

Neptune was the name that idolatrous Romans gave to the Greek god of the sea. As a rational people, how do we understand a Talmudic portion of God talking to the “prince of the sea”?



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Weekly Parsha

Chayay
Sara

RABBI BERNIE FOX

“And Sara died in Kiryat Arba which is Chevron in the land of Canna’an. And Avraham came to eulogize Sara and to mourn over her.” (Bereshit 23:3)

Our parasha begins with the death of Sara. The Torah tells us that Sara

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RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Well not actually raging, but it was “upset”.

Last week we discussed Lashon Hara, based on sources in tractate Ayrchin. That Talmudic portion continues to recount ten events whereby the Jewish people tried God. One account was the Jews ascension from the Red Sea after God had drowned the Egyptian’s. The Jews rebelled saying, “Just as we ascend from this side, the Egyptians ascend from the other side.

Although they were drowned in the Red Sea, the Jews did not see the Egyptians dead, and it was evident that they required this visual, if they were to truly be emancipated from their psychological subservience to Egypt. The Talmud cites a metaphor:

“God thereby said to the officer of the Red Sea, “Spit up the Egyptian corpses on the shore”. The sea refused, “Shall a Master give a gift [food for the fish] to His servant, and then retract it?” God said, “I will give you one and a half times more [bodies] in the future.” The sea again refused saying, “Can a servant ever make a claim on a Master?” God thereby guaranteed His promise with the brook of Kishon.”

God guaranteed the officer of the sea through this brook that when Sisera’s army came to cool off their spears in its waters in the future, the brook would engulf the army with waves, swallowing his 900 officers. This was one and a half times more men than Pharaoh’s 600 chariot drivers mentioned in the Torah. But how do we understand such a story and all its details? What can be a first step to unlocking the underlying message?

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Weekly Parsha

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passed away in Chevron and that Avraham came to eulogize and to mourn her. The phrase “and Avraham came” implies that Avraham was not present at the time of Sara’s death. He came or returned to Chevron when he heard of her death. Nachmanides discusses this issue. However, he concludes that this interpretation of the phrase “and Avraham came” is not necessarily correct. This phrase may not mean that Avraham traveled to Chevron at the news of Sara’s death. The phrase is sometimes used to communicate that a person is moved to engage in an activity. If the phrase is understood in this manner, then the meaning of the passage is that Avraham was moved to eulogize Sara and to mourn for her.

However, Nachmanides acknowledges that the phrase can be understood in the more common sense: Avraham came to Chevron from some other place upon hearing of Sara’s death. This raises the question: Where was Avraham? Why was Avraham not with his wife at the time of her death? Nachmanides notes the answer to this question is provided by the Sages in the midrash. Nachmanides does not quote their answers in detail. Rashi provides a more comprehensive treatment of their comments.

In order to appreciate Rashi’s presentation of the midrash’s response, we must return to the previous parasha. At the end of Parshat VaYerah, the Torah provides an account of the Akeydat Yitzchak – the binding of Yitzchak. Hashem told Avraham that he must take his beloved son to a place He would reveal. At the appointed place, he must offer Yitzchak as an Olah – a sacrifice. Avraham follows Hashem’s instructions without reservation. He takes Yitzchak to the appointed place. He builds an altar. Avraham places wood on the altar, binds Yitzchak and places him upon the wood. Avraham prepares to offer Yitzchak and a voice calls out to him from heaven and tells him to not harm Yitzchak. He has demonstrated there is nothing that he would withhold from Hashem.

The Sages of the midrash ask: Why is the death of Sara juxtaposed to the Akeydat Yitzchak? They respond that this juxtaposition communicates to us that the two events are related. When Sara heard the news of the Akeydah – that Yitzchak was almost sacrificed – her soul left her. In other words, her death was a response to the news of Yitzchak’s encounter with near death.[1]

Nachmanides notes that these comments explain our passage. Where was Avraham when Sara

passed away? He was at the site of the Akeydah. He returned from the Akeydah and eulogized and mourned for Sara.[2]

The comments of the midrash are difficult to understand. Actually, they are shocking. Any sensitive person will be disquieted – if not disturbed – by the implications of the midrash. Hashem put Avraham to the most challenging test that one can imagine: He was asked to sacrifice his beloved son. He acted without hesitation. He was willing to demonstrate his total devotion to Hashem. Hashem praised Avraham for his wholehearted dedication. Immediately, Avraham lost his wife, Sara. This – in itself – is a great tragedy. Yet, Avraham lost his wife as result of his very devotion to Hashem. Yitzchak was spared but the news of the Akeydah killed Sara!

