

DATA of Plano

Parshas Pinchas | 24 Tamuz 5778 | July 7, 2018

Sermon



Playing With Fire

Friday

Mincha: 7:00

Candle lighting: 8:21 (Earliest time: 7:10)

Shabbos Day

Class with Rabbi Zakon: 8:00

Studying the book of Shir Hashirim (Song of Songs)

Shacharis: 9:00

Latest time for shema: 9:58

Learners' Service: 10:30

Childcare: 10:45

Kiddush following services at 11:45

Mincha: 8:00

Shabbos ends: 9:24

From the Desk of Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

The Argument Not to Expel



It was a decision I made long ago. I made it instinctively. It was not based upon any lesson that I had learned. After many years, I heard the lesson taught by a wise woman. Eventually, I came to realize that the lesson was in a four-word verse in this week's Torah portion, *Pinchas*. Let me begin by introducing you to the wise woman. Her name was Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis, of blessed memory. She was a brilliant speaker, whose death just several years ago left a considerable void in the galaxy of great Torah teachers.

Along with her, I was invited to deliver a talk to a large group of Jewish educators. The question we were asked to address was, "Should a child ever be

expelled from school?" We were both vehement opponents of expulsion. She was asked to precede me on the podium. Let me tell you, she was a tough act to follow.

I no longer remember what I said and doubt that anyone else does. But I'm sure that many remember the Rebbetzin's fiery remarks that afternoon. She began with a story.

She introduced the audience to a Hasidic master who lived more than two hundred years ago. His name was Rabbi Chaim of Chernovitz. He is known to this day as the author of a collection of homilies on the weekly Torah portions, entitled *Be'er Mayim*

Chaim (translated as “A Wellspring of Living Water”).

Rabbi Chaim was more than just a Hasidic master living in Chernovitz. He was the official Rabbi of the entire town. He was revered by all the town’s inhabitants, and his word was law.

Rabbi Chaim had a son who did not bring honor to his distinguished father. This son was a horse thief and not very particular about his religious observance. Rabbi Chaim was a loving father who repeatedly forgave his son’s offenses in the confident hope that he would one day reform.

The townspeople, on the other hand, were not forgiving. As the son’s behavior deteriorated, the townspeople began to demand that he be evicted from town. At first, the lay leaders resisted the townspeople’s demands, but they finally were forced by public opinion to form a delegation to approach the Rabbi and insist that he take action and rid the town of the young man’s presence.

The three most prominent citizens were assigned this distasteful task. The first, Yankel, was the wealthy president of the community. The second, Sol, was the dignified chairman of the charity committee. The third was Berel, the chief of the burial society.

The little committee decided that the best time to approach the Rabbi with their demand was *Erev Yom Kippur*, the eve of the Day of Atonement. They slowly made their way to the Rabbi’s doorsteps, and knocked on the door to his entry hall. The Rabbi’s wife opened the door and welcomed them, asking them for the purpose of their visit, with the Day of Judgement just hours away.

They answered that they had come to see the Rabbi about an urgent community matter. The Rabbi’s wife told them that the Rabbi was in his study, secluded in prayer, but that his prayers were generally quite brief. They could, therefore, wait in the anteroom and expect him to exit his study momentarily.

They seated themselves and waited for him to join

them. But while waiting they discovered that they could hear every word of the Rabbi’s prayers. This is what they heard:

“Master of the Universe. I approach You, as You are about to sit upon the divine seat of judgment, to plead with you on behalf of the leadership of my community. I know that you have good reason to judge them quite harshly. After all, Yankel, our president, has his faults. He is less than scrupulous in his business affairs, overcharges his customers, and is not entirely honest about his scales and weights. Sol is dismissive of the feelings of the poor, and, difficult as it is for me to speak of such things, is often too flirtatious in his dealings with the poor women who

beg him for alms. And good old Berel, who often has to deal with tragic circumstances because of his duties with the burial society, resorts to drinking, and when drunk, insults others abusively, and spreads malicious gossip.

“Master of the Universe, I grant you that they all have sinned. I know that you may

very well decide to punish them and perhaps even “expel” them from this world. I admit, dear Father in Heaven, that they are wayward children. But remember, my Lord, that I too have a wayward child, whose infractions surpass those of Yankel and Sol and Berel. But I tolerate him. I keep my door open to him. I show him love and forgiveness. I ask that you too show forgiveness to these leaders of our community. Please overlook their misdemeanors and acknowledge the good that they do.”

As the Rabbi continued to implore the Almighty to forgive the three men, they each slowly, with heads bent in shame, departed the anteroom. They returned to the townspeople and convinced them that expelling the Rabbi’s son would not be acceptable.

