



SPECIAL TOPICS-THE BASICS OF JUDAISM

**CONTINUING THE CC PRINCIPLE**

In the past, we discussed the greatest principle of the Torah. I would like to call that principle the CC principle. It's the principle of Creation and Control (CC).¹

Now, this principle is such an important principle because everything about life for every individual, Jew, and non-Jew, is built upon these two things. It refers to the fact that I'm created and the fact that somebody exerts control over the world and over my life.

CREATION - THE PRINCIPLE

The first benefit of knowing that there is a Creator and that everything is created, is that everything that you see has a purpose. There is nothing in this world that you see that does not have a purpose. If someone specifically created this thing, it must serve a function. The higher the intelligence of something created, the greater the function. So when we look at each other, or when you meet another person in the street, and you look at that person as someone who was created, you automatically view that person as "we're working in the same business." So then the question is always, "Oh, you work for the same company? What do you do in this company?" Two people meet in a company and one asks the other, "Oh, you work here? What do you do?" All of a sudden, there is a certain camaraderie, and you appreciate the function of the other person more.

CONTROL - THE PRINCIPLE

The second benefit of the principle of Control, is that nothing in this world or life is meaningless; nothing in this life is without a reason. There is nothing random. This is probably the greatest benefit of this principle.

Through Control, You Can See the Benefit in a Disability

Let me share a story with you. There was this great rabbi who has since passed away. I had the merit to hear him speak many times. His name was Rav Sholom Schwadron (1912-1997). He was a phenomenal speaker. He spoke in Eretz Yisroel, across the land. He could speak for hours. And he once told the following story. When he was a young man, he was in the beis medrash, or in a shul, with his study partner.

He was having a conversation with his study partner about whether he should continue his speaking engagements or perhaps it would be better for him to spend more time studying and becoming more learned and knowledgeable in Torah, as opposed to going out and giving speeches.

Then they noticed a man who was holding a white stick sitting next to them at the table, so they decided, out of respect, to ask for his opinion. So they turned to this man, and said to him, "Excuse me, sir, what is your opinion on the matter?" So the man said, "What is your name?" He said, "My name is Sholom Schwadron." He said, "Definitely, don't stop speaking." "Definitely?" "Absolutely." He said, "Can I ask why?" He said, "Sure, I will tell you why. You saved my life." Rav Shalom asked him, "How is that?" He said, "A number of years ago, I became blind. With my blindness, my life deteriorated. I became completely depressed and demoralized. I actually began to pray for death. And then one day, somebody said to me, you know, there is a speaker, Rabbi Schwadron. Why don't you come and hear him speak? And I did. And my life changed after that speech." So the rabbi said, "What did I say?" He said, "You related a story in the name of the Chofetz Chaim." And the story went like this.

The Chofetz Chaim told a story of a person who passed away. He was a teacher. He taught children Torah. He was a G-d-fearing man, but like all human beings, no one is perfect. He came to the next world, and they began to judge him. They went through his life and they ruled that he lived a life of accomplishment, of fulfillment. He deserves a good portion in the next world, in his rightful place. Then, as this dead person was feeling good about himself, all of a sudden, the prosecutor came along and said, "Excuse me, this man beat kids. Throughout his tenure, he would lose control when the children were studying by him, and he gave them a patch. And for that, he has to rectify himself." So they gave him a choice. The choice was, "Would you like to go back to the world and this time try to get it right, or would you rather go to what we call the therapy, the hospital, and get yourself corrected in the next world?" The only problem is with the therapy in the next world, they do surgery to correct you, chemotherapy, and all kinds of therapies, and there are no painkillers. So he started to go to the hospital, to the place where they do the surgery – he chose that first. Then he got scared. He heard screams, he heard shouts. He said, "Is this how it is?" "This is how it is," he was told. He said, "Could I change my mind?" They said, "Yeah, you can change your mind." "But before I go down to this world, I want

¹This shiur was given to a non-observant audience on Aug.2004 ,22 ,

to ask Hashem for a favor." "Okay," Hashem said. "What do you want?" He said, "I'm begging you one thing. I want to go back to the world, but I'm afraid I'm going to mess up again. I beg you, Hashem, do me a favor and let me be born with hands that don't function. The hands shouldn't work. Then I know I'll never make the same mistake again." Hashem granted his request.

A short while later, a child was born. The parents were devastated. The simchah they were awaiting turned into a nightmare. A child with hands that don't work. The mother was unhappy, the father was unhappy, the grandparents were unhappy. Everybody was unhappy. Except for one person. The soul of this child.

The blind man said, "That is the story I heard from you. And all of a sudden, I began to think, maybe there is a purpose in my not seeing."

