

### 3b. Theology Proper - Who Is God?



Today there is no agreed definition of "God," and ideas about him vary from person to person. Some view Him as the soul of the universe. Others believe He is a kindly grandfather in the sky, or an absentee landlord who created the world and then went off to a celestial Acapulco.

People in Paul's day were just as confused about God. In Acts 17, Paul visits polytheistic Athens, the intellectual capital of the world. There he is given the privilege of speaking in the Areopagus, Athens' oldest and most prestigious institution: a Senate-like court with special jurisdiction in moral and religious affairs. Paul's crash course in basic Christian theism helps us to understand who God is.

The first question in your work book asks, "What are some common misconceptions people have about God?" I'd like to list eleven for you.

#### **a. God the teddy bear. God will always forgive my sins.**

When the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah disregarded God's warnings, God's patience, after a long while, ran out and those evil cities were eternally destroyed.<sup>1</sup>

When the people of Noah's day rejected God's messages, the world was destroyed with a great flood.<sup>2</sup>

It doesn't just happen to the unsaved. The people of Israel balked at crossing the Jordan into the Promised Land. They said, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt, or if only we had died in this wilderness!"<sup>3</sup> They wished to die in the wilderness; God made their sin their ruin, took them at their word, and their carcasses fell in the wilderness.

When Moses lost his cool and ruined God's show and tell lesson, Moses was kept from the Promised Land.<sup>4</sup>

It didn't just happen in the Old Covenant. The Corinthian believers who were turning the Passover into a wild drunken party were made sick. Those who insisted on their "liberty" were killed.<sup>5</sup>

#### **b. God the vindictive thrower of lightning bolts. God can never forgive my sins.**

God will certainly never leave the guilty unpunished<sup>6</sup> and God may allow the consequences of our sins to spill over to three to four generations. However, if we will only turn and obey Him, He ensures that the results will influence a thousand generations!<sup>7</sup>

It is not up to us to decide whom God will or will not forgive. He is just as much an independent free-will agent as we are. He told us, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."<sup>8</sup>

God does not delight in the death of the wicked. Furthermore, anyone who will repent of their sins will find a gracious and merciful Father.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 19:12-13

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 6:5-7

<sup>3</sup> Numbers 14:2

<sup>4</sup> Numbers 20:12

<sup>5</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:29-30

<sup>6</sup> Nahum 1:3

<sup>7</sup> Exodus 20:5-6; Deuteronomy 7:9-10

<sup>8</sup> Exodus 33:19

**c. God the problem solver. God will not allow any problems to occur in my life.**

God is far more concerned with our character than He is with our comfort. He will purposefully introduce difficulties into our lives in order to test our hearts, humble us, discipline us, build character in us, or simply to glorify Himself by lending us strength and hope in the midst of our trials.<sup>10</sup>

**d. God the joyless party pooper. God is against all pleasure.**

God's first command to mankind was to have sex.<sup>11</sup> To say that He is against it is ridiculous. Having said that, sex is a powerful gift; one that can cut two ways. Within the right context, it promotes intimacy and results in life. Experienced outside God's healthful boundaries, it will separate and may result in sickness and even death.

God also gave us wine – simply in order to make our hearts glad. He wants to give us good things that we can enjoy. However, they must be enjoyed in moderation. The gift must never take precedence over the Giver.<sup>12</sup>

Jesus wants to give us good “pasture”. He wants us to fully experience life in all its abundance. The devil, who keeps telling us to “live it up” is actually wanting to destroy us.<sup>13</sup>

When we consider the lush biosphere that we enjoy, and view with awe the wonders of our universe, it is difficult if not impossible to conceive what our God has promised. The gifts God gives to His people will only keep on coming and get better and better. He is truly the generous “Good Giver.”<sup>14</sup>

**e. God the maker of perfect zombies. God will instantly make me perfect.**

Those who expect this to be true will certainly not find any validation for their theory in the real world. There is certainly no righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.<sup>15</sup> If we say, “we have no sin,” we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.<sup>16</sup>

The Teacher promised that those who seek righteousness will find themselves growing and improving over time.<sup>17</sup> As the sun first glimmers in the east and steadily increases until it has reached noontime splendor, so is the course of the tzaddik. His knowledge, purity, and holiness will gradually increase and the light of his pious example will shine more and more. At long last, he will be exalted by his God in the third heaven where he will shine in a blaze of pure joy.

