

ONE TORAH FOR ALL

Zerubbabel ben Emunah
www.onetorahforall.com

Come Let Us Reason Together

Yeshayah (Isaiah) 1:18

“Come let us reason together!” says YHWH.

YHWH has asked us to come together with Him that He might reason with us. However, in our day and age there are many whose reasoning and logic skills are sadly lacking, and in some cases, altogether absent. If our reasoning and logic skills fall into what is termed as “logical fallacies,” then our argument is lost and proven to be false. And in many cases, those elements that may be true are lost as well and do not get a fair hearing because of the presence of these fallacies.

Furthermore, there seems to be a growing idea in believing circles which surmises that reason is the antithesis of faith; and therefore reason is not to be enjoined in the process of growing one’s faith. Yet, this could not be further from the truth as found in the written word. In fact, as we will see, true faith is actually based upon a solid foundation of reason and logic as we see in the verse above. If it is not reasonable, then we have a right, yea, an obligation to question those things that are not reasonable and logical.

While YHWH has asked us to come together with Him that we might reason together, we should recognize that we should also reason with one another. Now this seems to be a little more difficult; particularly, when one side goes out on a limb with what he believes, and it cannot be supported with Scripture and reason, especially if he has used one of the following logical fallacies in an effort to gain an upper hand in the process. Let us understand that all of Scripture is reasonable and YHWH never expects us simply to accept something that is not reasonable and provable.

1st Thessalonians 5:21

prove all things; hold fast that which is good;

It stands to reason that if one is going to “prove” something, then it must be able to be proved using logic and reason. One must stay within the bounds of that which can be proved. If it

cannot be proved, then while it may be interesting to entertain such an idea, such an idea should not be rightly enjoined as part of one's faith. That which cannot be proved one cannot expect others simply to accept at face value because it sounds good.

For example, to a person born blind the concept of color can never be understood or adequately explained. He cannot understand the idea of the sky being blue or the leaves of a tree being green. He can understand the sky or the leaves of a tree via other means of discovery, but color is not one of them. Therefore, when one who does see color explains things to such a person, this portion is meaningless and the sighted person cannot rightfully expect the person born blind simply to accept that which he has no meaningful context to understand.

Likewise, when discussing Scripture, we need to do so in the framework of our hearer's understanding, that which he has already proven to be true for himself; thereby, using that as a means to prove something new. In this means only, will a meaningful exchange take place and thus, growth can ensue.

In this article we want to discuss nine of the most common logical fallacies into which people fall. Then we will explore what it means to use the scientific method of discovery when studying Scripture. First, let us just simply list the logical fallacies, and then we will very briefly discuss each one. These are in no particular order.

1. Endorsement
2. Hasty generalization
3. Bandwagon
4. Tradition
5. Unqualified generalization
6. Faulty cause and effect
7. Sentimentality
8. Attacking your opponent
9. Either – or

Endorsement – this is when someone who is famous endorses the product or position. In the case of a theological position, a person will often resort to putting forth a name of a famous or well-known preacher, teacher, or rabbi in an effort to convince the reader or hearer that this is a worthy position and should be adhered to because this big name person adheres to it.

The fallacy of this can be seen when we understand that we are to follow YHWH and not man. To simply expect another person to accept something because someone of renown accepts it is unacceptable and holds no weight whatsoever when held up to reason. In fact, using such a tactic will actually weaken a person's position in the long run.

Hasty generalization – this happens when a person gives too few examples and draws a conclusion before enough evidence is before him. Without the proper weight of sufficient evidence, conclusions should be postponed until such time that more evidence is gained.

Being hasty in one's conclusions is a sure way to come to wrong conclusions. This is often seen when one finds one or two verses to support his idea and then runs with it without thoroughly testing the concept with the whole counsel of Scripture.

Bandwagon – this is similar to the endorsement argument, but instead of a well-known personage, it is more in the flavor of “well, everyone believes this way.” Of course, that position can rarely be supported by facts and statistics, as rarely if ever is “everyone” doing or believing something.

