

This week, a shidduch – a potential match – was not acceptable by the girl because the boy owned blue jeans. When you hear ideas which go against our Torah philosophy, not violating Torah laws, you must follow the Torah's command to rebuke your neighbor. Your silence – perhaps to keep a friendship – will in fact allow such corrupt and destructive ideas to flourish and harm others. Your personal concern not to make waves silently encourages others to proliferate their nonsense. The Torah teaches what is prohibited. Let us not disqualify perfectly righteous individuals when they are perfect in God's eyes. Study the entire Radak on Zefania, 1:8

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Parshas Bishalach

RABBI BERNARD FOX

"And Hashem hardened the heart of Paroh the king of Egypt and he pursued Bnai Yisrael. And Bnai Yisrael left in triumph." (Shemot 14:8)

The Egyptians are struck with the plague of the firstborn. Paroh agrees to allow the Jewish people to leave Egypt. Bnai Yisrael leaves Egypt and travels towards the wilderness. Hashem hardens Paroh's heart. He decides to pursue the Jewish people. This ultimately leads to the miracle of the splitting of the Reed Sea. The sea

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40 Years & The Manna

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

In order to understand the concepts in the manna, we must understand the events immediately preceding. The Jews traveled to Israel, and were promised its inheritance by God. No doubts were presented to them regarding their ability to conquer the land. While trading Israel's borders, the people desired to send spies to evaluate the land. This was not commanded by God or Moses. Moses consented to this for he desired that they see there is nothing to hide. Moses hoped the Jews would abandon their wish to spy the land upon seeing his conviction that all their requests were complied with forthright (Rashi). The Jews however, insisted and spied the land. After their return forty days later ten of the twelve spies incited a riot. They terrified the people with the news of giants. Along with their heretic opinions and projections, they decided not to take on the land.

Due to their own fears which were created by the spies, they rebelled against God. This rebellion clearly demonstrated their disbelief in God's age old promise to Abraham that they would receive the land. The Jews were then sentenced to roam the desert for forty years until the last of the rebellious people perished.



Question: If the Jews simply did not deserve Israel, why didn't God allow them to reach another land until the sinners died out? What was the reason God desired the Jews to roam the desert for forty years?

I believe the answer is that the crime the of the Jews was a basic one. Their conviction of how reality operates was based on trust in their own abilities, and nothing else. What is amazing is that after witnessing tremendous miracles in

Egypt, and at the Red Sea the Jews still harbored disbelief in God. They felt God wanted to "kill them in the desert". This confirms Maimonides' words that the miracles leave doubt in one's heart. The Jews didn't believe Moses due to miracles. The reason being, miracles lose their significance with heir increased frequency. God desired to address the Jews' disbelief. The method utilized by God shows the level of intricacy and depth in God's system

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40 Years & The Manna

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

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of justice.

God forced the Jews into a situation where they were solely dependent upon Him for their very existence in the desert. He desired to train them in the ways of believing His word. God chose to raise the Jews above a simplistic existence. From a reality that is self provided and understandable, to a reality where God's existence is primary in all equations. That His word is more real than physical reality. He accomplished this in a number of ways:

1) God sustained the appearance of the miraculous manna: The aspect of a miraculous food removed understanding from the Jews regarding the manna's properties. Had He fed them vegetation or animal products, there would be a feeling of familiarity and reliance on the natural procurement of these foods. This would afford security and detract from God's goal of forcing them to rely on Him alone. God therefore created a "miracle food" which by its very name "manna" which means "what is it", the Jews could not find any security. It is also something "their fathers were unfamiliar with". (Deut. 8:3) This alien feeling about the manna contributed to their feelings of insecurity in themselves, a prerequisite for redirecting security in God. We learn from the words in Deuteronomy that people are comfortable with that which their forefathers spoke of. The manna did not carry this sense.

2) He limited the manna's "shelf life" to one day and it would rot if left for the next day: This was done to remove any security in the manna itself. Therefore, the essence of the manna must include

temporary shelf life. No emotional security could be attached to it.

3) God caused it to melt each day as the sun warmed it: Seeing the manna lying on the ground would provoke the feeling of security; "it is here all the time." This is another area the Jews would have sought security. Security in the physical was their weakness until this point, which caused their sin. Their need for physical security would have to be redirected to security in God.

