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# Rav Avigdor Miller on

# The Real Question



**QUESTION: How did Hashem become Hashem?**

**ANSWER:** A child asks, who made Hashem? Let me explain something.  Suppose you were walking in the desert and you see on a rock, there’s an inscription there: “Kilroy was here.” Now, even if that inscription is not found on any other rock, still, it’s a fact. Kilroy was there.  The fact that it’s not found on any other rock, that doesn’t interest us.  He was there.

This world is so complicated in every detail, it’s insane to think it happened by itself.  Every object in the world testifies to an infinite intelligence that made it. If you know something about molecular biology, you see that the configurations of the molecule are so intensely complicated that such a thing couldn’t happen in that way even once in millions and billions of chances. And there are such configurations that need sometimes 500 or 1000 of them one after the other and each one couldn’t happen even once in billions of chances.  
  
**Anybody with a Little Bit of Common Sense will**

**Recognize that the World was Made by a Creator**

And so it’s out of the question for anybody with a little bit of common sense not to recognize that the world is made by a Creator. And the evolutionists are insane. Why are they doing it?  Because they will just not agree to the principle that there is a Borei. But for the Borei, there’s a scientific explanation – that’s the only scientific explanation.

And therefore they think of crazy ideas and theories and none of them have any substance at all.  Therefore evolution today is a lost cause.  Only it is continued because that’s the only way they can continue to fight back against the overpowering evidence that the world is made by a tremendous wisdom, by a Creator.

Now, once we established that Kilroy was there, it makes no difference if Kilroy was tall or short, skinny or fat.  He was there! You understand that? Once you know there’s a Borei, questions like “Who made the Borei?” are unimportant questions.  There was a Borei! There is an infinite intelligence that made the world. That’s all we want to know.

**Who Made the Borei?**

Who made the Borei?  That’s not the question; that question doesn’t mean anything to us.  Was there a Borei? That’s the question. And the answer is, absolutely.  Positively! Everything in the world says so.

And therefore there’s a Borei and that’s all we have to know.  Such questions like, “What does He look like?” or “Is He tall or short?” that doesn’t interest us at all.  Who made the Borei?  It’s a childish question.  The question is, is there a Borei? Absolutely.

There’s no fact in the world that is as openly demonstrated in the world, in nature, as the fact that the world is made by a Borei and therefore all the apikorsim are going to have to pay for this in Gehinom because they’re going against the most simple common sense.  They’re fighting tooth and nail to defend their silly theories; but when we, the people who live with the knowledge that Hakodosh Boruch Hu bara shamayim va’aretz and we see it corroborated by every fact in the universe then we’re the ones who can laugh at the world who don’t see anything.

*Reprinted from an email of Toras Avigdor. - TAPE # E-190*

**Rabbi Berel Wein on**

**Parshat Bo 5781**



Since every word of our holy Torah carries with it many layers of significance and importance, it is incumbent upon us to understand why this particular word, *Bo,* is employed by the Torah to describe a certain situation.

In the opinion of the commentators to the Torah, the word *Bo*, which appears at the beginning of this week's reading, contains a deeper meaning than the simple translation meaning ‘to come.’ The fact that the word is then followed by the Hebrew word ‘*el*’ meaning not only ‘to’ but perhaps more literally ‘into,’ gives us insight into what the word *Bo* in this context really means.

**More than Just a Mere Visit**

It was not sufficient for Moshe merely to visit or come to the Pharaoh of Egypt to deliver the warnings from G-d regarding the plagues that were going to descend upon the Egyptian nation, because of their refusal to free the Jewish people from bondage.

Moshe could have delivered this information by proxy, by messenger, by letter or any of the other means that human beings used then to communicate one with another.

Rather, it was necessary for Moshe to enter into the brain and feelings of Pharaoh, so to speak, that propels the entire narrative of this week's reading and will lead to the great moment of freedom and emancipation for the Jewish people.

It is as though the L-rd, so to speak, wants Moshe to really understand the stubbornness and almost suicidal behavior of the Pharaoh, and to appreciate that it is this intransigence itself that will be his undoing and the destruction of Egypt.

