

Avraham Avinu

“General” in the War to Free the Minds of Humanity The Role of Mysticism in Psychological Emancipation

by HaRav Ariel Bar Tzadok

Copyright © 2009 by Ariel Bar Tzadok. All rights reserved.

The Biblical patriarch Avraham is probably the most influential human being of all times. Historically his spiritual teachings can be seen to be the source of three of the great world religions, whose members comprise half the world's population.

Torah sources state that Avraham's influence stretched far beyond the boundaries of “western” religions and that his influence was also substantial in the founding of “eastern” religions. While the historical evidence for this may be debated, one thing is certain; there are certain “mystical” elements in both “western” and eastern” religions that when examined psychologically appear to be teaching the same things, suggesting a possible singular source.



Avraham's “mystical” message to his generation, however, was not limited to the spiritual realms. Avraham's message was one that combined spiritual content with political overtones. He believed and preached that we human beings have an immortal soul that has been placed within us by the One True G-d and that our Divine heritage instills within us certain inalienable human rights.

These rights include our living as spiritually connected, morally minded, intellectually emancipated and politically responsible human beings. And that without experience of the Divine, there can be no true knowledge of the Divine. Without true knowledge of the Divine, humanity becomes susceptible to the confusing and enslaving philosophies that serve to aggrandize some at the expense of others.

Essentially Avraham's spiritual message was one of freedom for the soul and that only through freedom of the soul can come freedom for the individual in greater society. Mysticism therefore served a two-fold purpose, it kept the individual in touch with Heaven and at the same time enabled the individual to always remember his personal Divine heritage and thus not allow himself to be used or manipulated by others in either the personal or political arenas.

“Mysticism” is a term and practice that in modern times has fallen into ill repute amongst the majority of world religious leaders and their respective theologies. I do not think this is so much a statement about the evolution of religions as much as I think that it is a statement about the present low and disenfranchised state of collective human consciousness in these confusing and chaotic times.

In light of the overwhelming societal push to emphasize only the rational and logical side of nature, we have come to ignore and ultimately deny the super-rational and the supernatural, dismissing both as nonsense. This denial of higher realities only serves to reinforce primitive superstitions and does nothing to help emancipate the human mind to experience greater realms of consciousness.

In modern times, ancient religions, revolving around a belief in G-d, spirituality and the supernatural have for the most part been abandoned. Such beliefs, we have been told are primitive and outdated; and that today our rational logical minds are able to discover all truths through the never-ending only true source of revelation: science.

The religion of most people today is atheist-based science. Most today “worship” on the “altars” of secular universities that teach with religious zeal the arrogant attitude of how there is no Higher Power that can influence one’s destiny and that human beings are in charge of all. The popular trend in societal belief is that we are free to choose as we wish, whatever we wish and that we can, we should and we will mold human society into that image which we deem best.

There is no moral compass, no objective value system, no more understanding of fundamental right and wrong. The secularist considers this progress; those however with insight and vision recognize this as nothing other than anarchy and chaos. When the blind teach others to be equally blind, then when all are equally blinded, then can all be equally led, manipulated and enslaved.

Ancient religion taught that G-d created humanity in His Divine Image. Modern teachings proclaim that a corrupted humanity created G-d and religion in his own corrupted mortal image. This subtle shift away from accepting the authority of Heaven and towards the misguided understanding that this is true freedom; for humanity to pursue whatever paths it chooses regardless of the consequences, is nothing new. What we see here is an exact revival of the Generation of Babel, with modern technology and secularism substituting for both “Tower” and “city.”

Modern society does not officially deny the existence of G-d, but the Presence of G-d is considered to be far removed from the affairs of mortal men. Thus we mortal humans are thought to be in charge and that Heavenly rule, which defined morals and proper behaviors is viewed as a primitive belief from the past. While the religious are still free to proclaim their belief in the existence of a Divine Being, still said beliefs are no longer tolerated if and when they violate societies new moral and social norms. Belief in G-d is tolerated; following G-d’s law is not!

