



DATA of Plano

Parshas Lech L'cha | 11 Cheshvan 5779 | October 20, 2018

Sermon

with Rabbi Yogi



The Journeys of Our
Lives

Friday

Mincha/ Candle lighting: 6:30

Shabbos Day

Shacharis: 9:00

Latest time for shema: 9:46

Kiddush following services: 11:45

Mincha: 6:00

Shabbos ends: 7:33

From the Desk of Rabbi Yogi

The Human Need for Legacy



If a man achieves a great feat in a forest and there is no one there to witness it, does the success resonate less within the man? Does it feel less significant?

It's a difficult question, I admit.

As for myself, I can't shake this feeling inside of me that a great act both deserves and requires a great witnessing to match; and that the witnessing itself impresses significance upon a deed (a retelling of one's personal unwitnessed events to interested parties often serves as something of a surrogate witnessing). After all, we humans are selective viewers, restricting our purview to but those things we deem worthy of our time and interest and keeping our watchful eyes on the goings-on of but a select group of people: those of whom we care

about most. The gift of one's attention says "What's going on here matters!" It proclaims, "These actions, these lives no less, are significant and meaningful!"

As the character of the wife in "Shall We Dance" answers to the question of why she wants to be married:

We need a witness to our lives. There are eight billion people on the planet ... I mean, what does any one life really mean? But in a marriage, you're promising to care about everything — the good things, the bad things, the terrible things, the mundane things ... all of it, all the time, every day. You're saying, 'Your life will not go unnoticed because I will notice it. Your life will not go unwitnessed because I will be your witness.

In an article in Psychology Today (August 22, 2016), William S. Breitbart M.D. writes extensively and eloquently of this collective need to be witnessed. His words bear our consideration:

What is clear is that we human beings need to have our lives witnessed, Viktor Frankl wrote "the only thing worse than suffering is suffering that goes unwitnessed." (Frankl - The Doctor and the Soul, 1955/1986). This need for our lives to be witnessed, I believe, is related to the concept of "significance." The question of significance is an essential one. "Did it matter that I lived?" "Did I leave some mark in this world?" "Did I have some impact on this world or on someone?" Was there a "sign" that I was here. The idea of having a life witnessed relates to the question of whether someone else in this world noticed me, and ultimately judged the value of my life. It is as if one was a playwright and had a play that only you performed, but was never viewed by an audience, or reviewed by a theater critic. Were you a playwright? Was the play a work of art? A work of great significance?

Witnessing has an additional function, as within it lies the power to lift up the moments in our lives to transcendent heights. If unobserved accomplishments last but singular moments in time and live on in but the select hearts and minds of the protagonists themselves, witnessed occasions take on a lifeforce of their own, inviting others to both partake in the moments of our lives as well as to share their memories of the event with others not present. A witnessed event may be recorded in a book or passed down as family or national narrative. And the life of that witnessed event can long survive the life of the character of whom the story is told. As such, witnesses allows us to transcend the limited confines of both self and time. It allows for the building of legacy.

But there are significant drawbacks to our need to be witnessed, great dangers awaiting our demand for ex-

ternal validation and significance. It's true that we tend to act better in the company of others than we do in the privacy of our own homes, but it's easy to fall in to the trap of worrying more about "looking good" than actually working on "being good."

And with eyes focused outwards comes both unhealthy societal pressures that must be met if we are to remain in good standing with our neighbors and peers, as well as a steady inculcation of foreign value systems which work to slowly but steadily replace our Jewish values for central primacy in our lives.

What's more, there is scant room for the development of the prized trait of humility when "likes" on social media don't generate themselves - we need to be "out there" for the public to see if we are to earn there approval and esteem.

And after all is said and done, we still find ourselves questioning if we are truly loved and valued by the people around us! It's a no win affair.

A different, rather confounding solution to the witnessing dilemma is suggested by Dr. Breitbart at the tail end of his

article. There Breitbart concludes that we ourselves serve as our own life's witnesses:

We are never completely alone. Our observing "self" or ego is our constant companion; that constant voice, commentator, judge, critic, witness to our lives. In living a truly authentic life, the only judge or critic who really matters is us, our observing self. So as you live, you are creating your legacy through witnessing and striving towards a life of significance.

While Breitbart's solution circumvents the many issues detailed above which emerge from the need of external validation, his suggestion seems more word play than anything else. For, inasmuch as I am more or less aware of the details of my life, I cannot also bear witness to my life. A witness stands ipso facto removed from the person being witnessed, and any significance that a witness brings to the table derives from the very fact that he is separate. It's hard, then, to believe that many, if any,





will find comfort in a life “self-witnessed.”

And what of the transcendence of external witnessing? What of the comfort that comes with the knowledge that one’s life, one’s legacy, will endure beyond the grave, in the memories and in the impact made upon those still living? In Breitbart’s vision one must be satisfied that “The legacy you live does not require remembering after death; it is a legacy lived unto death.” I, for one, find no solace in such a forecast.

