

### Choice and Freewill - Part 3 of 3

Choice is a personal decision, based on personal responsibility and an understanding of impending repercussions. The choices that we make are ours, requiring a mature decision-making process based on conscience and our own moral fiber. Institutions attempt to make us believe that we are not mature enough to make our own decisions or let others make theirs. Thus, institutions attempt, some more overtly than others, to not only manipulate our choices but impose their own restrictions on our choices. This includes attempts to change not only our personal feelings about such issues as killing, but our personal religious experiences or midrash beliefs in return for a manipulated belief system more easily controlled by these institutions and their media counterparts.

Regarding the issue of killing as noted in John Shelby Spong's *Beyond Moralism*, there are many institutions and groups that are against certain forms of killing, promoting punishment for some killings and forgiveness for others. These issues become the battleground between our own personal decisions and the choices of others. There are those who would want to interpret and predetermine events and actions for us, limiting our choices by classifying the circumstances as divine intervention or otherwise, in an attempt to ultimately control such decisions as when we can give birth, when we can raise arms, or when we can die, ultimately eliminating our right to decide on our own behalf and in our own defense.

What the issue of choice really boils down to is that there are no cut-and-dry solutions to polarizing issues of choice, despite the fact that message manipulators will try to tell us otherwise. They'll invade our space with their divisive messages, imposing their beliefs on us by way of authoritarian mandates or by preaching divine authority.

However, if we don't choose to buy version A over version B, even though the manipulators say otherwise, we probably won't live to regret it. In response to the even more dogmatic manipulators and messengers, if we don't obey their restrictive dogma, most likely we will not only go directly to jail or hell but in fact, may find more positive options to choose from. It is through our midrash quest that we keep on the straight and narrow--that path of responsible decision making and godliness where we forever seek answers and divine guidance, using the brain that God gave us.

Thus, those divisive issues--what is right and what is wrong, who is the source of the problem and who has the solution, and the method to resolve the issues--become irrelevant. There are too many contradictions on the path of righteousness as well as in the many methods used to achieve it. Think tanks, church groups, bible study, sociological study, and personal study are all part of the same quest to come up with the answer to "How do I attain godliness, goodness and compassion?"

Compassion is the key to attainment on this quest. It means holding back judgment and respecting each other's choices and path, within the confines of compassionate and rational limits, and letting others find their own way without interference, offering help only when it is sought.

It also means holding our own by being responsible for ourselves, standing up for ourselves, and intervening for ourselves when our own free will is threatened by polarized viewpoints. That means, we don't need to succumb to manipulative messages or to external restrictions we impose on ourselves through fear, and we can address our own God self through our own personal midrash quest.

It is our choice to hear what we want to hear, see what we want to see, learn what we want to learn, do what we want to do, and know what we want to know. We can change our consciousness by being conscious rather than brainwashed, and by making responsible choices through choosing our own way. The creator did not create humankind to be deaf, dumb and blind; we were given an inner sight and the knowledge to learn to use it responsibly and with careful consideration. Through sight and knowledge comes choice, through choice comes the development of responsibility, and through responsibility comes acceptance—the forgiveness and the compassion to allow others to make choices not determined by prior causes, events or divine intervention, but by accepting divine guidance as it is most appropriate to each one's personal experience.