

FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS

by Rabbi Pinchas Avruch

"A man went from the house of Levi and he took the daughter of Levi. The woman conceived and gave birth to a son..." (Shemos/Exodus 2:1-2) Rashi explains that Amram, a grandson of Levi, had already been married to Yocheved, Levi's daughter, but they separated because of Pharaoh's decree to toss all male children into the Nile. Their daughter, Miriam, suggested to her father that his "decree" was more severe than Pharaoh's, for Pharaoh was only set on annihilating the males, while Amram's action "annihilated" the females as well. From this re-marriage came Moshe, the greatest prophet of all time and rescuer of the Jewish Nation. What was the epiphany experienced by Amram?

The Chofetz Chaim (1) compares this situation to that of King Chizkiyahu (Hezekiah) who did not marry because he prophesied that he would have the evil Menashe (Manasseh) as a son. But the prophet Yeshaya (Isaiah) rebuked him that it was not his place to subvert the Divine plan. He had to fulfill his obligation to marry and bear children and leave the course of history to G-d. Indeed, his son Menashe was of the most evil kings of the Jewish people, but Chizkiyahu's later generations included the righteous king Yoshiyahu (Josiah) and the prophets Daniel, Chanania, Mishael and Azaria.

So too, explains the Chofetz Chaim, Amram realized that human perspective is limited. When G-d has detailed how we are to approach a situation, we cannot allow decisions of Divine service to be constricted and second-guessed by the questions borne by human logic or emotion. Mankind may be able to learn from the past, but lacking the breadth of knowledge that comes from knowing G-d's plan for the future, we cannot make authoritative decisions. How do we, then, make decisions? We follow Amram's example: G-d gave us a Torah that contains the instructions for approaching all of life's situations. Our assignment is to cleave to Him and follow His instructions; He will make sure that everything works out in the end. This is the challenge of the Jew, the lifetime assignment with which we are charged: learning to negate our wants and concerns to the knowledge that G-d will always see us through.

Have a Good Shabbos!

(1) Rabbi Yisrael Meir HaKohen Kagan of Radin; 1838-1933; author of basic works in Jewish law, philosophy and ethics and renowned for his saintly qualities

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