

NO CONTRADICTION

by Rabbi Raymond Beyda

When Ribkah Imenu became pregnant it should have been cause for joy and celebration. After all, she and her husband our Patriarch Yitzhak had prayed fervently for years for a child and now one was soon to be born. Instead her joy quickly turned to despair. Whenever she passed a house of idol worship the baby kicked in an attempt to leave its mother's womb. Similarly, whenever she passed a holy place of worship the pains of a fetus pushing to exit its mother's womb stuck her like a knife. "If this is so why should I live?" she said in despair.

She sought the advice of the wise men of the generation in the Yeshivah of Shem and Ever. "Don't worry", they responded, "there are two nations in your womb." She was comforted by this reply and with new resolve accepted her condition and persisted until the twins were born.

Knowing that 2 infants were inside of her did not make the pain any less severe nor did it change the pressure when she passed one type of house of worship or the other. Why was she comforted?

Our sages explain that Ribkah thought that only one child was in her womb and that fetus was a split personality. It had, she believed, a very wicked side and very good side also. Such a child, she felt, could not be a building block of the Jewish people. The commitment needed to become loyal servants of the Supreme Being would always be lacking in such an individual.

The wicked King Ahab and his vicious Queen Izebel pursued Elyahu Hanavi for years attempting to kill him and eliminate along with him any remnants of true prophecy. They preferred that the Jewish people serve idols and follow the false teachings of the prophets of the Baal. Elyahu Hanavi suggested a decisive test at Har HaCarmel. A bull would be put on an altar and the one whose prayers would be answered by a heavenly fire would be declared the true prophet. After thousands had gathered around the contest area Elyahu proposed, "How long will you all sway back and forth philosophically. If Hashem is the true G-d - serve Him and if the Baal is the true Creator worship him!"

In the end Hashem was proven to be the real G-d and the people cried out "Hashem is the King - Hashem is the God."

The question is: How could Elyahu Hanavi, the true prophet of G-d even suggest that everyone abandon Hashem if the Baal would win the contest. Could he possibly truly mean to serve the idol?

The answer is Elyahu was teaching the people that G-d expects us to loyally commit to His service. Swinging back and forth may be o k for politics but it certainly not allowed when it comes to religion.

A person may justify in one's own mind many contradictory verses. But - implied Elyahu - commitment - total dedication to one power - is the true way to succeed in the world of the spirit. Similarly, when Ribkah thought she had a schizophrenic child in her womb she felt that life was not worth living. When she was told that she was to have twins - one child all good and one child all bad - she was able to accept her fate.

Today - more than ever - one must declare for himself or herself about schools, shuls and other organizations as to how loyal one is to G-d and how the future can bring, Being two faced in a time when unity is at risk is much worse than clearly choosing the side of bad. One must not be fence sitter - one instead must choose one's side and declare one's positions. Loyalty to g-d will be paid and disloyalty will be punished. Arise from your slumber and declare for Hashem - totally - purely.

Shabbat Shalom

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