That is what "Control" - the principle that Hashem controls everything - enables a person to deal with.

DEFINITELY FOR THE GOOD

I knew a great rabbi who had a daughter who was sick for a number of years. She went through a very difficult time before she died. When she passed away, the response of the public was horrendous. Many people had been involved. Many people prayed for her. And the rabbi got up and spoke, and he said as follows: "I have a question on G-d." All of a sudden, people raised their eyes. The rabbi has a question on G-d? You don't do that. People say it's unfair but you don't question G-d. So he got their attention.

He said, "The Talmud tells us that there are three partners in the creation of a person - his father, his mother, and G-d. The halachah says, the law states, that if we are partners in a business and I want to make a decision, I can't make a decision without first asking you. I can't unilaterally make a decision. You are not allowed to do that. It's forbidden." He said, "My question is, G-d didn't ask me. We're partners. G-d didn't ask me, G-d didn't ask my wife." So the crowd was sitting there, and they said, "That's a good question. What is he going to say?" He said, "The answer is as follows. If you look into this halachah, you'll see that it says like this. If one partner is faced with a decision and a challenge about what to do with the business and there is no question beyond the shadow of a doubt that it's the best thing for the partnership and there is no downside, then one partner could go ahead and make that decision." He said, "It must be that if Hashem didn't ask me, the situation is such that it's absolutely beyond a shadow of a doubt that this is the best thing for the situation, whether I understand it or I don't. That much, I trust Hashem."

DIVINE CONTROL AND ENGINEERING LIFE SITUATIONS

The control factor is amazing! I had a man in my home yesterday, and we began to have a discussion - he was a Russian fellow who came to America. He told me that he lived in the United States for many years and had a successful professional career. Eventually, he became observant, settled in Detroit, bought a home, and had a good job. But one day, out of the clear blue sky, boom. He got fired. No job. One month passed, two months passed. I said to him yesterday, "How did you feel at the time?" He said, "You want to know how I felt? Not worried." I said, "Why? I speak to a lot of people who don't have jobs. You're out of work for a long time, you start to get very worried." So I asked him, "Was it because you were so wealthy?" He said, "No." He said, "I had mortgage payments to pay. I had just bought a house. But I had become observant, so I knew that Hashem had orchestrated this."

Quite a while went by that he was out of a job. The fellow at that time was not married. He was divorced. And he sent out many resumes, and after a while, he got a call for a temporary job in Cleveland. A rabbi had told him that he should be open to relocation. "Maybe Hashem wants you to relocate." "But I just bought a house here." "You've got to be open. Who knows what plans Hashem has for you." So the fellow came to Cleveland, and I met him. It was the funniest thing. I had a student that was thinking of opening a business with a partner from Detroit, so he had gone to Detroit. There he bumped into this guy in the street. The guy said, "I might be coming to Cleveland for a temp job." He said, "Why don't you stay at my house?" He invites him to stay by him. The guy meets me. Eventually, the fellow moves to Cleveland, and we become close. I tell the guy, "Why don't you get remarried?" He said, "I can't." He said, "I don't have the confidence to get married again. How do I know it's going to be the right one? How do I know it's going to last? I was married for such a long time to my first wife, and I need somebody really young." He had mushgasen and cobwebs in his head. I said, "You know what? Why don't you see a therapist? Go see a professional." So he saw a therapist, a psychologist. He comes back after three-four times, after that psychologist relieved him of a lot of money and the doc told him something that upset him. So this fellow said, "I'm not going anymore." I said, "Why not?" He said, "The guy is as meshuga as I am. He has the same fears as I have. He also can't get married. He's also burned, scared. It's the blind leading the blind." He said, "Rabbi, you've got to help me."

So I said, "Okay." I began to work with the guy. And then an amazing thing happened. I told him, "Don't waste your time going out with bad shidduchim. You're taking bad dates. You know it's not going to work out."

A few weeks ago, I was in Detroit. I was at a speaking engagement. This lady comes over to me, a very nice lady. I was very impressed with her. She asked me some questions. And she said to me, "Do you know so-and-so from Cleveland?" I said, "Yes, I know him." I asked her, "What do you think of him?" She said, "I think he's a very nice man." I said, "Would you like to have a date with him?" She said, "I'd love to." I said, "It's done!" That's it. That night, I made a phone call to Cleveland. I spoke to the guy in Cleveland. I said, "Get yourself over here right now, to Detroit." He said, "Rabbi, what happened? I got a girl I want you to meet." He said, "Who is it?! I know all the girls in Detroit." I said, "This girl, you've got to meet." The guy goes out with the girl, and he says, "I'm taking it slow." I said, "No rush. Take it slow." The guy arrived on Thursday, and went out with her. Then they met again on Shabbos and Sunday. Sunday night, he calls me up. He said, "I'm thinking of getting engaged." I said, "Take it easy. It's a little fast for me, you know

what I mean?" He said, "No." I said, "Are you sure?" He said, "Absolutely. I'm solid with this."