In order to answer this question, we must begin by considering another issue. The Torah characterizes the Akeydah as a test of Avraham.[3] This is a perplexing characterization. Certainly, the Akeydah was a test of Avraham’s dedication to Hashem, but was it not also a test of Yitzchak’s commitment? Yitzchak was not a child at the time of the Akeydah. He was a grown man. Should not the Akeydah also be characterized as a measure of Yitzchak’s resolve?



Perhaps, the Torah is communicating to us a message regarding the deeper nature of the test faced by Avraham. Certainly, the Akeydah tested is Yitzchak. This point is obvious and the Torah does not need to focus on this issue. However, the Torah’s intention is to draw our attention to Avraham’s experience. It wants us to carefully consider his experience and learn a fundamental message from it. What is this message?

A parent loves his or her child. The parent will make every effort to save the child from harm and to protect the child from pain. This protective attitude and behavior provides a nurturing environment in which the child can grow and mature. However, there are inevitable instances in which the parent must allow the child to face challenges on his or her own. If the child is to be permitted to truly face these challenges, then the parent must be willing to allow the child to fail and experience the painful consequences. This is not an easy task for most parents. As parents, we instinctually strive to protect our children from pain. It is difficult to allow our children to experience pain or failure. But if our children are to mature and become independent and responsible adults, we must sometimes step back and allow our children to

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experience unpleasant consequences.

As an educator, I sometimes encounter parents struggling with this challenge. One of the responsibilities of a school is to establish expectations. For these expectations to be meaningful, there must be consequences for the student who meets or fails to meet expectations. Failure to meet academic expectations may result in painful consequences: poor grades. Failure to meet behavioral expectations can result in disciplinary actions. Sometimes a parent will feel compelled to try to protect his or her child from these consequences. This is a natural and instinctual response. But, although the parent is responding to his or her deep love for the child, this attempt to intervene can cause the child more harm than good. The student must learn that decisions and behaviors have consequences. If the child does not learn this important lesson in school, it will be taught much more harshly by the dispassionate world outside of school.

This is one of the greatest tests we face as parents. We must exercise careful judgment and control, and even suppress our instinctual need to protect our children. But if we cannot pass this test our children will ultimately experience far harsher consequences and much greater pain. And we will be powerless to intervene.

Perhaps, this was Avraham's test. He was challenged by Hashem to allow Yitzchak to be tested without intervening. He was required to put aside his love for Yitzchak and allow him to experience the test of the Akeydah without intervening or attempting to save him from this challenge. The Torah is presenting to us a lesson in parenthood. It is portraying Avraham as the paradigm of a loving but insightful parent. We are being forewarned that, as parents, we must be willing to conduct ourselves as Avraham. We must allow our children to face the tests and challenges that are flung upon them by life. Occasionally, we must step back, control our instinctual desire to protect our children, and allow them to face these challenges.

But the lesson of Avraham's test should not be viewed in isolation. We should not draw hasty conclusions. There is another – and equally important – parenting lesson in the previous parasha. These two lessons complement one another. We cannot consider one without giving the other due consideration. Before returning to the issue raised by Sara's death, we must recognize and consider this other lesson.

Yitzchak was Avraham's second son. He had previously fathered a child with Hagar. This son was Yishmael. Sara recognized that Yitzchak must be protected from his older brother Yishmael. She approached Avraham and insisted that he send Hagar and Yishmael away. Avraham



was reluctant. He loved Yishmael. He did not want to part with him. But, Hashem told Avraham that Sara's perceptions of danger and her counsel were accurate. He must accept her guidance. Avraham complied and sent Hagar and Yishmael away.[4]

Sara illustrates a complementary element of parenting: We must protect our children. We sometimes must enter into conflicts and battle for their welfare. We must understand our children and their needs, strengths, and weaknesses. Our children are not miniature adults. There are times and occasions at which they cannot effectively protect themselves from harm. We must heed the instinctual message to protect our children and act with vigor and determination. Imagine Sara's situation. She perceived that Yitzchak was in danger. She knew that her intervention was needed. But, she recognized that she could only help Yitzchak through making demands that would place her relationship with her husband at risk. She could not depend on Hashem's intervention on her behalf. Yet, without hesitation, she acted. She demanded that Avraham protect Yitzchak and send away Yishmael.