The rasha on the other hand, though they may amuse themselves with many worldly baubles and be referred to as “stars” by Lowlander culture, will suffer a steady increase of thick, gloomy darkness; a compendium of ignorance, error, sin, and misery, until at length their life will terminate in the blackness of eternal darkness and torment.<sup>18</sup>

Even the great Apostle Paul admitted his own sinful frailties. He struggled with understanding why he didn't fully practice what he wanted to do. He confessed that he was

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<sup>9</sup> Ezekiel 18:21-24, 32

<sup>10</sup> Deuteronomy 8:2-3; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; John 9:1-3; 1 Peter 4:12-13

<sup>11</sup> Genesis 1:28

<sup>12</sup> Psalm 104:14-15; Romans 14:16-18

<sup>13</sup> John 10:9-10

<sup>14</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:9; James 1:5

<sup>15</sup> Ecclesiastes 7:20

<sup>16</sup> 1 John 1:8

<sup>17</sup> Proverbs 4:18

<sup>18</sup> Romans 1:21-32; Jude 1:10-13

unable to consistently do what was good.<sup>19</sup> Even at the end of his life, he admitted that he had not reached his goal of maturity in Christ; but he was still trying.<sup>20</sup>

For this reason, not only because those around us are “works in progress”, but because WE ARE TOO, we should practice forbearing patience toward one another.<sup>21</sup>

***f. God the perfect nanny. God will keep me from all harm.***

This idea is pushed primarily by the “health and wealth”-preaching charismatic groups. They teach that if only you will have enough faith, God will ensure you success in every endeavor, and perfect safety from all harm. Apparently, the Apostle Paul did not have sufficient faith, because he went through a whole HOST of troubles!<sup>22</sup>

Apparently, the Holy Spirit was mistaken to include suffering, poverty-stricken brothers and sisters in the Hall of Faith.<sup>23</sup>

God has different priorities than we do. He considers our **faith** to be a valuable commodity and He thinks it’s far more valuable than gold. Like gold, faith is refined in fiery trials. To seek a life of ease is to turn one’s back on faith; to turn one’s back on God’s values.<sup>24</sup>

***g. God the purveyor of gurus. God will instantly make my leaders perfect.***

This is an excuse many people give for leaving the church and living lives that by and large disregard Hashem’s mitzvot. “I got burnt in church.” Or “There are too many hypocrites in church.” However, this presumes that we are without sin too. The church never claimed to have perfect leaders. There is only One who is Good – and He holds an equal status with two other members of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit went to great lengths to help us choose the best, most principled leaders out of a bunch of degenerate sinners. Those qualifications are not only necessary to gain leadership in God’s “**charaktocracy**” but to keep that position.<sup>25</sup>

The early church was not only told to carefully examine the lives of those who were being considered as potential candidates for leadership, but to provide for their dismissal if they failed to continue in righteous living.<sup>26</sup>

***h. God the builder of fortress sanctuaries. God will not allow any vampires in His church.***

This is a variation of “God the purveyor of gurus.” In this one, people stupidly believe that because their children are in a church Sunday school they are completely safe from predators. That is not the case. In fact, I believe that Satan introduces wicked people to the church (using their predatory instincts) specifically to destroy churches.<sup>27</sup> Because we are “sheep in the midst of wolves”, we are in greater danger of attack – not less.<sup>28</sup>

This is also true about bad teachers; false prophets who are simply considering the pastorate as a means of personal gain or profit.<sup>29</sup> As we approach the end times, I believe that particular problem will get worse, not better.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Romans 7:15, 18

