

By the Grace of G-d
23rd of Elul, 5728
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Mr. B. Turkel
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Greeting and Blessing:

I am in receipt of your letter of September 10th, in which you touch upon the question of whether the sun revolves around the earth or vice versa, in view of the fact that you heard from a college student that "the truth is that the earth revolves around the sun."

It greatly surprises me that, according to your letter, the student declared that science has resolved that the earth revolves around the sun. The surprising thing is that a person making such a declaration would be about one half a century behind the times insofar as the position of modern science is concerned. For it is approximately one half a century ago that the theory of Relativity was expounded, which was accepted by all scientists as the basis for all the branches of science. One of the basic elements of this theory is that when two bodies in space are in motion relative to one another (actually the theory was initiated on the basis of the movements of stars, planets, the earth, etc.), science declares with "absolute certainty" that from the scientific point of view both possibilities are equally valid, namely that the earth revolves around the sun, or the sun revolves around the earth.

An essential point in the above conclusion is that it is not based on a lack of more definitive knowledge, but this is the inevitable conclusion based upon the present position of science, namely that in principle it is impossible that there could ever be scientifically proven which of the two, the sun or the earth, revolves around the other.

Needless to say, any particular scientist, like any individual, is entitled to his own opinion as to which alternative he prefers, or that he simply is inclined to believe in one rather than the other. However, this is only an expression of a personal preference which any individual human being is entitled to. But it would not be true to say that science has resolved the question in favor of one school of thought against the other. To be sure, there were scientists who made such declarations over one half century ago, as mentioned above, and this provides at least some explanation why the textbooks in the elementary schools have still retained that outdated position. However, it is surprising that a

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college student, who has already passed through highschool and has entered college, and should therefore have some knowledge of the theory of Relativity, should attribute to science such an unscientific and obsolete statement.

To sum up the above, it is clear that where one says that it is possible to be a scientist and accept the idea that the sun revolves around the earth, and another one says that science rejects this idea (I emphasize the word science, as distinct from scientist, as mentioned above) - the first one has both his feet firmly on a scientific foundation, *modern science*, while the second one appears to have remained in the world and time of Copernicus.

I assume from your letter that it is unnecessary to emphasize to you the truth that a Jew's life and his daily conduct must revolve around the Will of the Creator, the Creator of heaven and earth, in a way that it is expressed in action, since, as our Sages said, the essential thing is the deed. The present days of Elul are particularly auspicious to advance and go from strength to strength in this direction, and to do so with joy and gladness of heart.

Hoping to hear good news from you, and wishing you and yours a Kesivo v'Chasimo Tovo, for a truly good and sweet year,

With blessing,

M. Schmerson