I see this dynamic as well. My students are teenagers. They are bright and capable. But they are still adolescents. They need their parents' guidance and support. Most of my students are members of families in which both parents must work outside of the home. Most of my students are not the only child in the family. It is not easy for parents to live professional lives and, at the same time, maintain focus on the needs and sometimes erratic development of their teenagers. The years leading up to adolescence present enormous challenges. Parents have already dealt with countless parenting challenges before their children enter adolescence. It almost seems to be a cynical prank that, after all of these challenges, their children reach adolescence – the most complicated years of their development. It is not as if parents get a few years off between pre-

adolescence and adolescence.

They do not have an opportunity to retrench, refresh themselves, and then deal with the adolescent years. Yet, somehow we must maintain our focus. As parents, we must constantly remind ourselves that although our teenagers look like adults and want to be treated like adults, they are not quite yet there. And, if we are not diligent, adolescence can bring our teenagers its own disasters.

These two lessons complement each other. We must respect and pay attention to our instincts to protect our children. We must be willing to sacrifice our own welfare on their behalves. But there are times we must suppress this response. We must let go and allow our children to face challenges. Sometimes they will succeed and experience elation and joy. At other times they will fail and experience disappointment and pain. Neither element of parenting is meaningful by itself. These two elements must coexist and complement one another. As parents, our greatest test is to know when to protect and when to step back. We must respect our instincts but not abandon ourselves from them. We must exercise careful judgment. We must evaluate the development of our children and their needs at their stage in life and in regards to the specific challenge. Only after this evaluation can we decide whether we should protect or step back.

Now, let us return to the issue of Sara's death. Our Sages tell us that Sara heard news of the Akeydah and she could not bear to consider that Yitzchak had come so very close to death. What does this tell us? Avraham recognized that he must allow Yitzchak to submit to the test of the Akeydah. Sara, who had protected Yitzchak from Yishmael, could not bear this thought. She was overcome with fright and anxiety at the thought of Yitzchak's near death. Yitzchak had reached a point in his development that required letting go. Avraham was able to make this transition. He was prepared to allow Yitzchak to face challenges and experience consequences. He recognized he could offer support and encouragement. But he could no longer protect or insulate his son. Perhaps Sara was not prepared to take this next step that was essential to Yitzchak's further development. She had been a wonderful mother. She had protected her son from all harm. But now her job was done and she let go the only way she could. ■

[1] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 23:3.

[2] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 23:3.

[3] Sefer Beresheit 22:1.

[4] Sefer Beresheit 21:9-15.

Let's first isolate the main questions:

Why did the Jews disbelieve the drowning of the Egyptians?

Why did God desire to respond to this disbelief?

What is the meaning behind the sea's arguments?

What were God's responses?

What is the idea behind the need of God placating His creations, the sea? Can't God simply force the sea to vomit the corpses?

Why does God make offers that are rejected? Certainly He knows the response!

Why did this message require a metaphor?

Follow the Intrigue

A Rabbi once taught that when we are engaged in any study, we should investigate first what bothers us most. For when we do, we have the assistance of our full energies to propel us forward, with the most promise of success detecting clues and answers. But if we dismiss this advice, and engage other questions first, we will not be fully immersed, but distracted by the most annoying problems we discarded. We will not give our studies all of our energies: something essential for uncovering deep ideas.

The first thing that should catch our attention is the "conversation" between God and the Red Sea. A body of water is inanimate. It cannot speak! So there was in fact, truly no conversation. What then does this dialogue mean?

We next notice that God does not address the sea itself, but the "officer" of the sea. So if God does not address the physical waters, what else can "officer" mean?

Define the Terms

What is an officer? It is that, which enforces laws. Therefore in our metaphor, "officer" must refer to that which enforces the laws of the sea. It refers to "natural" laws. God was not talking, but He was "addressing" natural law, that it suspends its natural course. God created a miracle. This is an essential step towards unraveling this metaphor. Let's move ahead...

Apply the Terms

Once we unmask the "prince of the sea" and discover his true identity to be "nature", we can, and must, reinterpret the dialogue to unravel the mystery.

Had the waters sustained their nature, the Egyptian corpses would have remained below the surface, out of sight of the Jews. It is clear that God



deemed this visual of Egyptian corpses most essential to the formation of the Jewish people. For if they still carried a fear of the Egyptians, this would retard the Jews' relationship with God Who is to be the 'exclusive' authority. Therefore, God altered nature so the sea would vomit up the corpses. Now let's explain this dialogue...