It is as though the Torah is teaching us that if one is unable to comprehend the depths of the personality of evil, one can never really combat evil in a practical and strong fashion. It is this recognition of the evil lurking originally, though only in the background of events, that is the beginning of the process of preventing it from triumphing.

**The Danger of Wanting to be**

**Recognized as Good Egyptians**

The Jewish people were fooled by the Pharaoh into volunteering for their own forced labor and eventual slavery. They did not recognize his call for patriotism as the true evil that lay behind his national the plan for them. The Jewish people were so willing to be recognized as good Egyptians that they volunteered to become their own worst enemy and submit themselves to centuries of slavery and servitude.

Jewish people, for centuries, have often been unable to perceive that they themselves create the seeds of their own destruction. In the rush for acceptance and approbation by others, Jews are often blinded, willfully overlooking the evil arising around them.

It is insufficient to come to the Pharaoh to argue one’s case. One must be able to come ‘into’ Pharaoh and to see the true motivation that created this situation of sadness and servitude. This lesson, recorded for us in the Torah, forms a message that applies to all ages of Jewish existence and to all circumstances of political, social, and national life.

*Reprinted from the current website of Rabbiwein.com*

**Leadership Qualities**

**By Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss**



In contemporary society, respect for our leaders is almost extinct. We’ve become cynical to the extreme – feeling that our leaders frequently talk out of both sides of their mouths, saying not what they believe but what they think you want them to say, and following the polls rather than their morals and beliefs. It is, therefore, very educational, reassuring, and refreshing to see in the beginning of Sefer Shmos the development of leadership qualities of Moshe Rabbeinu, one of the greatest leaders of all time. From these lessons, we can hopefully absorb what to aspire to and how to train our children.

**Because of an Eagerness and Desire to Learn**

When Moshe Rabbeinu first met up with Hashem by the burning bush, the verse tells us that Moshe said, “Let me turn now and investigate this amazing sight.” Rav Avigdor Miller, Zt”l, Zy”a, points out that if Moshe Rabbeinu did not have an eagerness and desire to learn – as manifested by his turning and investigating, and he would have instead gone on his own way, he would have missed out totally on the revelation. Thus, we see a first step in greatness is the trait of always yearning to learn more.

As a young man, raised with royal treatment in Paroh’s palace by the princess Bisya, Moshe Rabbeinu did not allow himself to relax in splendor. Rather, he went out to his suffering brethren and shared in their fate. This is the great quality that we find in all of our leaders; namely, “Nosei b’ol im chaveiro – Sharing in another’s suffering.” Thus, Rebbetzin Kotler, Zt”l, did not put sugar in her coffee or tea all the years of the holocaust.

When Moshe Rabbeinu saw an injustice being committed against one of his brethren, he didn’t consider his security or his comfort, but rather acted with alacrity in the defense of his own. Then, upon seeing the misbehavior of some of his brethren, he did not concern himself with the repercussions, but immediately chastised them properly. How many lessons can leaders learn from the study of Moshe Rabbeinu, even in his youth

**Another Stunning Attribute**

**Was Moshe’s Unparalleled Humility**

Of course, another stunning attribute of Moshe Rabbeinu was his unparalleled humility. His was not a leadership motivated by the need for accolades or fanfare. His captaincy was not fueled by a desire for power or adoration. For seven days and seven nights, he valiantly attempted to turn down Hashem’s offer of ruler-ship of His people. This speaks volumes for the correct motivation for our aspiring young leaders.

Then, we watch in awe on how Hashem trained Moshe Rabbeinu to pray for his archenemies, Paroh and Mitzrayim. Moshe repeatedly did this to remove the successive plagues from Egypt. I believe this was to train Moshe Rabbeinu in the important leadership quality of being able to pray for, and help even, his antagonists.

Thus, in the desert, Moshe Rabbeinu was able to care lovingly for a nation about which he himself would testify, “Od me’at u’skaluni – A little bit more and they would stone me.” In a similar vein, we find that Mordechai, although he was only, “Ratzui l’rov echav – Favored by some of the people,” he was, “Doveir shalom l’chol daro – Sought peace for all of the people.” This is a tough test of leadership – to be able to care for, and help, even the malcontents and the antagonists.

