

STORY

Bar Mitzvah Sacrifice



The son of an American Jew was approaching Bar Mitzvah age, and his father decided to bestow his son with a wonderful present. He told his son that before his bar mitzvah, they would travel together to Eretz Yisrael to the Beis Medrash of the Gaon, Rav Shmuel Vosner, the Shevet Levi. There, the Gaon would lay his tefillin for the first time.

The man's son was very excited about this opportunity, and prepared for the trip. His father told him that Rav Vosner had told him to call him a few days before they left America in order to confirm the meeting. Meanwhile, the father purchased the airplane tickets.

A week before the flight the father called Rav Vosner, and to his astonishment, the Shevet Levi said to him, "I decided that it's not worthwhile for you to travel to me to Bnei Brak."

The shocked father said, "What happened all of a sudden? My son has been looking forward and preparing for the trip for a long time!"


Rav Vosner explained, "It's true that there's an inyan that the first time that a boy lays

tefillin, it should be done by a Rav, but have you thought how many unsavory sights the boy is bound to see on the long trip from America? Is it worth it?"

The father tried to explain to Rav Vosner that his son would be extremely disappointed if the trip was canceled, but all his explanations and pleading did not help. Rav Vosner said, "Nothing in the world is worth the damage incurred if your son sees forbidden things." The father then asked, "And what will I do with the two tickets that I bought for two thousand dollars?"

Rav Vosner answered, "Go buy a large frame, and put the two tickets inside it. On the top of the frame, write in clear letters, 'We sacrificed these two tickets which cost two thousand dollars in order that our dear son should not see forbidden things!'"

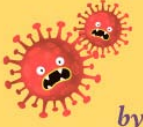
FOR THOSE WHO STRUGGLE WITH SHMIRAS EINAYIM. NOW IS HARDER THAN EVER!



Being confined to home without work, feeling anxious and stressed, as well as constantly checking our computers and phones, are breeding grounds for the Yetzer Hara.

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SMILE! IT'S CONTAGIOUS



You know what part I love about waking up??

None of it. Let me sleep.



If you see a sign that says "Save 50%" just keep walking and you will save another 50%.



HOW DO YOU DECIDE WHO TO MARRY?

Alan, age 10 wrote: You got to find somebody who likes the same stuff. Like, if you like sports, she should like it that you like sports, and she should keep the chips and dip coming. -



“And Yisro Rejoiced”

The words “וַיִּחַד יִתְרוֹ” that the Pasuk uses, meaning ‘Yisro rejoiced’, also comes from the word ‘Echad’ - as in ‘Yisro UNIFIED’ G-d, by realizing that all other forces are really just creations of the One and ONLY true G-d.

Why do the words ‘rejoiced’ and ‘unified’ share the same root?

When a person believes in many gods, then the problems of life all seem to come from many forces. The lack of rain is because the rain god is angry, and the problems with the wife are because the god of love is conspiring against you, and the lack of income is because the god of sustenance is upset, etc. But when a person recognizes that all the forces of the world, both the good and the bad, all come from one just and loving G-d Who sees to it that everyone gets what's coming to them (like what happened with the Egyptians), it brings a person to true joy! When we realize that even the ‘perceived’ bad is really from the ONE loving G-d who has only ONE goal, to bestow good on His creations, then we can be sure that what feels hard and painful is really only for our benefit. This knowledge is the key to achieving true joy and inner peace.

When we are pulled to look at things we shouldn't or towards forbidden desires, what is really happening deep down in our hearts is that we are believing in other gods (or goddesses?) who we imagine can provide our needs OTHER than Hashem.

The Zohar states that when Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai would pass by beautiful women with his students, he would urge them to avert their eyes and would recite the Pasuk “אל תפנו אל האלילים – do not turn to other gods.” When we look where we shouldn't, in our subconscious minds we are denying that Hashem is the ONLY provider or our needs, and we are giving strength in our minds to those ‘goddesses’ out there, who we perceive as beings who can ‘provide our needs’. This is the root of all idol worship, the idea that some other force or being in nature is a provider that is separate from G-d.

Part 2: Gods of Silver & Gold

On a similar note, the Pasuk at the end of Yisro says:

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה כֹּה תֹאמַר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: אֲתֵם רְאִיתֶם כִּי מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם דִּבַּרְתִּי עִמָּכֶם. לֹא תַעֲשׂוּן אִתִּי: אֱלֹהִי כֶסֶף וְאֱלֹהִי זָהָב, לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ לָכֶם.

