

By the Grace of G-d
 12th of Menachem Av
 5714, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Greeting and Blessing:

I am in receipt of your letter of August 9, in which you outline your personal views on what you consider the right approach to Judaism. As you see it, the right road is to be reached in two phases: first, the understanding, by reason and intellect, of the language of the Torah, etc. etc., and second, the eventual acceptance of the Divine Covenant and Yoke.

My view, which radically differs from yours, has been made known on several occasions in the past, and I will restate it briefly again.

The world is a well-coordinated system created by G-d, in which there is nothing superfluous and nothing lacking, with one reservation, however: For reasons best known to the Creator, He has given man freedom of will, whereby man can cooperate with this system, build and contribute to it, or do the reverse and cause destruction even of things already in existence. From this premise it follows necessarily that a man's term of life on this earth is just long enough for him to fulfill his purpose on this earth; it is not a day too short, nor is it a day too long. Hence, if he should permit a single day, or week, let alone months, to pass by without his fulfilling his purpose, it is an irretrievable loss for him and for the universal system at large.

The second axiom to bear in mind is that the physical world as a whole, as can be seen clearly from man's physical body in particular, is not something independent and separate from the spiritual world and soul. In other words, we have not here two separate spheres of influence, as the pagans used to think; rather is the world conscious of a unifying force which controls the universal system, what we call monotheism. For this reason, it is possible to understand many things about the soul from their parallels in the physical body.

The physical body requires a daily intake of certain elements in certain quantities obtainable through breathing and food consumption. No amount of thinking, speaking and studying all about the elements can substitute for the actual intake of air and food. All this knowledge will not add one iota of health to the body unless it is given its required physical sustenance; on the contrary, the denial of the actual intake of the required elements will weaken the mental forces of thought, concentration, etc. Thus it is obvious that the proper approach to insure the health of the body is not by way of study first and practice afterward, but the reverse, to eat and drink and breathe, which in turn strengthens also the mental powers of study and concentration, etc.

Similarly in the case of the soul and the elements which it requires daily for its sustenance, known best to its Creator, to which He revealed to all at Mount Sinai, in the presence of millions of witnesses, of different outlooks, walks of life, character, etc., who in turn transmitted it from generation to generation, uninterruptedly, to us, the truth of which is thus constantly corroborated by millions of witnesses, etc.

Thirdly. It is told of a famous German philosopher, the author of an elaborate philosophical system, that when it was pointed out to him that his theory is inconsistent with the hard facts of reality, he replied, 'so much the worse for the facts'. But, the normal approach of a person is, as expressed by Maimonides, that opinions are derived from reality and not reality from opinions. No theory, however cleverly conceived, can change the facts; if it is inconsistent with the facts it can only do harm to its adherents.

The conclusion from all the above, in relation to your suggested approach and order of the two phases, is clear enough. And from the practical point of view, the essential point is this: every day that passes for a Jew without practical living according to the Torah is an irretrievable loss for him and for all our people, hurting them. Inasmuch as we all form a single unity and are mutually responsible for one another - and also for the universal order, and all theories attempting to justify it cannot alter this in the least.

Finally, I want to note that there is a difference in how all the above should affect the individual concerned and his friend who wishes to help him and put him on the right path. Again, the following analogy may be useful. Where a patient places conditions before taking the treatment prescribed by the physician, then notwithstanding the fact that these conditions are detrimental to the complete ~~recovery of the patient~~ therapy, yet, if by going along with the patient at least some measure of success may be achieved, it is necessary to do so, if the patient is quite adamant, for besides the partial help that can be given him this way there is the hope that the patient may sooner or later see reason. This is why I have repeatedly said to you that your approach is wrong and that you are losing valuable time and causing much harm to yourselves by your wrong approach, and though I still do not see eye to eye with me, I want to help you if I can, at least for the present you still follow your own mistaken view. May G-d help you and your friends to see the light and place yourselves on the path of Torah and Mitzvot which ensures the true happiness for both the body and soul in complete harmony.

With blessing,