And there are other issues as well. While external validation often comes with unhealthy societal pressures it also comes with healthy pressures which push us forward. Caring friends and family tell it like it is, pointing out areas in one’s life that require attention and improvement. Their cajoling is generally aimed at moving us out of our comfort zone (the thing we despise the most), something “self-witnessing” is less likely to generate on its own.

And none of this touches upon the problem that is the natural conclusion which Breitbart himself reaches, that in “self-witnessing” we become “the only judge or critic who really matters.” That’s a biased judge indeed, one more likely to accept excuses and let things slide than to convict and chastise. Can we really, then, rely upon ourselves alone to know if we are acting appropriately and living lives of real significance?

There is a third option, though, one which side-steps the pitfalls of both external witnesses and Breitbart’s “self-witnessing”: G-d is our life’s witness! G-d carefully watches all we do, both because we are the apple of His eye (“So said the L-rd, “My firstborn son is Israel. [Shemot 22:4]””) and because our lives matter so that the Almighty himself cares to watch!

The benefits of G-d serving as our witness are multi-

fold. For starters, He’s always witnessing, and the entirety of our lives is uplifted and transcended in His witnessing (as opposed to human witnessing which only covers the public portion of our lives).

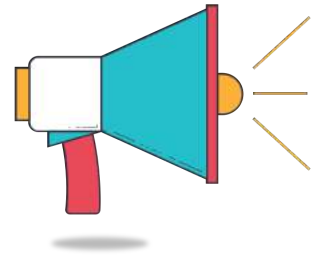
With G-d as our witness, we are propelled to evolve into our best selves - to become more and more G-dlike. Such witnessing generates a healthy external pressure without any of the damaging and often misguided social pressures that come with human witnessing.

There is no concern of foreign value systems creeping into our lives with G-d as our witness. To the contrary, we are infused with the will to keep our Witness’s values in the face of competing value systems. As king David proclaims, “I will speak of Your testimonies before kings, and I will not be ashamed. (Tehillim 119:46)” And with our steadfast commitment to living a life in consonance with G-d’s will we can feel confident in the knowledge that we are living big, significant lives and bound tightly in the favor of the only One whose opinion really matters.

Equally as important, with our need for witnessing fulfilled in full by G-d, we come to grasp that we need not the approval or recognition of flesh and blood, and with this final, vital shard of wisdom the gates of humility open up to us in all their glory. Our compulsion for self-promotion and exhibitionism slowly give way to the subtle pleasures of humble living, and the excitement once felt whilst basking in the limelight moves aside for the hallowed feelings which arise when we let the other lights around us shine a little brighter. It is fair to say that with G-d as my witness I shall not want for anything more!

Be a Part of the Action

As part of our expansion project, DATA of Plano will be running a one-day campaign in early November during which all donations will be quadrupled by matching donors. We are looking for community members who want to partner with us during this campaign by calling their friends and family to make them aware of this opportunity for having a special part in our growth.



If you are available to volunteer , please be in touch with one of the rabbis.



We are pleased to announce the launch of DATA of Plano's Shabbos hosting project. This project has been long in the making, and will officially begin on the first week of November. Our dedicated hachnasas orchim coordinator, Mrs. Ilana Panush, will be available to coordinate meals for those wanting to be hosted. In addition, should you desire to host, she will be available to recommend some families that might benefit from an invitation to your home.

In honor of this project's launch, and in conjunction with the worldwide Shabbos Project, Ilana is actively looking to match guests and hosts for spending a full Shabbos in the community on the weekend of October 27.

Please be in touch with her at hosting@dataofplano.org, or at (469)-268-5517

REGARDS FROM THE ISRAEL TRIP





Sunday Morning Adult Education Series

Drop the children off at Sunday school,
enjoy breakfast, Starbucks and Torah
wisdom with Rabbi Yogi.

10:45 A.M.
FREE BABYSITING

Fall series beginning on Sunday, October 21

Class # 1 : Torah Parenting Perspectives



WE ARE PROUD TO INTRODUCE OUR ALL-NEW

MEN'S NIGHT KOLLEL

Learn with the "chaburah" or learn your own topic.

Commit to nine evenings a month, and earn a \$750 vacation voucher for you and your wife.

Beginning November 1st.
For more information, or to register, contact Rabbi Zakon
at nzakon@dataofplano.org



THE GREAT PINK CHALLAH BAKE

Wednesday, October 24th

6pm: Doors Open + Testing

7pm: Baking Begins

JCC of Dallas - 7900 Northaven Road

This community-wide event is planned and run by volunteers. To volunteer for the Challah Bake or other Dallas Shabbat Project events, please email us.

In honor of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, Sharsheret and Myriad will be offering educational resources. BRCA screening and testing by a local provider will be available before the event. Please bring your insurance cards.

REGISTER HERE: www.eventbrite.com/e/the-great-pink-challah-bake-tickets-50823283810?aff=ebdssbdestsearch--

For information email us shabbosprojectdallas@gmail.com

theshabbatproject.org



**The
Shabbat
Project**
KEEPING IT TOGETHER