish the element of surprise would be gone. Mordecai did not communicate with Esther being

aware of the spies Haman and Achasvarus had. On the rare occasion that they did communicate it was done through trusted third parties.

We mentioned earlier that Esther was married to Mordecai. For a married woman to have conjugal relations with an other man is a mortal sin . True, Esther was forcefully taken in the competition to replace Vashti as the Queen after Vashti was murdered. She won the competition -against her will and was selected as the new Queen. However , Mordecai should have given a Get Jewish divorce to Esther. In that manner she no longer would have remained in the status of being a married woman with all the complications that such a status engenders, why then did Mordecai not free Esther?

There exist numerous answers. What I suppose is that Esther was Mordecai's niece and when both of her parents died Mordecai raised her and she lived at his home. He never married her. So she never was married when she was rounded up together with all the maidens to stand in the competition to become Queen Since Esther never was married Mordecai , of course , did not have to free her. She already was free. The Talmud merely conjectures suppose Esther was

married to Mordecai what would Jewish Law dictate under such circumstances. She is a married woman and she is forced to have sex , Is she supposed to fight her rapists and be killed? If she gets pregnant from the rapist is the resulting child a mamzer -illegitimate?

Through our Jewish history Jewish women were raped and many got pregnant from their non Jewish assailants. Anti-Semites made it a point to rape Jewish women . They preferred married women because a married woman would offer them greater satisfaction since she was experienced. Plus they would be inflicting greater pain and hurt to a married woman than one single since the married woman would be in violation of her oath of fidelity, plus she loves her husband. Such tragedies befell the Jewish people when the Greeks seized Eretz Yisroel from the Persians. Every maiden once married was forced to first have relations with the lord or governor. One of the reasons that the Chashmenoyim revolted against the Greeks was to save the honor of the Jewish maidens that were bedded by the lords following their wedding

Jewish law was sympathetic . Under ordinary circumstances when a married woman has an affair she is forbidden to live with her husband. She likewise is forbidden to her new lover. Thus she loses on both fronts. However if she is raped , she is not penalized. If the rapist is a non Jew and she got pregnant , the child is not considered a mamzer-illegitimate. Thus the problem of Jewish married women being raped , at least the Rabbis did not penalize them nor their offspring.

If the woman was married to a Kohen- a descendant from the priestly family of Aaron the restrictions were traditionally stricter. Even if she was raped by a non Jew she was forbidden to her husband the Kohen.

The Rabbis, nevertheless, found a solution by annulling her marriage to the Kohen. So when she was raped she was in effect not a married woman. They also questioned her husband's status if he really qualified to

be considered a Kohen. If his status was questionable she was permitted to return to her husband. They also ruled leniently like those authorities who do not consider a woman who had relations with a non Jew for bidden to a kohen as a Divine Law. It is only Rabbinical. Under such extenuating circumstances that we described the Rabbis were able to find a Halachic[in accordance with Jewish Law] solution to permit the victim who was raped to return to her husband. I discuss these questions at great length in my Responsa on the Four Parts of the Shulchan Aruch Books 10 on the internet.

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At any rate the Rabbis of the Talmud use hypothetical examples from the as if situation if Esther would have been married what would Jewish law dictate under such circumstances. Thus the laws learned from the as if situations were later applied to real tragedies faced by married Jewish women raped by anti- Semites. But Esther never was married . Therefore Mordecai had no need or reason to divorce her.

Or else , Esther was married to Mordecai .

Mordecai did free her with a Get. Again , the Rabbis employed the as if logic . What would have happened if she would have remained a married woman what would Jewish law dictate under the circumstances.

Or else Esther was married to Mordecai . Mordecai never divorced her because there existed a decree in Persia that anyone questioning the morality of the Emperor's sexual behavior would lose his /her head.

Or else Esther was married to Mordecai and Mordecai did not give her a Get -Jewish divorce. I confess that I do not know why.

Why did Mordecai refuse to bow to Haman?

The answer is that Haman proclaimed himself a god. A Jew is mandated to sacrifice his life rather than accept an other religion . Bowing to Haman would have meant that Mordecai the leader of the Jews recognized Haman as a god . This would have caused many Jews to follow the example of Mordecai and accept Haman as a god.

But here was a question of genocide . Would it not be better to accept Haman as a god rather than have all the Jews in 127 nations under Persian rule be killed?

Mordecai had no inkling that Haman was such an animal and that Achashvaros was such an idiot as to agree. Plus , Mordecai figured that he had an ace card in his hand-Esther. In back of his mind he figured that Esther would come to the rescue-which she did.

No one in his right mind would figure that the Persian who had a reputation of tolerance for all religions [Esther 1:8] would swing to the other extreme and order the killing of all Jews.

