A Minority Within a Minority: Truth Seeking as a Non-exclusive Reality

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Mishlei 1:2-3

“To know wisdom and discipline, to comprehend words of understanding; To receive the discipline of wisdom, righteousness, justice, and equity; To give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth. Let the wise man hear and increase learning. The understanding man shall acquire wise counsels to understand an allegory and a figure, the words of the wise and their riddles. The fear of Hashem is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and discipline.”

Introduction

One of the last conversations I had with my paternal grandmother before she passed away changed my life in ways that I initially could not imagine. At the time? my grandmother was 94 years old and her memory was starting to fade a bit. From her 80’s into her 90’s she was a bastion of family history and information with a memory that spanned decades and generations. I grew up far from most of my family and after my father died my contact with my grandmother was my main source of connection to them.

In her last years, my grandmother’s conversations were often repetitive due to her advanced age with *“How have you been, where have you been, I have’t seen you in a long time, etc.”* being the most common points of return for her. Yet, from time to time an almost eerie sense of clarity would come over her and she would say things to me that were often profound; things that she had never told me in the past.

During one such conversation my grandmother kept returning to trivial matters until all of a sudden out of the blue she asked me, *“What do you believe in?”* The question caught me off guard because it was sudden and had nothing to do with the subject of the conversation. The reality was that time of my life I was in a state of flux, intellectually, even though I thought I had it all figured out.

I stumbled through various ways of trying to answer grandmother’s question, not sure why I couldn’t find the words to explain myself. After a few moments of not giving her a clear and conclusive answer she stopped me and made one of the most profound statements anyone has ever made to me.

> *“Let me tell you that a day is coming where you will have to be something and believe in something not because of anything I told you, not because of anything your mother has told you, and not because of anything anyone has told you. No, the day is coming when you will have to be something and believe in something because you have investigated it and you know it to be true!”*

With that statement her memory faded and she fell back into the trivial conversation we were having before. From that moment forth nothing was ever the same and even though I spent many years trying to come to grips with her statement eventually it came front and center when I chose to dedicate my life to the truth like she told me. That choice led me to ground myself in the reality of Torath Mosheh to the best of my personal ability while learning how to divest myself from falsehoods.

> *“Through the intellect man distinguishes between the true and the false. This faculty Adam possessed perfectly and completely. The right and the wrong are terms employed in the science of apparent truths (morals), not in that of necessary truths, as, e.g., it is not correct to say, in reference to the proposition "the heavens are spherical," it is "good" or to declare the assertion that "the earth is flat" to be "bad": but we say of the one it is true, of the other it is false. Similarly our language expresses the idea of true and false by the terms emet and sheker, of the morally right and the morally wrong, by tov and ra’. Thus it is the function of the intellect to discriminate between the true and the false--a distinction which is applicable to all objects of intellectual perception.”* ***[1]***

A Minority Report

The truth, speak about it in the wrong sectors and you can get strange glances. Have a conversation about the truth with someone in modern-western based society and you may end up in argument about how there is no such thing as absolutes. I can’t even count the number of times someone, with no real experience a particular topic, would tell me something is an absolute truth when in reality due to my own research I knew it was theoretical. Some of the same people, while discussing a topic they term as “religious,” have treated my presentation of facts as problematic when they can’t find contradictions. In many of these cases they often fall back on the, *“How can anyone know what the truth is?”* or *“Nothing can be established as the truth”* method of avoiding the issue. In many cases the people who fall into this category are often are not able to see any further than their own perspectives because they are often using the wrong tools for the wrong job while not recognizing the fault in their philosophical approach.

What I mean by this is that if one wants to know if there is a possibility that the Source of Creation spoke to Am Yisrael, as the Torah describes[2], one would not pull out arguments on theoretical physics, chemistry, or mathematics. These fields of study may answer the “how” such an event may have taken place but they cannot answer “if” something actually took place. No, one would first use a historical model which is sometimes termed as a “convergence of facts” or a convergence of evidence.[3] [4] On the other hand, if one wants to make sense of the various statements made by Hazal about human perceived natural events and extra-natural events that Torath Mosheh describes as having sources from Hashem, one would not use the models for historical analysis and instead would use what is currently known in the various sciences.