**A Willingness to Sacrifice**

**Personal Ambition for the Klal**

Moshe Rabbeinu’s willingness to sacrifice personal ambition for the benefit of the Klal is yet another extraordinary example of his greatness as a leader. Upon coming down from Har Sinai, he reached the zenith of his dreams, bringing down G-d’s Torah to his people.

Yet, he willingly sacrificed and smashed it in order that the perpetrators of the golden calf should be spared from defying the written words that he held in his hand. So too, with awesome courage he declared, “If you do not forgive them Hashem, ‘Macheini na mi’sifricha – Blot me out from your Torah.’ ”

We all know the famous Medrash that when Moshe was a shepherd, a lone sheep wandered far from the flock. Upon finding it, Moshe Rabbeinu saw that it was ill and carried it back upon his shoulders. Hashem commented, “You displayed such compassion to one of your flock, I desire you to lead My flock.” Thus we see that mercy, compassion, kindness, and care are necessary components of true Jewish leadership.

Let’s not fall into the trap of being cynical about our own leaders. It is very natural that when someone criticizes us, we react by wanting to take him or her down a peg or two. It is much easier to tear them down and negate their words than to consider that we might be wrong – and need improvement.

**Why People Disparage their Own Rabbis**

This is one of the most frequent reasons why people disparage their own rabbi’s while still manifesting great respect for other rabbonim. It is not only because they grow weary and used to their own Rav over the years. It is also because the other rabbonim have not repeatedly chastised them personally.

Furthermore, let us not succumb to the easy habit of always suspecting our own Rabbis and Roshei Yeshiva of doing things for the sake of kavod. Let us rather consider that by elevating the stature of our leaders, we are ensuring that our children will look up to them, be more likely to listen to them, and have a greater desire to be like them. In short, let’s aspire to the reward of the Talmud, “One who honors Rabbonim will have children who are talmidei chachomim.”

As we continue Sefer Shmos and learn about geulas Mitzrayim, may Hashem bless us with long life, good health, and everything wonderful and may we all merit the final redemption speedily in our days.

*Reprinted from the January 5, 2021 email of The Jewish Vues.*

**Parshas Bo**

**Respect for the Institution**

**By Rabbi Bentzion Shafier**

**Founder of TheSmuz.com**



“*And all of your servants will come to me, bow and say, “Leave!” You together with the nation that is with you, and then we will leave*.” — Shemos 11:8

**Pharaoh remains steadfast in his opposition to HASHEM**

From the first time that Moshe appeared in his court, Pharaoh’s attitude had been, “Who is this HASHEM that I should listen to him?” Time after time, Pharaoh insulted HASHEM and Moshe.

At this point, Pharaoh had already lived through ten months of HASHEM’s demonstrations that He alone created and maintains all. That recognition came at a great cost. Mitzrayim had gone from being the most powerful, developed country in its era to utter financial ruin – and yet Pharaoh remained steadfast in his opposition to HASHEM.

Now, HASHEM is sending Moshe on the final mission: “Tell Pharaoh if he remains in his wickedness, all of the first born in Mitzrayim will be killed.” The stakes were raised.

**Moshe changes the message**

Rashi tells us that when Moshe spoke to Pharaoh, he modified the message. Moshe knew that in the end **Pharaoh himself** would come running back to him and beg him to take the Jews out of Mitzrayim. However, since it wasn’t respectful to mention that the king would come running, Moshe changed the wording to, “Your **servants** will come running.” Rashi explains that this was done out of respect for the monarchy.

## Why treat such a king with respect?

**Why should Moshe treat such a king with respect?**

The question on this Rashi is: why would Moshe treat such a king with respect?

Pharaoh was an enemy of HASHEM and the Jewish people. He did everything in his power to make their lives difficult. Surely, he wasn’t deserving of respect.

This concept becomes difficult to understand when we take into account what his government stood for and who he was as an individual.

**A wicked government**

It would be difficult to imagine a government more evil than Pharaoh’s. Official policy was enslavement and oppression of the Jews – not as a tolerated social ill, but as public policy and mandate of the government.