And the LORD said to Moses: Thus should you say to the children of Israel: You yourselves have seen that I have talked with you from heaven. You shall not make with Me--gods of silver, or gods of gold, you shall not make for you.

How many of us are guilty of making money (silver and gold) into a god? We run after it and worship it as if the ‘money’ provides our needs. But all the money of the world is G-d's, as the the Pasuk in

Chagai (2:8) says: לִי הַכֶּסֶף וְלִי הַזָּהָב. It is G-d who created all the forces and effects that seem to provide and create...

So if G-d exhorts us to stay away from forbidden pleasures, how can we give strength in our minds to these mere creations, if the One who created them and truly provides for all tells us it isn't good for us!

Believing that there is any good to be had from a provider that is OTHER than Hashem, is a form of idol worship.

Part 3: The Anticlimactic Ending

The Parsha of Yisro begins with the most basic prerequisite to the giving of the Torah - belief in one, all powerful G-d. Yisro, who our sages tell us had served every idol that there was, had come to the conclusive realization that there was only ONE G-d Who controls everything.

This was also the main purpose of the great miracles of the Exodus, to bring all of the Jewish people to a tremendous level of Emunah. Because without the basic belief in One G-d, there can be no Torah.

But it's interesting that after the awesome giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai, the Parsha winds down with Hashem saying: “You have seen that I have spoken to you from heaven, etc.. And then the last sentence of the Parsha seems very anticlimactic:

וְלֹא-תִעָלֶה בְּמַעֲלֹתַי, עַל-מִזְבְּחִי: אֲשֶׁר לֹא-תִגָּלֶה עֲרוֹתְךָ עָלָיו.

Do not go up by steps unto my altar, that your nakedness not be uncovered on it.

What secrets are hidden in this Pasuk that G-d found so important to end the powerful story of Kabalas Hatorah with it?

Don't go up on alter bi'maalos. Maalos means levels. Don't go up on the altar of G-d with levels of greatness; haughtiness.

Our Sages say that if we have gaivah, we push god away. They also say that those who are haughty of spirit will end up falling into sins of adultery. Why is that? Because a haughty man believes he is the controller of his own destiny, which is also a form of idolatry. “I can take what I want”. And this attitude is the root of carnal sin.

Mizbeach symbolizes sacrificing our desires. How can we do that? By not going up with gaivah. And then the pasuk continues and says “אֲשֶׁר לֹא-תִגָּלֶה עֲרוֹתְךָ עָלָיו” that your nakedness not be uncovered on it”. Perhaps this is telling us what the main sacrifice we need to make for G-d is.

What really is erva? In Vayikra 20:18 it says:

וְהָעֵרָה אֶת-מִקְרָהּ הָעֵרָה “Her Fountain he has made naked”.

Rashi explains that the word he'era means: וְכָן כָּל לִשׁוֹן עֵרָוָה גָּלוּי “Revealed, and so does all instances of the word “Erva” mean

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'to reveal'.

Why should it be hidden? And why were Adam and Chava 'ashamed' that they were naked after the sin and try to 'hide' and cover themselves?

The Yetzer Hara is simply the desire to receive, which separates us from Hashem (Who only wants to give). The purpose of all the torah and mitzvos is only to remove this shame. Before the sin of Adam, the yetzer hara wasn't inside him. There wasn't any shame. But once he sinned, his 'desire to receive' became part of him and he felt the shame. His desire to receive was exposed in direct contrast to that of G-d, making him feel distant and separate from G-d. And this is the root of all shame, the revelation of our desire to receive.

I have a 4.5 year old son, Motti, who was blessed b'h with a refined nature. Under him, is a 2.5 year old son named, Elimelech. I noticed that whenever Motti wants to ask me for something like a treat, or to play a game on the computer, he comes and tells me that "Elimelech" wants a treat or wants to play on the computer. Why doesn't he just tell me that he wants to? It is human nature from the earliest age, to be ashamed of 'revealing' our desires. We try to disguise them in any way rather than admit that we want something.

That is why there is so much shame around sexuality. Because this is an area where our 'desire to receive' is expressed in its strongest form. That is why Adam and Chava felt shame that they were naked, once their desire to receive was internalized.

The root of tznius is keeping our desire to receive hidden. When

we 'show off' we are revealing our desire for 'honor' to the whole world. And when a woman covers her body and tries not to dress provocatively, she is keeping her desires for intimacy – and the desires of the men around her – in check and in hiding. She is acknowledging the shame in 'flouting' our desires to the world, that which makes us separate from G-d.