Thus, when I approach any challenge or any question as to what I hold by[5], what I don’t understand, or what I desire to establish I use my experience as an electrical and an EMC Engineer in line with my studies of Torah to make decisions and come to conclusions. This, as a practice, does not take place once or a few times but is something that I interact with every day as someone who is focused on trying to understand the truth of every matter that affects my personal life and my daily philosophy.

> *"Adam the first, majestic man of dominion and success, and Adam the second, the lonely man of faith, obedience and defeat, are not two different people locked in an external confrontation ... but one person who is involved in self-confrontation. ...In every one of us abide two personae - the creative majestic Adam the first, and the submissive, humble Adam the second."* [6]

Truth – A Daily Companion

My confrontations and struggles with living out the truth, many times as the as a singular individual from a minority or as a minority within that minority, have been varied and numerous. They have spanned my travels in America, Israel, Ethiopia, Italy, and Japan and covered numerous topics. My ammunition has been the study of texts and keeping aware of how one determines the truth in realistic situations; using the right tools for the right situation. An unexpected result of this way of life is that at times it has caused me to stand alone in a crowd, even when surrounded by people who are also Jewish. The truth and one’s dedication to it can sometimes be a lonely place but the benefits of such a stance are well worth it.

It is important note that the point here is not what about one thinks or believes about a particular matter, because both thought and belief are subjective, but instead what one “knows” to be true and can with high level of confidence and certainty establish.[7] This is something substantiated by the Tanakh and the writings of Hazal, such as the comment made by Saadya HaGaon:

> *“And knowledge has two sides, truth and falsehood, the knowledge of truth is known as a matter that is “from the many is many, the few is few, black is black, white is white, available/established is available/established, and lacking is lacking. Falsehood is known as a matter that is from the many are few, the few are many, black is white, white is black, available/established is lacking, and lacking is available/established.”* [8]

In order to unpack these ideas and place them into real word applications, I will detail of number of situations from my life.

Struggling with the Past – New York

For seven years while living between New Jersey and Manhattan I worked at a high tech company in Pearl River, NY. During my day to day functions the truth of the Torah was an integral part of my interactions with my coworkers both Jewish and non-Jewish. I was not the only Jew working for the company but I was the only Jew who openly wore a kippa and tzitziyot. Further, within a group of about ten Jews out of about 200 non-Jews I was one of three Jews who kept Shabbat and Haggim[9] and I was further the only Jew who kept kosher. Given these facts it didn't take long for me to become the resident answer man for Judaism and it was due to this status that I came into contact with a coworker who took much interest in discussing life issues with me.

He was a Jew with a Christian name and though that may not be so strange in the U.S. it does speak to some of the inner conflicts and contradictions he had. Over the course of the seven years we worked for the same company I had many conversations with him, many of which addressed whether or not the concept of Hashem was logical or not. Because of my willingness to address any topic without reservation or coercion he felt comfortable enough to let down his guard on many personal topics.

During one of his visits to my lab he told me that he was angry because his wife was forcing him to start preparations for their eight year old son to eventually have a Bar Mitzvah. My coworker was actually perturbed by his wife's request since in his mind this involved years of financial expense, joining a synagogue – another expense, and personal stress for him. I listened to his complaints and when he was finished I responded in the following way.

> *"I am sorry to hear about your turmoil but let me ask you one question. Is this your Bar Mitzvah or your son's? Based on what you described you obviously feel strongly about this but your son is a Jew. Do you really want to possibly face him ten or twenty years from now with him asking you why you didn't give him a Bar Mitzvah? What if he comes to you and states that all of his friends had Bar Mitzvahs and he wants to know why he didn't receive one? What happens when you give him your answer and he may be angry with you because you robbed him of an experience of his youth? Are you willing to face the possibility of him telling you that this was his experience and not yours to deny him?"*

I told my co-worker that if the expense was the problem that there are a number of options that would cost him either nothing or close to nothing. I even offered that I could talk to people at the local Yemenite synagogue in Manhattan where I prayed because all children under the age of 13 receive the 6th aliyah.[10] As a joke, I even told him to call the local Chabad and tell them he is giving up on all of Judaism unless his son gets a Bar Mitzvah. The joke being that there would shiluchim knocking on his door within minutes to help him for free. I stressed that the important thing is that if we are Jews and if we value our culture and history to deny his son an

essential part of the normal modern development would be a sad and shameful thing for a father to do.

