



Ohr Yerushalayim News

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News This Week

Kiddush This Shabbos

There will be a Kiddush this Shabbos sponsored by family Gordon in honour of Avi's forthcoming wedding - Mazel Tov.

Holiday Time!

The holiday season is in full flow, we remind those in town to please support the Shul Minyanim.

False Prophets

Rabbi Pinchas Winston (Torah.org)

This week's parsha discusses the navi sheker, or false prophet. He's the guy who shows up claiming to have spoken to G-d and received instructions to do that which is contrary to Torah law. He might even SUCCESSFULLY perform a miracle to validate his assumed authority.

The Torah says to kill him. After being proven guilty before a Sanhedrin, he is executed as mandated by Torah. For obvious reasons, the world has no room for false prophets and dreamers who steer people away from G-d and truth.

Of course, now that the Jewish people are still in exile, we lack a Sanhedrin and any authority to execute anyone, Consequently, "false prophets" spring up everywhere and can say and do whatever they want. They can act without any obvious impunity.

Then again, we don't have prophecy either. We lost that in 313 BCE, long before we even entered this fourth and final exile. That being the case, it is even harder to be a false prophet than ever before, seemingly ending the entire issue of the navi sheker.

Perhaps. Perhaps not. There is usually a lot more to mitzvos than what first meets the eye. This is why when explaining the parameters of a mitzvah it is not uncommon to include actions that, at first, do not seem to be part of the mitzvah. Mitzvos have underlying principles that often have multiple and varied expressions, making them applicable even at times one might have thought they were no longer relevant.

For example, a navi sheker only CLAIMED to have received his instructions as prophecy. G-d, of course, never actually told him what he said to do. He doesn't need prophecy to be a false prophet. He just needs to say he had it, and that can apply in ANY generation, even today, especially if people are gullible enough to believe him/her.

I'm not sure if the prohibition can be stretched to include the following, but its message certainly does.

One of the main aspects of the false prophet is his credibility in the eyes of others. If everyone thinks that he is crazy, they won't listen to him. He is only dangerous as long as people believe he may speak on behalf of G-d, something G-d does not take lightly—AT ALL.

What about a "rabbi" or "leader" who tells their congregation what

THEY think G-d REALLY meant when He commanded a particular mitzvah? I was once told by someone with authority in his community, "I don't believe G-d meant for people to sit in the dark on Shabbos just because they forgot to turn on their lights, or that He wanted someone to be alone on Shabbos instead of driving to shul to be with others."

Now, he didn't say that G-d told him that. Even if he did, no one would have believed him and they would have let him go instead. That gullible they were not. But, when he expressed such beliefs as opinions, they carried weight in the minds of those to whom he spoke, partly because they wanted to believe the same thing, partly because he was an intelligent and "learned" man. They relied upon their rabbi for religious direction.

That too is speaking in the Name of G-d. It says, "Though G-d did not tell me to say this, He probably would have if prophecy was possible today." That implication is far from harmless.

There is a famous midrash in the Talmud in which Moshe Rabbeinu is shown the greatness of Rebi Akiva (Menachos 29b). The vision, apparently, occurred prior to Moshe Rabbeinu being taught the entire Torah on Mt. Sinai by G-d. Therefore, when Rebi Akiva expounded what he knew, Moshe Rabbeinu did not recognize what he said, and became concerned.

It wasn't until Rebi Akiva said that the law came directly from Moshe Rabbeinu at Mt. Sinai that Moshe Rabbeinu calmed down. Moshe realized that Rebi Akiva had been teaching law that he himself had yet to learn.

The midrash is clear. Rebi Akiva had not known something Moshe Rabbeinu had not known as well. He had not originated a law, based upon the needs of his time, that had not begun with Moshe Rabbeinu at Mt. Sinai. It had been a timing issue in the Talmud, not a knowledge one.

The Week Ahead

שבת פרשת ראה	שבת מברכין אלול
1st Mincha / Candle Lighting	6.40pm / not before 7.00pm
2nd Mincha / Candle Lighting	7.25pm / 7.33pm - 7.50pm
Seder HaLimud	8.40am
Shacharis	9.00am
סוף זמן ק"ש	9.33am
1st Mincha	2.00pm
Ovos uBonim	5.00pm
2nd Mincha	6.00pm
3rd Mincha	8.19pm
Rov's Shiur	Following
Maariv & Motzei Shabbos	9.24pm
Sun	7.15am / 8.20am
Mon / Thurs	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Tue / Wed Rosh Chodesh	6.30am / 7.00am / 8.00am
Fri	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	7.45pm
Late Maariv	10.00pm

This did not stop a current branch of the Jewish people from using the midrash, in a large ad in the New York Times, to say exactly the opposite. They were faithful to the Talmudic account up until the end of the story. The conclusion THEY inserted was: If the great Moses did not know what Rebi Akiva knew in his time, then Rebi Akiva would not have known what he know in our time.

In other words, the ad ignored the most important part of the story, the punchline if you will. They inserted their own message which contradicted the point of the story. They used a midrash that was written to reduce any falsely assumed halachic authority in the future to invest themselves with it. And you can be sure that their words did not fall on deaf ears.

Now, if people do not believe in the authority of the Talmud, or even that Torah was given word-by-word by G-d to Moshe Rabbeinu at Mt. Sinai, they can think they were just cleverly making THEIR point. What THEY believe however does not determine reality. What G-d thinks IS reality, and He is going to be far less impressed by their faulty and abusive representation of Torah and Judaism.

