

I quote from the overview of the Torah in our Chumash:

Rambam, or Maimonides, formulated the Thirteen Principles of Faith, which are incumbent upon every Jew. Two of them, the eighth and ninth, refer to the Torah. As they have been set down briefly in the familiar text of Ani Maamin, "I Believe," they are:

8. I believe with complete faith that the entire Torah now in our hands is the same one that was given to Moses, our teacher, peace be upon him.

9. I believe with complete faith that this Torah will not be exchanged, nor will there be another Torah from the Creator, Blessed is His Name.

These principles are essential parts of the faith of the Jew, and they are also fundamental to the way one studies the Torah. For the attitude of one who approaches a book as the immutable word of God is far, far different from that of *one* who holds a volume that was composed by men and amended by others over the years. As we begin the study of the Torah, we should resolve that this recognition of its origin and immutability will be in our consciousness always. In several of his writings, *Rambam* sets forth at much greater length the unanimously held view that every letter and word of the Torah was given to Moses by God; that it has not been and cannot be changed; and that nothing was ever or can ever be added to it. Indeed, the Talmud states emphatically that if one questions

the Divine origin of even a single letter or traditionally accepted interpretation of the Torah, it is tantamount to denial of the entire Torah (*Sanhedrin* 99a). This harsh judgment is quite proper, for if a critic can take it upon himself to deny the provenance of one verse or letter of the Torah, what is to stop him from discarding any part that displeases him? Modern times illustrate this all too clearly. And logic dictates that man cannot tamper with the word of God, not merely because man's intelligence is of a different, infinitely inferior order, but because God and His wisdom are perfect, and, by definition, perfection cannot be improved.

Here ends the quote.

In this context, I am struck by the concerns of Thomas Sowell in his ©1999 book "The Quest for Cosmic Justice". He asserts that there are multiple definitions of justice. The traditional and cosmic definitions are the subject of his book.

By my judgment: The cosmic justice or social justice quest for equal outcome fails. Most important, two commandments are violated: #8 You shall not steal, and #10 You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor.

By Sowell's judgement related to stealing:

In short, traditional justice is about impartial processes rather than either results or prospects. ... But this is not what is meant by those people who speak of "social justice." In fact, rules and standards equally applicable to all are often deliberately set aside in pursuit of "social justice." Nor are such exceptions aberrations. The two concepts are mutually incompatible.

Sowell also points to Milton Freedman who said:

A society that puts equality – in the sense of equality of outcome -- ahead of freedom will end up with neither equality nor freedom. The use of force to achieve equality will destroy freedom, and the force, introduced for good purposes, will end up in the hands of people who use it to promote their own interests.

Sowell speaks to coveting [envey]:

Envey was once considered to be one of the seven deadly sins before it became one of the most admired virtues under its new name, "social justice." Under either name, it has costs as well as benefits. For some, envy can act as a spur to match the achievements or rewards of others currently more fortunate. This can happen in the case of individuals or in the case of whole nations, such as Japan, whose generations-long drive to catch up to the industrialized Western nations achieved success in the twentieth century. On the other hand, envy can also engender social strife, whose consequences include the possibility that the society as a whole can end up worse off, both materially and psychically, as a result of mutually thwarting activities, including mob violence and civil war. Among nations, a drive to achieve "a place in the sun" militarily can end in disaster, as happened to Japan in the Second World War and to Germany in both world wars.

The first kind of envy-the more or less natural and potentially beneficial envy that spurs self-development and achievement-creates few incentives for third parties to try to mobilize and heighten it for their own benefit. It is the second kind of envy, expressed in hostility toward others, that is useful for third parties pursuing careers as politicians, group activists, or ideologues. It is this kind of envy which can have high costs to society at large and to the poor especially. It is not simply that the poor may suffer psychically from having less than others and from being encouraged to dwell on their current situation, rather than concentrating on improving it. The very terms of the discussion encourage them to attribute their less fortunate position to social barriers, if not political plots, and so to neglect the kinds of efforts and skills which are capable of lifting them to higher economic and social levels.

By my judgment our current church and political emphasis on the word justice is misplaced. It has led us to unwittingly violate the 8th and 10th commandments. We should strive to respect the spirit of the declaration "that every letter and word of the Torah was given to Moses by God; that it has not been and cannot be changed". We should follow our savior's example by giving full respect to the scriptures. We should beware of inventing new principles that replace those recorded by Moses.

Let us pray