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Being in the Here and Now

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Which is more important to you, the past or the present?

If you say the past, then I am concerned that you might not be paying enough attention to the present.

The present builds the future. This is why it is so important to keep ourselves focused on the here, and now.



As a rabbi, I am often asked, how can I believe in things that may not be written in the Bible? I am always surprised by this question! I usually respond by asking those who question me how well do they know the Bible?

Reading the Bible in translation does not make one know the Bible. Without a thorough understanding of Hebrew, and an equal understanding of the life and times of the Biblical personages, no one is ever going to properly understand Biblical teachings.

The Bible is not a book. It is a collection of books, written over many centuries. Yet, one thing they all have in common is that they were all written a long, long time ago, by a people very, very far away from us. The ancients who wrote the Bible were very different from us culturally, and even psychologically. They did not see the world as we do, nor did they think in the same manner as we do today.

The ancients wrote their books for themselves, not for us. If we want to properly understand the ancients and their books, then we first must learn to think like them.

It is also important to remember that the Biblical canon was decided, more or less, for political reasons. There were many other books of equal antiquity, which were not included into the Biblical canon. Many of these books are still with us today. Many of these books have become the source of legends, which in Torah literature is called Midrash.

What is important to understand is that, unlike modern claims to the opposite, there are major sections of the Biblical books that were written as metaphors, and intended to be understood symbolically. The entire Genesis story, and the entire books of Jonah, and Job were never meant to be taken literally. These three do not stand alone in this respect.

Without a proper understanding of the original language of the Biblical books, and a thorough understanding of the styles of literature used in those ancient times, it is no wonder that so many people come to misunderstand, and therefore misquote the Bible.

So, when I am asked how can I believe this or that thing, when the Bible says something else, I merely open up the original Hebrew Bible, and show my questioners, that what they think the Bible is saying may not be exactly what it is really saying. My job is to educate, and this is what I do.

In present times, modern science has exposed us to realities which seem to contradict what the Bible says. But there can never be such a contradiction. For we believe that God created the universe and everything in it. If so, then all the universe is the Works of God.

How then can the Word of God contradict the Works of God? This cannot be. Science can show us how the universe operates. We have a clear understanding of God's Works. We can, therefore, reflect upon the Word of God and begin to understand it in a much clearer, proper light.

By not dwelling in the past, and our past limited understandings, we can embrace the great truths of the present, and build upon them an even greater future.

The Bible says that God created the universe. The Bible does not tell us how "He" did it. Evolution, therefore does not contradict the Bible, and may very well be how God implemented "His" creative design.

Did God act directly to create, or did "He" create through "His" angels and messengers? The Bible can be interpreted in both ways. The details do not matter. The Source is still the same.

How old is the universe? The six days of creation are not literal measures of time, as we measure today. The Bible is very clear on this point. Therefore, the universe may very well be billions of years old, as modern science has measured. Nothing here contradicts the Bible!

Were there civilizations before Adam? The Bible does not say no! Therefore, it is possible! And when we discover ancient archaeology dating to periods older than the Biblical narratives, it seems almost certain to be true. Why would we want to deny the truths before our own eyes? The spirit of denial contradicts the spirit of truth that the Bible seeks to instill within us.

There is nothing in the Bible to contradict the idea of ancient civilizations before Adam, ancient aliens from outer or inner space, or the idea that the angels of old are still with us today.

By knowing the Bible properly, in light of its Hebraic origins, and its original Midrashic (non-literal) understandings, we come to bring the ancient past into the modern present with all the richness that both past, and present have to offer.

There are still many secrets out there in the world today. The more we explore, the more we will uncover. But we must be bold in our explorations, and we must especially not allow the mistakes and misunderstandings of the past to limit us in the present, and to then continue their negative influence into the future.

Be here, be in the now! Then move forward to build a bright and brilliant future!

The KosherTorah School



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