This does not just apply to secular religious leaders. It applies to everyone. "G-d" and "truth" are spelled differently, but they mean the same thing. A person may not believe in absolute truth, but that does not mean they aren't misrepresenting it when they express their opinion. If they convince others of their tragically mistaken point of view, then they are guilty of lying about G-d.

It is something to consider unless a person is 100 percent certain that G-d doesn't exist, which he can never be. It is simply impossible to know enough to be 100 percent certain of such a thing. Too much exists to say otherwise to be even close to it. Doubt in G-d's existence is due to ignorance, not knowledge, even with respect to atheistic geniuses.

Even when a G-d-believing person acts in a way contrary to Torah—a profanation of the Name of G-d—he misrepresents truth to the world. He may not be a navi sheker, but his actions might be considered close to it. Torah believing Jews, for many, represent the word of G-d in the world. That's a HUGE responsibility that must be shouldered with care.

The bottom line? Pursue truth, and protect it. The reward is great for doing so, and the opposite is true when it is left vulnerable to abuse.

Till Death Do Us Part **Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein (Torah.org)**

You are children to Hashem your G-d. You should not cut yourselves, and you shall not make a bald spot between your eyes for a dead person.

Rashi: Do not place a cutting or tearing of the flesh, as the Emorites do. You are G-d's children. It is appropriate for you to have a pleasant appearance, and not look cut or balded.

Maharal: It is difficult to harmonize this understanding of the plain meaning of the verse with a derashah of Chazal that derives from here that a single court in a city should not present conflicting decisions, with some of the judges ruling like Bais Hillel, and others like Bais Shammai. This would divide the practice of the community into two camps.

The gemara demonstrates quite well why the word "sisG-dedu" accommodates both derashos. It also points to the allusion of its root to the word agudah, group. This hints to us that a community should not be divided against itself regarding a single halachic issue, with some acting one way, and others in a demonstrably different way.

Yet, we are still not put at ease by this. While the derashos are both justified and appropriate, they still grate on us, because they have nothing to do with each other. Over-the-top personal mourning

practices do not strike us as related to the conduct of community courts. We are accustomed to seeing derashos on a given pasuk relate to a single topic.

In fact, the derashos do revolve around a single point: dividing what is meant to be whole. Tearing into the flesh in the anguish of mourning cuts into what is meant to be whole and undivided. Similarly, when a court divides itself into two camps regarding some halachic decision, it takes a community that ought to be united in practice, and divides it into two. The Torah finds each one of these situations contrary to a wholeness that Hashem engineered into it, and wished to see maintained. Ramban challenges Rashi's explanation of the connection between our being children of Hashem and the prohibition of cutting into flesh. Rashi says that because we are His children, it is inappropriate for us to disfigure ourselves. Because of our relationship with Him, we ought to give a pleasing appearance. If this were the case, asks Ramban, would it not be forbidden to tear into the flesh for any reason at all – not just as a mourning observance?

I don't believe this to be a valid objection. The Torah tries to educate us, to change our acceptance of many wrong-headed ideas. But it does not try to forbid every behavior that flows from those ideas. It will often restrict the lesson to obvious or common manifestations of that attitude, while disregarding others. Tearing into the flesh as a mourning practice was a common behavior, while other forms of tearing were less common. The Torah does not try to be exhaustive in its prohibition, and limits itself to the strongest example of the faulty attitude, and disregards the others.

Returning to the main issue, we can look at the prohibition in an entirely different manner as well. The prohibition against cutting our flesh aims at preserving our consciousness of Hashem's Oneness.

When a person suffers a loss, he attributes his loss to the operation of Divine judgment. His focus on the midah of din may be so complete, that he loses sight of Hashem's opposing midah of rachamim. The tearing of flesh is a preverbal expression of giving midas ha-Din an exclusive – as if midas ha-rachamim did not exist. G-d's Oneness, however, demands that all things be contained within Him. Rachamim is at least as much a part of Him as is din – if anything, far more so. Concentrating too narrowly on din is, in effect, a denial in part of Hashem's Oneness. Tearing into the flesh for any other purpose or occasion says nothing about din and rachamim, however, and therefore lies outside of the purview of our prohibition.

Din in its pure sense is associated with one other public institution. Elsewhere, the Torah teaches "Judgment belongs to G-d." The court is not a place for rachamim, but for the exercise of din. Although as human beings we can hardly hope to promote din in a pure form, we are still aware of our roll as purveyors of a commodity – din – that is sourced within Hashem. The face of that Din ought to testify to the One G-d behind it. When the output of a beis din is fractured, and divided, this too detracts from our appreciation of G-d's Oneness.

The element that is common to both of the derashos – the one cited here by Rashi, and the gemara's finding of a prohibition against splitting a community's halachic base – is a requirement to relate to the Oneness of Hashem in a manner not apparent to most people. Believing that Hashem is One requires far more than rejecting the idea of many G-ds, or a chief G-d with many associates. While the true nature of His Oneness is unfathomable to us, who live in a world of many things and many divisions, we can at least understand on some level the idea of Hashem as containing all phenomena within Him, with no exceptions. The Torah does not demand this only of the philosopher, but in a measured manner, of all loyal Jews.