In truth, when looked at the whole of Scripture, more times than not, the majority in any given situation was usually on the wrong side of right. In most cases, if in fact not in every case, it was only a handful or a remnant that was in the right. So using the “bandwagon” card in an argument can actually be a red flag that it is not the correct position, rather than having the desired effect of swaying the opponent over to his side.

Tradition – this often takes the form of “we have always done it that way before” or “this is what we have believed in the past.” This is just a cop-out from thinking and proving one's position. It is shifting the burden of proof from himself to someone who is not present and cannot be questioned in the matter at hand.

Furthermore, most traditions are manmade and while there are those traditions which are good ones, there are equally those traditions which are not good, or are in fact, harmful and should be discarded because of their dubious past and origins.

Unqualified generalization – this is when the writer or speaker makes sweeping generalizations and is usually caught up into exaggeration. Avoid such statements that use words like “all”, “always”, and “never”. Such all inclusive words and statements are rarely true and cannot be proven in the long run.

If one makes a statement that every true follower of Mashiach Yeshua believes something, then, in order for this to be proven one would have to go and question every single follower of Mashiach Yeshua. While this may be possible of all present followers, it is highly unlikely that this would occur. Furthermore, one would also need to examine all those past followers of Mashiach Yeshua and that is simply not going to happen. Therefore, before one can even examine the content of what has been said, it has been proven to be false; and the content, while it may have an element of truth and have some merit in it, has fallen by the wayside and not been properly examined because of the presence of this fallacy.

Faulty cause and effect – this is when one claims that, because one fact precedes another, the one which was first was the cause of the second, when in fact the two may be completely unrelated.

Let me give you an example. I used to have a lot of fun with fellow preachers with this. I used to pastor in the largest holiness denomination. When attending a preachers' meeting almost always there would be coffee served. Now I am not a coffee drinker and never have been. When I would be asked if I would like a cup of coffee, I would often respond with, "No thank you; I am sanctified." Now both aspects of this statement are true; i.e., I did not want a cup of coffee; and I was sanctified. But the truth is, that one fact had nothing whatsoever to do with the other fact. But the response that this would illicit from the hearer was almost always strong and quick as they would immediately be in a defensive mode, defending that they too were sanctified, and that it was okay to drink coffee. In all the years of my doing that, only one person caught on to what I was doing and we had a good laugh about it. Perhaps I should not have been so ornery, but it was always good for a laugh. I would always explain to the hearer afterwards. Some thought it was funny; others didn't see the humor in it at all.

This illustrates that just because two statements can be true and even said together, this does not make them related at all. Watch for this one as it is common to make one statement about Scripture that is provable in order to support a statement that has not been proven.

Sentimentality – this happens when one uses feelings to plead his cause rather than the position's own merits. If it is a good and right idea or principle, then it will be able to stand whatever test can be devised and thrown at it. One should not be emotionally attached to those ideas that he presents. For if it is wrong in any way, then should one not love the truth so much that it is the truth that will win, not one's own ideas? To be sure!

Also, oftentimes when a person is emotionally attached to a particular position, principle, or concept, then when that idea comes under fire and it appears to be in danger of falling, oftentimes an emotional appeal is made. For example, when dealing with the passage of Scripture that there is only one name under heaven whereby man must be saved, people are often reluctant to give up the name of "Jesus" in favor of the historically and Scripturally accurate name of "Yeshua". It is quite common for someone to ask about one's grandma at some point in such a discussion. But this is an emotional appeal for which there is no support. If grandma has already died, which is the emotional appeal of this, then her fate is already sealed. What she did or did not do has no bearing on the truth YHWH is presenting to us personally. Watch out for such emotional appeals as they only move one away from the merits of an idea into a realm that cannot be supported with logic and reason.

Attacking your opponent – rather than attacking a position, value, or fact, a person attacks the person holding that position. This often involves some type of character assassination in which the other person's personal character traits are brought into question by outright accusation or by innuendo.