4) He caused it to double in size once it was in their homes Friday evening: On Friday, the Jews were commanded to gather enough for that day. Although the manna did not fall on Shabbos, they would have sustenance through the Shabbos. When they did as they were commanded they found that the manna miraculously doubled in size, to sustain them (Exod. 16:5 - Rashi). Their complete confidence would be in God's word. The manna fell each of the 6 weekdays with just enough for each day, as God promised. Left over manna would become wormy and rot. Not so on Shabbos. Manna leftover from Friday through Shabbos remained fresh. The purpose of this was again, to force the Jews to believe more in God's word than in physical reality and their own securities. All the miracles of the manna described above were to engender faith in the word of God. This integral concept of faith in God's word applies today. We demonstrate this idea by our abstinence in all work on the Shabbos. By doing so, we demonstrate conviction that abstention from work on one day does not threaten our existence and livelihood. God will take care of us, however He does so, even though

we may not understand how.

In Deuteronomy 8:3, we read: "He (God) afflicted you and hungered you and fed you the manna, which you didn't know and your fathers didn't know, to show you that not on bread alone does man live, but by all that comes from God's mouth does man live."

The word "alone" teaches us that man should live primarily in accordance with natural law. The purpose of the manna was to show that man's reality - the way for "man to live" - is in the reality of God's word, "but by all that comes from God's mouth does man live." It is clear from this verse that man's existence in the wilderness for forty years was meant to direct his dependency towards God alone. The Rashbam also states this when he says, "...you had no "bread in your basket" but your lives were dependent upon Heaven each day".

We see that God's multifaceted manna-plan was required to first strip the Jews of their securities placed in the physical and in their own might, and secondly, to permeate the Jews with belief in God. The manna was used to address those areas where he seeks security. Living in the desert for forty years gave the Jews an opportunity to abandon their flawed emotion of self trust. This was a great blessing. Their need to follow only that which was intelligible was replaced with trust in God and His system of providence. □

Did Abraham Believe He Was to Sacrifice Isaac?

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Reader: In my opinion, Hashem never asked Abraham to kill Isaac. Since He promised Avraham that his seed continue with Isaac, and later didn't tell him to kill Isaac but to bring him as sacrifice. So the test was, if Avraham has bitachon, he will know what ever he does, nothing will happen with Isaac, because Hashem keeps his promises. Therefore he should know that even if he strikes Isaac with his knife, he can not kill him. Miracle has to happen.

Mesora: According to you, Avraham's perfection in following God's word is a game. He never really thought that he was sacrificing Isaac. But the Rabbis teach otherwise, Avraham was in fact under the impression that he was to kill his son. This is fact. See the Ramban and Rambam on this point for verification.

Reader: Am I to follow majority opinions in this area, or can't I follow what my mind tells me?

Mesora: In philosophy - which this is - there is no psak. So you are correct to follow your mind as best as possible. Yes, you must follow your mind, so I wish to clarify for you these points which I see clear: Reason dictates that, the inclusion of the story in the Torah as a lesson in devotion; the storyline itself; and the response of the angel (Gen., 22:12) "...don't send your hand out to the lad, and do nothing to him, for now I know you fear God, as you have not held back your only son from me" teach clearly that Abraham had full intent to slaughter Isaac. □

Prayer May Be Inappropriate

RABBI REUVEN MANN

Certain divine intervention is dependent on the level of the people. Thus, Moshe (or the people) would need to daven in order to effectuate the change in their level that would "trigger" the hashgacha. However, as Hashem explained to Moshe, ("lama titzak aylay?" , "why cry unto me?") there are certain instances of divine intervention that have nothing to do with the people. It is Hashem's will that they occur, and they will occur regardless of the level of the people. Kriyas Yam Suf was one such instance. Other examples would be the creation of the world, and the coming of Moshiach (although we can hasten the coming of Moshiach by doing teshuva, but by a certain point in time Moshiach will come regardless). □

Respecting Religions

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

The following is an actual conversation with a former orthodox Jew ("Anon") defending her position of "Respecting All Religions"

Anon: I understand your passion for Judaism...that is wonderful! Are you interested in other faiths as well or believe the Jewish way is it? I don't mean that offensively in any way, it is just something that is important to me.

Mesora: I have studied other religions, but would not say I am open to them. I am open to truth, not what is false. Other religions are baseless, built on the word of one person, and require faith, since they are bereft of proof. Science and math are based on proof, so too religion must be based on proof. All natural and philosophical sciences are creations of God, so all must be permeated with His wisdom. As much as I don't affirm $2+2=5$, I don't confirm any falsehood, including Christianity and the others. It also makes no sense that God would give more than one religion. As there is only one type of human, there can be only one best life style for mankind - one religion.

