

By the Grace of G-d
11 Tishrei 5712
Brooklyn, N.Y.

In reply to your letter and questions contained therein:

I. Re the apparent contradiction between the Omniscience of G-d and man's Free Will (or choice of action), there is a whole literature dealing with the subject, and it is impossible to give an outline of it in the course of a letter. I would refer you, at least, to the Rambam (Hilechoth Teshivah, ch 5). However, I cannot leave without some answer, so I will state very briefly:

G-d's foreknowledge is no contradiction to man's free choice. What could be a contradiction to free choice is compulsion, not knowledge. Hence, a foreknowledge that is not compelling or forcing, is in no way a limitation on one's free choice of action.

I will cite two illustrations. First, assuming that there are men with prophetic knowledge, their forecast concerning certain people does not compel them to act in a certain way and does not rob them of their free choice of action.

Secondly, as you know, G-d is not subject to time, and the past, present and future is all the same to Him (He Was, Is, and Will be, all in One). It follows, that G-d's future is like the past, and as knowledge of a past action is no contradiction to free choice, so is His knowledge of a future action. In other words, G-d knows the thoughts of man and his decisions, and ~~such~~ knowledge does not rob man of thinking and deciding how to act.

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II. Re your question as to my opinion of the theory of Evolution. You do not mention what Evolution you are referring to. Presumably the evolution of vegetable and animal life.

My opinion is, as stated in the Torah, that during the Six Days of Creation, G-d created the Four Kingdoms (minerals, vegetation, animal and man) independently of each other. Our Sages have enlarged upon this question in detail. However, this Creation does not deny the possibility of evolution within each particular species through various mutations.

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III. With regard to your question concerning the role of Aggadah in the Talmud, particularly those dealing with medicine, I want to point out that you are touching upon two distinct questions: Aggadah in the Talmud, and Medicine in the Talmud.

As to Aggadah, not all Aggadoth can be treated equally. In the

introductions to

various editions of Ein Yaakov you will find how our Sages classify the Aggadeth of the Talmud.

As the question of Medicine in the Talmud, they are not at all as fantastic as they may appear. As a matter of fact, many medical suggestions in the Talmud have been confirmed in recent years as to their therapeuting value, although medical science had long derided them.

Generally speaking, however, inasmuch as the nature of the human organism has undergone many changes since those days, the medical advice contained in the Talmud cannot be applied nowadays. But it is quite certain that in their days the remedies were quite effective.

For references consult: Tosafeth Meod-Moten lla ^{דפ"ק} ~~Marah - fish~~, Kosef-Mishnah, ch.4 of Hilchoth Deoth, ch.18, and the sources mentioned in Sdei-Chemed, vol. of Kelolim, under "R" klal 54, where it is stated that due to physical and climatic changes, medical treatment and remedies of old no longer hold good generally.

In the History of Medical Science many illustrations are cited as to changes in both in man's susceptibility to disease and treatment, the development of virus attack, new diseases, etc. There is quite a literature on the subject, and there is no need for me to enlarge upon this subject.

I am surprised that you do not mention in your letter anything about your activities in influencing others to bring them nearer to Torah and Yiddishkeit, which serves also to strengthen one's own convictions.

With blessing,