The fellow is getting married next Thursday in Detroit. So he told me an amazing thing. He said, "Do you realize? I lost my job. Hashem made me lose my job. I knew the woman from Detroit. I would have never dated her. I knew she was a nice woman, but it wasn't for me. I had no confidence. I couldn't do it. Hashem had to get me to move to Cleveland, which I thought was because of a job. Then I got to meet you. You had to get called to Detroit, meet this woman, and set me up." And he says, "I had no fears. What happened to my fears?" He said, "You remember me, rabbi, I was a basket case. I thought I couldn't get married." I said, "Hashem controlled it." He says, "That's absolutely correct."

That is the greatness of the principle of control. When you know there is somebody in control, there is nothing in life that is meaningless. This is such an important principle that we have to constantly re-emphasize. By hearing this principle, you think you got it? No. It's a lifetime of work. This principle is a lifetime of work to acquire. Lip service is very easy. It's very easy to say, "Yeah, there is a G-d," babababa. But when push comes to shove, and you have to make decisions, then it's a different picture. It's an absolutely different picture.

DO YOU BELIEVE IN MIRACLES?

I read a long article four years ago. They had made this huge study. Do people believe in miracles? Reading the article, 80% of people believe that miracles do occur and can occur.² They took a whole spectrum of Spaniards, Indians, French, Italians, Irish, across the board. 20% of people were cynics. The article mentions an amazing thing. Of the 20%, most of them, coincidentally, happen to be Jewish. And I read the article again and again, and I said, "What? We are the people who taught the world about miracles! How can that be?" It blew my mind.

And I have asked many people over the years, "Tell me, what is your difficulty with believing?" People accept evolution. You know, in America a couple of years ago, there were certain states, Colorado and other states, that had this big controversy. Are the schools allowed to teach about creation that the G-d created the world? Or is that an issue with the separation of church and state, and it is not allowed? Do you have to teach evolution instead? And it's amazing to me. Evolution is a theory. There is no proof that G-d did not create a world. There is no proof.

I thought, you should know, there is a legal principle that says, if there is a presumption, the burden of proof devolves upon the person who wants to come and take away from the presumption. The burden of proof devolves upon him. For example, if I go to a court of law and I say, "That shirt you are wearing is mine!" The court cannot open a case. They would say, "Okay, you want to make a claim. Now the burden of proof is upon you. Prove that this is really your shirt." It's amazing to me that we are the people who know about Hashem, yet the Jewish people are so quick to accept the fact that there is no G-d. Why is that so?

IS 'HONESTY' THE BEST POLICY?

Many people will tell you the reason is because Jews are extremely honest. Now, I tell people, "When you want to be honest, you have to look at the following."

Scenario number one is like this. You know, every system of law is made up of lawyers and judges. The function of a lawyer is, he defends his client regardless of what the client did. You have a client that murdered somebody. Witnesses come to the court and say, "Your honor, we saw this guy murdered that guy, he put a gun in his face." The lawyer says, "Objection, your honor, hearsay. This guy doesn't have good eyesight. Maybe it was his cousin, maybe it was his twin brother." The guy says, "Listen, we have pictures of the guy." They shrei ahin, shrei aher. That is what a lawyer is about. The lawyer is hired to defend the client. You never heard a lawyer say, "Your honor, I guess you're right. Witnesses, pictures, DNA, blood samples. You know what? Throw him in jail. Execute him." No! The defense lawyer will deny every accusation until the last second: "Your honor, we are going to appeal this!"

You have to ask yourself, the difference in the potential outcome of every case depends on the judge. He judges every case and the people involved on their merits.

It's the same thing with people. You tell people something about what they should be doing, and all of a sudden, they begin to shrei. "Not so, can't be." And you tell them, "Excuse me. Are you judging the case, or are you being a defense lawyer? Are you defending, or are you judging?"

That is the key that a person has to know in everything. If you want to know if you are honest, you have to ask yourself, "Are you functioning as a defense attorney? Do you have some kind of bias? Or are you honestly judging the matter?"

So a person said to me, "You want to know, rabbi? I think I'm honestly judging this matter." I said, "Are you always so critical?" And the person said, "Yes." And I said, "You know what? I beg to disagree with you."

And he said, "Rabbi, how do you know? Give me an example." And I said, "I'm going to show you how you're never honest at all." People just apply faith indiscriminately, in different cases, for their own perceived benefit.

