



THE MAN, THE BOOK, AND THE GOAL

INTRODUCTION TO THE KUZARI

FAQ's

THE MAN: RAV YEHUDAH HALEVI

Q: Who is Rav Yehudah HaLevi?

A: Rav Yehudah HaLevi was a Spanish Jewish physician, poet, and philosopher.

Q: When and Where was Rav Yehudah HeLevi born?

A: He was born in Toledo, Spain in 1075

Q: What is Rav Yehudah HaLevi's greatest philosophical work?

A: The Kuzari

THE BOOK: THE KUZARI

Q: What language was the Kuzari originally written in?

A: Arabic. However, the book has been translated into Hebrew and other languages.

Q: How is the book structured?

A: The Kuzari is divided into five parts ("ma'amarim" - articles). It is written in a questions- and – answer format, and takes the form of a dialogue between the Rabbi and the Kuzari King.

Q: What is the Kuzari about?

A: The book presents a meeting between the ruler of the Khazar kingdom and a Jewish sage, who discuss a series of theological, philosophical, and ideological dilemmas that are as pressing today as they were then.

THE GOAL:

Q: Why is the Kuzari structured in a question- and – answer dialogue?

A: The structure of the book is a literary tool.

Q: Why did Rav Yehudah HaLevi choose this particular device?

A: Through his book we become acquainted with Rav Yehudah HaLevi as a man who delves into the eternal questions, with his eyes wide open to a harsh reality. In the real world a terrible battle is constantly waged between the knights of Christianity and the cavalry of Islam. Judaism exists on the periphery, almost, but not quite, off the stage. Yet, Rav Yehudah HaLevi does not deal with his current historical reality.

Q: What is the goal of the Kuzari?

A: The Kuzari constitutes a vision and a prophecy regarding the future of the entire human race. The book is constructed around the struggle for the conversion of the nation of Khazars, but the story represents all humanity in the messianic era. Can we indeed hope and expect that the messianic prophecies of the Bible will come true? The book wishes to restore that hope. It reminds us that one honest and upright man, the king of the Khazars, searched for God and reached the truth. That man is all of humankind. The hope of redemption, therefore, is present from the very beginning.

- **WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT HAVING A BOOK WRITTEN IN A QUESTION— AND— ANSWER FORMAT?**
- **WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO ASK QUESTIONS?**



“To ask is to believe that somewhere there is an answer. The fact that throughout history people have devoted their lives to extending the frontiers of knowledge is a compelling testimony to the restlessness of the human spirit and its constant desire to go further, higher, deeper. Far from faith excluding questions, questions testify to faith – that history is not random, that the universe is not impervious to our understand, that what happens to us is not blind chance. We ask, not because we doubt, but because we believe.”