<sup>20</sup> Philippians 3:12-13

<sup>21</sup> Matthew 6:12, 14-15; Colossians 3:13

<sup>22</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:24-26

<sup>23</sup> Hebrews 11:35-40

<sup>24</sup> 1 Peter 1:6-7

<sup>25</sup> 1 Timothy 1:15-16

<sup>26</sup> 1 Timothy 5:19-20

<sup>27</sup> Matthew 13:25; 1 Peter 5:8

<sup>28</sup> Matthew 10:16

<sup>29</sup> Matthew 24:11; Acts 20:29-31; Philippians 3:18-19; 2 Peter 2:1; Jude 1:10-13

<sup>30</sup> 2 Timothy 3:13

One of the principle reasons is that “we get the leadership we deserve.” If the people from who the leadership are chosen are corrupt, then the leadership will also be corrupt.<sup>31</sup> If the people (the pool), are interested in righteous living and do not tolerate sin, then they will choose wise leaders.

***i. God the finicky. God’s people should never hang out with Lowlanders.***

This one is more popular among the “KJV only, hyper fundamental, so separated we are of no earthly good” types. These are the ones who are even too righteous for each other! It’s also a primary driving factor among such as the Amish and Quaker. However, if it were true – if God wants us to be separate from Lowlander culture, then why did the Master Himself live and move among them?<sup>32</sup>

It wasn’t that Jesus simply went slumming to pass out tracts and then scuttle back to the relative safety of His white, middle class neighborhood. He didn’t simply try to save “the little black babies” all the while despising their parents. His enemies referred to Him as a glutton and a drunkard.<sup>33</sup> Because He was faced with all the same temptations as us yet without sin, we know their accusation was false. Yet the fact remains, He did like a good meal and He did drink alcoholic drinks and He remained “a friend of the untouchable.”

Having said that, there is a big difference between “hangin’ out” **with**, and lovingly ministering **to** sinners. Jesus never hesitated to put His finger right on our moral sore spots. Furthermore, He always kept in mind the Father’s will and obeyed it fully.<sup>34</sup> He simply wasn’t “over-righteous” as Solomon put it.<sup>35</sup>

Besides, it would be impossible to fulfill the Lord’s Great Commission<sup>36</sup> if we were to remain completely separated from sinners! We not only need to go out among sinners but we need to tailor our approach to their proclivities so that we can be more effective witnesses.<sup>37</sup>

What’s really interesting to me is that the only clear and categorical statement on the issue of separation teaches that it is not the worldly Lowlanders from whom we must separate. It is from hypocrites who call themselves believers but live like their father the devil that we must separate.<sup>38</sup>

***j. God the blankie. God’s people will always feel close to God.***

This error presumes that we will never sin, an obvious fallacy. When we sin, Holy God will separate from us – even if we are His children.<sup>39</sup> The fact that we are His children INCREASES the chance of this happening because He is our Father and will, like any good Father, discipline His children.<sup>40</sup> The Father even separated Himself from His only begotten Son when the Son became sin for us. How much more will He deal with our sins?<sup>41</sup>

***k. God as Miss Manners. God’s people should all talk like the Stepford Wives.***

This usually is heard among the true “cultural Christians”; those who regard the Way as being strewn with rose petals and saturated in saccharin sweet speech. The Scriptures agree

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<sup>31</sup> 2 Timothy 4:3-4

<sup>32</sup> Matthew 9:11; Mark 2:16

<sup>33</sup> Matthew 11:18-19; Luke 7:33-35

<sup>34</sup> Luke 5:30-32

<sup>35</sup> Ecclesiastes 7:16

<sup>36</sup> Matthew 28:18-20

<sup>37</sup> 1 Corinthians 9:22-23

<sup>38</sup> 1 Corinthians 5:9-13

<sup>39</sup> Psalm 42:1-3; 63:1

<sup>40</sup> 1 Peter 4:17

<sup>41</sup> Mark 15:34

that we are to speak lovingly, but maintain that we must balance the graciousness with truthfulness.<sup>42</sup>

The prophet Isaiah warned against condoning sin in an effort to remain “united”. He said,

- [Isaiah 5:20-21 HCSB](#) Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness, who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. (21) Woe to those who are wise in their own opinion and clever in their own sight.