This is often used as a last resort. Sadly, the one against whom such tactics are used often fall victim to this by responding to the attack by either responding to the specific accusations and/or by attacking the person in like kind. Either one of these responses moves one away from the discussion at hand and most generally the person who began the attack will come away feeling justified regardless of the outcome. However, the best response is to point out this attack for what it is without defending oneself or attacking back. In this way the discussion can continue on topic and not be derailed.

Either . . . Or – this is when a position is arrived at by allowing the reader only two options, when in fact more options may be available. This type of argument often refuses to acknowledge any gray areas that exist and asks you to make a decision that is either black or white.

Many times this either/or presentation also refuses to see that many times both sides of the argument can have its good points and bad points. When this happens the good points of both positions should be recognized as well as the bad points of each position being discarded. Then those points which were gleaned from both positions should be further proved as needed for a more comprehensive view of the overall position. But the either/or tactic rarely allows for this to take place.

The truth is that in most cases there are far more than just two positions that are available. One needs to be honest and open enough to be able to see and recognize these other positions and to be able to examine and prove them right along with his own position.

Let each one of us be aware of these logic killers in ourselves and in others so that the position that we take in anything can be logically and reasonably supported by Scripture and the facts at hand. If there is not enough information available to make an informed decision, then simply put it off until more information is acquired. There is no shame in saying that one needs to investigate something further before making a decision. In fact, such a position shows wisdom in not being too hasty.

I can remember back in the late 1970s being presented with a concept that was not only new to me, but in direct opposition to my then present position. It took me two years of investigation and study before I was ready and able to discard my previously held position and take up the new idea. It is a difficult thing to admit that what one has held to and believed is wrong and to put it aside. But sometimes this is completely necessary.

In order to avoid these pitfalls to reason and logic, first one must be aware of them. Then, when confronted with one or more of the logical fallacies, one must take great care and effort to avoid being swept up and aside by them. One must stay focused upon the topic at hand and be careful of rabbit trails and other diversionary tactics that are simply employed to divert the attention off the topic at hand in order for one party not to have to face the cold hard reality that his position is not logically and reasonably tenable.

One must be willing to investigate and prove all things. If something does not sound right for any reason, simply acknowledge this and set out to prove it. Even if it does sound right, it still needs to be proved. Just because one agrees with something does not mean that it does not need to be proved. In fact, agreeing with something is even more reason to prove its validity. Make reason and logic your friend and constant companion. Let them serve you and they will keep you out of much future trouble.

I have always been drawn to science. I am like a little kid in a candy store when it comes to science, for the possibilities to explore and discover are nearly endless. At every turn one discovers new vistas of the magnificence of the Creator's greatness. So, early on in my life I learned of what is called the scientific method. I can remember as a small boy experimenting with many things, combining all sorts of things and keeping records as I did it and recording the effects of my experimentation. It is only by YHWH's grace that I did not combine things to create a deadly reaction.

But early in my life I began employing the scientific method. It has become second nature to me and I do it most of the time without even thinking about it. So, when at the age of thirteen I began to study the written word, it was only natural for me to employ the scientific method.

This method has served me very well and YHWH has opened my eyes to many great and wonderful truths because I was not afraid to ask the hard questions and literally to prove all things!

Before we go further, perhaps it would be wise to present a definition of the scientific method. The following definition is from Webster's Dictionary.

Scientific method - principles and procedures for the systematic pursuit of knowledge involving the recognition and formulation of a problem, the collection of data through observation and experiment, and the formulation and testing of hypotheses

Here is a more detailed definition from Ask.com.

The principles and empirical processes of discovery and demonstration considered characteristic of or necessary for scientific investigation, generally involving the observation of phenomena, the formulation of a hypothesis concerning the phenomena, experimentation to demonstrate the truth or falseness of the hypothesis, and a conclusion that validates or modifies the hypothesis.

A pragmatic format of the points above may be listed as follows, for use as a practical guideline:

- Define the question
- Gather information and resources (observe)
- Form hypothesis
- Perform experiment and collect data

Analyze data

Interpret data and draw conclusions that serve as a starting point for new hypothesis

Publish results

Retest (frequently done by other scientists)

Let us now examine each one of these practical points in order.