Divine authority is looked upon as being fanatical and contrary to modern life. Yet, Divine law is not religion. Divine law is natural law; it is the way of the human being, inclusive of his higher spiritual potentials. When this is denied and eventually lost, then human beings descend to the level of animals, and animals are a lot easier to corral and control. Deny the Divine soul and the responsibilities that are inherent with it and we are left with a humanity that is essentially

nothing more than animals. Teach people that they are animals, get them to believe that they are animals and then you can justify treating them like animals. This is the evil of today as it was the evil in the days of Avraham.

Essentially we today live in a society that suffers from multiple forms of collective “split personality.” On one hand we have the complete atheists who are at odds with any form of spirituality and religion because of the moral codes that they impose. Then we have believers in religion who say how everything that we do must be pleasing to G-d whereas at the same time many of their own behaviors and actions violate every ancient code of every historical faith. Detachment from direct experience of the Divine within us and of G-d in the universe causes this all to be.

Our detachment from direct experience with the Divine and the supernatural has left us collectively in a bereft state, psychologically lost and lacking in hope, imagination and faith. Such a mind-set is easily open to suggestion, influence and control.

We rationalize our collective behavior and call ourselves modern, enlightened and emancipated. Little do we pay attention to the lessons of the past to see where we are today as a collective society.

In the past when humanity had reached similar points of social development and disconnection from the real, true and personal “mystical” element of their religious origins, said societies collapsed in short time under the weight and pressure of their lack of moral compass and personal connection to an experience of the Divine. This has happened in cultures around the world over thousands of years. Apparently this is not a religious issue but rather a psychological one.

Religions have long taught that humanity cannot live without G-d. History does tend to show us the truth of this reality.

As wise King Solomon said, “there's nothing new under the sun.” Avraham came on to the world stage in midst of the same type of societal conflict that we are experiencing today. This is why his teachings and role model have more meaning and relevance today than they have had for centuries. Avraham lived in a time of great social strife. He lived in the remnants of ancient Babel, the great civilization that just a generation or so before his birth had access to the ancient pre-flood nuclear technologies and the resolve to launch its members into space and to conquer both Heaven and Earth once and for all.

One cannot understand the universal spiritual/“mystical” message of Avraham without understanding him within his context, times and culture. Ancient Torah tradition teaches us that Avraham was a younger contemporary of another Biblical character, Nimrod, who the Torah calls a “great hunter.” The Sages commented that he was a great hunter of human souls. Nimrod was the first in the line of seemingly never-ending dictators who seek to control the human mind and thus human society. Nimrod was the first political dictator and cult leader all rolled up into one. He is the polar opposite of Avraham and we cannot understand the one outside of the context with the other.

Avraham was not a religious reformer. He did not start a religion, nor did he teach one. Rather, Avraham had a personal experience with the Divine and instead of teaching people about his experiences, he instead taught them to experience for themselves. Such experiences are

personally emancipating and leads the individual to stand on his/her own two feet, to think independently and to act with full and proper human resolve. It is this danger of personal spiritual experience and direct contact with Heaven that brought Avraham to the attention of he dictator Nimrod.

The dictator Nimrod could not tolerate an upstart that would teach people to think for themselves and to thus question the authority of government and cult. Independent individuals cannot be controlled. Those who can think for themselves cannot be mentally enslaved. Avraham was destroying the cult and undermining the dictators ability to control the mindless masses. No oppressive government both ancient or present can survive while tolerating free thinkers who teach individuals how to get in touch with and thus know the Will of the Higher Authority.

In this respect Avraham was the first in the great line of political reformers who spoke with moral social conscience. He embodied what it meant to be a "man of G-d" and that is to be a man of the people, by the people and for the people. Avraham's greatest desire was to enlighten enslaved minds teaching them how to free themselves.

