

ARE THE MAJOR RELIGIONS WORSHIPPING THE SAME GOD?

We like to think that the major religions are worshipping the same god, that the differences between religions are inconsequential. We are most definitely not worshipping the same god and the implications are important.

We like to think that there is one god and each religion thinks it has the best description of what god is and what he wants from us. The differences between these “understandings” of god are so large and contradictory that the gods can’t possibly be the same.

If one looks at the various religions’ claims as to what god is asking of them, it would appear that god either contradicts himself or changes his mind regularly about his expectations. It appears that he himself does things that humans are prohibited from doing, things that the bible calls repulsive.

So what does this all mean? For one thing, it gives serious modern-day relevance to one of the Ten Commandments: to not worship other gods. A person might childishly think that this commandment refers only to stone or wooden statues. Actually the commandment is timeless and much more subtle than that. The warning is meant for our time as much as for any other time in history.

Basically, the bible recognizes the ever-present temptation of humans to gradually alter or more seriously redefine their gods, to give the gods characteristics, motives, powers, behaviors, etc. that are not in the Five Books of Moses. These departures have consequences for individual lives and for societies, they are very detrimental to happiness. That is why we need this commandment. It is in our interest to leave G-d as He is described in the Five Books of Moses. If we redefine G-d, we get hurt. On the other hand, if we all came back to the same understanding of G-d, humanity could finally achieve its potential for harmony and well-being

There is only one God, the One amply described in the Five Books of Moses. He shows an interest in, or love of, humanity by giving us civilizing rules and suggests that they be spread by example. He doesn’t want them spread by coercion and murder around the world. He does not accept faith as a substitute for action. He wants us to understand that the rules reward those individuals and societies that adopt them in this life. In the Five Books of Moses he doesn’t promise other chances, other lives. Finally he makes it very clear that we need to take responsibility for ourselves. You follow these rules, things will go well. You don’t follow them, you will suffer. In the Five Books of Moses He definitely does not suggest waiting and hoping that someone will make things easier for us.

If these things seem right to you, then you grasp the simple beauty of *Back To Basics Judaism*.

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