After my response my coworker had a silent moment and before leaving he thanked me for my response. A few weeks later he came to me and told me that after speaking with his wife he wanted me to come by their house to help get their son interested in learning Hebrew; to put him on the path of a Bar Mitzvah. I in fact did help teach his son some basic Hebrew after which his daughter proclaimed the she also wanted to learn.

My co-worker eventually opened up even more to be and I began to understand where his anger over th??e issue of the Bar Mitzvah came from. He explained to me that he grew up in an “extremely secular” Jewish household with a mother who was a scholar and researcher. What I mean by “extremely secular” is that he once told me that his mother the scholar made it clear that the Torah was utterly and emphatically “wrong.”

My co-worker further explained that he never realized how distant he was from his culture as a Jew until he recently attended a Passover Seder with his wife’s family. His wife’s family were at various stages of the Reform Movement but he said that he felt bad at the seder because he was the only attendant who didn’t know what they were doing. They would sing songs or perform actions as a part of the seder and he was not aware of what to say or do. He explained that during his childhood, while every other Jewish families were doing a seder on Pesah, his mother would sit he and his siblings down to explain how the haggadah was wrong and that there was no Yetziath Mitzrayim (Exodus).

Even with all of that, he was conflicted because he had an appreciation for the importance of being a Jew and he saw the relevance in the existence of the modern state of Israel but no matter how he felt he was always in the shadow of the way he was raised. My words to him were the same as what my grandmother once said to me about the importance of knowing from self-evaluation the truth. His critical decision was to determine and develop his understanding of what is the truth – Torath Mosheh vs. the path that his mother placed him on.

It is interesting to note that I had the opportunity to meet his mother at an art exhibit for his father and upon seeing my kippa and tzitziyoth her first words to me were, *“You do know that whole exodus in the Haggada is wrong!”* Thus began a classic debate with her stating that she had traveled to Egypt and performed research there finding no sign of any proof of such an event and that the haggada had been invented within the last 2,000 years. I course was not willing to let her statement stand unchallenged since I knew she had not done her researching using Jewish sources written in Hebrew and Aramaic from across the spectrum of the ancient Jewish world. As the argument heated up my coworker stepped in by changing the topic knowing that neither his mother nor I would give ground on the topic.

In 2007, after seven years of work I left that job in order to take on the ultimate challenge of my life - making Aliyah. After moving to Israel I only had a few sporadic contacts with my former co-worker. He left me a short message once on my former blog wishing me luck and thanking me for our interactions. I have no way of knowing what effect I had on him or his family but the truth of the matter is that maybe by being that one Jew out of several to try to walk the path of Torah publically and privately I may have been a part of a shuva process for him or maybe his children.

We Don't Need the Har HaBayit! – Nachshonim, Israel

Thinking back on my time living in America, it is not hard to imagine situations where a Torah based Jew can feel like a singularity simply due to the lower percentage of Jews to the majority population. It is also a given that the social and professional pressure to be loose on areas of Torah such as Kashrut and Shabbat can be intense even when a handful of Jews are present. In situations where more Torah based Jews are present it isn't so strange to have someone else who won't eat with everyone else when business and restaurants excursions take place. In those kind of environments a Jew may feel like less of a minority in a minority but simply like one Jew of several in a non-Jewish environment – just a minority.

By like token, one would expect that it would be a lot easier to not feel isolated with these topics in Israel. We are talking about the modern state with a Jewish majority and a place where supposedly there is more respect for Torah based Jewish values, right? All I have to say is for those who have never spent more than a year here at one time you may be surprised.

I have worked in both hi-tech and in patent law here in Israel, I have also lived in at least 3 different regions of the countries, traveled at least 4 different sectors of the country, and the reality is that there can be situations where Jews who keep Torah are the minority within a secular Jewish majority; after which in contrast to the rest of the Middle East we are thus a minority within a minority.

From my professional experience here in Israel there have been numerous times when secular Israelis have called my kippa *"that thing on your head"* or my tzitzyoth *"that stuff you are wearing."* Of course with Shabbat being an official day where no one is required to work[11] as well as the abundance of "kosher" restaurants Torah in every city; Torah based life is a lot easier to maintain in Israel than outside of it.[12] Yet, there is still the reality that the majority of the Jewish population here does not keep Torah and there are conflicts at times between so called "religious/Hereidi/Daati Leumi" interests and secular interests.