We all know that we can count on our truest friends to speak the truth to us – sometimes bluntly.<sup>43</sup> It is to enemies that we speak in an overabundance of care: witness the statements our presidents have made concerning the former Soviet Union, or Iran or Korea.

Those who push the “Stepford Wives” argument tend to have a burr under their saddle about “judgmental Christians”. Their favorite verse is:

- [Matthew 7:1-2 HCSB](#) "Do not judge, so that you won't be judged. (2) For with the judgment you use, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

But they fail to balance it with:

- [John 7:24 HCSB](#) Stop judging according to outward appearances; rather judge according to righteous judgment."

True believers are allowed to practice good judgment but it must not be hypocritical and it must be according to the truth.<sup>44</sup> We are not only allowed but encouraged to call out those who are wicked teachers.

- John exposed the Pharisees as vipers.<sup>45</sup>
- Jesus exposed the Pharisees.<sup>46</sup>
- Paul exposed Jannes and Jambres.<sup>47</sup>

It is all right to “name names”.

- Paul named Peter,<sup>48</sup> Demas,<sup>49</sup> Hymenaeus and Alexander,<sup>50</sup> Hymenaeus and Philetus,<sup>51</sup> Alexander the Coppersmith,<sup>52</sup> and Jannes and Jambres<sup>53</sup> publicly.
- John named Diotrefes.<sup>54</sup>
- Moses, Peter, Jude and John named Baalam.<sup>55</sup>
- Nathan named David.<sup>56</sup>
- Hanani named King Jehoshaphat.<sup>57</sup>

Believers are required to expose error and to oppose those who peddle it.

- We are to MARK them and AVOID them.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ephesians 4:14-15

<sup>43</sup> Proverbs 27:6

<sup>44</sup> Matthew 7:3-5

<sup>45</sup> Matthew 3:7

<sup>46</sup> Matthew 12:34; 23:3, 15-17, 27, 33

<sup>47</sup> 2 Timothy 3:8

<sup>48</sup> Galatians 2:11-14

<sup>49</sup> 2 Timothy 4:10

<sup>50</sup> 1 Timothy 1:18-20

<sup>51</sup> 2 Timothy 2:17

<sup>52</sup> 2 Timothy 4:14-15

<sup>53</sup> 2 Timothy 3:8

<sup>54</sup> 3 John 1:9-11

<sup>55</sup> Numbers 25:1-3; 31:14-16; 2 Peter 2:15-16; Jude 1:10-11; Revelation 2:14

<sup>56</sup> 2 Samuel 12:7

<sup>57</sup> 2 Chronicles 18:1; ; 19:2; 21:1-6

- We are to SEPARATE from them.<sup>59</sup>
- We are to KEEP AWAY from them.<sup>60</sup>
- We are to REBUKE them.<sup>61</sup>
- We are to REJECT heretics.<sup>62</sup>
- We are to TRY them.<sup>63</sup>
- We are NOT to RECEIVE them.<sup>64</sup>

Take a look at your second question. Why would the synagogue and the market place,<sup>65</sup> two very different venues, be logical places for discussions about God? The term used of what Paul was doing was “reasoned.” Although the word *dielexato* is frequently translated “reasoned,” “disputed,” or “argued,” this sense does not come from its classical meaning where it was used of philosophical disputation, including the Socratic method of questions and answers. There is no contextual evidence for this kind of debate. What was happening was the simple ***derasha*** or midrash that any qualified member of a synagogue or even a visiting ***rabbi*** might give. We see the Master doing the same thing during His stay on Earth.<sup>66</sup> Other examples may be found at:

As we saw in Acts 17:21, the Athenians loved to sit around and dispute about “new things”. Sounds kind of like the origins of Facebook to me: a whole lot of talk about nothing. Paul specifically spoke out against that type of thing.<sup>67</sup> Paul, a master debater and evangelist says we need to understand the following about wrangling over mere words, splitting hairs, delighting in ***casuistry***, ***sophistry*** or ***polemics***:

1. It is useless.
2. It leads to the ruin of those who listen to it.
3. It leads to the furtherance of ungodliness.
4. It ends up spreading like gangrene.
5. It will produce quarrels.