Who could imagine that Germany the cradle of the enlightenment together with France would send their Jews to the ovens of Auswitch and other concentration camps?

Who would believe that the USA would do nothing to save the Jews? After all Roosevelt was a semi god the father of the New deal who saved the USA in the great depression . WHO WOULD BELIEVE THAT HE WOULD DO NOTHING TO SAVE THE JEWS ?

BUT THE UNBELIEVABLE UNFORTUNATELY BECAME THE REALITY.

Today Jews all over the world and in Israel must all

take a deep breath and absorb the lesson of ancient Persia and modern Germany France all of Europe and the USA.

Purim marks a dramatic event in the collective Jewish mind. Religious as well as secular Jews celebrate this momentous miraculous event when Jews were saved by the cunning of a woman. Perhaps the reason God's name is not mentioned even once is to dramatize the concept that God helps and saves only those who help themselves and save themselves.

This lesson is impressed upon Jews today when a new Haman has arisen in Iran the new name for Persia who wants to develop an atom bomb to wipe all the Jews and Israel off the map. Perhaps we should take the lesson of Esther and the relationship of God in this equation. The holocaust was the culmination of what happens to the Jews when they depend on others. The anti-Semitism of 2000 years instigated by the Church bore fruit with the murder of over 6 million Jews.

All the Europeans with the exception of a handful are guilty as accomplices in the murder of these Jews. The Europeans today are guilty as accomplices with Iran and all the other Arabs who want to wipe the Jews and their state off the map.

God will only save the Jews if Jews save themselves. This is the moral lesson of the story of Esther.

Barbarism sadism and cruelty exhibited toward women is the fore runner of barbarism sadism and cruelty exhibited toward all who are weaker than the savage.

This was the attitude of the Nazis and Europeans WHO ARE EQUALLY GUILTY IN THE MURDER OF OVER 6 MILLION JEWS. THIS IS THE SAME ATTITUDE EXISTING TODAY IN IRAN THE

MIDDLE EAST AND EUROPE REGARDING JEWS AND ISRAEL.

Let us get back to the original story of Vashti in the Bok of Esther.

The moral of this story was that there were two interwoven elements . [1] the subject matter to have Vashti appear in the nude to have her beauty displayed in front of all his guests. [2] and the ego pride and reputation of powerfulness sadism and cruelty another slant shade side of power of Ahasvarus.

Vshti failed to grasp the psychological element or elected to stand fast as the protector and defender against male sadism . Perhaps she thought herself as a martyr defending the right of all women in the empire to revolt against the abuse of men against the weaker sex. Her sisters through out the ages achieved the same mission by having greater patience intuition and using their beauty duplicity cunning better timing and greater wisdom than men and not defying their husbands' impulses and stupid demands. Vashti as the

legitimate Princess had little patience with the drunken brute- Achasvarus . She was forced to marry him. Now all her anger exploded. She paid with her life for the expression of her true feelings.

The moral of this tale is that in all our dealings with our spouses we remember that when we argue it is not only the subject matter ; but the pride of our spouse that is involved. The prudent course most of the time even when your spouse is one trillion per cent wrong is to agree with what your spouse wants. That is the secret of a lasting marriage.

When you feel that you are the most important person in the world , what does it really mean or matter to you to agree to the wrong course if that will make your spouse happy.

Now who should agree the husband or the wife?

The Torah says the husband should agree. Abraham was ordered by his main wife Sarah to throw out of Abraham's home Hagar his second wife and Yismuel Abraham's son with Hagar . The reason was because Sarah feared that Yismuel would bodily harm if not

kill Isaac- Sarah's and Abraham's son. God agreed with Sarah. God told Abraham. "everything that Sarah tells you you are to listen " The Jewish way is to listen to your wife even if she is wrong. Doing that will build up her pride.

If you listen to her she will listen to you. If you crown her as a Queen she will crown you as King , no as Emperor . You will then have peace at home a good marriage and have a stable home for your children free from the worry of divorce. The wise men throughout the centuries and ages have said beware of a woman defied. A woman can be as compassionate as a mother. She can turn and be as vicious as a tigress.

That has been my secret for having a good marriage for the last almost 50 years.

This same attitude one must adopt when one experiences trials , tribulations , adverse circumstances

and tragedy.

One must believe in himself herself. One can and will overcome all adversity no matter what it takes.

For longevity one must also walk a mile or two or three every day , in addition , to exercise. One must watch their intake of food. Food is to be eaten like medicine -ordered by physicians and dieticians.

Last but not least- NEVER RETIRE. Remaining in your profession trade or business endows you with your sense of importance and accomplishment.

God helps those who help themselves. The miracle of creation is that God enables man woman to think they are God. Man woman is granted the power -free will - to act like God. If they abuse this power they self destruct , if others whom they abuse do not do it first- legally or not.