The True Story

The dialogue personifies the sea, as reluctant. How can we explain this trait, knowing that the sea is inanimate and cannot talk, and really represents nature? It must mean that the sea "prefers" not to alter its nature, but to keep the corpses at the bottom. In other words, God'S creation – nature – "desires" to remain functioning naturally, expressed as the sea refusing to vomit the corpses. In other words, God desires nature remains in tact. (Of course, as soon as God desired, the sea operated exactly as He wished...there was no conversation, or delay.)

God's then offers to reward the sea with 1.5 times more bodies. This indicates that God favors nature, over miracles. God is working within the sea's nature (fish need food) by making this offer. God thereby endorses nature. Our Rabbis who crafted this metaphor express this by saying that the sea will eventually be nourished in a plentiful manner.

What is meant by the sea saying, "a servant has no claim on his Master"? This means that the "future" drowning of Sisera's army carries an element that "dissatisfies" the sea. Although 900 – and not merely 600 – men will eventually be washed into the Red Sea via the brook Kishon, it is not something real at the present, and not something God tolerates. God does not wish that natural law experience any delay whatsoever, and natural law dictated that the sea should have retained 600 Egyptians. So if it is going to give them up, it wants a replacement "now". Otherwise, it is not following nature for a period of time. But why must nature be sustained...without break?

The Purpose of Nature

Nature embodies God's laws, and it is precisely from these very laws that man derives an appreciation for God – nature's designer. Otherwise, nature fails in its objective. Again, the "officer of the sea" is really nature...which in turn is really God behind the veil. Nature is none other than God's creation: God's means of conveying His wisdom to mankind. It is God's wish – not the seas' – that nature be sustained. This is because God desired man to study God...through nature! So the future event of Sisera's army falling into the sea is great, as it returns to the sea what it naturally owned after

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(Raging Sea continued from page 4)

Method

Pharaoh's army drowned. But it's a delayed prize, causing nature to be off kilter.

God then guarantees the future bounty by citing the brook of Kishon. This means that Kishon is in existence "right now". There is no delay in nature returning to its natural course, since the river is in existence. This brook is sufficient to set nature back "on course".

The Talmud then says, "Immediately, the sea vomited the Egyptians." This means that based on all these considerations, God allowed the sea to suspend its nature, and perform a miracle of spitting up the Egyptians at that moment: even more...it spat out only the Egyptians, and not aquatic life.

In essence, the "conversation" really refers to the "considerations" which were addressed. The Jews' disbelief stemmed from decades of servitude, which broke their spirit. They needed tangible proof that their tormentors were dead. God deemed it more crucial that the Jews' fears be vanquished, than nature functioning as designed. This is because without the Jews possessing peace of mind, the study of God through nature cannot come to be. God addressed the priority. But God also wishes nature to be sustained, expressed by the sea's "reluctance" to change.

We now see that none of God's offers were "rejected". This part of the fictional dialogue means that God prefers not to alter nature. But why not make the final offer first, obviating the need to make offer after offer? Again, we have answered this. But when we first asked this question, we were bothered it. And we may still retain a feeling of dissatisfaction with our explanation if we didn't revisit each question. This is a good practice in general. It is always proper to return to our questions and confirm we have answered each of them, if we wish the full satisfaction of an answer, and not live with doubts. So as to this question, there were in fact no "offers", since there was no dialogue. The offers and responses merely teach the considerations made by God in planning this event.

Self-Application

We must apply this approach to all amazing stories that cannot, and must not be taken literally. Unfortunately, many students are taught, by teachers who were taught...that such stories are true. It's an endless line of repeating what's heard, bereft of any investigation or thought. "If it sounds amazing, repeat it!"

Amazing stories were a thrill to hear when we were youngsters with wild imaginations, especially at such a time when we were so impres-



sionable by the words of adults. We've carried inside us the sense of reality these fables offer, and we in turn seek this type of fantasy life in our own day-to-day living as adults. But miracles don't happen. What follows, is our attachment to "miracle workers", Kabbalists, and "powerful" Rebbes, who in our minds replace this childhood enchantment we sorely miss. So we live blindly, encouraged to so by youthful memories, and equally wishful, current-day peers.

But this was not the way of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob or of Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah. We just finished reading of Abraham and Sarah's passing. What do we recall from God's Torah records of their lives? Did they ever once seek out the "miraculous" path? No...not one of them did. Abraham subscribed to nature when he felt his lineage would go to Eliezer. He didn't have a child, and even said this to God! Amazing! If talking to God, would one of us say, "I am destined not to have a child"? Or would we feel "God can do anything"? In a dialogue with God, Abraham still cleaved to nature and felt nature would continue, and he would not have a child. Of course he believed God when he was told he was going to have a son. But the point is that Abraham loved, and lived by nature, as it was a perfect system reflecting the utmost wisdom...reflecting God. That is why Abraham laughed when he was told he would have a child. It was amazing that God would suspend natural law. Sarah too laughed, but hers was disbelief. But even this teaches how firmly she too subscribed to nature.