I find myself being in a weird type of middle ground where I don't feel the need to personally enforce the Torah I hold by on others but at the same time I don't accept, on any level, encroachment on the standard that I hold dear. At the same time, I have also felt the reach of secular elements of Israeli society which at times does everything it can to distance itself from Torath Mosheh.

I also recognize that the modern state can't continue as it is and fulfill the prophecies that talk about Yamoth Mashiah, the establishment of an official Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, the rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash, and the return the exiles to Eretz Yisrael. The truth for me is that something major would have to change in all facets of Israeli governance, life, and thought to facilitate such a complete worldwide social change and thus this is the contradiction of the situation.

This brings me to 2006 when I took part in a volunteer program on two military bases in the Mercaz region of Israel. During my interview process for the program it had been noticed that I wore a kippa, tzitziyoth, and also that I spoke about Torah. I was informed by the person performing the interview to not talk about "religion" when I arrived on the base since it would be frowned upon. I agreed and upon arrival when I entered my room at the

barracks and met my room-mates I changed into a uniform while trying to hurry and remove my tallit katan but it was noticed by some of the guys in the room.

By chance after being asked to say the bracha for lighting the candles for Hanukha I became the answer guy since the majority of people in the area didn't publically wear tzitziyoth. On one occasion I was asked about whether halakha allowed the use of marijuana, on another about male and female relationships, at times why does the Torah say this or that, and on another occasion why I would wake up every day at 04:00 a.m., shower, and head out.

My response to that last question led to interesting situation when I told my roommate that I was heading to the Beith Keneset to pray Shachrit at netz. He asked me, *"There is a Beith Keneset here? Where is it?"* I described the location to him and then I packed up my things and left. As usual, at that time of the morning there was only two of us praying in the Beit Keneseth but after finishing I noticed my roommate sitting in the back of the Beit Keneset without a tallit and without tefillin. He simple crouched himself over the chair in front of him and prayed. I went to him and asked if he wanted to borrow my tallit and tefillin but he quietly said that that was okay and he continued.

Yet, the highlight of that time was during a conversation with two younger soldiers in a conversation that turned into issues against Arabs. One of them mentioned how he hated Arabs and didn't trust them for of course obvious and realistic reasons. Yet, before he could go any further the other young man chimed in and asked if we could change the subject because his mother was Jewish and his father was Arab/Muslim.

It was that same young man who turned to me and said he had a question for me. He asked, *"You have a kippa and tzitzityoth. Tell me do you believe what the Torah says about the Luchoth HaBrith, the Aron HaQodesh, etc."* I responded, *"Yes I do."* He in turned, *"If all that stuff is true how come we have never found any of it?"* Without pause I responded, *"Let me ask you a question. The Har HaBayith (the Temple Mount), is it important or is it not important? Do we need it?"* He responded, *"No we don't' need the Har HaBayth we only need the Kotel."* It was then that I returned with the following statement.

> *You know it is interesting that you say that because there was a time when for the most part no Jew would have agreed with you. Today you say we don't need the Har HaBayit, we only need the Kotel, and tomorrow your children will say we don't need the Kotel we only need Jerusalem outside of the old city. After them your grandchildren will say that we don't need Jerusalem we only need Tel Aviv. Finally, their children will claim that we don't need Tel Aviv or Eretz Yisrael at all. You know if that is the case I don't blame Hashem for hiding things from us because based on what you are telling me we don't want them.*

From there the conversation had to stop since their commanding officer walked in and things had to go back to normal. Yet, the truth of the matter is that maybe it didn't. In reality, who knows what effect the conversation had on all involved.

Close Encounters, Palestinians vs Israelis – A coffee shop in Jerusalem

Several years ago I had the opportunity to meet with a professor from the United States who was researching how mixed ethnicity is viewed around the world in comparison to the U.S. We met at a coffee shop in Jerusalem and she arrived with a friend whose background I did not know and for most of the initial conversation her friend only listened attentively while taking notes. I explained my perspectives to the professor about how family background, language, and passed down traditional practices plays a major role in how one defines Middle Eastern cultures. I detailed, from my view, how the social affects, parameters, and issues of being mixed in more ancient traditional societies has more far sweeping implications than what exists for the most part in the U.S. for reasons that I spoke at length about.