Christians should actually avoid controversies over foolish matters, because they realize they are “unprofitable”, “worthless” and give credence to those who say that Christians are constantly fighting and forming splits.<sup>68</sup>

A person who is “factious” is addicted to forming cliques, groups or parties (as in political parties – not the fun kind). They are seditious, divisive, and characterized by contentiousness, self-seeking, and reckless of the common good. Being divisive, they have a party spirit and seem to delight in argument for argument’s sake. They foment intrigue and are marked by irreconcilable conflicts that are unrelated to sound doctrine, logic or even common sense. It may take a time or two before you realize what kind of person you are dealing with, but once you have you are commanded to have nothing more to do with their games. You do not want to participate in or encourage their sin.

So – going back to Acts 17:17, when we hear that Paul was going to the synagogues and the marketplaces, reasoning with people – we are not talking about the foolish type of soap box preaching some cultural Christians do today that is actually an embarrassment to the

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<sup>58</sup> Romans 16:17; 2 Timothy 3:5

<sup>59</sup> 1 Corinthians 5:9-11

<sup>60</sup> 2 Thessalonians 3:6

<sup>61</sup> Titus 1:13

<sup>62</sup> Titus 3:10

<sup>63</sup> 1 John 4:1

<sup>64</sup> 2 John 1:10-11

<sup>65</sup> Acts 17:16-34

<sup>66</sup> Matthew 4:23; Mark 1:21

<sup>67</sup> 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 2 Timothy 2:14-17, 22-26

<sup>68</sup> Titus 3:9-11

cause of Christ. Paul was using a common practice of his day's culture and turning it to the good of the Kingdom.

Why the synagogue? The Apostle Paul had a great love for his racial kin. He wished that they might all come to realize that their long wait for the Mashiach' had come to an end.<sup>69</sup> However, he also realized that many of the racially Jewish people had rejected their rightful King and would continue to do so, but Hashem would use their stubbornness as a way to illustrate both His great mercy and His continued commitment to make Abraham a "blessing to ALL nations."<sup>70</sup>

So, Paul would reach out to those in the synagogue first, and then when he was rejected (though not universally for it says "some worshipped God" or were "devout") he turned to "Israel that was not Israel", Goyim who were, like their spiritual ancestors Ruth and Rahab, willing to convert and turn to Yahweh Yeshua as their Savior/King.

**Epicureans believed that pleasure is the chief end of life. Stoics emphasized that we should be rational and self-sufficient. How did these philosophers respond to Paul's preaching?**<sup>71</sup>

The Epicureans were a well-known school of atheistic materialists, who maintained that the universe is the product of chance and that pleasure was the chief end of human existence – a principle which the more sober disciples of this school interpreted in a refined sense, while the sensual explained it in its courser meaning.

The Stoics were the followers of Zeno, an equally celebrated but opposite school of philosophy, essentially pantheistic, whose principle was that the universe was under the law of an iron necessity, the spirit of which was what is called the Deity; and that a passionless conformity of the human will to this law, unmoved by all external circumstances and changes, is the perfection of virtue. While therefore the Stoical was in itself superior to the Epicurean system, both were alike hostile to the Gospel.

They heard bits and pieces of Paul's message and, though hostile and condescending, they invited him to the Areopagus and on the surface spoke civilly to the Apostle.

**Why did they responded this way?** Like many today, they were perfectly happy to entertain the possibility of multiple deities, multiple philosophical systems, even contradictory ideas, and include them in a syncretistic mishmash of spiritual, philosophical and intellectual odds and ends. They were the post-moderns of their day. There truly is nothing new under the sun.

