

ST. LOUIS
KOLLEL**Family** TORAH JOURNAL**PARSHA PERSPECTIVES** RABBI SHLOMO SOROKA

The Halachah is that one may exaggerate “a little” when eulogizing a deceased individual. Why is one allowed to lie? Is it permitted to relate untruths to make the family feel proud of their lost loved one? If it is permitted, what is the difference between a small lie and a bigger lie? A lie is a lie— period. And what is considered a “small” lie when eulogizing? If he once gave a needy person a thousand bucks, can you say it was \$2,000? How about \$10,000?

I saw an eye-opening explanation from the author of the Shulchan Aruch himself, Rabbi Yoseph Caro, in his commentary to the Tur (Bet Yoseph). Human nature, he explains, is to see faults in others and to under-appreciate their positive attributes, traits, and make less favorable assumptions about them. If we were to tell it as we see it, we aren't doing justice to the deceased and the family. If we exaggerate just a little, it's actually closer to the truth! (So if he gave a poor individual \$1,000, you don't lie and say it was \$2,000. But if you think he was a pretty generous guy, you can say he was a very generous guy.)

This aspect of human nature to underestimate the good in people may be instinctive, but it's not a good thing, nor is it impossible to change. We can train ourselves to see the good in others in our personal situations in life. It will make us happier and more optimistic people, as well. The Torah commands us to “Love your fellow as yourself.” While it may seem nearly impossible to actually love another as much as you love yourself, many commentaries don't understand that to be the intent of the Torah. We all have faults and foibles, yet we think of ourselves as decent people because we all have redeeming qualities. Some interpret the commandment to mean that you should love others the same way you are able to love yourself- by paying more attention to the good.

This lesson, I believe, is evident in two places in this week's Torah portion. For a mammal to be kosher, it must have split hooves and chew its cud. There are some animals that have only one of these criteria and hence, are not kosher. When we think of the most non-kosher animal, the pig is the first that comes to mind. It actually has split hooves, but doesn't chew its cud. When the Torah mentions the pig, it says, “It has a split hoof, but not the cud...” The Medrash explains that the Torah goes out of its way to mention that it does have something positive and even mentions it first before it points out its flaw. Similarly, with the camel, hare, and hyrax (an animal that resembles a mouse, but in scientific classification, is closer to the elephant) the Torah says, “They bring up their cud, but their hoof is not split.” Again, it mentions first the redeeming quality of animals that are not kosher before specifying their disqualifying flaws.

*(continued on next page)***NOTE**

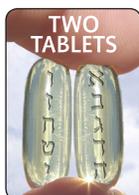
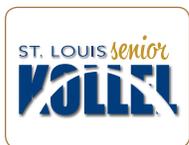
As our Kollel Rabbis take time off to “rejewvenate”, please enjoy this edition of the Kollel's “Family Torah Journal” which has been adapted and revised to include a variety of enjoyable lessons from Torah sites and past editions of our Kollel newsletter. The Kollel will be back in session this Monday, and all classes and programs resume at that time. We wish all of our Kollel Rabbis a healthy and enjoyable break together with their families.

MOMENTS OF GREATNESS

The Satmar Rov Rav Yoel Teitelbaum was famous for giving out huge sums of money to people who came to ask him for help. One day a man came from Eretz Yisroel and asked him for money to marry off his daughter. The Satmar Rov asked him how much he needed. The man quickly calculated the cost of an apartment, the wedding, and all the other expenses and said that he needed 30,000.

The Satmar Rov then left the room and came back with a stack of bills. The man counted it and saw that it was 29,000. His happiness knew no bounds. He went out literally dancing in the streets.

One of the people with the Satmar Rov asked him why he left him 1,000 short and he didn't already finish off the entire amount. The Satmar Rov answered that had I given him the full amount he would have initially been ecstatic. However a few minutes later he would have been upset at himself for not asking for more. I wanted the man to be happy. By giving him 29,000 the man was ecstatic that he got as much as he could ever have dreamed.

(courtesy of Revach L'Neshama)

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IN GRATEFUL APPRECIATION TO HASHEM FOR HIS KINDNESS

ZMANIM CANDLELIGHTING: 7:44 PM

SOF ZEMAN KRIAS SHEMA MA: 9:03AM GRA: 9:39AM

SHABBOS ENDS 8:46 RABBEINU TAM: 9:13 PM

THE HARMONIOUS HOME RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY

Not only does the Torah teach us what to do and what not to do. It admonishes us *before* we turn off the proper path. Last week's portion cautions us not to turn after our eyes or hearts. Exodus 34:11 enjoins us not to socialize with idol worshippers lest we marry a spouse who will lead us away from our faith.

