

# YOU CAN NEVER FOOL G-D

*by Rabbi Pinchas Winston*

## Friday Night:

*And this (V'zos) is the blessing which Moshe, the Man of G-d, blessed the Children of Israel before his death. (Devarim 33:1)*

In general, I write "Perceptions" two weeks in advance of the parshah, since it is only one of a few projects that I work on each week, and so that I can send it out Motzei Shabbos of the week of the parshah itself. This way people can read it in advance of Shabbos if they want to, and many seem to do just that.

I never felt that it was important to state that, until about two weeks ago. Until the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon by terrorists, my parshah sheet was rarely out of step with current history, dealing with issues that were relevant long after the weekly parshah was read in synagogues.

Not any more. Now, so much happens so fast that affects the Jewish people in so many important ways that I find that what I may have written the week before may not be what is important to talk about the week of. To compensate, I have started to write additional essays and I am posting them on my website ([www.thirtysix.org](http://www.thirtysix.org)) to be available to anyone looking for such information at the time it is important.

The first word of this week's parshah, "v'zos," literally means "and this." However, the word also has a deeper meaning, which could change the meaning of the verse to: Zos is the blessing, meaning that whatever "zos" represents is in fact the blessing that Moshe gave to the Jewish people just before he left This World.

At this point, it is important to introduce two concepts, both of which are found in the following section of Talmud:

Rav Chizkiah said in the name of Rebi Yirmiyah, who said it in the name of Rebi Shimon bar Yochai: I see that the great people are few in number . . . But is that so? The master has said that the first wave that comes to greet The Holy One, Blessed is He, extends eighteen thousand miles, as it says, "All around it should be eighteen thousand" (Yechezkel 48:35). This is not difficult to explain; these see with "Esp'kilaritya Hameirah," and these see with "Esp'kilaritya sh'aino Meirah." (Succah 45b)

ESP'KILARYA: A division that separates between them and the Divine Presence; MEIRAH: like a mirror that you look into; there are some righteous people for whom it does not give off much light and they can't really see that much. (Rashi)

Although from Rashi it is still not that clear what an "Esp'kilarya Hameirah" is, it is clear that it represents a certain level of vision along the road to prophecy. There will always be somewhat of a division between us and G-d, but there are some divisions that allow one to see beyond them, and some that block vision as well, though one may still have a sense of something beyond them.

According to the Tikunei Zohar 110d, "zos" is not just a word, but it represents a middah - a trait, specifically the trait of "Malchus" (Kingship) that also corresponds to the level of "Esp'kilarya sh'aino Meirah, the lower less clear vision of G-d and His will. Though Moshe Rabbeinu himself was on the higher level of "Esp'kilarya Hameirah" (Yevamos 49b), he did not possess the ability or time to elevate the Jewish people to the same level, and therefore, he settled for the level of "zos," which was far greater than no level at all.

As the Pri Tzaddik points out (Simchas Torah 48), there was precedence for this back in the days when Ya'akov Avinu blessed his own sons, the Twelve Tribes, just before he died:

*And this (V'zos) is what their father said to them . . .* (Bereishis 49:28)

For, by blessing his sons with "zos," and later, Moshe blessing the Jewish people, he caused the trait of Malchus to enter their hearts, and through this, they became merit worthy of the blessings that followed. And, logically-speaking this should be true of all the generations that have followed since then - the blessings can only help us when the trait of Malchus is in our hearts.

If so, then we need to know what it means to have the trait of Malchus in our hearts.

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## Shabbos Day:

*And this (v'zos) to Yehudah . . .* (Devarim 33:7)

What better place is there to understand the concept of Malchus itself than from the source of it within the Jewish people, Yehudah, whose blessing happens to begin with the word "zos."

According to the Rokeach, the words "v'zos l'Yehudah" hint that all kings to descend from Yehudah must always learn Torah. This is because "zos" also always alludes to Torah. However, though this mitzvah may be more stringent by the kings of Yehudah, it is still one that applies to ALL Jews, and one which does not necessarily make Yehudah, the source of Malchus, unique.

To begin with, the Four-Letter Name of G-d is within Yehudah's name, which spelled, YUD-HEH-

VAV-Dalet-HEH, which the Pri Tzaddik explains also corresponds to the level of Esp'kilya Hameirah. However, that is not the only source of Yehudah's name, as the Torah reminds us:

*She became pregnant again, and gave birth to a son. She said, "This time I will thank (odeh) G-d." Therefore she called him "Yehudah" . . . (Bereishis 29:35)*

In other words, Yehudah's name was a testimony to Leah's, Yehudah's mother, gratefulness to G-d for her fourth son's birth. His name comes from the Hebrew word "modeh" which can mean "I thank" or "I admit." In fact, as Rashi points out in this week's parshah, Yehudah's blessing followed that of Reuvain because he had taught Reuvain to admit his mistake before his father.