Anon: No I don't feel a person "must be" anything accept for who they are. I appreciate all cultures and religions and I like learning from all of them. That is who I am.

Mesora: You make two points, I will address them in order: 1)Yes, we must learn from all religions, but we must not let our need for our self image demanding approval from others, be more important than admitting fallacy. "Learning" from other religions, means you act with honesty, enough to discount those which are false and certainly destructive. Just as we study all plants and avoid poisonous ones, we must also flee from destructive ideas. We do not ridicule the adherents, only the false notions of a religion. We are discussing religious ideas, not peoples' actions. 2)If someone said "who they were" was a ruthless murderer, is this acceptable behavior to you? Your quote, "that is who I am", is an attempt to justify any belief people hold in their hearts. It is clear that you do not mean that "to each his own", regardless of consequences. I therefore see no reasoning in your position, as it leads to disastrous results.

What is your estimation of a culture where killing humans for sport is an accepted practice? Would this register as a 'good' or an 'evil', and would you condone such a culture? Please bear with my curiosity. You mean you feel a person

must be open to all religions? Isn't it true, that if you were the victim of such a savage culture, your wish would be that this culture is not allowed to continue killing, as you would be the next statistic? Wouldn't you agree that only a culture following a set of "objectively good" morals be allowed to function freely?

Anon: I say this with deep respect for you as a fellow human being and one who has obviously thought and experienced many things to find a place for himself in the world...I suggest to you that perhaps the answer to the world's problems are not in your thinking but buried deep within the goodness and generosity that lies in your heart... Be well.

Mesora: But does not "goodness and generosity" need to culminate in some action, so that the answers to the "world's problems" are addressed? I mean, my internal goodness does nothing for the world unless it is expressed, and that means either actions, or expression of thoughts. If this be the case, then my actions need to be in line with the good for man.

We must now define what is good for man. Seeing so many religions which oppose each other, but seeing only one "human species", we are forced to say that either one religion is the correct religion, or all religions are false. We cannot suggest that all opposing religions are correct - this is against reason. We must then study man and determine his makeup, and decide which religion best aligns with man's design as a psychological and philosophical creature. If I were to prove conclusively that the Creator gave to man just one religion, would you agree to follow such a religion?

Anon: I reiterate: Perhaps the answer to the world's problems are not in your thinking but buried deep within the goodness and generosity that lies in your heart... with respect.

Mesora: I do not understand what you mean. Could you please clarify, and also explain why 'respect' is an issue?

Anon: At one time there lived a man who thought that only his ideologies were correct and true. He blamed the world's problems on a group of people. He sought them out, corralled them,

humiliated them and slaughtered them...all because he thought he had all the answers.

Mesora: So you make me the analog, and feel I will slaughter people?

Anon: A battered and needy community followed him blindly.

Mesora: So you feel only those in need will agree with me, but not those whom think?

Anon: Our friends, family and ancestors were buried in mass graves. Mother Theresa was once asked why she spent her life administering to the needy and sick and her reply? "I could have been Hitler". Adherence to one ideology is dangerous.

Mesora: According to you, I must not adhere to yours.

Anon: I have met people before who discover Orthodoxy and Judaism later in life and many come with your attitude.

Mesora: So you feel I only have an attitude, but no substance. Isn't it true that you have the attitude? You do not answer any questions, you do not use reason, and therefore all that is left in your words, is emotion, an attitude?

Anon: This is not a judgment just an observation...I was born into Orthodoxy. I have had 34 of experience, my mother, 69 years. She studies Torah and davens everyday. She has become a peaceful woman and I strive to be like her. We all have the potential to be Hitler or Mother Theresa or if you please, Sara, Rachel or Rivka. There are great Rebbes out there who know the great value, that respect and love and have, over blind adherence to principles.

Mesora: Then you must study, so your adherence is not blind.

Anon: In addition to your studies seek them out...above all else nurture love in yourself. You ask why respect is important...without respect we tend to hurt each other and more importantly our children. Your neshama is the greatest gift you have...In the Talmud it says that for every living creature there is an angel up in heaven whispering "grow".