State law denied Jews all rights – ownership of property, freedom of speech, the right of public assembly. They were treated as chattel, owned by the Mitzrim. Any Egyptian could demand that a Jew work for him without pay at any time.

But more than that, Jews didn’t even have the right to live. As the Jewish people continued to thrive, infanticide became state policy. Pharaoh issued four separate decrees to stem the “Jewish population problem,” eventually commanding the citizens of Mitzrayim to kill the Jewish newborns.

Pharaoh himself was a butcher. When he contracted tzaras, his wise men offered the cure – bathe in human blood. The Medrash tells us that to do this, he would bathe in the blood of Jewish babies each day. However, he needed a bath in the evening as well, and heaven forefend to use stale blood, so each morning and evening he would have 150 innocent Jewish souls slaughtered – for his personal comfort.

Why should Moshe treat such a king with respect?

Respect for the institution not the individual

“Without fear of government, a man will swallow his friend alive.” (Pirkei Avos). Anyone who has lived through a period of lawlessness can attest to the primal fear he felt as he helplessly watched rioting, looting, and mob behavior.

**When There is No One to Talk to**

Ask a recent émigré from South Africa what it is like when a group of thugs appears at his backyard picnic and begins indiscriminately shooting up his family. It’s a country where carjackings, muggings, and armed holdups are the norm, and there is no one to talk to, not because people there are different, but because the respect for authority has melted.

It seems that the answer to this question is the distinction between respecting the **institution** and respecting the **individual**.

For the proper running of society, and therefore for the good of mankind, there needs to be a system of leadership and a hierarchy of authority, what we know as government. For government to be effective it must wield power, and its citizens must respect its authority.

One of the obligations of any member of a society is to obey and respect its leaders. It is a correct and proper manner of behavior. Without it, society itself cannot function.

**An Obligation to Respect the King**

As the king occupies the position of leadership of the country, it is the obligation of all to respect him. That is basic to the good of society. It is the right way to act, and it is the way that HASHEM wants us to act. This respect has nothing to do with the **individual;** it has to do with the **position**.

I may recognize that a leader as an individual is a lout, and I may feel that way about him privately, but as long as he maintains his position, I am obligated to respect him.

**Moshe Rabbeinu acted with respect for the institution**

Moshe Rabbeinu was doing what was right and proper. Despite the fact that this individual was wicked, he held the position of king, so Moshe showed respect for the institution of leadership. Even though that institution was now being used to pursue wicked ends, the institution itself was still worthy of respect, and therefore Moshe acted that way.

This message is especially relevant in our times. Historically, kings viewed their populations as sources of taxes and foot soldiers – vehicles by which to expand their fame and fortune. Rare was the king who actually ruled for the good of his people.

We find ourselves in very different conditions, a government “**of the people, by the people, and for the people.”** Whether we agree with every policy or not, it is an unprecedented advance for the good of man, a regime run for the good of the citizens of that land.

**To us as Jews**

To us as Jews, this is especially poignant. For almost two thousand years, we have wandered from county to country, oppression to oppression, expulsion to expulsion. We now find ourselves welcome members of the American society, citizens with all the rights of any other citizen. We are allowed to operate our own schools in the manner that we see fit. We are allowed to worship in the way that we feel appropriate. We are allowed to conduct our lives in the way that we so choose. The only request made upon us is to abide by the laws of the land.

We have never had it this good. And, therefore, it is incumbent upon us to respect this land, obey its laws, pay homage to its leaders, and appreciate the great blessing that we enjoy in living in this country.

*Reprinted from the website of Theshmuz.com.*

**The Legacy of Chizkiyahu Hamelech in Endangering His Olam Haba to Help His Nation**

**By Daniel Keren**

The January 1st Legal Holiday Hakhel Yarchei Kallah began with a lecture by Rabbi Yisroel Reisman, mora d’asra of the host shul who spoke on the topic of Chizkiyahu Hamelech (King Hezekiah) as detailed in Divrei Hayomim Beis/ II Chronicles (29:1-32:33); whom he described at being one of the great and extraordinary kings in the history of the Jewish people.