In fact, admission is what Yehudah's life was all about, or at least his right to the kingship:

*Yehudah, you, your brothers will acknowledge . . . (Bereishis 49:8)*

You acted correctly when you admitted your guilt in the case of Tamar, and therefore, Yehudah, you, your brothers will acknowledge, for I recognize it too after having wrongly suspected you of killing Yosef. You are therefore chosen to be the king (Bereishis Rabbah 99:9).

What was this trait that Yehudah possessed that is the power of admission, but more importantly, the right to Malchus? If you think about it, admission is based upon the ability to surrender oneself to the moment, and in more general terms, history as a whole. You may be able to fool some of the people some of the time (including yourself), but you can NEVER fool G-d, and even a liar has to know that on some level.

At the moment of a truth, a person stands between two decisions: to save face but damage history, or to damage himself but save history. To save face means to do what is most comfortable for you at the moment, regardless of the long-term effects on history. To save history means to do what must be done for the sake of the bigger picture at that time, even if it means getting hurt along the way.

Yehudah could have lied. He could have denied being the father of Tamar's children, and they would have killed Tamar and her children, and no one would have been the wiser for it. However, Yehudah knew that one day the truth would catch up to him and that he would be held responsible for the distortion of truth, which would have to be rectified at his expense. That's the concept of "measure-for-measure," and given that an innocent woman and her children would die as a result, that was heavy price to pay.

Instead, Yehudah suffered complete embarrassment, and possible disownment by his father, which in the case of the Tribes meant more than just not inheriting one's financial part of the will. It even meant losing one's portion in the Jewish people altogether, and all the future rewards to come - also a VERY heavy price to pay.

But he paid it. Yehudah surrendered himself to the moment and to history, and for that, his father

Ya'akov told him, he earned the Malchus. For that is the trait of Malchus - the ability to make history more important than our own individual lives, and to make the nation more important than the people who make it up.

It is THIS trait that removes the spiritual "blindness" from a person's eyes which prevent him from seeing history as it is, and Divine Providence as it really acts. It is THE difference between being able to see with the "Esp'kilya Hameirah" or the "Esp'kilya sh'aino Meirah," the lower less clear vision of G-d and His will. Ultimately, as we learn from the word "zos," it is the difference whether or not to be able to reap the blessings imparted to us by Ya'akov Avinu at the beginning of our history, and later by Moshe Rabbeinu.

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### **SIMCHAS TORAH:**

Where do I begin to tell the story of the great love I feel for you?  
A love, as a young boy I was unaware of, I never knew.  
A "Tree of Life" You have been called by the wisest of the wise,  
A flowing river of life, an invigorating stream, a source of light for the eyes.

You are one of the three goodly gifts that Hashem gave to his nation,  
Kept in waiting for them thousands of years before creation.  
It had been a joyous time, that saw a desert bloom and become flowery,  
G-d the "Chasan," the Jewish people His "Kallah," Torah His dowry.

"We will do and we will understand," we said with complete trust,  
We will do all the mitzvos, understanding that life with mitzvos is a must.  
As the Faith Shepherd climbed the mountain to fulfill his greatest role,  
We waited with anticipation to soon nourish our collective soul.

The time passed slowly, and evil still remained amongst us,  
Moshe's extended absence gave "them" cause and time to fuss.  
As is always the way of "the people" who left Egypt on our wings,  
They sowed dissension, and drove us to horrible things.

As patient as You are, some things simply cannot be or exist,  
Golden calves, worshipping idols, from which we were told to desist.  
Had we only known then that it would break the work of Heaven,  
We would have stopped them all, the worshippers of gold and "even."

Before our very eyes, we watched Holiness fall to the profane ground,  
And instantly understood that it was for destruction we were bound.  
But You relented, had mercy on Your people, and gave us a second chance,  
But not to receive the first set again of which we only were given a glance.

It took eighty days of prayer and supplication to gain atonement,  
The punishment for which we were able to achieve postponement.  
And then, on the eleventh of Tishrei Moshe Rabbeinu reappeared,  
Holding dearly the Second Tablets for a nation whose eyes had teared.

Thus, on Simchas Torah we celebrate the gift of the Torah, the word of G-d,  
Even though our lives and history still remain quite flawed,  
We dance with great joy with a gift that has no equal,  
There was nothing before it and nothing after it, it hasn't a sequel.