Most often the warnings about sin are succinct and precise. The focus of the Torah is clear: avoid any activity that will lead to straying from the path of Hashem. This week the Torah seems to spend as much effort exhorting us about involvement with bad influences as it does with sin itself.

The Torah discusses two scenarios where people intend to lead Jews astray. The first case is of the false prophet. Deuteronomy 13:2: "If there should stand a prophet or dreamer who will produce a sign or a wonder saying, 'let us follow gods of other folk,' do not hearken to him." The Torah then exhorts us to keep our faith and elucidates how to deal with the bogus seer. The next section deals not with a false prophet but with a kinsman. Deuteronomy 13:7: "If your brother, son of your mother, or your son or daughter or your wife or a friend who is like your soul, secretly entices you saying let us worship other gods, those that you or your forefathers did not know."

The Torah does more than exhort us not to follow the would-be influencer. It reiterates the admonition in no less than five different expressions. "You shall not accede to him; you shall not hearken to him; your eye shall not take pity on him; you shall not be compassionate toward him; you shall not conceal him."

When it refers to our own misdoing or those of a false prophet the Torah simply warns us, "do not listen" or "do not follow your heart." Yet when referring to kin the Torah offers a litany of variations on a theme of disregard.

Shouldn't our own feelings need more and stronger admonitions than ideas suggested by a friend or relative? Surely a prophet who conjures awesome miracles should warrant five or six expressions of caution. In that case, all the Torah says is, "do not listen to him for Hashem is testing you." There is no talk of mercy, compassion, or concealment, as there is when the Torah talks about kin. Why?

The Torah understands the intimate affinity our people have towards relatives.

It only needs one or two words of warning for us not to listen to the false prophet who comes with miraculous signs and mesmerizing oratory. It only tells us, "don't listen to him." Even when discussing our own desires and infatuations it simply warns us, "do not turn after your heart."

However, when referring to kin, brothers, sisters and relatives, the Torah has a difficult mission. We tend to excuse wrongdoing, cover up for misdeeds, and harmonize with our loved ones — although the results may be terribly destructive. There are countless stories of parents who did not have the heart to restrict their children's late-night activities. Too many tales are told of the man who was ensnared by his brother-in-law's misdoing because he had not the heart to refuse his overtures to evil.

The Torah expresses its warning in five different ways. You must love your kin to a point, but way before the point of no return.

PARSHA PERSPECTIVES CONT.

If this is the way to talk about and perceive animals, how much more so we should be careful when it comes to other human beings.

In dealing with difficulties in life as well, this is an invaluable lesson. The very beginning of the Torah portion starts with the verse, "See, I present today before you a blessing ..." What is presented before someone is obviously seen. Why the need to emphasize that we must "see"?

Apparently it's not always obvious. Life is full of blessings, but we need to put effort into recognizing them and appreciating them. Some "blessings" take effort to notice. Others may be obvious to those around us, but we take them for granted. By training ourselves to look and appreciate the good in life and in other people, we will become happier people.

Isn't happiness something we all want?

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT

Q *May flowers be moved, smelled or touched on Shabbos?*

A There are a number of important halachos relating to flowers on Shabbos. Flowers, while still connected to the ground, may be smelled and touched, provided that their stems are soft and do not normally become brittle. Flowers in a vase may be moved on Shabbos. They may not, however, be moved from a shady area to a sunny area to promote blossoming. If the buds have not fully bloomed, the vase may be moved but just slightly, since the movement of the water hastens the opening of the buds. One may remove flowers from a vase full of water, as long as they have not sprouted roots in the water. Once removed, they may not be put back in the water if that will cause further blossoming. Water may not be added to a flower vase on Shabbos. On Yom Tov, however, water may be added but not changed. Flowers should be placed in water before Shabbos. In case they were not, they may not be placed in water on Shabbos if the buds have not blossomed fully. If the buds are completely opened, however, some poskim permit placing them in water on Shabbos. One may not gather flowers or create an arrangement and place it in a vase on Shabbos, even if the vase contains no water.

For final rulings please consult your Rav.

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Hotel Influenza

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What are the ethics of experimenting new treatments on otherwise healthy patients. Join Dr. Scott Kaar and Rabbi Yitzchak Kowalsky for an intriguing discussion. The answers may surprise you!

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 SSM — St. Mary's Hospital 6420 Clayton Road
 For more info, email ykowalsky@stlkollel.com



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