Abraham waged war with experienced soldiers to rescue Lot. He attacked at night, again following the natural laws of human psychology, using 'surprise' as his ally. On other occasions, he told

the two kings his wife was his sister, lest he be killed for being her husband. He knew they would decorate him as a bribe to allow "his sister" to marry those kings. And he did this [as was taught to me] since he knew they would honor him, and one of high political ranking would not become the target of assassination. Abraham again uses his wisdom of human nature to save his life. He recognized the famine had to be addressed, so he entered these foreign countries, but he used a plan, all crafted around natural laws and psychology.

Most of all, Abraham's discovery of God – the reason for God's appointment of his seed – was totally based on natural considerations. Sarah too saw how Ishmael might negatively influence her Isaac, and God told Abraham to listen to Sarah's advice and send Ishmael away with his mother Hagar. No miracle workers...just intelligence and natural law. Jacob also followed natural law, that of psychology when approaching his twin Esav, of whom he feared for his life. Joseph counseled Pharaoh based on natural law as well. The list is endless.

Our metaphor about the "raging sea" and many others are to be taken metaphorically. For if taken literally, they are ridiculous: who ever heard of a talking body of water?!

And hundreds of literal examples of our Torah leaders teach this primary lesson. So we must not simply repeat stories over, otherwise we either accept as literal what is not literal, or we miss the perfections of our patriarchs and matriarchs. This lesson is embodied in this week's Parsha when Rashi quotes Rabbi Acha who said, "More precious is the speech of our forefather's servants before God, than the Torah of their children." ■



Rashi's commentary on Gen, 24:42. "Rabbi Acha said, 'More pleasant is the speech of the servants of the Patriarchs before God, than the Torah (commands) of their children, as we find Eliezer's account (describing his encounter with Rebecca) doubled in the Torah, while many of the central commands of the Torah are only given by way of hints.'"

This is a truly perplexing statement, as we are all of the opinion that that which is most central in the Torah are God's words. How then can a servant's words, even a servant of Abraham, be more precious to God? Was not the Torah given for the sake of the commands?

How do we approach such a question?

The first step is to note what is being compared, as the quote of Rabbi Acha is one of comparison. We find that "speech" is compared to "Torah", and "servant" is compared to "Patriarchs' offspring". In both comparisons, what generates our questions is that the latter appears obviously more important: Speech does not outweigh Torah, and servants do not outweigh Israelites, (in the capacity that Israelites must keep the Torah as the world's teachers.)

Rabbi Acha is teaching a central lesson. He intends to draw our attention to God's estimation of personal character. He first teaches, that which the Torah repeats is done so for

emphasis of its importance. Based on this rule, Eliezer's words must be more important than the Torah's commands. But how so?

I believe the one difference between the Patriarchs and ourselves, is that they followed God out of an internal realization of God's truth, with no externally imposed system. Even the speech of the Patriarchs is replete with wisdom, and their attachment to God included no coercion. The Midrash says, "At Sinai, God held that mountain over our heads commanding us in the Torah's observance, and if we refused this obligation, He would drop the mountain on us, and there would be our graves." This Midrash is of course metaphorical. But it teaches that the event of Sinai carried such clear proof of God's existence that His commands were undeniably emanating from the Creator, one Who we would be foolish to ignore. Our acceptance of the yoke of Torah was in a manner, "coerced", as if a mountain was suspended over our heads in threat.

Not so the Patriarchs. They arrived at a knowledge and service of God on their own. This is much more precious to God. The Megilla reads, "They arose and accepted that which they already accepted." This is referring to the Jews' re-acceptance of the Torah out of love, as opposed to their Sinai acceptance out of fear. Again, we are pointed to the concept that adherence has levels. Greater than one who is commanded, is one who arrives at the truth using his mind. True, there is a statement of the Rabbis, "One commanded is greater than one who is not." But this does not mean 'greater' in every way. This latter Rabbinical statement, once elucidated by a Rabbi, means that when one is commanded, he has more to conquer and is greater. He must fight the additional desire to rebel against "obligations". One with no obligations, but who observes Torah, is great. But such a person has not conquered his rebellious instincts. But here we discuss only the sphere of "conquering his instinct". A totally different question than our topic, "adherence to God".