I told him the following: What is the most precious thing in a person's life? His life. My life is my most precious thing. My children's life, my parents' life. My family's life. That is the most precious thing. Now, suppose you wake up

2 Ed. note: a similar, large Gallup poll, conducted in May of 2022, found that 81% of Americans believe in G-d - the new low in Gallop's trend since beginning to track this data in 1944, where 96% of Americans believed in G-d. This was also down from 87% from the most recent Gallup survey in 2017. Furthermore, the 2022 survey showed that four out of ten Americans believe that G-d hears prayers and intervenes, while 17% of Americans do not believe in G-d. The groups with the largest decline in the belief in G-d and those currently least likely to believe in G-d were liberals (62%), young adults (68%) and Democrats (72%), while those most likely to believe were political conservatives (94%) and Republicans (92%).

one day, with a stiff neck. You call the doctor and make an appointment. He comes to the doctor, and the doctor tells you to sit down. The nurse comes and says, "Take your clothes off, sit down, and let the doctor examine you." You say, "Excuse me, I only have a stiff neck. What should I take my clothes off for?" "Take your clothes off." So you take your clothes off, and they give you a shmatte to wear. You think, "This is crazy." But they tell you to do it, and so you do it.

Then the doctor comes in a little while later, and he starts to poke you and stick you in your neck and listen to your neck. You say, "Doc, what's the verdict?" He says, "I don't think it's anything major. Take these pills. You'll feel good. In a little while, you'll be fine. Make sure you pay the bill on the way out." So now, do you ask the doctor, "Excuse me, doctor, I want to ask you a question. How much knowledge do you have about necks? Is this a common problem that you deal with?" No, you don't ask. Do you ever ask the doctor, "Excuse me, what medical school did you go to? Are you a good doctor?" No, you ask him nothing. There are no guarantees. You take what you get, right? Or do you maybe ask the doctor, "Did you get an A or maybe a B minus or a B plus? Maybe it was my sickness that brought down your grade?" You don't ask these questions. Make sure you pay before you leave the office. You pay your bill, and you go.

Three days later, four days later, it's not getting any better. You call the doctor back, "Doc, I've got a problem." We'll make you another appointment. You come for a second appointment. You take your clothes off again. They start to poke you. You say, "Doc, what is this?" Here is Mr. Critically Honest sitting there like a robot in a coma, and he comes back again and again, and he keeps on paying like a tatele, and keeps taking off from work.

"You're not critically honest," I told this fellow. I don't go to a doctor until I find out who the doctor is. It's about my life. I'm critically honest, trust me. I walk into a doctor and ask the doctor, "How do I know you are even fit to be my doctor?"

I'll never forget, shortly after I got married, I had this sickness with fatigue, bloody throat, etc, so I went to the doctor and I said, "Can you prove to me what this problem is?" I said, "I want to hear how your mind works. Share with me your thinking process." He says, "Who are you?!" I said, "I'm a rabbi, and we study critical analysis. I was trained to question, to critique everything." I said, "I want to know, do you have knowledge of this disease? Tell me, what could it be." He says, "I'm starting to feel uncomfortable." I said, "If you feel uncomfortable, tell me. I'll leave. You feel uncomfortable?"

If a guy tells me, "Rabbi, what is the halachah in this case?" So if I feel uncomfortable with that question, then I'm the wrong rabbi for the job! So he goes and finds somebody else, and we are okay with that. And here, the doctor will say to you, "I don't know, but I'll guinea pig you. I'll try to alleviate you of as much money as possible, and empty out your pockets. I hope that at that point, I'll get it right. I hope it's not life-threatening." That's life.

QUESTIONING THINGS VS. FAITH

So I told that person, "If you're really honest, how come when it comes to everything else in life, you don't question? Then, you buy into the ads. You trust everything and anything. I don't trust anything. If you learn Torah, you know that everything can be viewed from five different angles. You learn how to question. You learn how to challenge ideas and people. There is nothing you can't challenge. And most of the world is as stupid as they come because most of the world is gullible. They believe anything that they are told. They are told today, "Cheerios in the morning is healthy. It's the breakfast of champions." So they say, "Okay, give me three boxes." Then they tell you, "No, that's the breakfast for weaklings. Eat bagels in the morning." "Ah, bagels, let's go buy bagels." Then the guy tells you, "No, bagels are the worst thing. You eat meat for breakfast." "Have you tried the Atkins or South Beach diet? Carbs are the worst thing for you. Absolutely." "You say that? I'll buy it." Tomorrow, no carbohydrates. Low proteins, high proteins. They make you meshuga, and people just shake and shockel and buy whatever narishkeit they sell. And it's unbelievable!