Mesora: True love of people is expressed only by those who are honest, and who have knowledge of truth, verified by conformity with reality, i.e., God's Torah. Such people care for others, and wish to open the eyes of the blind. But this you cannot do so with emotions of 'accepting all religions'. You help others by first learning the truth yourself. Good emotions cannot replace truth.

Returning to my initial point, God Himself in his Torah says we must not only withhold our respect for all other religions, but we must slay certain individuals because of the greatness of their crime.

Your ideas oppose God's. God's will is

that man is to be lead by His correct ideas, and not simply "respect" other religions out of a false desire to be nice to all humanity. God's idea of being kind to all humanity was to wipe out corrupt civilizations - more than once - so the rest of mankind may not fall into their error.

In your attempt to view yourself as a good person, you strive to discover the good in all other religions, but this is not God's will. You may read of this in the Torah yourself. The error you make is a common one, and may stem from emotions seeking unanimous approval. But you have gone without the guidance of God's will expressed so clearly in His Torah. Without an objective morality - only possible by God's word - all members of mankind are free to develop their own religion. And someone else's religion may include mass murder, as was the case with the Crusades. So I ask you again: Does your wish that we respect all religions also demand that we respect the Christian Crusades?

Without admitting to God's objective system, 'everything goes', and you must condone all religious expression, including those who wish to slay you in the name of religion. Your position is riddled with contradictions, and will shorten your life.

God knew man has these types of "accepting" emotions. He therefore gave a single system, only once, as the Torah says, Deuteronomy, 5:19, "These matters (the Ten Commandments) God spoke to your entire assembly from amidst flames, cloud, and thick darkness, a great voice not to be repeated..." This was done with clear proof for all generations via that great event of Sinai.

Now, you must first prove the event to yourself so you realize that God condoned only Judaism. Secondly, you must study His Torah with great care, so you subjugate your mind to His will, not your baseless position.

At this point, the other party ceased from the conversation, either out of a realization of her absurdities, or as an admission that she did not really wish to arrive at a conclusion. In either case, the other party fails to be enlightened to an essential component in her life, i.e., which religion to follow, and how to reason, so to arrive at such a conclusion.

Our goals must be pure, and our objective - the truth, regardless on how many points we are proved wrong. As a Rabbi once said, in learning, even when you are wrong, you have not "mistaken", as the true act of learning also includes all the times you err. Each error is an opportunity to realize a new truth, and that too is learning!



Parshas Bishalach

RABBI BERNARD FOX

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miraculously separates before Bnai Yisrael. The nation crosses the sea. The Egyptians follow and the sea closes upon them. Paroh and his army are destroyed. Bnai Yisrael are redeemed. It is clear from our pasuk that the Almighty led Paroh and his nation to their destruction at the Reed Sea.

Paroh's heart was hardened by Hashem. This caused him to chase Bnai Yisrael into the sea. Rashi comments that Hashem carefully planned the route of Bnai Yisrael's escape. His objective was to encourage Paroh's pursuit of Bnai Yisrael. After escaping from Egypt, Hashem told Moshe to lead the nation back in the direction of Egypt. He then commanded Moshe to instruct the people to camp near Baal Tzafon – an Egyptian deity. Rashi explains that these instructions were explicitly designed to mislead Paroh and his people. The backtracking

implied that the nation was lost. The proximity of this confused wandering to Baal Tzafon implied that this deity was somehow acting against Bnai Yisrael. The deity was foiling the nation's attempt to escape. Rashi's interpretation raises an immediate question. According to Rashi, the Almighty was enticing Paroh to pursue Bnai Yisrael. Why was this complicated plan needed? Hashem had hardened Paroh's heart. Paroh was forced to chase after the nation! Why was any inducement needed? It seems clear from Rashi's interpretation of the pesukim that Hashem hardened Paroh's heart through these inducements. Hashem did not just turn-off Paroh's ability to chose his course of action. Instead, Hashem maneuvered Paroh into a situation in which he would not be able to resist the urge to pursue Bnai Yisrael. The Almighty knows the inner workings of every person's heart. He knew that given the proper inducements, Paroh simply would not be able to resist the urge to chase after Bnai Yisrael.