Define the question – in one's everyday living he is often challenged in his thinking and belief system as to what is true and valid. These challenges can come through any number of avenues; the two most common are one's own life situations and through one's interaction with other people.

When one is presented with such a challenge, it is helpful to set down in writing what the specific challenge or question is. Doing this will help one in the long run, of keeping focused to be able to prove or disprove the validity of any given question.

Gather information and resources – The sources of our information should logically include the written word. In fact, it is the source that is supreme. But do not be afraid to test and prove this source. It will stand whatever test one can devise to put it through. But please understand this, it is not actually the written word that one is testing, but actually one's understanding of the written word.

We also need to seek out other sources of information and resources such as historical sources that are pertinent to the question at hand. One can also use one's own as well as others' current experiences in the matter under investigation. But be careful that one judges these personal experiences with the written word and not the written word with one's personal experiences. If one judges the written word with his own or with the experiences of others, then he is elevating the experience over and above the written word. When this happens then the investigation becomes more subjective and less objective.

It is better to have too much information (if that is even possible) than to have too little information.

Form hypothesis – or form your question that you desire to investigate and prove. Many times it is easier to look for and attempt to disprove the formulated question. If you work hard at disproving it and are unable to disprove it, then you have progressed a long way to proving it. For if the question or hypothesis will stand up to any and all attempts to disprove it, then most likely it is a solid formulation, something worth holding on to.

One must realize that if he is unwilling to make an attempt to disprove his position, then when he publishes it, many others will. If one has not already gone through the process of proving his position, when challenged he will have to do it then and perhaps even face an embarrassing recantation of his position.

Perform experiment and collect data – This is where many go awry in their pursuit of truth. Just because you would like for something to be truth, does not make it true. One cannot be emotionally tied to any given position. Rather, one needs to be in pursuit of truth, regardless of wherever that takes him.

Now, we have all had our teachers during the course of our lives. Those teachers have taught us what their own personal view of life was at that time. However, how many of us have taken the time to prove or disprove that which we have been taught? Have we been guilty of simply accepting what our teachers have taught us at face value without proving it and hammering it out on the anvil of life?

Ma'aseh (Acts) 17:11

Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of the mind, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so.

Please understand, that if these in Berea were considered noble-minded because they did not take Shaul at his word, but proved it for themselves, then does it not behoove each one of us to prove those things that we are taught, regardless of who is teaching? To be sure! Please, I implore you, do not take my word for anything! Prove it for yourself. However, please do me a great kindness, if in the process of proving something that I have taught and you find error in it, then return to me and let us discuss it, for if it truly is in error, then I want to know about it so that it can be corrected in my own life and thinking!

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 13:14a

“Then you shall inquire, and make search, and ask diligently;”

We are commanded in YHWH’s Torah to search out all things diligently. Only after we have been diligent in our search for the truth, are we ready to analyze the information and data we have collected and to formulate a conclusion.

Please allow me to insert a parenthetical thought here concerning parenting and the raising of our children. Many times our children do things that are wrong and we need to apply some form of discipline in their lives. However, in most cases the discipline is applied too soon, before diligent inquiry is done. Many times when a couple has multiple children, it is the child who runs and reports first, or if there is a favorite child, he will have the upper hand and diligent inquiry is not made by the parents before some form of discipline is meted out. In the search for truth, even truth in such a matter as a disagreement between children (or other parties) before a rightful conclusion can be reached, careful and deliberate inquiry must happen. Only then will the conclusions and subsequent discipline be appropriate.

Analyze data – It is at this point that many fall into one of the logical fallacies as listed in the beginning of this study. When analyzing the information and data collected, it is important that we allow it to say what it says without preconceived ideas and notions interfering with what the

data is revealing to us. One should not have to make any quantum leaps between points to get to a logical conclusion.

Luqa (Luke) 18:17

“Amein I say to you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of Elohim as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein.”

