

The Religion Test

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The following question will define for you whether or not you are truly religious.

Which matters more, winning or how you play the game?

If you could guarantee winning, but at the cost of compromising some of your values, is the end result worth it? Does the end justify the means?

Think about it, life is inherently unfair, bad things happen to good people all the time. Don't waste your time trying to explain it or understand it. As the saying goes, "S-h - - happens" and that's just the way it is. With this being said, which is more important having or being?

No one can ever control what happens to oneself. We are all from time to time "victims of circumstance." Like I said, S-h - - happens. So, when it happens, what is one to do? Now, here is the test of faith, character and morals. For although we cannot control what happens to us, we can definitely control how we respond to whatever happens to us, be it for good or for bad.

In one sense we are slaves to destiny and in another we are masters of it. This is just one of those paradoxes that the Creator has made for us to live with. And indeed, it is the test of our resolve, our character and our personal righteousness. Our choices define for us (and for Heaven) whether or not we are righteous and whether or not we live by our faith.

Ultimately, we choose whether or not we are sincerely religious. It is not defined by our beliefs but rather by our actions and our choices. Bad things happen to good people. There are no Divine promises that everything will go well for those who live by their religion. But for those who live by their faith and act with righteousness, no matter what befalls them, they do not budge from their convictions. They stay firm in their beliefs about what is right and what is wrong. Even when wronged, the righteous do not pay back in like-kind. While we do not turn the other cheek, still we do not sink beneath our righteousness to act in ways inappropriate, unrighteous or dishonorable. No matter what happens, death comes before dishonor. This is not only a motto for the military, it is also the motto of everyone who lives by the Code of the Bible.

If you are really religious, then you live by the Religious Code of Honor. This is a code for behavior that is universal. It does not define doctrine or theology, but only behavior. The Ten Commandments is a good example of it. Who disagrees that murder, theft, adultery and coveting are wrong? What religion preaches these behaviors as moral and righteous? The answer is that none do. There is an unwritten human moral code, that most of humanity knows and lives by without having to be told it. Those who deny it are usually savages living some primitive form of life. This is not defined by their culture or religion but rather their behavior. We have many primitives living in the biggest and most advanced urban areas around the world. And at the same time some aboriginal peoples are far more advanced, moral, spiritual and religious than many others who only pretend to be advanced civilized westerners.

Character counts! Morals are the measure for human civilization. Righteousness is the true measure of religion and spirituality. When one is trustworthy, honest and faithful, such a one is being religious, regardless of whatever religion they do or do not profess. G-d looks to our actions, not to the doctrines or theology we claim to embrace but often, hypocritically ignore.

Righteousness is what binds us. Our common code of morals, ethics and character bind good people of all kinds, beyond any barriers of country, religious affiliations, race, creed, color or sex. Men of right resolve stand together, no matter what external differences separate us. Righteousness demands that we judge one another by our hearts, not by our differences. United we stand, divided we fall. This is the motto of the righteous. And the righteous recognize one another through deeds, not through speech.

Righteousness is not nebulous. How to behave properly is unfortunately not something one can learn in school. It has to be learned in life. Let us turn to the prophecies of Isaiah for some wise instruction.

In Isaiah (1:16-17), G-d is speaking through the prophet admonishing the people (historical Israel, but also all of us) how to do what is right. This is what is said: “ (1) Wash, cleanse yourselves, (2) remove the evil of your deeds from before My eyes, (3) cease to do evil. (4) Learn to do good, (5) seek justice, (6) strengthen the robbed, (7) perform justice for the orphan, (8) plead the case of the widow.”

Let's review each one of the admonition briefly.

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1. **Wash, cleanse yourselves** - Not only is this good advice to keep physically clean to reduce the spread of disease and illness, it is metaphorical speaking about the inner motivations which guide our actions. As long as we continue to think of “me first,” we will forever be unclean in Heaven's eyes. To be clean means to be a giving person, to look for the needs of others and to provide for them as best as one can. Mind you, this can be taken to an extreme where one gives of oneself to the harm of oneself or one's family. This is wrong, it is unbalanced and will eventually lead to evil. One must be careful to fulfill the commandment to “love one neighbor as oneself” and to remember to consider oneself in that equation. One must always give, even of oneself, but always in proper and not selfish imbalance.

2. **remove evil from your deeds** - this is a personal matter wherein which every single person must examine their motives to see why they are doing what they do. Even when doing righteousness on the surface, it can be motivated by a haughty or arrogant heart. This is evil and it taints one's deeds. Doing right should be done for one and only one reason, simply because it is the right thing to do. Deeds have to be right. Motives have to be pure. When one's insides are as pure as one's outsides, then we have one who is clean (pure) in G-d's eyes.