This interpretation resolves an apparent contradiction in the writings of Maimonides. Maimonides

explains in the fifth chapter of Laws of Repentance that every person has the ability to choose the path of the good or the path of evil. Hashem does not decree that any person should be evil or righteous. It seems that this is an unqualified statement. Every person has this ability to choose. Oddly, in the very next chapter Maimonides explains that sometimes the Almighty withholds from an evil person the opportunity to repent from sin. This is a punishment. This person performed willful evil. Hashem prevents the person from repenting. This assures that this evil individual will suffer for his or her wickedness. These comments seem to contradict Maimonides earlier assertion that every person has the freewill to chose between good and evil! How can these two statements be reconciled? Rashi's approach to explaining Paroh's experience provides a resolution.

Humans are created with the ability to chose between right and wrong. However, this does not mean that we can exercise this ability in every area of our lives. We are all subject to strong, overpowering feelings. Confronted with these powerful

emotions, we may be helpless to choose freely between options. On balance, we have enough freedom to constantly choose to improve ourselves. We are responsible to make the proper choices in those areas in which we are empowered. If we make the proper choices, we become better individuals. We become more empowered. With time, we can even overcome desires that once were irresistible. In short, we have freewill. But this does not mean that we have volition in every area of our lives. It is completely consistent for Maimonides to state that every person has freewill. Yet, in a specific situation one may be bereft of the ability to choose. This is clearly illustrated by the experiences of Paroh. Hashem did not disable any faculty in Paroh. He did not suddenly hit a switch and turn-off Paroh's volition. Instead, he placed Paroh under the control of an irresistible urge. Paroh found himself outside of the area in which he could make choices. He had no option. He had to chase Bnai Yisrael.

"As Hashem commanded Moshe, Ahron placed it before the Ark as a keepsake." (Shemot 16:34)

During the travels of Bnai Yisrael in the desert the nation ate manna – mun. Hashem commanded Moshe to instruct Ahron to create a reminder of this miracle. Ahron was to fill a container with the mun. This container would be placed before the Ark in the Mishcan. The miracle of the mun has an interesting expression in halacha. Shulchan Aruch explains that on Shabbat we are obligated to recite the blessing of HaMotzee on two loafs of bread. The Talmud explains that this recalls the mun of the desert. How do these double loaves represent the mun? The Talmud in Tractate Shabbat discusses this issue. A short introduction is required.

Generally, the mun fell in the desert each day. The people would collect enough mun for the day's consumption. They were not permitted to collect extra. They were prohibited from saving a portion for the next day. Any portion, which was left at the end of the day, would quickly spoil. On Shabbat the mun

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Parshas Bishalach

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did not fall. What did the people eat on Shabbat? On Friday the people were permitted to deviate from their regular practice. They were to collect a double portion. One portion would be eaten on Friday. The second portion would be saved and consumed on Shabbat. Miraculously, this mun would not spoil. The Talmud explains that the dual loaves recall the double portion of mun that provided for Shabbat.

There is another requirement of the Shabbat meal that recalls the mun. When the kiddush is recited the loaves are covered with a cloth. A number of explanations are offered for this requirement. One explanation offered by the Tur is that the covering recalls a characteristic of the miracle of the mun. Each day before the mun fell a layer of dew formed on the ground. The mun fell upon this dew. A second layer of dew then covered it. The covering over the loaves duplicates the dew that covered the mun. Tur explains that according to this explanation one cloth should be placed under the loaves and a second over the loaves. It is somewhat difficult to understand these laws. The mun did not fall on Shabbat. The double portion fell on Erev Shabbat – on Friday. In other words, the double portion did not fall on Shabbat. On Shabbat the people ate a single portion that remained from Friday! How do the double loaves on Shabbat recall a miracle that occurred on Erev Shabbat? In order to answer this question, we must more clearly understand the message of the double loaves.

Our Sages created, through these loaves, a reminder of the miracle of the mun. What aspect of the miracle is recalled through the loaves? The Sages did not attempt to duplicate, through the loaves, the Shabbat portion. On Shabbat the people ate a single portion, not a double portion. Instead, the Sages created a reminder of the origins of the Shabbat portion. The Shabbat portion was derived from the double portion of Erev Shabbat. The dual loaves recall this

origin.

Bnai Yisrael experienced many miracles in the desert. They were provided with water and shelter. All of the needs of the nation were miraculously met in this desolate wilderness. Why did the Sages choose the miracle of the mun for special treatment? Why must this miracle be recalled each week? At a basic level, our pasuk provides a response. Hashem commanded Moshe to create a permanent reminder of the mun. This was accomplished through placing a container of the mun by the Ark. This command implies that the mun has a unique significance. Hashem singled out this miracle for constant remembrance. The Sages created an additional symbol designed to recall the mun. They reinforced the message of our pasuk. However, this does not completely answer the question. First, why did Hashem single out the mun? Why did this miracle require a constant reminder? Second, why did the Sages specifically relate their reminder of the mun to Shabbat? The mun was an ongoing miracle. We need to understand the implications of this miracle.