Rebbetzin Jungreis, of course, had much more to say against expulsion of children from Jewish day schools. But this story clinched her case and rendered my subsequent remarks superfluous.

Where, you ask, is the Scriptural basis for accepting individuals, no matter how morally far gone they seem? What is the four-word verse in this week’s Torah portion to which I allude?



It is to be found in this week's Torah portion, *Parshas Pinchas*, in the midst of the section detailing the census of the tribes, in chapter 26:9-11. We read: "The sons of Korach, however, did not die."

Rashi, the preeminent Torah commentator, describes the scene graphically: Korach's sons were totally committed to their father's rebellious cause. They too were swallowed up by the earth's "open mouth." They were in hell together with the entire band. However, in those hellish circumstances, they contemplated repentance.

Miraculously, an elevated sanctuary, a mini-fortress, appeared in midst of that ghastly scene. They took refuge there and were spared.

The lesson is clear. No person should be expelled. Everyone can repent. Great things can be expected even from those who are very far gone. Remember that Korach's sons, once fanatically devoted to their father's cause, went on to compose many of the songs in the book of *Psalms*. They became the worthy forebears of the prophet Samuel.

Back to the beginning of my story. I was a fledgling teacher in a Jewish high school. I received the roster of incoming students and noticed that the names of six of them were circled in red. Upon inquiry, I discovered that, based upon their past behavior, they were slated for expulsion from school.

The six boys approached me as a group. They pleaded with me to intervene with the administration on their behalf. I did so, but the principal tried his best to convince me that I was doing myself a

disservice. They would disrupt the class.

My instinct told me to stand by the boys, and I did.

It is now a full fifty years later. From time to time I meet one or another of the six. None of them is a Prophet Samuel. None of them has written sacred *Psalms*. But all of them are outstanding leaders in their Jewish communities, and all are blessed with large Jewish families.

Where would they be if they were expelled at the age of fifteen from the tenth grade?

I'm glad I trusted my instincts then, and I feel honored that those instincts are supported by the example of the sons of Korach, by the spiritual sensitivities of Rabbi Chaim of Chernovitz, and by the impassioned plea of Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis, may she rest in peace, that we never give up on a Jewish child.

Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb is Executive Vice President Emeritus of the Orthodox Union. He combines the skills and experience of pulpit rabbi, scholar, author and clinical psychologist to provide extraordinary leadership to worldwide Jewry.

SAVE THE DATE!

- ☑ **Fast of the Ninth of Av** | Sunday, July 22
- ☑ **Champions Camp** | August 5 - August 10
- ☑ **Jewish Night at the RoughRiders** | Sunday, August 5 @ 7:05 P.M.
- ☑ **Community End of Summer BBQ** | Sunday, August 19



“Come join the seed girls for a night of inspiration as we prepare for Tisha Bav through song ”

When: Thursday Night
July 19

Time: 8:15 P.M.

DATA of Plano
Where: 3251 independence pkwy
Plano, tx 75023

(for women only)





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FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT RABBI ELI NISSEL AT
ENISSEL@DATAOFPLANO.ORG OR 970.402.2281

**August
5-10**



Join Rabbis and spiritual
leaders from throughout
our community in unity
for the second annual

Tisha B'Av Teach-In

as we join together for
thematically appropriate
classes throughout the
afternoon of Tisha B'Av -
Sunday, July 22

All Classes at Congregation Ohev Shalom

6821 McCallum Blvd.

2:15 Early Mincha

Program Begins

with opening remarks
by R. Aryeh Rodin,
Congregation Ohev Shalom

2:45 - 3:30

R. Yerachmiel **Fried**

DATA

*Is The Temple Lacking
In Our Lives Today?*

3:30 - 4:15

R. Aryeh **Feigenbaum**

CONGREGATION OHR HATORAH

Why We Left Out G-d

4:15 - 5:00

R. Ariel **Rackovsky**

CONGREGATION SHAARE TEFILLA

The Sound Of Silence

5:00 - 5:45

R. Mendy **Kesselman**

CHABAD OF FRISCO

*Is Exile G-d's Way
Of Punishing Us?*

5:45 - 6:30

R. Nesanya **Zakon**

DATA PLANO

*Understanding The Destruction
Of The Temple Through The Eyes
Of The Maharal and The Netziv*

6:30 - 7:15

R. Zecharia **Sionit**

SEPHARDIC TORAH CENTER
OF DALLAS

*Mystical Insights Into
Tisha B'Av, Part II*

7:15 - 8:00

R. Aryeh **Rodin**

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Coping With Crisis

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DATA and DATA Plano

Dedicated in the merit of a *refuah sheleimah* for Shoshie Strassman, Shoshana Elka bat Etel Dina, and all others in need of a full recovery.