The ***Ruach' ha Kodesh*** gives us what their true purpose was in all their philosophical meanderings. The Spirit tells us their sole motivation was "telling or hearing something new." As with many post-moderns, their hearts were not intent on discernment of truth. Their goal was self-aggrandizement (i.e. telling something new) or entertainment (i.e. hearing something new). Small wonder Paul warned Timothy,

- **2 Timothy 4:3-4 HCSB** For the time will come when they will not tolerate sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, will accumulate teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear something new. (4) They will turn away from hearing the truth and will turn aside to myths.

**Paul stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and made known the "unknown god",<sup>72</sup> stressing the following facts about God.**

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<sup>69</sup> Romans 9:1-8

<sup>70</sup> Romans 11:7-11

<sup>71</sup> Acts 17:18-21

<sup>72</sup> Acts 17:22-29

- a. v. 24 There is a single ultimate God.
- b. v. 24 That God is the origin of all things both heavenly (to the Stoics) and earthly (to the Epicureans).
- c. v. 24 Though God is the origin of all things material, He is in fact Spirit and uncontainable. He is transcendent.
- d. v. 25 This God is not only the source of material things, but also of life itself. He is ***EI Ch'aim***, the God of Life.
- e. v.25 All our earthly works are insufficient
- f. v. 26 He began humanity through one man.
- g. v. 26 He is the founder of every nation, both Greek (they probably all nodded in sober agreement) and Barbarian (they probably started at this point and gave a small frown).
- h. v. 26 God reigns supremely over all nations. He raises empires and casts them down.
- i. v. 27 In view of His sovereignty, power and omnipotence we should seek a relationship with Him.
- j. v. 27 D'vekut is not far from any man. God may be sovereign but He is also gracious and loving.
- k. v. 28 God is not only transcendent, but He is also immanent and omnipresent.
- l. v. 28 He considers Himself to be our Father. In Greek society that gave him the power and life and death over each of His children and allowed Him to even choose their career paths and spouses.
- m. v. 29 We cannot put God in our mental boxes, regardless of the form we give those boxes. We must simply take Him as He presents Himself.

Paul's statements seriously challenged the Athenian views about the gods. In typical Jewish Christian style, Paul informed them of the true God, of whom their idols were an ignorant reflection. In this bluntness he reflected the influence not only of his culture but of his Master.<sup>73</sup>

Make no mistake; Adonaic culture is about "demolishing arguments and every high-minded thing that is raised up against the knowledge of God. It's about taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ."<sup>74</sup> We are to be so rooted and built up in Him, and established in the faith, that we are invulnerable to being taken captive through philosophy and empty deceit based on human tradition, based on the elemental forces of the world and not based on Christ.<sup>75</sup>

*Epicureans* – Atheistic materialists. In the Epicurean view, the highest pleasure (tranquility and freedom from fear) was obtained by knowledge, friendship and living a virtuous and temperate life. Their founder lauded the enjoyment of simple pleasures, by which he meant abstaining from bodily desires, such as sex and appetites, verging on asceticism. He argued that when eating, one should not eat too richly, for it could lead to dissatisfaction later, such as the grim realization that one could not afford such delicacies in the future. Likewise, sex could lead to increased lust and dissatisfaction with the sexual partner.

To the Epicureans, Paul pointed out that there is a Mind behind the matter; that the spiritual aspect is as critical in our personal formulas as the material. He showed them that our knowledge falls fatally short in contrast to an omniscient God. He demonstrated that it is not our pleasure that is of primary importance but God's. Paul's message was that salvation lies not in moderation but in total abnegation of human rights.

*Stoics* - The stoics considered destructive emotions to be the result of errors in judgment, and that a sage, or person of "moral and intellectual perfection," would not undergo such

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<sup>73</sup> John 3:9-10; Matthew 16:9-11; Mark 4:13

<sup>74</sup> 2 Corinthians 10:5

<sup>75</sup> Colossians 2:7-8

emotions. Because of this, the Stoics presented their philosophy as a way of life, and they thought that the best indication of an individual's philosophy was not what a person said but how he or she behaved.