The miracle required a manipulation of nature. Nature was altered in order to conform to the needs of Bnai Yisrael. This is an important lesson. The Torah promises us that we will be rewarded for following the Torah. All of our material needs will be satisfied. This means that if we observe the Torah, nature will be altered. Nature is influenced by our virtue. The mun proves the veracity of this promise. It represents nature conforming to our needs. Through recalling the mun, we confirm the reality of the blessings in the Torah. The mun contained a second message. The laws of Shabbat forbade collecting mun on Shabbat. In order to provide for the needs of Bnai Yisrael, a double portion fell on Erev Shabbat. Nature conformed to the requirements of halacha! This provides an important message about halacha. We all recognize the reality of the physical world and the laws that govern it. However, the laws of halacha often seem less important or less real. The miracle of the mun taught that the halacha has a greater

reality than the physical world! Nature conformed to the requirements of halacha! We can now better appreciate the lesson of the double loaves. The Sages chose to create a symbol recalling the double portion of mun that fell on Erev Shabbat. This double portion captures the concept of nature conforming to halacha. □

Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Shemot, 14:2. Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah 5:1-2. Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah 6:3. Rav Yosef Karo, Shulchan Aruch, Orech Chayim 274:1. Mesechet Shabbat 117b. Rav Yosef Karo, Shulchan Aruch, Orech Chayim 271:9. Rabbaynu Yaakov ben HaRash, Tur Shulchan Aruch, Orech Chayim 271.

Genes vs Free Will

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Reader: If I am correct, I believe that G-d holds everyone responsible for their own actions in life, especially when one makes bad decisions or deeds. Everyone knows that genetics apparently plays a big role in ones behavior and mannerisms. Sometimes, these behaviors and mannerism's can be very self-destructive, harmful, wrong, and plain stupid. For instance, many times someone will say she's just like her mother. Example - "She never thinks before she acts, and gets furious without controlling her emotions. Just like her mother." Some instincts between relatives are almost scary in how close they are to each other. If we all have the ability to act the correct way, the way of the Torah, the way G-d intends us to do so, why does genetics sometimes show to be such a detractor and counter force. Why are negative qualities such as "conniving dishonesty, selfishness, anger, etc.. passed on through genetics. Why aren't people given a clean slate to build their own character upon through experience. I know this happens, and experience and upbringing is responsible for the vast majority of who and what we are, but why are those negative genetic qualities still present. Can one say that G-d doesn't start off everyone with a clean slate, because in many cases it seems like bad genes run in

the family, and I'm not talking about physical deformities. Please explain. Shalom, and God bless you.

Mesora: Many times we confuse nature with nurture. A girl mimicking her mother's traits is largely due to emulation, not genetics. We imitate our role models. But I do not deny that if you separate a child from her parent at birth, 20 years later you may find the child to display similar traits. But trait similarities are exactly that - traits, versus values.

To say that a child has a strong thievery gene is an incorrect statement. All that can be passed from parent to child are psychological trends, not values or the ability for free will. Free will is not less or more present in one person over another. We all have free will, despite our personality differences. Additionally, free will is not subject to quantity. One either has free will, or one is not human. There are no other possibilities. A person cannot have partial free will, just as a person cannot have partial intelligence. One's intelligence may not be as abstract as Einstein, but in both, Einstein and us, the presence of intelligence - and free will - is equal.

A person must examine himself throughout his life. He must detect where his own specific makeup requires a control in temperament. Then he must work on himself to produce the most even keeled personality which lends itself to the serenity essential for a life lead by wisdom, without the pull of his emotions. A Rabbi once taught that Maimonides' "golden mean" (where one stays equidistant from both poles of any emotional spectrum) is for the ultimate goal of rendering one's personality free from emotional pulls, so he may lead his life based on wisdom. If however one's emotions are powerful, he will be led by them, not intelligence. He will harm himself with poor decisions, and the absence of involvement in Torah. If however, one isn't too giddy, nor morbid, or he is not too miserly, but not too much the spendthrift, but in all spectrums he remains in the center, he has removed the pull of both extremes, and he is most at ease. He will then find his mind able to immerse in a life of wisdom without emotions pulling him towards his desires. □

