

A Taste of Torah Where are You Going?

By Rabbi Levi Lebovits

This week's parsha describes, in great detail, the tremendous prosperity awaiting the Jewish people when they heed Hashem's Word and, G-d forbid, the terrible tragedies that will befall the Jewish people if they disobey Him. It is interesting to note the manner in which the Torah refers to the obeying or disobeying of G-d's Word. The Torah (Leviticus 26:3) says, "If you will GO with My statutes...", and subsequently states (Leviticus 26:21), "And if you shall GO with Me casually...". Why does the Torah refer to the obedience and disobedience of G-d's Word in terms of movement? Fulfillment of His Will would seem to be a matter of action, not of going somewhere.

The Vilna Gaon (1720-1797), in

his commentary to Proverbs 15:24, says that man is a "goer", i.e., he is constantly moving. Therefore, he explains, there is no middle ground. Either man is growing upwards towards G-d or he is moving down and away from Him. The deeper understanding of this is that Judaism is NOT simply a conglomeration of actions, but rather a way of life. Life is alive, it is evolving; it is not static and unchanging. There is constant movement and change, and there is, hopefully, no "down time" when it comes to life. This explains why the Torah expresses the obedience and disobedience of G-d's Will in terms of "movement", because when it comes to the growth of man, he is always going moving, and the hope is that he is headed in the right direction.

Ask the Rabbi Heart to Heart Talk

Dr. Carol B. Conaway wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

While on a plane from Boston to Philadelphia two weeks ago, I happened to look at the cover of the book the man seated next to me was reading. On the back cover of the book, the following quotation appeared: "Words written from the heart, enter the heart." As a scholar and professor, I was very moved by the quotation and wrote it down for my own keeping. The quote was attributed to "The Sages."

I would like to ask: Where do these words appear in the vast writings of

The Sages? I would be very grateful if you could find the time to provide me with an exact reference so that I might consult the entire text and see in what context the statement was made.

Dear Dr. Carol B. Conaway,

"Words which emanate from the heart, enter the heart" is sometimes quoted in the name of "the Sages," meaning that it is from the Mishnah, Talmud or Midrash. But the truth is that the source for this phrase is a bit of a mystery! Although it has indeed become an accepted Jewish teaching, it does not seem to appear in any of the

Stories For The Soul

Never Lose Hope

The Torah tells us of the rewards that will be showered upon us if we fulfill the Torah. It also speaks of the punishments and tragedies that will befall us if we do not uphold the Torah. Still, G-d assures us that He will always be with us (Bechukosai 26:44-45). G-d is always there for us. No matter how bleak it is, do not despair.

In 1949, Gene had just returned home from the war. On every American highway you could see the soldiers in uniform hitchhiking home to their families, as was the custom at that time in America.

Sadly, the thrill of his reunion with his family was soon overshadowed. His mother became very ill and had to be hospitalized. It was her kidneys, and the doctors told him that she needed a blood transfusion immediately or she would not live through the night. The problem was that her blood type was AB-, a very rare type even today, but even harder to get then because there were no blood banks or air flights to ship blood.

All the family members were typed, but not one member was a match. So the doctors gave the family no hope. Gene left the hospital in tears to gather up all the family members, so that everyone would get a chance to tell Mom goodbye.

As Gene was driving down the highway, he passed a soldier in uniform hitchhiking home to his family. Deep in grief, he had no inclination at that moment to do a good deed. Yet it was almost as if something outside himself pulled

Kollel Happenings

THE SEFIRA PROJECT

In conjunction with the Bais Havaad Insitutue of Talmudic Law, Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher is giving a seven-week series of shiurim on matters of bein adam lchaveiro (interpersonal law). Classes will be held on Thurs. night at the Kollel. Mincha is at 7:45, the shiur at 8, followed by ma'ariv and refreshments at 9. The shiur will also be held on Sun. at EDOS. Shacharis will be at 7:30, followed by the shiur & breakfast at 8:15.



CHERRY CREEK MUNCH AND LEARN, MON., MAY 23

The next Cherry Creek Munch and Learn for men, led by Rabbi Yehuda Amsel, will be held on Mon., May 23 at 12:30 p.m. at Colorado Capital Bank, 55 Madison Ave. The class focuses on Pirkei Avos. For information, contact Rabbi Amsel at 303-820-2855 or at rya@denverkollel



FATHERS-AND-SONS PROGRAM SUN., JUNE 5 AT EDOS

The next Fathers-and-Sons learning program will be held on June 5 at EDOS. Breakfast begins at 9 a.m. with learning following. For information, contact Rabbi Yehuda Amsel at 303-820-2855 or email rya@denverkollel.org

Interpersonal Issues Returning Stolen Property Part IV

Even if the victim knows of the theft, but is unaware of the identity of the thief, the money may be returned without informing the victim. However, because the victim suffered anguish due to the theft, the thief must ask for forgiveness. Although this can be done through an

anonymous note, is preferable for the thief to disclose his identity and ask for forgiveness from the victim.

Adapted with permission from "The Halachos of Other People's Money" by Rabbi Pinchas Bodner (Feldheim Publishers)

Ask the Rabbi

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above mentioned sources!*

I've seen it advanced that "Words which emanate from the heart, enter the heart" is a paraphrase of the statement in the Talmud that "Anyone who has fear of Heaven, his words will be heard and accepted." I personally don't see this as being the correct source, as it doesn't speak about the sincerity of the words which "emanate from the heart."

I would like to propose that the phrase is an application of the principle taught by King Solomon in Proverbs: "As water [reflecting] the face is to the face, so a man's heart is to [his fellow] man." Meaning, that the human heart intuitively feels the emotions of others, and thus, if one speaks with an open heart, the heart of the listener will be open as well.

Between the 1920s and 1930s, Poland issued a ban against shechita (ritual slaughter of animals). It is told that Rabbi Yisrael Meyer Kagan, the Chafetz Chaim, came before the Polish officials to plead for the rescinding of this decree which would cause tremendous hardship for Poland's Jews. The Chafetz Chaim pleaded passionately, in Yiddish. When he'd finished and the translator began translating into Polish, the official said, "Stop. You don't need to translate." He was so moved by the Chafetz Chaim's words, even though he hadn't understood them, that he agreed to do all he could to help rescind the decree.

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Stories for the Soul

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him to a stop, and he waited as the stranger climbed into the car.

Gene was too upset to even ask the soldier his name, but the soldier noticed his tears right away and inquired about them. Through his tears, Gene told this stranger that his mother was lying in a hospital dying because the doctors had been unable to locate her blood type, AB-, and if they did not locate her blood type before nightfall, she would surely die.

It got very quiet in the car. Then this unidentified soldier extended his

hand out, palm up. Resting in the palm of his hand were the dog tags from around his neck. The blood type on the tags was AB-. The soldier told Gene to turn the car around and get him to the hospital. His mom lived until 1996, 47 years later, and to this day no one in the family knows this soldier's name. Gene has often wondered, was he a soldier or an angel in uniform? One thing is for sure; G-d is always with us, loving and protecting us.

Adapted with permission from ShulWeek by Rabbi Boruch Lederman.