But the "theory" of the Torah that G-d created the world - that everybody is questioning! So therefore, I tell people that are not sure about why they should follow the Torah that their questions are not necessarily coming from an honest perspective.

So now people say the following: "Okay, rabbi, I hear what you are saying. But now, we have the following problem. We are actually envious of you. You have this blind faith. We don't have that faith. What should we do?" And I tell them, "Do you think for one second this has got anything to do with faith? I'm also working on my faith. But that has got nothing to do with faith."³

This is one of the most important aspects of this principle of Control. This has very little to do with faith.

WHAT IS FAITH REALLY? WHAT IS REALITY?

Faith means, "If I have faith in you. I have no guarantees." It's, "I want to have faith in you." If I say, "I have faith in the guy building my house," what kind of faith do I have? I want to have faith. I want to have faith in my dentist. I want to have faith in my doctor, I want to have faith in my shoemaker. I want to have faith in my barber that he's not going to cut my head off, I want to have faith that he knows what he's doing. You want to have faith, so you have faith. I don't have faith in Hashem because I want to have faith. It's got nothing to do with that.

I once heard a woman who came out of the Holocaust speaking. This woman was a very, very respectable woman, very observant. She was a child during Holocaust. 11 years old, 13 years old, 14 years old. A little kid. She was describing what she endured for three years - horrendous. She was describing the horrors she went through as a child. Somebody asked her, "How come you didn't lose your faith?" She looked at them, "What?!" The person said, "After all that, didn't you lose your faith?" She said, "No." So they asked, "Why not?" So she gave an amazing answer. She said, "My faith

3 Ed. note: in other words, "blind faith" or "faith" in general, that those people were referring to, is not real faith. It is just a "belief" that they decide to believe when they want to believe in it.

is not based on blind dogma. People whose faith is based on blind dogma, when they are challenged, their eyes open and reject everything." She said, "My faith is based on the collective experiences that the Jewish people went through. It's based on my history." And she said like this, "If you had a hard time breathing – if you had a cough and breathing was difficult for you, would you then stop believing in breathing? Would you not want to breathe? No, of course not! You scramble for every breath you can. You try everything in the world to make your breathing better because you know that if you don't breathe, you can't continue to live. So it's not a belief." She said, "The history of the Jewish people taught me there is a Hashem. That is a fact."

What does that mean, "I'm not going to have faith?" Faith is not, "It's dark now, so I believe it's nighttime now." That's a reality. When your faith is based on something you want to believe, when you're hanging onto some kind of pipe dream, then you are 100% right. Then the faith gets shaken like this.

But when the faith that you have is not a blind dogma but it's based on the knowledge and on the history of the Jewish people, that's something else. You know how we know Hashem? Because of the one time in history that He revealed Himself – and you have to say that over and over again so you remember. We are the only nation in the world that makes the claim. We don't have faith in Hashem because we were present at creation. Man wasn't created until the last thing. I never spoke to Adam. But the Jewish nation, 3 million people, was at Mount Sinai, and they heard a Living G-d come down and say, "Boys and girls, I am the L-rd, your G-d." That was a fact. They saw that with their eyes. They experienced it firsthand.

If I went to see the president and told a guy, "I saw the president." The next day, I see the president again - it's a picture of George Bush, running around without a suit and tie. Let's say they had him on TV jogging running through the White House in his sweatpants. Do I not believe that I saw George Bush? No! I saw George Bush. It's reality. It's not a question of faith and not faith.

A COLLECTIVE REALITY FOR THE JEWISH PEOPLE

Now, what is the collective experience that we had? People always ask me, "What is the experience we had?" I tell people, "Do you work for a boss? Have you worked for a boss of a company?" "Yes." "Now, do you believe there is a boss in your company?" The guy says, "No, I don't believe there is a boss. I know there is a boss in my company." "Do you have faith there is a boss?" Maybe he's dead. Maybe the company is running on automatic pilot. Maybe it's happening by itself? Now, if there is a boss and the boss wants to communicate with the people, how does the boss do it? There are three ways the boss does it.

Number one, the boss communicates directly with the workers. That's what he does. A guy starts a company, and the guy goes to the workers, "I am the boss, welcome to my company." The boss doesn't want you to rob him blind. He doesn't want you to undermine him, so he says, "It's our company, but I'm the boss. I'll pay you. I'll give you benefits in our company. We'll use the same parking lots." You know there is a boss. He communicates with you directly.

What is the second way? He has agents. He has people in the higher echelons of the company, and they communicate constantly with the lower people.