Chesed Shel Emes

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According to the Raavad: "Marriage is man's natural state." Without a mate, human beings are incomplete; through marriage man's completion is achieved. Marriage and family are essential to God's divine plan and reflect an important part of man's nature. Marriage is not an arbitrary institution created by society. In Genesis 2:18, we read: "It is not good for man to be alone." "It is not good." Listen to the Ramban: "The meaning expressed in 'it is not good', is that it cannot be said of man that 'it is good' when he is alone for he will not be able to so exist. In the work of creation, 'the good' means existence. And God saw that it was good." Man was alone for a time although according to the Ramban: "It does not appear likely that man was created to be alone in the world and not beget children since all created beings, male and female of all flesh were created to raise seed." When woman was created from him she was brought to him. Adom could not be satisfied unless he had woman and so God put Adom to sleep and from one of his ribs God created her as a helper to man. When she was brought to him, he desired to be with her. "The calling of the names" of the animal species, by Adom was done to reflect the concept of "the help". However, his need for "help" was to be satisfied by the one who could "help" him live the right existence. Since existence is the "good" woman was created and brought to him as part of the "good." She is the good as far as man's existence is concerned.

Man needed to identify with her intellectually, physically and psychologically. He needed to realize that without her he was lacking, as he proved to himself by the naming of the animals. Although their natures are different or opposite, only by conforming and directing their energies together to the will of God, could they live harmoniously. In Genesis 2:24, we read: "Therefore shall a man leave

his father and his mother and cleave unto his wife and they shall be one flesh." The concept of "one flesh" is completely unique to man. Animals procreate with whatever mate of their particular species and then go their separate ways. This is not so with man. Man "cleaves" to his wife, as woman is literally taken from him, from a part of his body and so he cleaves to her, takes her to him as his own and with her creates children. Their flesh is united into one.

So, where does chesed fit into all of this? The Sifre says: "Chesed begins with those who are closest to us and then to encompass our neighbors and then finally the rest of the world." Jewish law requires that a man be as concerned about his wife as he would be about himself. However, it is only when each is concerned for the other, will happiness fill their lives. The most important component for building a happy home of Torah through marriage is kindness, chesed. A friend of mine said: "The greatest gift I can give my children is my peaceful marriage built on chesed." This is totally true because the foundation of chesed can only be built by husband and wife, and ideally should be the primary focus of marriage, that is then transmitted to one's children by example. Marriage is the beginning of chesed, because each one is obligated to shift the focus from the self to their spouse and children. Our natural inclination is to live by and for ourselves. A person who pursues true chesed, is sincerely concerned for the other's well being. For most people this does not come easy and requires so much patience and thought. Once the person satisfies his or her emotion of "well, what will I get out of this?" then hopefully he or she will gradually be more involved in chesed based on emes, truth.

Often we forget and/or ignore the concept of "created being" selem elokim. We forget that this "other" person is also created in the image of God. This person

was also created for the specific purpose of complying to the will of God. This person also needs every opportunity for spiritual growth and potential. This person was not created to satisfy my needs alone. (read that statement again!) Men and women become easily caught up in the anticipation of "what will I get out of this marriage?" However, the purpose of marriage is to live harmoniously by living a life directed by God's will, the emes, truth according to law and the appropriate philosophy. A life of emes that satisfies the needs of both husband and wife should be directed to the middle path with an appropriate philosophy. The appropriate philosophy is not the philosophy of what car to buy or what style of house we must have. I'm referring to: "What is the purpose of this marriage and our life?" Thinking about this idea seriously and then internalizing it will foster kindness based on truth. Both will understand that truth translates into human "existence" which is "the good" and the good can only be achieved through chesed or kindness based first on truth, not based on selfish needs first. If a woman would think more about the fact that she and her husband will be the transmitters of Torah, she might be less preoccupied with what her material gain might be. She would hopefully be less demanding of her husband to make more money and encourage him more to invest time in his learning as she would invest in her own. She will see the potential they both have and can achieve, since woman naturally has a better sense of reality. At the same time, if a man would see that his wife will create a calm, peaceful home and nurture the children that they will give Torah over to, wouldn't he be more appreciative of her? He would be much more concerned about her needs and would offer to help her since he is to love her as himself and honor her more than himself. This is certainly the ultimate chesed. ■