Rabbi Reisman also described Chizkiyahu as being a “Post-Holocaust” leader of the Jewish nation akin to the more modern gedolei hatorah of our own recent history such as Rav Aharon Kotler, the Satmar Rebbe, the Ponevizher Rosh Yeshiva and other great leaders who did much to rebuild the Jewish nation after the horrors of the Nazi attempt to institute a Final Solution” to Hashem’s Chosen People.

**The First Holocaust in the History of the Jewish People**

The comparison to the Holocaust is because shortly before Chizkiyahu ascended to the throne of the Kingdom of Yehuda as part of the Malchus Bais Dovid (the royal house of David); the neighboring Kingdom of Israel was conquered by the Assyrians and most of the inhabitants, the Ten Tribes that broke away from the rule of King Rechavim [the son of Shlomo Hamelech] were hauled away from the Holy Land, never to be seen again, and hence the tragic term of the “Ten Lost Tribes of Israel.”



**Rabbi Yisroel Reisman**

Rabbi Reisman discussed how whereas one-third of all Jews were killed and martyred by the Germans (yemach shemo), the loss of the Ten Tribes was a much higher percentage of the then Jewish population of the world. As somewhat of a consolation note, Rabbi Reisman noted that the Navi Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah the Prophet) managed to bring back to the Kingdom of Yehuda, dozens of families from each of the Ten Tribes; so that intermixed with tribes of Yehuda, Binyamin, Shimon and elements of the Leviim and Cohanim [who lived in Levite cities in Yehuda, today are still a few families from each of the Ten Lost Tribes.

But in the aftermath of that original “Holocaust” of the Jewish nation following the loss of the Ten Tribes, Chizkiyahu Hamelech in the words of Rabbi Reisman became the original “Post-Holocaust” monarch whose actions to redeem the Jewish people were highly successful. And he was successful because Chizkiyahu was one of the most righteous kings [and leaders] in all of the history of the Jewish people.

**A Time When Jews Were Attracted by the Haskalah**

Rabbi Reisman noted the comparison to recent Jewish history when during the 1800s and the early 1900s there was a period when many Jews turned away from loyalty to the Torah and became devoted to instead promoting the Haskalah (Enlightenment Age) that sought becoming a part of the more “liberal” environment being developed in the non-Jewish world. This mass defection unfortunately led to the tragedies of World War One and the subsequent Second World War and the Holocaust.

The fact that Chizkiyahu became a righteous Jewish king was a miracle of great unexpected proportions because he was the son of Achaz, a wicked ruler who shut down the Beis Hamikdosh (the Holy Temple in Yerushalayim,) not allowing his own subjects to pray at the holy sanctuary and promoting the worship of idolatry instead of worshipping Hashem properly.

Rabbi Reisman spoke of the spiritual mesiras nefesh of Chizkiyahu. He noted that many Jews throughout our history have been willing to risk their lives on behalf of protecting Klal Yisroel (the Jewish nation,) but Chizkiyahu was one of the few whose concern for his subjects was so great that he was willing to lose his share in Olam Haba (life in the next world) in order to save his people.

**The Six Unique Actions of Chizkiyahu Hamelech**

Rabbi Reisman focused much of his lecture on the Mishna (4:9) of Pesachim that discuss six unique actions that Chizkiyahu undertook to stem the spiritual decline of the remaining Jews who lived in his kingdom following the loss of the Ten Tribes of the neighboring Kingdom of Israel. Three of those actions were endorsed by Chazal (our Sages of blessed memory) and three were condemned.

The first act that he enacted [and which was supported by Chazal] was to deny his wicked father Achaz Hamelech a proper and dignified burial; but to rather drag his father’s corpse through the streets on a bed made of ropes. Through this humiliation, Chizkiyahu was able to afford his father a much need form of kappara (atonement).