Remember, when analyzing the data that it should be easy to follow the logic of it. Approach it as a child. If a child would have difficulty following it, then it may not be the correct path. I often use the K.I.S.S. principle to remind myself to K.eep I.t S.imple S.tupid. Not that simple is stupid, because oftentimes it is the simple that is the most profound! Remember, YHWH calls us to reason with Him. If it is not reasonable, then it most likely is not correct!

Interpret data and draw conclusions that serve as a starting point for new hypothesis –

Oftentimes it will happen, that as we have gathered our data and begin analyzing it, we will see that our original question or hypothesis was not totally correct and needs some tweaking. This is where we need to be emotionally detached from the proposed hypothesis and attached to coming to the fullness of the truth regardless of where that leads one. If one is emotionally attached to a particular position, then he will find it difficult to let go of any discovered error. In fact, the emotional attachment may even hinder him from being able to see or admit the presence of any error in his position.

One needs to be solidly in pursuit of truth. If it is truth, then it can only be proven to be true and can never be proven to be untrue. However, if one’s position is proven to be untrue in some way or in some area, then it cannot be true and one must resubmit it to the proving grounds of the scientific method.

Sometimes the questions with which we are presented take one in a wrong direction. When this is discovered, then one needs to be honest enough to back up and go at it from a different angle or even with a different question. It is not sin to be wrong in our investigation of Scripture, but it is sin when one discovers he is wrong and he does not discard the error and presses on anyway knowing that he has already proven it to himself to be wrong. Honesty with oneself is always at the forefront of one’s scientific method of investigation. One cannot afford the luxury of deceiving himself!

Publish results – Only after careful and deliberate examination of the position or question at hand is one ready to publish one’s results and conclusions. Sadly, in believing circles the publication of results is typically premature as the position has not yet undergone rigorous testing and proving before publication. This is the source of many heresies and wild ideas that have little basis in truth and are unproven.

Even after publishing a study, if one discovers that his conclusions are wrong, then it is his responsibility to go back and reinvestigate it and correct that which is wrong. This is going to

take honesty with self and a high degree of humility to admit that his former published position was in error and that he is now correcting that error. No one likes to be proven wrong! It is a very emotionally tumultuous event when this happens. But one must be so much in pursuit of truth that he sets himself aside and does what is necessary to attain that which is true.

In this day and age when it is so easy to publish something on the internet literally with the ease of just the push of a button, many things are published before they have been adequately proven. I have seen it happen time and time again where a “teacher” will publish a teaching or study and once it is published he is no longer open to dialog concerning the matter and the errors discovered in the study remain and are never corrected. It is truly a sad occurrence, one that is all too common!

Retest - But even after an idea or position is published, this is not the end of the process of coming to the truth. In fact, it is actually just another beginning. For the position needs to be tested and retested again and again to show that this position, is in fact, a valid position. The majority of the retesting will be done by others. And if in this retesting one comes back and points to something that does not quite fit in with the overall scheme of what has been presented in the publication, then it is time to reevaluate and formulate a new hypothesis and go through the process again with this new information and new data in mind.

It is so very important that one is not emotionally attached to an idea or principle, but rather be attached to the truth!

When we hypothesize about what is true, then we should be the most critical of it first of all. We should attempt to disprove it first, then if it stands up to that testing and it is true, then when others question it, it will also stand. But if it does not stand, then changes need to be made in it so that it will stand on its own merit. For if it cannot stand on its own merit, then it does not deserve to stand and attempting to defend something that cannot stand on its own merit is foolhardy at best.

Be careful about being a cheerleader for an idea without testing it, for if the idea is wrong then it will last longer than it would otherwise without having a cheerleader. It is regrettable that what happens many times is that someone will read or hear something that appeals to the fleshly nature. It sounds really good and spiritual, but in fact, when tested, is proved to be something that should be discarded. But if one gives in to the fleshly desire and simply supports something that sounds good without first testing it, then one becomes emotionally attached to the idea and it is hard to let it go as one should in his pursuit of truth.

How do we test or prove our faith? First and foremost, it is a process. It is done in our everyday living. One’s faith is something that is constantly undergoing changes and refinements. Or, at least if it is going to be a healthy faith, it should be.