3. **cease to do evil** - it is never enough act righteously if and when at other times one does what is evil by wrongly harming another, or acting in any way that brings dishonor to Heaven or to oneself. Nothing is worse than one who is religious acting in ways that bring dishonor to one's religion. Nothing is worse than acting in ways that bring dishonor not only to oneself but to all others associated with one's people. One must remember, when others look at one, they do not see an individual, they see a representative of whatever group one belongs to, so when one does wrong, he brings dishonor on to his whole group. Although such judgments are wrong and prejudice, this is unfortunately still prevalent. The righteous must remove this from their hearts, for this is evil. But at the same time they must remember that they are surrounded by evil men, and thus should not give them any “ammunition” that could rightly be used against the righteous.

4. **learn to do good** - sometimes knowing good from evil is a confusing thing. Since the days of the Garden of Eden, when we ate the fruit of the forbidden Tree of Knowledge Good and Evil, recognizing good from evil has been clouded by deception, confusion and outright lies. We must learn to discern what is good and pursue it. While goodness is innate, still, it is clouded over by layers of confusing emotions and outright lies. In order to conquer us, evil pumps us up with falsehoods and deception in order to confuse us. Evil seeks to make us think that good is evil and that evil is good. Evil loves to have the righteous so confused that the righteous end up acting for evil and doing evil's work, all the while confused into thinking they are doing what is G-d's work and thus good. Evil is very deceptive. When one follows the path of righteousness without deviations and exceptions, one can stay clear of evil's attempts at deception.

5. **Seek justice** - the one thing that evil hates most is justice. Evil seeks to pervert and thwart justice at every turn. All the more reason why the righteous must stand for justice in every case. Justice must be pursued in every aspect and manner of life. Justice is not something adjudicated by courts of law. Justice is discerned and executed by righteous G-d fearing men who seek to do what is right for one another. Courts can become corrupt, but when man's heart is right, justice will flow forth from it naturally. When men are moral and righteous they do not need layers and layers of laws that only complicate matters and make justice almost impossible to achieve. They find justice in the simple common trait of honor. Men of good will always manage to find a way. Men of ill will never seem to find their way.

6. **strengthen the robbed** - "thou shall not steal" is a universal law applicable to all men everywhere at all times. This transcends every boundary of separation. Simply it is wrong, immoral and dishonorable to take that which belongs to another without proper and due compensation or cause, that cause also being defined by universal acceptance and not just by personal selfishness, need or desire. It is not only wrong for an individual to take that which does not belong to him, it is a greater wrong when people gather together, form a government and then under the guise of government try to legitimize stealing from one group to give to another. This is evil disguised as good. Institutionalized theft, whether it is called taxes or fees is nothing more than stealing. When governments institutionalize stealing, they have sunk to the level of the evil Sodom and Gomorrah. It then becomes a moral right and obligation for the just members of society to overthrow such a government by whatever means and to replace it with one that institutes proper and fair justice. Man is meant to work for his bread and to enjoy the fruit of his labors. It is evil to steal from one who has worked and to give his benefits to the one who has not worked and who has not earned such benefits. The giving of charity is a personal thing incumbent upon every individual to look after his fellow. Charity should never be used as an excuse to levy taxes to make the rich pay for the poor. This is theft. Those who are robbed demand and require justice. The righteous uphold one who has been robbed and seek justice against the thief, be he a person or a government.

7. **perform justice for the orphan** - an orphan is one who is left bereft, without support of parents to help him/her grow, mature, learn a trade and thus stand on one's own two feet. For one without the basic advantage of family, learning how to stand on one's own two feet becomes an even harder than usual affair. A orphan is not only literal, but symbolic, it refers to those who because of life's circumstances start off on an unequal footing. Morality dictates to us not to take advantage of someone just because that one is down on their luck, or otherwise financially limited. While we are not obligated to provide for the orphan or other indigents more than anyone else, we must also be careful not to treat them as less because they have less. It is all too easy to overlook the "little guy." Part of righteousness dictates that we uphold the little guy and do not deny him the opportunity to take control of his situation to grow, mature and become independent. Mind

you, this obligation is a personal one upon every individual. Each of us is morally obligated to help one another. We cannot deny our personal responsibility by passing on this obligation to another or onto a government. It is never government's job to provide for the poor or for the downtrodden. That job belongs to individuals who choose to help others of their own free will. For government to be involved takes away personal involvement. When the person feels the government is doing his job for him, then usually neither the government nor the individual gets the job done, and thus the poor suffer. People must help other people directly and personally, and not job it out to some government program which then in turn takes money away from people and, as governments are, use such money for purposes other than for what it was intended. Again, we have institutionalized theft under the guise of social welfare. Evil upon evil, disguised as good.

8. **plead the case of the widow** - a widow like an orphan might be at a disadvantage, yet, unlike the orphan she is not bereft. The widow still has the benefits of her husband's estate, still without him there, the unscrupulous will target her, to take advantage of her lack of full strength. Such a weak one does not necessarily need our support, however, being at a disadvantage we watch out for them, whether they are a widow or whoever else might be at societal disadvantage. This is a personal obligation and defines individual character, morals and integrity. For one to abrogate such responsibility to a government is to deny one's personal responsibility and need for involvement. This again is the evil wolf masquerading in the sheep's clothing of social justice, when in fact, we need to speak of individual justice, not social programs designed to absolve the individual of their personal duties and obligations to help and defend others.