One of the first actions undertaken by Chizkiyahu as monarch during the first month of his reign was to open up the doors of the Beis Hamikdosh and restore them. In order to do so, he brought the Kohanim and the Levites and had them assemble in the eastern plaza where he personally addressed them:

“Hear me O Levites! Sancitfy yourselves now and sanctify the Temple of Hashem, G-d of your fathers, removing all the contamination from the Sanctuary. For our fathers have been treacherous, doing evil in the eyes of Hashem, our G-d, and they have forsaken Him…”

It took the Levites and Kohanim eight days just to repaint the walls in which Chizkiyahu’s father Achaz had painted improper images and then another seven days in which to purify the holy sanctuary by removing all of the impure items and taking them outside the Beis Hamikdosh to be dumped in the Kidron Ravine. On the sixteenth day of the first month (the month of Nissan) the job of purifying the Temple of G-d had been completed.

**The Special Sin Offering for the Nation and the Sanctuary**

After being informed by the Leviim and the Kohanim that his mission had been carried out, Chizkiyahu accompanied by all the leaders of Yerushalayim brought seven bulls, seven rams, seven sheep and seven he-goats as a sin offering for the nation and the Sancutary.

Chizkiyahu further ordered the Levites as specified according to the designation of Dovid Hamelech to certain posts in the newly purified Beis Hamikdosh to play the musical instruments of Dovid and for the Kohanim to blow trumpets until all the burnt offerings were completed.

After this sin offering on behalf of the nation was completed, the King commanded that peace offerings and thanksgiving offerings be brought. And those subjects with generous hearts brought many burnt offerings. And thus the proper “service in the Temple of Hashem was thus re-established. Chizkiyahu and all of the people rejoiced that G-d had enabled the people to prepare, for the matter had been undertaken suddenly.”

Immediately after this, Chizkiyahu Hamelech then sent word to all of Israel and Yehuda, and also to the tribes of Ephraim and Menashe to come to the Temple of Hashem in Yerushalayim in order to perform the Pesach offering to Hashem, the G-d of Israel as in days before the Jewish kingdom had split into two divisive nations.

**Apparently the Day for Making a Pesach Offering Had Passed**

Rabbi Reisman explained that the only problem for Chizkiyahu was that the day for bringing the special Biblically mandated Passover sacrifice (the afternoon before the first day of the holiday [the 14th day of Nissan] had passed as the Temple had only been purified and restored by the Kohanim on the 16th day of Nssan, which was already the first day of Chol Hamoed.)

How did Chizkiyahu accomplish his goal of getting the Jewish nation together for an unforgettable spiritual experience of achdus (unity?) Rabbi Reisman said that he bent the rule by retroactively declaring an ibur (leap) year and thus making that current month of Nissan an Adar II, which would then allow sufficient time for all the Jews throughout his Kingdom and what was left of the Kingdom of Israel to come together and pre the following month for the Pesach festival.

This action of Chizkiyahu in retroactively proclaiming a Jewish leap year was one of the three acts he did that was not accepted by Chazal as taught in the Mishna mentioned above from Pesachim. Indeed in Divrei Hayamim Beis, it is recorded that “the king and his officers and all the congregation had conferred and decided to perform the Pesach-offering in the second month, for they had not been able to perform it at its [proper] time…”

Yet, this decisive if controversial act by Chizkiyahu was how, Rabbi Reisman said, the king was able to turn around Klal Yisroel and bring them back to a proper and sincere relationship with Hakodesh Baruch Hu. In achieving this turnaround, he broke many rules. As mentioned earlier, it was the extraordinary heroism of Chizkiyahu by breaking many of the Torah laws in order to inspire his subject that demonstrated his willingness to sacrifice his share in Olam Haba in order to spiritually save his own subjects.

**Rabbi Nosson Finkel’s Observation of the Necessary “Meshugenah”**

Rabbi Reisman once recalled talking to the late Rabbi Nosson Tzvi Finkel, the Rosh Hayeshiva of the Mir Yeshiva in Yerushalayim who remarked that whenever he came to a community and saw a successful mossad (Torah institution), he realized that there was a “meshugenah,” one individual who was “crazy” in his devotion for the mossad’s mission to the Jewish community and whose life revolved around making sure that his institution was successful.