One must be careful that he doesn't set out to prove his point of view, but rather to discover the truth. Let us prayerfully consider an incident from the life of Avraham to help instruct us in this matter.

B'reshit (Genesis) 22:2

And He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, even Yitzchaq, and you go to the land of Moryah. And offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell you of."

The instructions of Elohim straight from Him to Avraham were quite specific in nature. Avraham was to travel to a specific mountain and there offer as a burnt offering the very son that YHWH had promised him. This was a specific commandment to a specific person. It was YHWH's will that Avraham go and do this. Had Avraham refused, he would have been in sin.

However, while it was YHWH's will for Avraham to go and do this, it was never YHWH's will for Avraham to complete the task. It is absolutely critical for us to understand this truth! This is particularly true in relation to our present study. In order for YHWH to get Avraham to where He needed him to be, YHWH had to give Avraham specific instructions. But those instructions were never to be completed.

How many times do we miss His will when He gives us instructions, but we are not really ever to complete those instructions? How many times have we missed hearing His Voice, and life would have been so much better had we not forced our way through something that He did not mean for us to complete in the first place?

Please consider this question: Had Avraham completed the specific instructions that Elohim had first given him, what would have happened? What would have happened if Avraham would not have heeded YHWH's follow up instructions? Two things would have happened. One, Yitzchaq would have died; and two, Avraham would have been in sin.

So, here is the question: If you have completed specific instructions from YHWH and a person has been injured (killed) or a relationship has died, then did you miss the follow up instructions from YHWH? It is a legitimate question and only you and YHWH can answer it.

Here is what we need to see as it relates to this study. How many times have I heard that, "YHWH has revealed this to me," or "The Ruach Qodesh has revealed to me..." So what? I mean that in all earnestness and without any disrespect intended toward you or YHWH and His Spirit! But so what! Perhaps because of where you were at that moment, YHWH had to give you specific instructions to get you moving in the right direction. Perhaps those instructions have now changed and you missed it. Have you proven His instructions? If not, why not?

Can we be honest here? While it may be a true statement that YHWH or His Spirit did in fact instruct a person in a particular position, does that mean that it is the end all of all arguments? Because typically that is why this is brought into a discussion, to put an end to it and give one

the upper hand! No, this is not the end of the matter at all! Just because YHWH told you something does not make it the end of the matter for all concerned! Remember Avraham? YHWH instructed him to go and sacrifice his son.

Perhaps YHWH told you a particular bit of information to move you away from another piece of information and He knew that it was the only thing that would get you moving in the correct direction. But now are you still listening? Or, are you emotionally tied to a past experience rather than His truth?

YHWH has instructed us to prove all things. B'reshit 22:1 clearly states that YHWH gave these instructions as a means to test Avraham. Could it be that what YHWH has instructed you in is merely a test to see if you will do right and test and prove what He has told you?

Kepha Bet (2nd Peter) 1:9

For he that lacks these things is blind, short-sighted, having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins.

Let us not be blind or short-sighted, but rather let us come together with YHWH and reason out our faith in order that we might be established upon the solid foundation of truth, which is Mashiach Yeshua Himself!

Brothers and sisters in Mashiach, come let us also reason together!

ABBA YHWH, teach us to reason with You, Your word, Your creation, and one another, in the love and respect of Mashiach; in the name of Mashiach Yeshua. Amein.

Shabbat Shalom

Zerubbabel ben Emunah

www.onetorahforall.com

zerubbabel@onetorahforall.com

© All material is copyrighted and no part may be changed, added to, shortened or edited; however, the entirety of the article may be reproduced as long as the author's name remains attached to the article. It is encouraged and a blessing for others to forward these teachings to others, and permission is hereby granted for this as long as the teaching is kept wholly intact, which includes the author's name and contact information, the "One Torah For All" header, and this copyright paragraph. Furthermore, it must be passed on without any cost whatsoever to those who receive it. The act of forwarding or sharing this teaching in any way constitutes agreement by the party forwarding it that he agrees to the terms and conditions of this paragraph.