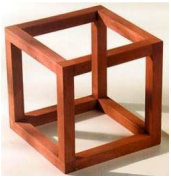


Paradox, Mystery and Contradiction

For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of Me will find it.
- Matthew 16:25 HCSB



A paradox is a statement or concept that leads to a counterintuitive conclusion. The Scriptures are full of them. The very concept of a divine and eternal being contains paradoxes. How could such a being be both transcendent and immanent? How can He retain sovereignty while granting free will? How could He be holy and yet put up with us?

However, the Bible does not encourage irrationality. It does not demand a “blind leap of faith.” He is not named Gelah Raz¹ – Revealer of Mysteries – for naught. As stated elsewhere², Hashem has given us plenty of evidence to demonstrate not only His existence but many of His divine attributes. Beyond the general revelation available to the natural theologian, Gelah Raz gave special revelation to the prophets of old, detailing not only His nature but His demands.

However, God’s revelation has historically been progressive. God’s hidden wisdom was a mystery that many of the ancient sages did not know but it has since been graciously revealed through the Holy Spirit.³ The sacred secret of God’s full revelation is now revealed and made known through the prophetic Scriptures.⁴

Even in the individual experience, truth can only come through process. More light is given to those who respond obediently to enlightenment. Those who stubbornly suppress the truth find their minds darkened.⁵ This is why Christ spoke in parables. He deliberately kept truth from some while revealing it to others.⁶

This process, along with our own fundamental ignorance, can sometimes cause us to perceive certain statements as paradoxical, mysterious or even contradictory. Typically, though, the statements only seem puzzling because our understanding of the premises are flawed. For instance, the statement that whoever wants to save his life must lose it, is not paradoxical to the one who knows that this physical life is not all there is. The same principle can be used to understand Yahweh warning that on the day Adam and Eve disobeyed, they would surely die. Those who read of them continuing on with their lives and having children after being cast out of the Garden could believe that God was either wrong or deceitful if they did not keep in mind that “the wages of sin is death.”⁷

For years, critics scoffed at the idea that the entire world would gaze upon the dead bodies of the Two Witnesses⁸ – that is until the advent of satellite television and the World Wide Web. Many shook their heads at the Scriptures’ description of the Hittite nation⁹ - until Hugo Winckler discovered their empire in 1906.

As we approach God and His Word, we must do so cautiously, humbly keeping in mind our ignorance and mortal perspective. Those statements that seem most paradoxical will usually turn out to hold the most amazing truths.

¹ Daniel 2:28

² “The Silent Voice of God”

³ 1 Corinthians 2:4-10

⁴ Romans 16:25-27

⁵ Proverbs 1:25-28; 6:23; 13:9; 18:1; 29:13, 18; Isaiah 66:3b-4; Matthew 13:12-17; 25:19-23, 26-29; Luke 12:47-48; Romans 2:5-9; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12

⁶ Matthew 13:10-12

⁷ Romans 6:23

⁸ Revelation 11:8-10

⁹ Genesis 10:15; Joshua 1:4