As an example, I asked the professor's friend about her family background since she had been quiet during the conversation. She responded to me that I may not want to know her background, to which I expressed no reservations. She identified herself as an American born Palestinian – her parents having been born in the Shomron region and having moved to the U.S. before she was born. I responded that I still had no problem and from there the conversation took a different turn into the realm of politics. She expressed to me that even though she identified with being a Palestinian and she was a very vocal advocate for a Palestinian state, as a secular American Palestinian she was terrified of such a state becoming Islamic and thus being no different than the existing extremist Islamic countries in the region.

I expressed that I could not imagine such a "potential Palestinian state" without some form of Islamic focus as it the only cultural background I have seen any Palestinian attach themselves to. Sure, I have heard some anti-Israel types claim that modern day Palestinians are descendants of Canaanites and the like but I have yet to see any linguistic or cultural practices in their societies that can identified as Canaanite. Further, during the entire time I have lived in Israel and traveled in the Shomron, Gush Etzion, and the Negev I have also never met a an Arab who used this claim.

The young woman had personally never heard of the claim that Palestinians were Canaanites and I explained that the reason was that the claim started as a grasp at straws to make any claim why Jews have no right to be here. Further, I asked her what kind of culture can override the one that currently exists and what common ground does it have the current Israeli one. I could tell by her facial reactions that these were also considerations she had never taken into account and to this point she had no answer.

Her response was to return to the political perspective and she stated that she could not understand why we could not all just live in peace. My retort to her was to ask the obvious questions of, *"What exactly is peace, how do you maintain/obtain it on a day to day basis, when was the last time in world history that such a peace was achieved, and why does it not still stand now?"* She did not have answers to my questions, and on one some level I think she had never even considered them before. It is also possible that no Jew had ever interacted with her in this way so I continued with the following statement:

> *"As you can hopefully see that situation is a lot more complicated than what you have considered. Yet, in all honesty I can't tell you that you don't have a right to fight for PA State that you or others envision using whatever means you see fit. That would be hypocritical to some degree since I have no divine*

mandate to dictate what you should dedicate your life to.

I do know that in reality if we Jews can't maintain ourselves and if we don't build the society that can withstand claims to the contrary or attacks on our perceived rights to be here then maybe we don't have a right to be here – using basic rules of survival of the fittest.

Yet, if we can survive all of the claims against us and if we can overcome all those who are against us and if we Israelis can build a society that makes sense, what right does anyone have to oppose the reality as it would stand in that situation?

You though face a different problem; you face the challenges of authentic history and straight forward logic. Historically speaking there has never been an independent and locally elected government which defined itself as "Palestinian" here in this region. If such a nation did exist what was its currency, who were its locally elected officials, what was its local language, what ancient cultural elements can still be seen today, and why is Islam and Christianity the only two religions found being practiced by virtually all Palestinians, even by those who are secular, when these religions are respectfully between 2,000 to 1,400 years old?"

As she considered my questions, I went even further by asking her what her family's last name is. She responded that it is "Hamdani" to which I asked what was the Hamdani family's cultural and religion prior to the entrance of Islam in the region from Arabia. She shifted a bit and stated that she didn't know but a moment later she claimed that more than likely they were a religion-less people. I stated that I didn't believe that such a people existed here given the fact that we only receive rain during the winter with a delicate eco-system that can be disrupted by either too little or too much rain. That alone may cause any ancient/traditional people to pray to something, even if they didn't do so on a regular basis.

Lastly, I informed her that Egyptian, Babylonian, Syrian, Greek and Roman accounts describe the local culture for the last few thousand years being Israeli/Jewish and during the 2nd Temple period in the region of Shomron were the Samaritans so "if" the Hamdani family is of local ancestry, and not by import, they must have at one time been Jewish or Samaritan, one of the two. This statement seemed to shock her because it was not a part of the historical picture she had ever considered; if she had every considered one at all. So, seeing an opening I closed our conversation with the following:

What you need to do is go back to your family in the Shomron and ask the oldest members what were the Hamdanis before the entrance of Islam into this region. You may find some answers in that question that may make your future more focused.