When we dance with the Sefer Torah do we keep it in mind,  
How we were almost left in the dark, left to live amongst the blind?  
But instead G-d came down and showered His people with love,  
Giving His people life, joy, and a ladder to bridge Below and Above.

In these troubled times, when we feel so distant and so estranged,  
And mankind commits acts and offences clearly so deranged,  
It remains for us, the children of ancestry much larger than life,  
To reunite with our G-d, His Torah, and finally bring end to all strife.

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## **CHANGES THAT LAST FOREVER:**

### **CHAPTER TWO: Relatively Sane**

Based upon the conclusion of the previous chapter, it is worthwhile for our purposes to redefine some familiar terms. To begin with, if "order" is the purpose of creation, then "sin" is doing that which leads to chaos.

Inserting this definition of sin into the earlier Talmudic statement, it would read:

No person does that which leads to chaos unless a spirit of insanity enters them.

Certainly that makes sense; what sane person wants chaos? The only problem is that most of us who sin do not consider ourselves crazy, or wish to for that matter. It is important, therefore, to address the concept of sanity.

In general, a "sane" person is one who is able to live in reality, as it is. Likewise, an insane person is one who believes that reality is something other than what it actually is, and acts accordingly. This is what makes such people dangerous to themselves, and very often to others as well.

However, the truth be known, sane and insane are really two end-points on a single line:

INSANE o \_\_\_\_\_ o SANE

on which we all find ourselves, at some point or another.

To the extreme left of the continuum, there is insanity, or a wholly imperfect perception of reality; to the right extreme, there is sanity, the completely accurate perception of reality-God's reality, completely objective, totally unaffected by physical limitations or personal biases.

But how many people actually possess a perfect vision of reality? Very, very few. On the contrary, most people fluctuate between the two extremes throughout the course of their lives. Thus the world with man in it seems to consist of two realities, one which can be called "Small r Reality," or the subjective reality, and another, which can be called "Capital R Reality," or the objective reality.

The objective reality can be understood by imagining a world without mankind. The world existed before man was created, and it can exist after man has left. This is the objective reality - God's reality - the will behind existence, so-to-speak, outside of man's impact.

The subjective reality is the objective reality as perceived by mankind, and exists within the objective reality. As history has proven, the subjective reality has the potential to be at odds with objective reality, at which time destruction is the result.

For example, God wants peace and universal brotherhood. That is the objective reality. Man, too, would enjoy such worthy goals, and would achieve them if subjective realities didn't result in anything but peace on earth.

Thus, another way of expressing the "sanity-line" is the line that stretches between extreme subjective reality, and the objective reality. If so, then who is the "sane" person? One who lives a hairsbreadth past the half-way point, closer to the objective reality? All of a sudden, it's not so clear who's insane, and who's not.

What the rabbis of the Talmud are saying is that sin is the net result of losing track of the objective reality. As beings created b'tzelem Elokim, we possess the ability to pursue and discover the objective reality, and shed our subjective version of it. Doing so brings order to chaos, as the following dialogue illustrates.

"I don't like Sam."

"Why not?"

"He's always talking about himself, as if he doesn't care about others."

"You shouldn't say that about Sam."

"Why not? It's the truth."

"Even if it is, what gives you the right to talk badly about someone else?"

"What do you mean?"

"The Torah says that one must not speak loshon hora . . ."

"Loshon what?"

"Loshon hora. That's when you say something about another person that is derogatory, even if it is true."

"Why's that?"

"Well, for one, how do you know that Sam's not just covering up for an insecurity? Do you know what his life at home is like? Do you know what he went through as a child?"

"Well, not really . . ."

"That's the point. Speaking badly about someone is judging them, and we don't have the ability to weigh all the factors of a person's life. Why don't you get to know Sam, and find out why he does focus on himself. Maybe he's just looking for people like you to like him."

"Good point."

In the above example, Speaker One viewed reality subjectively, which he believed was the only reality to consider. Speaker Two introduced him to another reality, the objective reality, to which Speaker One became sensitized. He then adjusted his subjective reality to suit the objective reality, a process referred to as doing teshuvah, or returning (repentance).

If insanity is the lack of clarity of the objective reality in life, then it can be said that while Speaker One, was out of touch with the objective reality, he was somewhat "insane." And if this is so, then the road to sanity, to order from amidst the chaos of life, to the fulfillment of the purpose of creation, is in hot pursuit of the objective reality.

Summary:

Sin is the result of misperceiving reality. When our subjective perception of reality, according to which we act, conflicts with the objective reality, we sin. Thus, to permanently correct improper behavior, one must first correct improper thinking, in other words, build a clearer vision of the objective reality.

Have a great Yom Tov and Shabbos,  
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