

ONE TORAH FOR ALL

Zerubbabel ben Emunah
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Religion vs. Reason

An Essay Concerning Critical Thinking



Recently, I met a man who was not religious as most would understand, even though he grew up in mainstream Christianity. In my discussions with this man, I discovered that the reason he left Christianity, was for logical reasons, namely, because he followed his reason, and that led him away from that religion. I have thoroughly enjoyed my discussions with this man and hope to have many more. These discussions sparked a long dormant thought, which I had had long ago, which I had brushed off, and but have given more thought to as a result of meeting this man. It is this thought which I would like to share with you today.

In Yeshayah (Isaiah) 1:18, YHWH calls us to come to Him that He might reason with us, and us with Him. Yet, what one finds in Christianity in general, is that when one comes to "faith," he then lays all reason aside and simply blindly follow the beliefs of that particular church. This is anything but reasonable. One is taught not to question his leaders or the church, as they know best. However, doing something simply because it was done that way in the past, is not sufficient reason to continue to do anything.

Now we are not speaking against religion or even religious tradition, per se, for even Christianity does not have it all wrong. What we are pointing out, is the setting aside of one's

reason. I am sure, if you have spoken to very many people at all about Scripture, then at some point you have been told, "Well, that's not what my church believes," or something along those lines. Such a statement reveals several things, one of which is that the person making such a statement has not thought this issue through for himself. It also reveals that he is blindly following another man and that man is not Messiah. Even Mashiach Yeshua asks us to think things through with Him. He does not expect any person to blindly follow Him without question. He has given us the ability to think and reason and He wants, yea, He expects us to use that ability to its fullest potential.

All too often, religion is used as a crutch to stop thinking. The truth is that religion is used by those in power as a means to control the masses. Religion becomes one's god, and when that happens, a person worships and serves his god without question and heartily defends his chosen religion in any way possible. History is full of bloody wars fought over religion and those who blindly follow and serve it.

I know individuals who are non-religious and yet who are closer to following Torah than many Messianics. It's a sad statement, but completely true. Now, we are not saying that all Messianics are this way, neither are all non-religious people. We are simply pointing out that if a man truly follows his reason, then that reason will bring him closer to YHWH and to His ways. It can be no other way. YHWH is completely reasonable, as are His ways. Now, we are not saying that one does not need Scripture, for one most certainly does. However, what a person does not need is man's misinterpretation of YHWH's written word. This is where a person needs reason to discover and see what Scripture truly says.

If there is something a person believes or does that will not stand up to reason, then how can it be correct? Simply put, it cannot be correct. It is true reason which will help each person find and then lay aside those errors in his life that are not pleasing to YHWH. However, if a person is not willing to face head on with reason what he has chosen to believe, then how can such a person ever be sharpened? He cannot!

The Scriptural concept of one man sharpening another man as iron sharpening iron cannot come to pass if a person refuses to allow reason into his thinking. If he places anything, any doctrine, any teaching, any long held belief, out of reach of reason, then that area can never be sharpened. Furthermore, that thing which is out of reach of reason is his god. It is an idolatrous thought and it needs to be pulled down. But no outside person can do it. Only the person holding such a position can pull it down.

It is a rare thing to have a wonderfully reasonable conversation with a religious person, a conversation where neither party gets bent out of shape because of the context of the dialog, and where no subject is off-limits. It is not so rare for this to happen with non-religious people. I seek out these people and cherish the conversations I have with them. These people are the ones who will challenge me the greatest. It is these types of people who cause me to be a better man for YHWH because they calmly challenge my thinking with reason.

When iron sharpens iron, there will be filings, little pieces of iron which are removed from the main item being sharpened. These are discarded. Likewise, when one man sharpens another man, there will be small filings that are chipped away and discarded. Only in this way will a man be sharpened. If small pieces are not removed, then a man is not being sharpened. And a man who holds to his religion without question can never be sharpened in the manner which would please his Creator.

The truth is that each and every person is a spiritual being regardless of what he believes. This does not necessarily make him a religious person. I do not consider myself a religious person, but I do consider myself a spiritual person. (I am not touting this new spirituality running rampant in our world today.) I focus upon keeping my spirit in tune with the Spirit of my Creator. To do this takes effort and a willingness to look at any sacred cow that I may have lurking in the shadows. If we find such a creature lurking around, then we thoroughly examine it and then act in a manner which pleases YHWH. To do otherwise is spiritual suicide.

It has been my experience, that generally speaking, religion is the antithesis of reason and thought. Let each person determine that he shall be a thinking person. If one finds something which is not reasonable in his life, let him discard it!

YHWH wants to reason with each one of us. Let us reason with Him and open a new and exciting dialog with Him today! Let us do the hard work of examining anything and everything at which He points His finger. Let us be extra careful not to shut our minds to ideas which prick us and cause us pain, for until we examine it thoroughly, we cannot know whether it actually might be something we should pick up; or, if we have picked it up, to lay it back down. Also, let us be careful not to discard something just because of its source. YHWH can use anyone He desires to get our attention. The question is: are we listening to Him, or to whom He is speaking through? Are we seeing Him or just the messenger?

Yeshayah (Isaiah) 1:18

“Come now, and let us reason together,” says YHWH, “though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

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