That was the greatness of Chizkiyahu who focused all of his efforts on bringing Klal Yisroel closer to their Father in Heaven. One of the most important lessons is to be a “mevater” one who sacrifices his own desires for the benefits of others.

Reprinted from the January 8, 2021 edition of The Flatbush Jewish Journal.

**Fire and Water**

**By Rabbi Y.Y. Jacobson**



I was once speaking in San Francisco about the mitzvah of immersing in a mikvah, ritual bath. It was a speech which centered around what ostensibly seems like a strange commandment.

But I put it in the following way. There are two types of marriages, I said. There is a “fire marriage” and there is a “water marriage.” A “fire marriage” is exactly as it sounds: fire! Nuclear energy! It is full of interaction, passion and attention. And when a fight erupts, it’s explosive on every level.

Then there’s a water marriage. It is calm, peaceful, and reserved. It flows like a nice river, with no major explosions, either positive or negative. Every couple I’ve asked wants both a balance of passion and peace, commotion and calm. But there’s one problem. Nobody in history has ever invented a method to bring together fire and water.

Or maybe there is a method. 3,500 years ago, G-d told us how to do it. For two weeks, when a husband and wife can be in contact, there’s fire. And for the two subsequent weeks, when the laws of Family Purity are in place and a husband and wife refrain from physical contact, there’s water.

It becomes a laser-focused time to talk, communicate, share what’s going on, experience boundaries, and allow for space.

In this vein, the remark of the Kotzker Rebbe is apropos. “If I am I because you are you, and you are you because I am I, then I am not you and you are not I. But if I am I because I am I, and you are you because you are you, then I am I and you are you.”

Space, boundaries, respect. That is fire and water. That is you and I. Separate, but together. This recipe of Yiddishkeit, 3,500 years old, is still working wonders. It allows every Jewish couple which follows it to maintain a fresh, vibrant and alive relationship. It allows men and women to have personal boundaries and feel self-respect. And it allows a couple to grow together with a healthy balance of closeness and distinctiveness.

*Reprinted from the Parshas Va’eira 5781 email of TheTorahanytimes.*

**My Dad's Jewish, Why Should I Convert?**

**By**[**Aron Moss**](https://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/8051/jewish/Moss-Aron.htm)



**Question:** I have to admit, I’m angry. I was brought up Jewish, attended a Jewish school, and have only known Judaism as my religion. Now I’ve been told I have to convert, because my mother never formally became Jewish. Isn’t it a little unfair that all my life I was more Jewish than my friends, was even subjected to anti-Semitism, and after all that I’m told I need to convert?

**Answer:** I completely understand your frustration. It can’t be easy to hear that you need to convert to your own religion. But please don't take it personally. This is not a reflection of you. The entire Jewish nation went through exactly the same process.

After leaving Egypt, where they suffered as slaves and were tormented for being Jewish, the Israelites reached Mount Sinai. There they were told they had to formally accept the Torah and convert to Judaism by immersing in a mikvah.

They could’ve had the same complaint: We’ve always been Jewish, we’ve suffered terribly for it, and now we’re told we need to become Jewish?!



**Illustration by Rivka Korf Studio**

Indeed, they were already Jewish in the ethnic sense, but they had not yet become Jewish in the religious sense. They were born into the clan, but they had not yet committed to the mission. Only by sincerely accepting the Torah did they take on the complete Jewish identity in body and soul.

The Israelites of old had a moment of truth: Am I ready to stand before G‑d and commit myself to being Jewish? Not just for a day or a week or a year, not just for my lifetime, but for generations?

And they said yes.

The power of that moment still reverberates. All Jews alive today are descended from a mother who converted to Judaism, who took that plunge, either at Mount Sinai or sometime since.

Now you have *your*moment of truth. You can be culturally and ethnically Jewish, as you already are. Or you can stand at your own Sinai and say yes to G‑d.

Put aside the emotion and take this decision seriously. If you don’t go ahead, you leave things hanging for your children and theirs. But if you do it, your commitment is forever, for all generations, once and for all.

*Sources:* See [Exodus 19:10](https://www.chabad.org/9880#v10), Maimonides Hilchot Issurei Biah 13.

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