"Do not go up on my Mizbeach with steps", with ego. When sacrificing our desires to become one with G-d, we must hide our desires. As it says, "For all yeast and honey thou shall not burn from it an 'isheh' for G-d". Yeast symbolizes ego, and honey symbolizes the sweetness of desire. Therefore, the Pasuk in this week's parsha ends, 'that you shall not reveal your nakedness on it'. Meaning, that when your desires are not subjugated, they are revealed and this separates you from G-d.

Before the receiving of the Torah, we had to recognize that there is only one G-d who controls everything. But AFTER the receiving of the Torah, our job is much greater than that. We are now expected to unify G-d in all our actions, in other words, everything that we do should be for G-d's sake. Only through the Torah can one reach such a high level, and this is hinted to in this final verse of Parshas Yisro: "Do not go up on my altar with steps and ego". Do not let your nakedness - your 'personal desires' become revealed. Sacrifice your ego and desires for G-d on my Altar.

This is the ultimate unification of G-d's name, and so perhaps that is why the story of Kabalas Hatorah ends with these divine instructions for our ultimate perfection.

IT'S A PACKAGE DEAL

In this week's Parsha we have the Aseres Hadibros: the Cornerstone of Yiddishkeit.

I would like to focus on the last commandment: "LO SACHMOD - You should not be envious of all that is your friend's".... of you friend's wife, his house, his donkey, etc...

Ok, so what's so wrong with a little envy and jealousy? What's the big deal? And also, why does the Hashem command us not to be jealous of certain specifics, and then He sums it all up and says: "V'chol asher Li'raei'echa - and all that is your friends"?

The answer is: Jealousy is a lack of Emunah - and Emunah is the basis of the whole Torah.

Our spouses, our houses, our cars, kids and even vacations, are all predestined from Hashem. Oh, but we are still jealous...

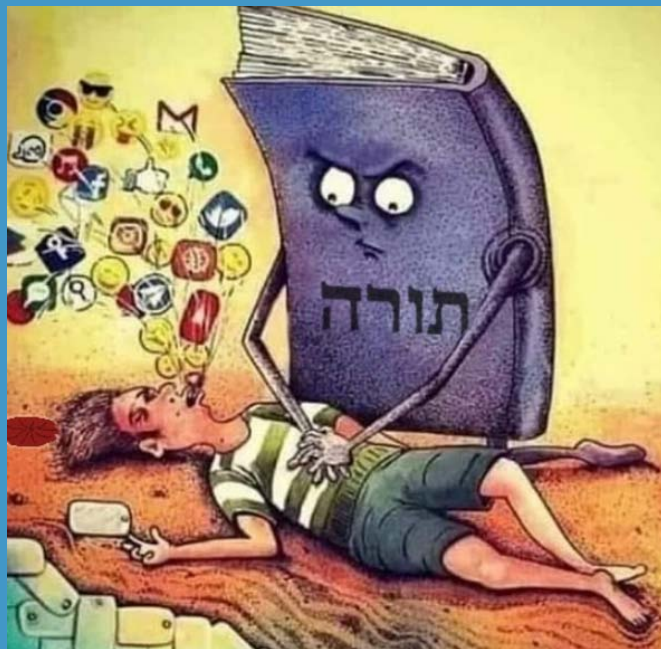
Ok, well look at the rest of the baggage your friend carries.

You want her, her house, her jewels, her lavish wedding?

Well then take her parents, her crazy brother, her phobias, etc.. too!

V'chol asher Li'raei'echa... It's a package deal!

INSPIRATIONAL IMAGE OF THE WEEK



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PRACTICAL TIP OF THE WEEK

Practice with Visualization



Visualization is a powerful technique that is used by elite athletes and other performers. When you visualize an experience, areas of our brain actually go through some of the motions used when actually acting out that behavior.

To use the power of visualization simply imagine yourself encountering a nisyanon, and then successfully resisting the temptation. This can help increase the chances that you'll be successful with real nisyonos.

You can also use the power of visualization to increase your motivation. Each night before going to sleep, visualize yourself having successfully broken your habit. See yourself no longer controlled by those old thoughts and feelings. See yourself as empowered and freed from the control of old patterns. Imagine how good that would feel!

DESIRES ARE AN ILLUSION

Are the dots in the middle moving?

Our eyes are a tremendous blessing that allow us to perceive the world around us. However our eyes can trick us as well, making us believe that we need things that in reality it may be very bad for us. Let's train ourselves to use our eyes for good and not let them trick us to turn after our hearts desires!

