

## **Segulot – Part 1 – Introduction and Spiritual Realities – JewishClarity.com**

### **Introduction to *Faith and Folly (Tamim Ti'yeh)***

**Rav Yaakov Hillel** wrote – *Emuna* is the foundation of Torah, but mistaken faith is forbidden by the Torah. The purpose of this book (*Faith and Folly – Tamim Ti'yeh*) is to clarify the thin line, often a mere hairsbreadth, between the two.

As an example, the use of an intermediary between man and G-d is idolatry, while it is permitted to seek the blessing of a *tzadik* who has achieved closeness to G-d through years of studying the Torah, fulfilling its *mitzvot*, and purifying his character. And the prayers and blessings of one who, beyond his knowledge of the revealed Torah, has also attained the closeness to G-d that comes through the study of the *kabalah*, are the most powerful, and capable of working wonders.

### **Spiritual Realities – Is there any truth or reality to the spiritual practices which the Torah forbids, or are they merely deception?**

The **Rambam** famously held that **sorcery was mere deception**, which the Torah forbids in order to keep the Jewish people from foolishness. He wrote –

All these matters are lies and deception that the original idolaters used to fool the non-Jewish nations to follow after them. It is not fitting for Israel, who are wise Sages, to be drawn after this nonsense, nor to imagine that there is any benefit to them.

Whoever believes in these types of practices and considers that they are true and wise, but the Torah simply forbade them, is foolish and lacking intelligence. (*Hilchot Avoda Zara* 11:16).

**As certain as the Rambam was in stating his position, he was virtually the only one among the great Sages throughout the generations to deny any truth or reality to these forbidden spiritual practices.**

The **Vilna Gaon** wrote that the Rambam's mistaken view was actually a product of his study of Greek philosophy –

Every [Sage] that came after the Rambam disagreed with him. There are many cases in the *gemara* discussing the use of Divine names and sorcery. The Rambam had been influenced by [Greek] philosophy. Therefore, he wrote that witchcraft, Divine names, incantations, demons and amulets are all false. This was all refuted since we see many actual occurrences in the *gemara* of this. The Torah itself testifies, along with the *Zohar*, that there were serpents [that came from a staff]. And there are numerous cases of amulets and incantations. The [Greek] philosophy caused him to err and view these *gemaras* as nonsense, and to uproot them from their simple understanding. (Commentary to *Shulchan Aruch – Yoreh Deyah* 179:13).

The **Shomer Emunim HaKadmon** (1:13) wrote similarly –

It is well known in many places in the *Gemara* and *Medrash* that there is a power to names and amulets to do remarkable things. The Rambam (in the *Moreh Nevuchim* 1:61-62), however, denied this and strongly ridiculed believers in the power of names to do anything. It is also clear from the *Gemara* and *Medrash* that our Sages accepted the reality of demons and witchcraft. Even so, the Rambam decided that they are nonsense and stupid, with no reality. Although magic is mentioned in the Torah in Egypt and in many different verses, the rationalists still reject it and suggest strange and unlikely explanations to avoid contradicting their perspective.

The **Maharal** not only viewed these spiritual realities as real, he saw them, in some sense, as even more real than physical realities – Altering the *mazel* would involve a great miracle. Without a doubt, changing spiritual realities is more difficult than changing physical ones. The physical power of nature is easier to change than the work of Heaven. Change is more relevant to lowly physical things. (*Gevurot Hashem* – chap. 7).

**Rav Yaakov Hillel** summarized the topic of spiritual realities by explaining – In order to preserve man's freedom to choose between good and evil, Hashem created worlds of impurity corresponding and parallel to the holy worlds. The worlds of impurity, too, He invested with powers to influence earthly beings.

Ultimately, however, He remains sovereign over all, and retains the power to do as He pleases at all levels of Creation and [even] to change that which has already been decreed and ordained. (*Tamim Ti'yeh*).

**This should be *I'zechut ul'illuy nishmat Ruchama Rivka, a"h*, bat Asher Zevulun**