This was not to be accomplished by teachings followers of Nimrod to instead follow Avraham. Rather Avraham had to educate the members of his generation how to become individuals of strong character and moral integrity. This could only be accomplished by putting each individual in personal touch with the transforming power that enables one to reach the highest levels of personal humanity.

The Builders of Babel sought to enlist all in their futile war against Heaven. Avraham knew better. He knew how to give individuals the real power that would forever emancipate them from both human and angelic oppression. By enabling human beings to not only remember, but also to realize and experience that they are each higher spiritual beings created in the Image of G-d each individual can tap into inner resources that truly enables them to become great.

Avraham revived and renewed the members of his generation would were receptive to his message. It is this message of human emancipation that has spread far and wide since Avraham originally taught it some four-thousand years ago. It is this message of human emancipation that is the common denominator of all Avrahamic spiritual traditions. And indeed, any spiritual tradition, western, eastern or other that teaches this message has somehow and somewhere been over the centuries of time influenced by the "Torah" of Avraham.

The Avrahamic message is spoken of in mystical Torah sources. Avraham, of all ancient Torah personages has attributed to him the greatest of Prophetic/Kabbalistic text, the Sefer Yetzirah. In its modern form, this text consists of six small and obscure chapters. Yet, an ancient tradition recorded in the Talmud states that Avraham wrote a six hundred chapter book to teach the members of his generation how to avoid the pitfalls of idolatry.

What we must understand is that idolatry is not so much a statement about this or that religion, but rather idolatry is a aberrant psychological condition that disables an individual from finding their own true course.

Idolatry is the placing of another in a position of authority in one's life that the other does not deserve or merit. Any force, person or thing that becomes paramount in one's life instead of the Highest Authority is therefore an idol and allegiance to it is the meaning and definition of idolatry.

It is not enough to proclaim this to make it so. One has to experience it and see it for oneself. When one enlightens one's own mind, one does come to realize just how many masters one truly worships. This is the core of evil idolatry. It is an exile from one's own true self and from one's own greatest potential.

Only when one has developed a strong sense of self identity can one cultivate the psychological power to go beyond oneself to see and experience the greater realities in life. Free individuals can travel, in body and in mind. Slaves are attached to chains; their mobility in mind and body is severely curtailed.

Emancipation from psychological idolatry therefore entails an emancipation of the mind. This can only come about when one allows one's mind to travel freely into the non-physical domains of Higher Reality to see and experience directly the truths underlying the great universe in which we live. How to have such experiences is what the Sefer Yetzirah teaches and most likely what was written in the ancient six-hundred chapter book ascribed to Avraham.

Avraham was the first in the long line of freedom fighters. Yet, he experienced and saw first hand that the only true freedom is the one that begins with the freedom of the human mind/soul. He recognized the poison that societies can generate and how the lies popularly embraced can blind the eye and confuse the heart. Avraham knew that the fight began first inside the individual within his own mind and heart; for only one who is personally emancipated and free internally can ever wage a war for freedom in the social and political arenas.

Avraham thus taught against idolatry; first to free the mind from its psychological prisons and only then to free the people from oppressive physical enslavement to oppressive powers. With regards to the political freedom he fought for, Avraham did not live to see it materialize. The world had to wait for one of Avraham's descendants, Moses, who hundreds of years later fulfilled the Avrahamic call for freedom and led the children of Israel out of Egypt.

Yet, if one were to ask Moses what inspired him and directed him along his path, he would point to Avraham. Moses would say that Avraham was the role model for himself and for all Israel. What Avraham began Moses completed. Therefore, these two human beings, more than any others in history have inspired free men to think free thought and to act upon them for the betterment of all humanity.

The concepts of freedom and independence were first taught by Avraham. He is thus the father of all freedom fighters; he is the father of all who seek emancipation of the mind. For all who teach humanity how to approach and experience G-d directly, freeing them from the bonds and shackles of those who try to mislead them can rightly be called the children of Avraham.