And then there is a third way. Memorandums. You go to work for a big company, they give you a little bible. It's called the company policy. They tell you to take it home and read it. People take it home, throw it in the back of their trunk, they don't look at it. But if you ask somebody, is there a book about company policy? Of course.

So there are three ways that a boss communicates. And that's how you know there is a boss. I said, "Hashem did all three for us."

The first thing Hashem did was, he communicated directly with the entire nation at the time of Sinai. He gathered together the Jewish people, and He taught us the foundations of Judaism out loud. He showed the entire Jewish people that He had chosen Moshe to be one of the agents. He set down the parameters of who you trust and who you don't trust, who works for Him, and who doesn't work for Him. Who speaks for Him, who doesn't speak for Him. And so on and so forth. That was step one.

Then secondly, throughout the ages, we had prophets. Most people don't realize it. We are the only nation in the world – the only nation in the world! – that has prophecies that are so in order. Now, I want to tell you the difference between the prophecies of the New Testament and the prophecies of the Old Testament. The prophecies of the New Testament were all written down after they happened. See, I'm a big prophet also. I can tell you all about 9/11, but I could only tell you about it starting 9/12. That's not a prophet. That's called a guy who has hindsight. That is not a prophecy. Everybody is a genius in hindsight. Prophecy is if I tell you this is what is going to happen, before it happens. I tell you, this is going to be the future of the Jewish people. This is going to be the future of this particular place.

I remember years ago, a guy told me, "How about Nostradamus?" I said, "I'm not familiar with that, but I will definitely study it." I got a hold of a Nostradamus book. The Nostradamus book is hieroglyphics; it makes no sense. It's abracadabra. So I got it in English. Originally, of course, it wasn't written in English, but in French. So I'm reading it. It says, "clouds," it says "rain," it says "thunder." But it doesn't say where, what, when. So a guy says, "Every time there are clouds, it thunders." "Ah, you see, the guy is a prophet!" This is what he says! "And when a building is on fire, it means this." There are a lot of fires on buildings. That is not a prophecy.

We, the Jewish People, have prophecy. We don't have prophets now, but there was a period in history when prophets foretold events one after another. Were there false prophets? Sure there were false prophets. The Jewish nation was also

plagued by those. But their prophecies never became part of the Prophets in the Tanach. They were all weeded out, and the prophecies that we have were the prophets that turned out to be true prophets. So there were agents who worked for Hashem.

And then there is the third way, and that is the memorandum. Hashem gave us the book of instructions. But, like most company policies, people look at it, and they say, "It's too big and too technical for me. It's too fat for me, and it's probably not going to be relevant to me." So they take it, and they put it in their drawer.

But those three things are the basis for our connection, for our realization.

THREE REASONS FOR JEWS NOT BELIEVING

Now, why do 20% of people not believe in miracles, and a large part of them are Jews? It's amazing – most beliefs in the world, which believe in the G-d of the Jews, believe in that because of the experience that the Jewish nation experienced. All the Muslims, all the Christians, and the Catholics all believe in the G-d of Abraham, the G-d of Israel, because of the experience we had. The only ones who question it are the Jews. Why is it like that?

There are three reasons.

Number one, it's because the Jewish people are the most afraid. They are the most challenged by the discomfort this knowledge causes them. Because if I'm a Jew and I was created, then my next question is, "Am I living for the purpose for which I was created?" And now the challenge becomes threatening. The answer is, obviously not. But the second question is, "Do you even want to live as a Jew?" Most Jews don't want to live as Jews. They don't want to know. Because they don't want to know, they can't even begin to be an objective judge. They must be a defense lawyer. They have to defend their position. And they will say the strangest things.

I told somebody, "Could you imagine the following thing? When did Passover start?" They would like to believe that at one point, millions of people got together, and they made this hoax and said, "You know what? Let us make up a story. A conspiracy. We are going to get every Jew to tell this story. We got out of Egypt. There were these ten plagues. We'll make it up. And we'll make sure to get it right. We'll make up ten plagues. We'll make up all the details of this whole story, and then we'll start making a seder. We'll make this whole thing for the kids. And we'll tell the kids, "Listen, Passover, we know it didn't happen, but we'll play this game." And all the kids will buy into it. We'll tell them, "You've got to eat matzah crackers. And it has to be special crackers. They can't be baked in a regular oven. Only water and flour. It can't have any salt in it, and you can't eat bread for eight days." They create all kinds of laws to make up this whole story.

And then we'll tell people to put on tefillin every day to remember this story. We'll tell them, put a mezuzah on the door that reminds us of the story of the Torah. The craziness, the ludicrousness, the stupidity of such a theory is unbelievable! Try it! Try to get three people to make a conspiracy to get the kids to do something! And we'll write it down, and everybody is going to believe it. But regarding Pesach, for thousands of years, there was no one that questioned it! It's unbelievable.

