

Does G-d Need Our Protection?

Category: Beshalach, Shemos

What is the key difference between Judaism and other religions? The explanation will shed light on a perturbing question from this week's parsha.

The Riot Tradition

When did it become acceptable for people to express their indignation through violence? Why is it that when people get angry, they begin to riot - destroying property and even taking. Where did they learn this from?

This behavior is not new. Throughout history, Jews have been subjected to horrors like the inquisition, Chmelnicki pogroms, the Crusades and the Holocaust. Often, the excuse was because we "insulted" the Christians by not accepting their faith. They killed and maimed millions upon millions of men, women and children in "defense" of their god's honor.

The truth is that people behaved that way much before Christianity was even a thought. When Moses told Pharaoh that the Jews needed to go out into the desert to sacrifice to their G-d, Pharaoh didn't understand why they couldn't do it in Egypt. Moses then explains to him that the Jews would be sacrificing sheep which was considered sacred by the Egyptians. "When the people see us sacrificing the 'sacred' sheep they will surely stone us!" Moses explains. We see that even back in Egypt they were protective over what they found sacred and were prepared to violently defend its honor.

For some reason, this is much less common among the Jewish people. Why don't we riot when our G-d is insulted? Trust me, it's happened countless times in history!

Time and Again

Let's stop for a moment to examine this week's parsha.

In four instances in this week's Parsha, we find angry Jews complaining to Moses. In the beginning of the Parsha when the Jews were faced by the sea in front of

them and the Egyptians behind them, they began to complain to Moses and, as the Midrash relates, they even wanted to go to war with Egypt.

Why would the Jews, after all the miracles they'd witnessed in Egypt, have any doubt in G-d's ability to save them again here?

They were thinking that G-d performed miracles in Egypt in order to save them, but outside of Egypt, G-d might not fend for them and instead wait for them to react and do something on their own.

Reassuring them, Moses told them to stay put. "Stand and see the deliverance of G-d which He will do for you today! G-d will fight for you, while you remain silent." In fact, even the Egyptians finally came to the same conclusion. The Jews remained safe with G-d's fierce protection.

Nevertheless, later on in the parsha we see that they still had a little trouble digesting the idea that G-d would always protect and sustain them. When they arrived in Mara and realized that the water there was bitter, they again complained to Moses. Here again, they must have had the same worry, "True that G-d had protected us both in and out of Egypt, but that was protection from our enemies. However, for food and drink, we're on our own." Then when G-d sweetened the water, the Jews realized that He wasn't just a warrior but an all-time caring G-d.

Yet soon after that, the Jews continued to doubt the fact that G-d had everything under control when they showed their concern about finding food. "G-d could sweeten bitter waters" they thought, "because to change something is only a 'small task' on G-d's part. On the other hand, to supply food in the middle of the desert means to create something from nothing, seemingly a much bigger deal."

Then they again saw the great care G-d had for them when they were supplied with the manna.

It didn't take long, however, for their belief to get shaky again. When they reached Rephidim they thought, "In Mara the job was only to change bitter water to sweet, but here there is no water at all to work with. Perhaps G-d expects us to find water for ourselves." But again, G-d gives the Jewish people water.

Reading these stories makes you wonder: What was the deal with these Jews?

After G-d performed numerous miracles for them, why were they still worried? Time and time again G-d proved his ability in every possible situation. Why were the Jews so reluctant to accept that as reality?

Who Creates Whom?

The explanation is that they came from Egypt, where it was the way of life for man to take care of his idols, his deities. He fed them, watered them and cleaned them. They couldn't relate to a G-d whom they couldn't see, hear or feel, yet Who takes care of them and watches over them. Although they saw it clearly, the concept had to be proven once again every time they were faced with a crisis.

Let's think about this.

Why, in fact, is it that in every other religion their gods have to be taken care of, while in Judaism, the exact opposite is true?

The difference is simple: Who created whom?

When man creates his god, inevitably, it needs constant care from its creator, because on its own it is nothing. The value of this g-d lies only in man's decision to believe in it, and the more it is believed in, the more worth is attributed to it.

On the other hand, the one and only G-d, omnipresent and omnipotent, created his believers and his worth remains eternally untouched even if no one believes in him.

It is for this reason that Judaism doesn't seek converts. The number of Jews doesn't affect G-d's greatness. If a person is naturally an immense genius, he doesn't need people to praise him in order to validate his genius. But someone who, like they say, is not dealing a full deck, needs people to validate him all the time.

In simple terms:

All other religions are centered on the man and it is man who creates his god in his own image. In Judaism on the other hand, G-d is the center. In Judaism we know that it is G-d who creates man in His image. This is why other religion can bend and be molded to the needs of the people, while in Judaism it is the people

who need to mold themselves to the eternal everlasting will of the Holy One
blessed be He, Almighty G-d.