You talked about peace. Maybe, just maybe, if we Jews and you so called Palestinians sat down and talked about ancestry and history we may find that we are from the same source, prior to the entrance of Islam in this region. We may find that at one time a number of so called Palestinians had Jewish or Samaritan ancestry – which is something that is already known to be true in a number of towns in the "so called West Bank." ***[13] [14]***

Yet, if this is the case this means that you and others may have a decision to make. If you find out that prior to the rise of Islam in this region the Hamdanis were either Jewish or Samaritan this may change the focus of what you are looking for on the national level. This may mean that a conflict between us is fruitless and a coexistence based on our common ancestry shouldn't be a problem. Yet, who is willing to take these kinds of steps? It takes a bravery that some people may not want to take on because of their personal political agendas.

Listen, it is not my intent to sway you in one way or the other but if the two of us can sit here and discuss history and ancestry and do so in a civil manner why can't those who are our so called leaders? Maybe, if they were to take this approach we could either settle this over coffee or worse, the other thing.

We parted ways that day agreeing to be who we chose to be – whatever that may have meant for her. In truth, I am not sure where her life has taken her since that point but I did sense that she walked away with a different perspective than what she entered the conversation with.

I also know, looking back, that very few people would have approached the conversation the way I did and there was a time in the past when I would have not been so "open" as I was with her. Yet, even if I am alone in how I handled the situation the truth dictates that I hold by it even if it may seem like an uneasy position to take.

Further, as much as I may have been teaching her I was also taught a lesson about the importance of making the truth the source of one's perceived political stances and how even in the most unexpected places the pursuit of the truth can bring understanding.

Torath Mosheh vs. Unsourced Religionism

As a last consideration, I feel it necessary to discuss the times I have been at odds with my responsibility to the truth as it relates to the people whom I come into contact from the nations on the internet. I mean this in the sense of both non-Jews and even at times Jews who follow what I term as "Unsourced Religionism."

I define Unsourced Religionism as the practices and customs that one comes up with which do not adhere to any proven historical or logical methodologies. The truth is of course in stark contrast to this method of living and often Unsourced Religionisim is the source of some of the strife found in the world. Whether it be false religious concepts that lead people astray, worthless Atheist vs. Religious debates, or the various forms of fanaticism - the lack of contact with the truth has had devastating effects on human history.

This can be seen in the various cults throughout history that have risen up and convinced both the rational and irrational to throw away their logic and replace it with feel-good brain-washing. There was a time when I would have believed that it was not worth the time to confront the falsehoods of such groups but that changed when I came to know several individuals who had been drawn into religious cults – forcing me to use the truth of the Torah to fight an intellectual war against the falsehoods.

One such incident involves one of several cults that falls under the rubric of the title "Sacred Name Movement." This movement is made up of former Christians who have come to believe that the more prevalent forms of

Christianity are influenced by paganism and that specifically the four letter name of Hashem must be pronounced/uttered in order to have salvation. Though these cults believe that the various forms of historical Christianity practices have pagan origins, they use of the New Testament and their culture involves some type of belief in Jesus being divine although they believe his name originally had the two letter name of Hashem in it.

I recognize full well that debating this type of cult is an activity that most Jews would not engage in; especially given the fact that most Jews have never even heard of them. The time and energy needed to confront these types of falsehoods can take a certain toll on a person's personal life and often the question may be asked, "is this thing I am doing having any true effect of the world at large?" Yet, even with all the reservations I have had in the past about my involvement in this type of activity I have learned that there are times when not expressing the truth can have a negative effect on the world around us.

With that in mind, I once spent an entire year defending a book review I did against a Sacred Name cult's supposed translation of the Tanakh due to having personally known several non-Jews who were considering involvement in these cults.[15]

The back story of this situation is that more than a decade ago I came into contact with a non-Jewish friend who had purchased a supposed translation of the Tanakh produced by said cult based on Abiline, TX. I skimmed over the book and noticed that this cult was taking huge liberties with the text with no basis in Tanakh and accurate mesorah. Because the cult used a flashy apocalyptic end of times message and prided itself on revealing things to Christians who were already exploring the so called "Jewish roots of Christianity" I realized that I needed to do something to warn those who may be tricked into joining them.