To the Stoics, Paul preached that it was not about salvation by good works. We could never behave well enough to satiate the holiness of **Yahweh Kadosh**. It was not principally about a lifestyle but about a conversion experience.

Paul's statements not only challenged the Athenian views, but also the principle modern misconceptions about God. To the atheists with their philosophy of scientific reductionism, Paul argues that there is far more to existence than may be perceived by man or man's machines.<sup>76</sup> He reasons that values and ethics, though intangible, are real and effective because they reflect the underpinnings of the universe. They give us hints and clues. Where science answers what, where and when, God's Way tells us how. Further, he warns that the values and ethics revealed in the Scriptures are perhaps even more crucial because they reveal WHY the universe functions as it does.

To the religious liberals, with their philosophy of religious pluralism, Paul throws out a challenge to demonstrate the proof of their so-called religiosity. With James, he states "Faith without works is dead." He opposes their claim of multiple paths to a single Truth with "There is one God and one mediator between God and man; the man Christ Jesus."<sup>77</sup>

Your seventh question asks, "**What has God done so that people might seek Him?**"<sup>78</sup> I offer four answers:

- a. *God has left proof that we all came from one source.* He left clues as to the singular origin of mankind. Paleoanthropology and mitochondrial population genetics agree with the Scriptures. Both approaches largely support the Recent African Origin model which states that all humans originated on the continent of Africa and migrated from there across the Sinai Peninsula, spreading out across the European and Asian continents. In Paul's words "He has from one man made every nation of men."
- b. *He has left proof that He is transcendent.* He told prophets hundreds of years in advance what kingdom would rise and how they would fall. We can never hope to "get one over on" God. He is in complete command of every situation, and we can prove that – archeologically, linguistically, lexically.
- c. *He has left a deep imprint upon mankind* – as Ecclesiastes puts it, "He has also put eternity in their hearts..."<sup>79</sup> Or as Paul said in Romans 1, there is truth in our hearts that must be suppressed.<sup>80</sup>
- d. *He has demonstrated He is the one universal God.* He is no mere local deity. No one escapes this call. The call Hashem has upon our lives is an active, disturbing one. Again, we know this because we see that every nation, regardless of their technological advancement, believes certain fundamental truths:
  - 1) There is life after death;
  - 2) what we do in this life affects the next life;
  - 3) there is some kind of supernatural force or forces to whom we must answer;
  - 4) there is an absolute standard of morality by which we are being judged.
- e. *He has left a spark of His personality and creativity in us.* He has left traces of art, poetry and music for which value cannot be determined from a materialistic, evolutionary standpoint. What would mere genes, driven by an irresistible drive to

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<sup>76</sup> John 3:8

<sup>77</sup> 1 Timothy 2:3-6

<sup>78</sup> Acts 17:26-28

<sup>79</sup> Ecclesiastes 3:11

<sup>80</sup> Romans 1:18-19

procreate, care for art, poetry, music or philosophy? These exist to show us that “we are His offspring”.

Finally, Acts 17:30-31 helps us understand Paul’s distress about idolatry<sup>81</sup> and his motivation to proclaim the true God if we compare that to his Lycaonian experience<sup>82</sup> and his own personal experience of conversion. He had been tremendously zealous in his religiosity. Unfortunately, his zeal was only matched by his ignorance and he did a lot of damage as a result.

In Lycaonia, he saw how people were ready to worship other humans and how quickly they turned from worship to murderous rage. Now he sees the same religiously ignorant zeal again. You can imagine where his mind was going!

Further, he knew that though God is patient, Elohim would not fail to punish evil doers. Now God commands all people everywhere to repent. Those that fail to recognize this fundamental truth will be as surely crushed as the wicked people of Sodom.<sup>83</sup>

As the Psalmist put it, “Pay homage to the Son, or He will be angry, and you will perish in your rebellion, for His anger may ignite at any moment.”<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Acts 17:16

<sup>82</sup> Acts 14:15-18

<sup>83</sup> Jude 1:5-7; Hebrews 2:1-3; 12:25

<sup>84</sup> Psalm 2:6-12