So, the first reason is that Jews are petrified because of the discomfort.

The second reason that people reject it is because they just don't know. There is a lack of knowledge. One of the ways that Hashem foresaw to protect our knowledge is that you have to study the Torah every single day. If you study the Torah every day of your life, it becomes a living experience. The story becomes real to you. It's not a faith. You know about Hashem, you understand about Hashem. People don't know it. Their parents didn't teach them, either because their parents weren't able to teach them or their parents thought it would be better not to teach them. So they cheated them out of this knowledge. So people are just ignorant.

And the third reason is – and this is a very common reason – is peer pressure. Here is a person that wants to believe, here is a person that would like to stop drinking, he would like to stop smoking, but he can't. Because all his friends smoke and drink. So he doesn't want to sound like he's a tzaddik. He doesn't want to sound like he's the righteous saint and say, "Now I'm going to start keeping Shabbos." Everybody is going to become hostile. Why this, why are you pushing us, why do you have to be strange, why do you have to be different? Why do you have to change? Why do you have to do this? That is called peer pressure.

Human beings struggle with these three things. That is the reason why we have difficulty believing fully and acting on that belief. I have met many people who have gone through the Holocaust, and I say to them, "How strong was your faith before you went in?" I'll grant you, anybody whose faith is weak or whose faith is based on blind dogma, would get blown away if they would go through the Holocaust. I have seen people in little situations get blown away. Things happen to people. I have seen people who lost children, and they blame themselves. The wife tells me, "Maybe I shouldn't have listened to my husband, maybe I shouldn't have listened to my mother, I shouldn't have let the kid go out." You start to incriminate yourself and second-guess yourself. Excuse me, you don't think there is a Hashem in the world? You think your child would have lived if you wouldn't have let your kid go out and ride his bike? What do you think, that is why your kid died? Because you let him go out and play? You think Hashem really wanted the child to live longer? Don't you realize that? And they say, "You're right. We wish we could believe. We don't have the belief."

That is a fundamental principle. This principle of belief is called the CC principle. The Creation and the Control principle. It's the biggest principle of the Torah.

ROSH HASHANAH PREP: ACKNOWLEDGING HASHEM IN MY LIFE

Rosh Hashanah is coming soon. This is what Rosh Hashanah is all about. On Rosh Hashanah, every Jew goes to shul and says, "G-d, happy anniversary. This is the day of the creation of the world. We acknowledge that You are the Creator." You come to shul on Rosh Hashanah and say to Hashem, "You are the King. You created the world, You control the world, You will control the world. I acknowledge that. Give me a good year. Let my health be good. Let my family's health be good. Let my parnasah, my livelihood, be good. Let my children be well." I realize I'm dependent on the Boss.

So the person comes to shul on Rosh Hashanah, he's hedging his bets. And it's amazing to me. I say to non-observant people, "What are you coming to shul for?"

I'll never forget. I was once in the JCC, and I meet this fellow. He said, "Oh, rabbi, you know, I'm a professor of religion." I said, "Really? What do you teach." He said, "Jewish religion." I said, "Really? Like what?" He says, "I teach about the Jewish people." I said, "Do you teach the Torah?" He said, "Sure." I said, "Really? That's amazing to me." I said, "Are you observant?" He said, "No, not at all." I said, "Why not?" He said, "I don't believe in it." I said, "Excuse me, do you teach lies?" He said, "Oh, we study the text, we study Torah." He says, "I don't believe the stories." I said, "Excuse me, do you think that in every Orthodox synagogue, what we call the holy Torah, is a lie?" He said, "Well, basically." I said, "You mean somebody wrote, 'and G-d said to Moses'?" "That's a lie," he says. I said, "What would they write that for?" He said, "Well, it has moral lessons, and I try to take out the moral lessons." I said, "You mean, and G-d said to Abraham and Abraham said to G-d - this is all nonsense? And G-d took the Jews out of Egypt?" He says, "Yeah, I don't believe it." I told the guy, "Have you seen a psychiatrist lately? It doesn't make any sense to me not to believe." So you know what he said to me? He said an interesting thing. He says, "Rabbi, I can't believe." He said, "If I would believe, I would have to change my life." I said, "Okay, fine. I understand."

That's the struggle. That's what Rosh Hashanah is. Once you have that principle down, you can build your life. Now the question is, how much belief do I have to have? Okay, creation and control. How much do I have to believe that?