At a certain point I decided to write a review against the so called translation, spending much time on methodically breaking down how unfaithful this cult's book was to both the original Hebrew Tanakh and also to the historical mesorah[16] of the text. I ended my review by advising all who were interested in the book to instead spend time trying to learn Hebrew and Aramaic since the people who I knew who were interested in the sacred name cults were searching for the truth but had little or no tools to determine it.

My review garnered numerous positive responses as being helpful, several personal emails requesting help with finding a more accurate translation, and requests for assistance in finding resources to learn Hebrew but it also drew the attention of the cult that created the text. Several of them, and even one of them that someone informed me was most likely the cult's leader, wrote nasty messages to me in the comments section. I wasted no time in responding to their false accusations and claims by using both textual and historical proof to make my points. As the back and forth continued the cult members resorted to name calling and condemnations of hellfire against me and anyone who favored my review. The language they used and their refusal to prove the accuracy of their work, by providing the source text they supposedly translated from, caused a number of parties who were originally interested in their text to abandon their interest while thanking me from preventing them from wasting their money and time.

As the cult's members descended into even more non-sense with their responses, such as calling me a Catholic at one point, the next calling me a Pharisee, and later a Saducee, the site that the review was found on started deleting the cult member's comments since they had received so many marks as being useless in the review process of the book. As more and more potential victims of the cult began to see that joining said cult would have been a waste of time I was reminded of the Rambam's comment in his responsa concerning teaching Torah to Christians.[17]

Yet, even with this victory there is another side of this issue and that is when I have had to do mental battle with missionary/messianic cults and organizations. Most of them are evangelical types but in one case I was approached by an Islamic organization that focuses on trying to convince Jews to convert to Islam. In the case of the latter I was engaged in a two month back and forth with a member of said Islamic organization concerning what they claimed were inaccuracies in Judaism that are only understood correctly in Islam. Having had a background in Islamic studies, I knew the claims and was able to counter them in an honest and respectful manner. I had to do so though remembering that though the truth can break through any argument the Rambam advised in one of his responses against teaching Torah to Muslims since they could in turn use that information against us.[18]

The Truth: For What It's Worth

Whether it is being responding to falsehoods on the internet or defending the truth of Torath Mosheh against falsehood the question at times may be – what is the benefit? For what reason would a person need to interact in this way with these types of people? The answer to me comes in two forms – one for Am Yisrael and the second for all of humanity. In several instances through my responses I was able to convince missionaries to become Noachides and in a couple of instances those who debated with me became interested in becoming Jewish. Even in situations where neither of these outcomes happen I feel that I have a responsibility as a Jew to stand for the truth when possible for the sake of being an active participant in Tikun HaOlam. Further, I know of situations where Jews have been lost to Torah completely simply because no one in their immediate area stood up for the truth in a strong, public, and dignified way. To this point, I was once pleased to come across a video of a famous Kiruv rabbi here in Israel who was asked by a secular young man why should a person who is good and doesn't do anything to hurt people make teshuva to the Torah. The rabbi calmly but boldly declared, *"There is no reason except for the sake of the Truth."*

> *[The deception is so great] that even the best of the chasidim [faithful] among our men [scholars] of Torah, think that they are true but forbidden because the Torah forbids them. They do not realize that they are nonsensical false things that the Torah warned against, just as it warned us against [believing in] falsehoods.**[19]***

In Closing

Years ago I would never imagined that my grandmother's words would have the type of effect they have had on me for all of these years. I could not have imagined the path her words would have set me on or the

completeness it brought me. She passed away before I could thank her but in a small way she may have known the result. The last time I saw her, before she passed away in 2002, she stated that there were things that she told me that she never told anyone else because when my father passed away she knew that I needed something more than everyone else.

When I open my eyes and take a look around I see that there are numerous others who are also seeking to have a love affair with the truth that Hashem has placed upon us. No matter how isolated I may feel at times I must remember to look to the hills where there are others waving the banner of truth; lighting the fires of Torah to draw the attention of any willing to observe. In reality, a life dedicated to truth has a way of changing the world whether it be in passive observance or active participation.

