



Who Accepted the Torah?

The Agudas Azov (Haggada, p. 14b, s.v. אשר. This is also said in the name of the Chassam Sofer, among others.) tells us that when the non-Jews were offered the Torah, they refused to accept it. Nevertheless, although the nation as a whole refused to accept it, there were individuals who did want to accept it. The souls of these people are the souls of those in each generation who come to convert to Judaism. Likewise, the Jewish nation in general accepted the Torah when it said, נעשה ונשמע. However, there were some individuals who didn't want to accept it. Their level of rejection is reflected in how much their souls assimilated into secular society in later generations. Those who completely refused it are the ones who שמד, converted, to other religions in later generations.

If we browse through Jewish history, we notice something astonishing about those who converted. It appears that no Jew educated in Judaism ever converted to a different religion because of intellectual honesty, but rather because of social pressure, need for food, threats, persecution, or fear. However, we do see the reverse situation. We see that other people converted to Judaism (such as Onkolos Hager, Avraham the Ger Tzedek in the time of the Gra, Shmaya, and Avtalyon, among many others) because of intellectual honesty, as Judaism logically makes the most sense. One example is our miraculous survival throughout history, despite having a small population, being scattered around the world, and so on. Another example is the depth of our Torah, which contains everything in it, including all events and the secrets of the universe. (Incidentally, when one sees the depth of Torah, his emuna gets

strengthened. In this way, we can comprehend יגעת ומצאת תאמין

[Megila 6b]—if you toil in Torah, thereby seeing some of its depth, then your emuna will be increased [see Toras Avos, 9, [אמונה ובטחון]]. Also, the Rambam writes that the audience who listened to Moshe was as much witness of the validity of His words as was Moshe himself. There is no parallel to that in world history.

What one studies in elementary school in the secular world is different from the material he learns in high school, which is different from what he learns in college. As one graduates and progresses, the books become bigger and harder. This is in contrast to the Torah world, where a first-grade boy as well as the gadol hador are learning the same Chumash, albeit on different levels. Additionally, the simple Jew, R' Yosef Karo, the Maharal, R' Akiva Eiger, and R' Tzadok Hakohen all learned the same Chumash. Amazing!

Some may doubt Judaism, since we are such a small minority in contrast to other religions. An analogy is given of someone trying to find his way out of a forest. He notices a large group of people going in one direction and only five going in another, so he is tempted to follow the large group—until he sees that they are all blind people being led to their school for the blind.

We must remember that only Judaism makes the bold statement that the revelation wasn't given to only one man, but rather to approximately three million people. Six hundred thousand is the number mentioned in Chumash, but that only includes males between ages 20 and 60. If we calculate the number of females as well as males under the age of 20 and over 60, we come to at least three

million people who were at Sinai. This number experienced that one-time-in-history mass national revelation. (The Sefer Hachinuch [Hakdama, s.v. [האמת] writes, "Clear, indisputable truth among mankind is what the minds of most human beings in the world have agreed upon. Now, the thinking of all has long agreed to believe human testimony; and the more the witnesses who attest to a matter, the more convincingly true it becomes to the ears of its hearers; while if the witnesses are few, a bit of doubt about the matter may enter the intelligent mind.") Other religions don't argue about Hashem

revealing Himself to some three million people because to argue about that would put them in an extremely weak position, and they would need to demolish what has been known to humanity for thousands of years. So how did the other major religions come about? What did they say? They didn't deny the ancient history that Hashem revealed Himself at Sinai, that mitzvos were given on that day, that Moshe was His prophet, or that the Jewish people are chosen. They claimed that Hashem just changed His mind!

A rabbi once said, "Let's say that someone asks how you know the story of Judaism is true, as it is thousands of years old." The answer is that we have an unbroken chain from then until now. We have the story that anyone can look up in any library in the world. We have a story accepted by millions of people who have lived their lives according to it. One who counters, "I don't believe it," has no argument. The burden of proof is on that person, who needs to prove that the story isn't true. We should also keep in mind that many claim there is no Hashem because they don't want to abide and conform to His rules.

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