Humanity is defined by the Tree of Knowledge

Think back 1000 years ago. Being human was quite different than it is today. They didn't have most everything that surrounds us today. Life was very different. Most people were involved in farming. Most of their energy went into eating and surviving. They didn't have electricity. They had to make their own clothes, their own crude homes, kill their own meat, grow their own crops. They only had the simplest of machines. No significant medical technology. When the plagues came - millions of people died. They didn't even have pain killers. Most people lived half as long then as today, if they were lucky. Most of their social contact was with people in their immediate physical space. They didn't have cars, trains, planes, telephones, radio, the Internet. Very few people then could even read.

Today things are quite different. You're reading about this over the Internet. We have instant world wide communication. Computers are common in households. We travel in outer space. We take pills for diseases that used to kill millions. We can transplant organs from one person to another. We measure time in nanoseconds. We now have massive factories, assembly lines, robots building robots - I could go on forever - but things are very different today than they used to be. Yet - genetically humans today and humans 1000 years ago are virtually identical. So what has changed? Why is humanity so different today than it was 1000 years ago - or even 100 years ago? The difference is in the Tree of Knowledge.

The Tree of Knowledge defines who we are as a species. It is what makes humans what we are today. 100 years from now humanity will be quite different than it is today and there will be a single thing that will make us different - the changes in the Tree of Knowledge. Will we be technologically advanced living in a peaceful and free world? Will the human race continue to grow and prosper? Or will we use our technology to create a horrible oppressive society that is dark and static where knowledge is controlled and reality suppressed? What we become will depend on how we structure our society - and how we structure our society is part of the Tree of Knowledge.

To grow and maintain the Tree of Knowledge is to contribute and improve humanity as a whole. If someone finds a cure for Cancer - that knowledge becomes part of the Tree of Knowledge and the people of the world become cancer free. Strengthening the tree of knowledge also improves humanity. Strengthening involves the removal and updating of false or otherwise outdated and useless information. For example, people used to think the world was flat. The idea that the world was round was a revolutionary idea and people had a hard time accepting it. Even to suggest that the world was round was to invite death or persecution. But what would the world have been like if we stuck to the flat world view? We wouldn't be watching satellite TV - that's for sure.

Even though we see ourselves as scientifically advanced and knowledgeable, we are not. There are a lot of things that a huge number of people believe in that are just plain wrong - obviously wrong - yet these world views continue to exist. For example - a huge number of people still believe that the world was created in 6 days and is about 7000 years old. If this were true - we wouldn't be able to see stars that were more than 7000 light years away. But we are seeing galaxies that are 10 billion light years away clearly proving that the universe is at least that old. But often there's a difference between what we want to believe and the way things really are.

True knowledge often has a price. Take the example of religions that have been around for thousands of years. The Jews (and Jewish derivatives - Christians) are an example of this. Judaism is an ancient religion and culture and Jews are some of the smartest and most successful people on the planet. Yet their religion is frozen in time and clings to the ancient rituals celebrating things that never happened. But if the Jews were to admit that stories like Adam and Eve, Noah and the Ark, and the Tower of Babel never happened, then it would undermine a huge part of their culture.

If the world wasn't created in 6 days for example, (God resting on the 7th) then what is the point of all the Jewish laws relating to the Sabbath? Do they strike it from the Ten Commandments as a mistake? Certainly they should in the spirit of honesty. But to do so would be to give up their ancient culture. And to Jews and Christians - their cultures - their tribes - are more important than experiencing the real world the way it really is. And when other things are more important than reality - then false information is kept in the Tree of Knowledge and we as a species are weakened by that.

For the Jews to grow their tree of knowledge and maintain their religious identity, they would have to have a modern day prophet who would redefine what it is to be a Jew in a modern context. Jews could dedicate their religion to the perfection of ethics and law for example and turn a backward looking religion into a forward looking religion. These religions could be modernized to contribute to the Tree of Knowledge and have a real purpose in the context of reality.

My point is that there are a lot of barriers to the process of correcting old and false information. Much of our culture and heritage is based on ancient world views that are ingrained into the narrative of our culture and not easily given up. It used to be that the entire universe consisted of the area of earth that had been explored and mapped and what a person could see looking up. We now know that this planet is but a spec of dust in a universe of trillions of galaxies. To accept that knowledge - we have to give up a lot of self importance and accept a worldview that maybe we are not as significant as we would like to believe. That is a difficult step - and a step that is still in the process of talking. And although it's obvious - it's a piece of knowledge with a price - and many of us are too proud to accept that.