UNDERSTANDING BEREISHIS: TO SEE AND FEEL HASHEM IN MY LIFE

The Zohar says an amazing teaching on the first word of the Torah. The first word of the Torah is Bereishis which is translated to English as 'in the beginning.' When you get to study the Torah, you get to learn that every word could be rearranged and there are messages within the word. The Zohar, one of the greatest sources of kabbalistic teachings, says if you take a look at the word 'Bereishis,' it actually can be broken down into two words. One is "yorei" and one is "boshes." Bereishis is yorei and boshes. "Yorei" means to see. To be in awe when you see something. "Boshes" means to be embarrassed. The greatest principle of the Torah is that Hashem created the world and that He controls it. Do you know to what degree it has to be? To the degree where I feel that right now, I'm speaking in His presence. That right now, if I don't behave correctly, I have to be embarrassed and ashamed. If my father were here or my boss were here or your boss, or your father, your wife, or your husband were here, there are certain things you would be ashamed to do. You would be embarrassed. You would be afraid. Whether out of respect or out of fear. That is what accepting this principle means. The knowledge of this principle is such that I accept this principle to such a degree that I know, I see, and I feel Hashem at all times.

In your chadrei chadarim, in your most hidden rooms, the halachah tells us, the Torah tells us, you must conduct yourself properly.

It's amazing. If you study the Torah, there are laws of how you go to the bathroom. The halachah says, if you go to the bathroom, you don't get totally undressed. You know why? You're in the presence of G-d. You don't pull your pants down all the way. No. There are even ways to go to the bathroom. It's amazing. What is the message?

So people say, "What kind of laws are these, Rabbi?" These are all laws to remind you. You know what kind of brachah you say when you come out of the bathroom? I have been saying this brachah with a lot of intensity over the last two weeks. You know why? I'll tell you why. Because I met a young woman, much younger than me, who just got a pouch; she can't go to the bathroom anymore. Her days of going to the bathroom are over. If you look at her, she's a beautiful, wonderful young woman. She can't go to the bathroom anymore. So I don't take it for granted. When I come out, I say, "Hashem, why not me?" What special merit do I have to not be in her situation?

I have spoken to numerous people who have had kidney stones. When you have kidney stones, you want to go to the bathroom, and you can't. Trust me, the pain is intense. I've been with people, I have held people's hands. They were trembling, shaking. They wanted to die. So the same question - why not me? Because Hashem controls the world. Is it because I did something? It's because Hashem controls my life. So when you come out of the bathroom, you thank Hashem. You say to Hashem, "I acknowledge that Your control extends even to the slightest thing in my life. You're in control."

When you're in your house, you get upset at something, and all of a sudden, you switch languages. You stop talking English, and you start talking 'French.' And you think, "What is this? What is wrong with me?" You say, "It's my home, I do what I want!" But you wouldn't do it if somebody honorable and respectful was around. Hashem is here. When a person does that, it means his emunah is weak. His belief, his knowledge of this principle is weak.

And that is what you spend your whole life doing. Building. Building. Building the experience. You develop faith. You know the facts. You first study the facts. You study the Torah, you study the memorandum, you study the words of the prophets, you study the words you heard directly from them. You study the experiences. You get it into your mind. Then you spend the rest of your life internalizing that message and strengthening your heart to feel it, so that when something comes down the pipe, no matter what it is, you're ready for it, and you know you're in the hands of Hashem. You remember that principle, the principle of Creation and Control. Have a great week.

THE BOTTOM LINE

For the world to exist and endure, it has to run on continued and necessary partnership of both *middos of din* and *rachamim*, as Chazal teach us. The incredible chidduch of the Gr"א that chodesh Elul is כולו רחמים - *rachamim* alone, without any *middas ha'din* - is especially amazing in light of above principle of constant partnership of these two הנהגות. Elul is therefore the momentous exception to this rule of the creation. And of course the idea that Elul is כולו רחמים, is there to motivate us to change, so that we can prepare for Yom Kippur and do teshuva, for which we need as much rachamim as possible. We also learned, that similarly to how Hashem was *mekadesh* certain *zmanim* with specific השפעות (i.e. חירות on Pesach and מתן תורה on Shavuos) - to allow us to tap into their special spiritual *koach* and be transformed by that spiritual energy - Hashem also established Shabbos as a gateway of *kedusha*, available for us every week for us to tap into as well. Apart from sanctifying Shabbos by abstaining from *melachos*, we also have a positive mitzvah of וקראת לשבת עונג - to indulge the body with pleasures of delicious foods - but with the ultimate goal of remembering מעשה בראשית as a vehicle to praising and glorifying Hashem, and being *zoche* to reach the *madregah* of ה' להתענג על ה' on Shabbos!