> *That when judgement is made of truth it is the truth that establishes the world. It brings peace to the world. Thus Hazal teach in the Misnhah on three things the world is established, on the judgment, on the truth, and the peace. The three of them are spoken of in the pasuk (Zecharyah 5) "Truth and justice of peace you will judge your gates." Because when judgement is done/established, the truth is done/established. And because when the truth is done the peace is done/established.* [20]

Thus, I must close with saying that the truth no matter where it places a person has a way of making them jump for joy when they know they have it. The truth has a way of turning sadness to content. It can make conflict into compromise and it has the ability to empower the lonely.

With this constant wrestling with truth of the Torah we in turn fulfill the prophecy that one day Hashem would cause us to become a light to the nations because as the prophets tell us, "*ten men from the nations will grab the garment corner of a Jew and state: We have received falsehoods from our fathers. Take us with you because we have heard that Hashem is with you."*[21]

"Tzedeq, tzedeq [Correctness, correctness][22], pursue; on account you will inherit the land which Hashem your Elokim is giving to you." (Devarim 16:20)

[23]

[1] Guide to the Perplexed, Book 1 – Chapter 2, Rambam
[2] Shemot 20:1-22, Devarim 4:32-36
[3] Historical Questions and Facts, 2004, 2006, 2011 by Dr. Jim Jones of West Chester University – "A historical fact is an ordinary fact with some additional information. According to the Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary (Franklin J. Meine, editor, Chicago: Columbia Educational Books Inc., 1940, page 270), a fact is "anything done or that comes to pass; an act; a deed; an effect produced or achieved; an event; reality; truth; a true statement." To make this kind of fact "historical," you must include the time, place, act, and the protagonist--usually human--who performed the act. A historical fact also has a source from which all of the other parts of the fact are derived."

[4] Also see A Convergence of Evidence: The Key to Historical Proof, Skeptic Magazine, Nikzor Project, 1991-2012
[5] Most people normally state, “what I believe” but instead I state “what I hold by.” For me, belief is objective and there are some things that know and are in any connected to what I believe. They are things that I have taken time to establish as the reality/truth of the moment until, or unless, I am proven otherwise.
[6] The Lonely Man of Faith, Rav Yosef Soloveitchik, Chapter 8, pp.84-85
[7] See Yeshayahu 8:20 where truth is determined by two factors Torah and a Teudah or identifying custom, tradition, or revelation.
[8] Emunath and Daot, Rabbi Saadya HaGaon, introduction page 12, translation from Arabic to Hebrew by Rabbi Yoseph Qafah, published by Mechon Mosheh.
[9] Meaning that the other two would not work on Shabbat and Haggim. The others would at times. Several of them even worked on Yom Kippor.
[10] In Yemenite Jewish communities when someone is called to the Torah for an Aliyah reads for themselves. Children under the age of 13 are given either 5th or the 6th Aliyah in order to prepare them and get them used to reading. Most children may be given 3 or 4 pasukim but more able children can read and entire Aliyah for themselves.
[11] Outside of certain professions involving safety and protection of life such as military, police, and hospitals.
[12] See my article, Top Model, Choices, and Shabbat, on the Institute of Jewish Ideas and Ideals web-site on a situation where when living in the states I was challenged at work concerning observance of Shabbat.
[13] “Palestinians of Jewish Origin higher resolution,” Tzvi Misinai, https://youtu.be/IQCr7GaVMWA
[14] “Do The Palestinians Have Jewish Roots,” Shavei Israel, https://shavei.org/palestinians-jewish-roots/
[15] Like most cults this group encouraged those interested in their work to join them at their compound and separate themselves from their family and their lifestyles.
[16] The trustworthy transmission of the text and its meanings.
[17] Rambam, Responsa 149
[18] Ibed.
[19] Rambam’s Commentary on the Mishnah: Avodah Zara 4:7
[20] Menorath HaMeor, Rav Yitzhaq, Page 414, Pereq 222
[21] A combination of the prophecies of Yirmeyahu 16:19 and Zecharyah 8:23
[22] This translation is based on Rabbi Samson Hirch’s commentary on Torah. The meaning given is “justice; universal truth.” See Etymological Dictionary of Biblical Herbew, Based on the Commentaries of Samson Raphael Hirch, by Matityahu Clark, Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem-New York, page 213
[23]