From these words of Isaiah's prophecy we can see exactly what it is that G-d wants from us. We see that there are no promises in life. Some will have it easy and others will have it hard. Our job in life is not to seek the easy path, but rather to seek the right and proper path, regardless of whether or not it is easy or hard. We do not live by the code of "might makes right," but rather we live by "right makes might." We do the right things regardless of consequences. This only makes our resolve stronger, our character more defined and our integrity more clear for all to see. This is how we become "a light to the nations."

Being righteous is natural and normal and should be the disposition of every human being. But as we know it certainly is not. Rather than fulfill G-d's command to stand upon our own feet and to take responsibility for our lives, many chose the symbolic slavery of Egypt. They prefer to have others do their work instead of taking responsibility for themselves. They fall into the deceptive trap of thinking that because others are doing their work, then they themselves are free. On the contrary, those who rely upon others become the slaves always needing those others to do everything for them. In the end they end up doing nothing for themselves and thus have totally lost their freedom of action. The others, be it a government or group define and decide what is good and right for the enslaved individual and such an individual has no choice but to obey and to follow. This is the definition of modern-day idolatry, where the government itself has been elevated into the position of being a false god.

This how how tyranny is born and how it survives and thrives. Tyranny exists because individuals abrogate their individual responsibilities and expect others to act in their stead. Then they let loose those others with full authority to control more and more until no freedoms are left. Ancient tyranny and modern tyranny are both the same. Maybe the names and labels have changed but the loss of freedoms and the resulting social horrors are all the same. As the saying goes, those who do not learn from the lessons of history are destined to repeat them.

This is why we read the Bible, not to learn history but rather to learn from history how we must act and live today. Religion is not defined by what you believe, but rather as how you act. We

serve G-d by serving one another. Loving one's neighbor as oneself is the acting out of loving G-d with all one's heart, soul and might. G-d does not need our sacrifice, we do! We need the sacrifice of one another.

We have been charged by Heaven to turn our jungle of a world back into the garden it once was. Maybe we will never fully accomplish our mission alone, without Divine intervention, nevertheless, we are not exempt from trying our very best. There are universal principles of righteousness that unite all men of religion, regardless of our individual faiths, doctrines and theologies. We must learn to see the Living Spirit of G-d in the hearts of the commonly righteous and learn to stand together against the enemies of human freedoms.

The Armilus/Anti-Christ is alive and prospering among us. He has already conquered Europe with his socialist agenda. He is presently destroying the State of Israel and working over-time to destroy his greatest obstacle, these United States of America.

The world hates the U.S. and nothing can be done to change that. As long as the U.S. stands for freedom and justice for all, as one nation under G-d indivisible, a nation whose motto is "in G-d we trust," we will forever provoke the ire and hatred of the Armilus/Anti Christ. Today the evil one is disguised under the sheep's clothing of socialism, proclaiming equality for all. But those who live in socialist states know better than anyone else. In such countries there are no true freedoms and no limit to government intervention into personal lives, depriving people of every basic human right. Ask the Jewish citizens of Gaza what their socialist/fascist government did to them, in the name of peace.

Moral human beings of right character and proper integrity need to unite and together practice the universal religion of righteousness. Only in this is salvation of the soul, both in this world and in the world to come. We may not win the battle, but it is not our battle to win. Scripture speaks clearly that G-d will, in good time, send His Mashiah. Jews and Christians should not argue about his identity and name. Rather, the two must unite under the common flag of Biblical righteousness to jointly fight the Armilus/Anti-Christ which is growing to destroy both righteous Jew and righteous Gentiles (of all religions).

In Biblical times, Avraham stood against tyranny and so later did Moses. Their example was followed later by the Maccabees of the Hanuka story. It has long been the way of the Jews to fight tyranny. Indeed, it was the American founding father, Benjamin Franklin, who put this very Biblical, very authentic Jewish ethic into words, "rebellion against tyrants is obedience to G-d." No Jew has the right to call himself a member of the nation of Israel unless he embraces and lives by this ethic.

The battle may not be ours to win, but it is ours to fight. And how we fight it makes all the difference. We are the righteous and honor demands of us to act righteously. This alone is what G-d seeks from us. The righteous seek to live for G-d. They are always faithful (semper fidelis) to Him. As such, the righteous, wherever and wherever they may be are G-d's "marines." Not for naught is G-d called "the L-rd of Hosts." The literal translation of "hosts" (tz'va'ot) is armies. G-d is our Commander in Chief and we are his army, his marines. In Israel today, there is a saying, "Mi She'm'e'ez, Mena'tze'ah" (he who dares, wins). May G-d bless the righteous to serve Heaven as warriors who act with daring and courage to live by the faith that they proclaim.