

WRITTEN TODAY

by Rabbi Label Lam

See I place before you today blessing and curse. The blessing if you listen to the Mitzvos of HASHEM your G-d that I am commanding you today, and the curse if you don't listen to the Mitzvos of HASHEM your G-d and you turn from the path that I am commanding you today to go after other gods that you do not know. (Devarim 11:26-28)

Moshe is speaking to the Jewish Nation. He appeals to the sense of sight to impress his point and a demonstration is presented on the two distinct mountains, Eivel and Grizim. One is barren and wasted- Mt. Eivil, while the other is rich with beauty-Mt. Grizim. Simultaneous and contemporaneously the Torah tells us the very same thing. The Torah speaks of "today" over and over again. See the blessing and the curse before you today! Where are our Mountains Eivel and Grizim to concretize the point?

Anthony Gordon and Richard Horowitz constructed a powerfully instructive statistical model based upon the 1990 Nation Jewish Population Survey. Two decades have passed for the raw data but I believe we can be reasonable certain the premise of their findings is firm. Factoring two critical criteria they show clearly the tendencies for growth or withering stagnation in varying Jewish communities over the course of four generations. Taking into account the average number of children per family and the rate of intermarriage they demonstrate dramatic differences depending on allegiance to Torah. Even though statistics do not proscribe behavior they only describe and any one can exercise free will and change still the findings are still startling.

1-Starting out with 100 self-defined "unaffiliated" Jews with an average of 1.62 children per family and a 72% intermarriage rate in the second generation they become 51, by the third they are 26 and by the fourth there are 5. 2- Next with self-identified "reform" Jews where an average family is 1.72 children and the intermarriage rate is 53% 100 becomes 51 and then 26 and by the 4th generation they are 13. 3-In the camp called "conservative" the average number of children is 1.82 and the intermarriage rate 37% 100 are reduced to 62 and then 38 and after four generation 24. 4-A great divide is crossed when confronting the realities of "modern orthodox" living. The average number of children per family is 3.23 and the intermarriage rate plummets to 3% , so 100 may become 151 and then 295 and after four generations 346 Jewish persons. 5-Entering the world of "Orthodox" (Chassidic and/or Yeshiva) a dramatic uptick occurs. With an average children per family of 6.4 and intermarriage rate of 3% 100 becomes 295 and then 874 by the fourth generation there are 2588.

If this was a business deal and we would plug in \$'s instead of children I wonder how much sooner

eyes would open up. King Solomon wisely stated "If you seek it like silver and like hidden treasure you dig for it then you'll understand fear of HASHEM and the knowledge of G-d you'll find. (Mishlei 2:4-5) He understood well what motivates men and the standard of commitment required.

Professor Leo Strauss wrote about our state of confusion, "...we can be or become wise in all matters of secondary importance, but we have to be resigned to utter ignorance in the most important respect...our ultimate principles have no other support than our arbitrary and blind preferences. We are then in the position of beings who are sane and sober when engaged in trivial business and who gamble like madmen when confronted with serious issues- retail sanity and wholesale madness."

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