

~~April 28~~
File: Mentions
to articles

STEPHEN L. STULMAN

1088 PARK AVENUE
NEW YORK, N. Y. 10028

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Dear Rabbi,

I have just read your very timely and cogently reasoned analysis of extraterrestrial life implications in "Tradition".

In at least one sense, the existence of life beyond our planet enhances rather than diminishes the significance of man.

Man's greatest significance derives from his being a rational creature, with a degree of free-will and the capacity to cooperate with the evolution of the universe in accordance with divine purpose. (Unfortunately, most of mankind has thus far only found its significance in being unique among the creatures of this earth - so they are threatened by the thought of similar beings elsewhere)

If our function is, indeed, of significance in the universe, would it not be highly irrational for it to be left solely in the hands of beings with the ability and option of total self-destruction?

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In other words, if the function of man is important, perhaps even essential, to the universe - either we are not free or we are not unique.

If we freely choose to serve the Divine Purpose - we are certainly significant.

If we choose otherwise, there would be other beings capable of taking our place.

The fact that our significance lies in our own hands - that we are responsible for our destiny - should not cause us to resent the wisdom of G-d in having provided alternatives against our ^{possible} failure.

—H—

While I am in the mood, I would like to say something about this "G-d is dead or alive" business.

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I have long been interested in the modern scientific view of G-d. and I find that the unmistakable trend towards scientific "rediscovery" of "G-d" is rapidly accelerating. We are at a ~~tremendous~~ tremendous turning ~~point~~ point in civilization. Ecumenism - religious, social or political - is really ~~more~~ a sign of hard failure than of future hope. The hope that I see is in the scientific discovery of the reality of G-d as manifested in the natural universe - the Transcendental G-d. The danger is, of course, that having discovered a partial image of the true G-d, society may dispense with all implications of personal relationship - moral and ethical values - as being irrelevant, i.e. "dead". Eventually, when science begins to learn as much about human beings as military technology is forcing us to learn about physical systems, we will "discover" that there is as much objective

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validity in the word laws for the
behavior of mankind as there is in ^{laws for} the physical,
the impersonal natural world.

But what about time!? Who will
remain to point and argue and witness
to the truth that the newly discovered
Transcendent G-d of Nature is One and
the same as the Immanent G-d of
Human history and personal experience!?
Of course, that is and always has been
the task of the Jews. However, in the
coming decades there will require a
knowledge of "science" as well as "Hebrew" -
if we are to be heard and understood.

I am, therefore, encouraged to
hear someone such as yourself demonstrate
that it is possible to be eloquent
and consistent in two "languages".
until that day when we shall need only
one.

as ever, Stephen