"More pleasant is the speech of the servants of the Patriarchs before God, than the Torah of their children." This teaches that love supersedes fear. Our ultimate goal in life is not "fear" of God, but rather the "love" of God: the attachment to His knowledge through a true appreciation for the Source of all reality, an attachment to Him. This is love of God. ■

the Patriarchs *vs.* Their Children

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Drasha

Embracing *the* Torah *with* Mind & Heart

RABBI DANIEL MYERS

In Parshat Shmini, just when the joy of the dedication of the Mishkan reached its peak, tragedy struck with the death of Aharon's two sons, Nadav and Avihu. There are many different opinions regarding the actual transgression that was committed on that fateful day; the Sifra maintains that they erred in bringing their own incense into the Kodesh Kadoshim, while Ramban (16:2) argues that it is inconceivable that they would have entered the holiest part of the sanctuary without permission. Rather, they offered the regular daily Ketoret, incense, upon the Mizbaiach Hazahav, though they were not commanded to do so. One theme that appears in most of the commentators is that Nadav and Avihu performed an unauthorized service in the Mishkan. One lesson from this incident is clear: Avodath Hashem which is based solely on one's intuition, impulse or feelings is most destructive and dangerous-even if performed with intense religious passion and enthusiasm. All service to Hashem must emanate from one source, the Halacha. An individual may perform an action with great fervor and fanfare and not accomplish anything positive, while another may do an action in a most cold and perfunctory manner and fulfill a Mitzvah Mido-raita. For example, if one eats a drop of bitter herbs on Pesach night, less than the required amount of K'zait, and truly feels the pain and suffering of our ancestors in Egypt, he has still not fulfilled the mitzvah of Maror. Conversely, one who eats the required amount of Maror, but with little feeling, has nevertheless fulfilled his obligation. The same applies to Shma, Tefila and all other Mitzvoth; if they are fulfilled according to all the dictates of the Halacha, in the proper Zman, with the appropriate dress, Kavana, etc then one is Halachically Yozaih, otherwise, he is not.

This was actually one of the main issues

involved in the Chassidic-Mitnaged controversy over two centuries ago; the Gra and his followers were concerned that the religious enthusiasm of the Chassidim actually warped their Halachic observance. (See The Chassidic Movement and the Gaon of Vilna page 12 where he writes the following: "The manner and mode of Chassidic worship were in themselves considered an abomination and a perversion of proper prayer. The Chassidim were accused by their opponents, the Mitnagdim, of delaying offering their prayers at the proper time and reciting the Shema Yisrael and the Tefila long after the appropriate hour of their recital had passed." Baruch Hashem, today many Chassidim are Makpid on the Zmanim of Tefila, as well as all details of the four sections of the Shulchan Aruch.) However, this concept of precise Halachic legislation is fraught with danger, namely, that one will carefully follow all the legal minutia without feeling or passion; the mind will be engaged in the Halachic process while the heart is left out in the cold. This certainly is not the Derech of the Torah, which demands of us to embrace Hashem, so to speak, B'chol Livavcha Uvchol Nafshicha, with all of our hearts and all of our souls. This may be one of the messages of the Haftora for Parshat Shmini, which describes King David dancing with complete abandon in a public display of boundless joy that the ark was coming home to Jerusalem after twenty years in exile. This event is the perfect companion for Parshat Shmini, which relates the tragic deaths of Nadav and Avihu, whose religious zealotry led to their demise. In the Haftora, David's wife, Michal maintained that it was unseemly for the king to engage in such "undignified" behavior in front of the nation; King David sharply replied that it was a privilege and honor for him to demonstrate his boundless love for Hashem in such a passionate manner. There is nothing wrong- even for the king of B'nai Yisrael, who must be given the utmost respect and honor-with expressing unbridled and uncontrollable joy, if that Simcha is appropriate and directed to the Almighty.

Our actions must always be guided by Halacha in a most precise and meticulous manner; however, the observance should not consist simply of a cold, mechanical act, but must be filled with energy, excitement and fervor. All of one's passions that are often directed to the mundane activities in one's life should be harnessed and directed to Avodath Hashem, one's service of Hashem. This delicate combination of mind and emotion may be the message of the Passuk "David Melech Yisrael Chai V'kayam," king David was so full of enthusiasm, vigor and life-he was Chai-yet, he was Kayam, anchored and grounded with Chochma, Bina and Daat. ■

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