



# DATA of Plano

Parshas Bereishis | 27 Tishrei 5779 | September 6, 2018

## Sermon

with Rabbi Zakon



A Questionable Culture

Friday

Mincha/Candle lighting: 6:48

Shabbos Day

Shacharis: 9:00

Latest time for shema: 10:19

Learners' Service: 10:30

Kiddush following services at

11:45

Mincha: 6:20

Shabbos ends: 7:50

## Learners' Service

got purpose?

My Purpose in This world

## From the Desk of Rabbi Yogi

### The Addicted Soul



The Talmudic story of Rabbi Eleazar ben Dordaya seems to materialize itself in most Yom Kippur sermons. And for good reason! This is a story whose message is as inspirational as it is timely - that no one is too far removed for teshuva (repentance). And yet, the story ends suddenly, with the protagonist's early death. A death that arrives amidst a downpouring of remorseful and broken-hearted tears. And it is this part of the story that is so rarely expounded upon or explained (after all, better to focus on the happy stuff!). And that is a shame, for in the proper inter-

pretation of the story's cryptic conclusion lies arguably the greatest lesson on teshuva of them all.

It was said of Rabbi Eleazar ben Dordaya that he did not leave out any harlot in the world without coming to her. Once, he heard that there was a certain prostitute in one of the towns by the sea who accepted a purse of coins for her hire. He took a purse of coins and crossed seven rivers for her sake. As he was with her, she blew forth breath and said:

'As this blown breath will not return to its place, so will Eleazar ben Dordaya never be received in repentance.' ... Said he: The matter then depends upon me alone! He placed his head between his knees, he wept aloud until his soul departed. Then a bat-kol [a prophetic voice] was heard proclaiming: 'Rabbi Eleazar ben Dordaya is destined for the life of the world to come!' ... Rebbe [on hearing of it] wept and said: One may acquire eternal life after many years, another in one hour! Rebbe also said: Not only are penitents accepted, they are even called 'Rabbi!' (Talmud Avoda Zara 17a)

set in and finished the job. For without hope death is as inevitable as tomorrow's sunrise, as certain as gravity's pull.

Had Rabbi Eleazar developed a prior sensitivity to the spiritual pleasures of this world, had he come to know that there were other things besides carnal pleasure that could touch his senses and enliven his heart, he might have filled the void left by the loss of his life's immoral pursuit with an equally potent spiritual calling. Alas, such was not the case with Rabbi Eleazar and in his death we are made conscious of the somber consequences of an unresolved teshuva.

Teshuva is supposed to lead to a fresh start, to another crack at the good life. Not so for Rabbi Eleazar ben Dordaya. And according to Rabbi Aaron Lopiansky, the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva of Greater Washington, the reason for Rabbi Eleazar's death is as clear and obvious as it is tragic.



Had Rabbi Eleazar lived today he would have been called an "addict" (the Talmud calls him "avik bah tuva" - "greatly attached" to immorality) and hopefully found his way into a Twelve Step program in the mold of Alcoholics Anonymous. It's indeed encouraging that the twelve step model seems to have picked up on the fateful lesson of the Tal-

For Rabbi Eleazar ben Dordaya life was about one thing and one thing only, maximizing sensual pleasure. And, as evidenced from the story above, he chased after this objective with all of his heart, all of his soul and all of his resources.

But when Rabbi Eleazar recognized that this final sinful escapade had led him down a spiritual path of no return, that he had hit his rock bottom, he knew that he needed to make amends for the life he had lived and right away. His waterfall of prolonged tears made clear that his regret was of a sincere and authentic nature and that his teshuva would be accepted.

Nevertheless, his teshuva also, inevitably, put an abrupt end to his life's great pursuit, his essential joy and his reason for getting up in the morning. His teshuva became his dead end instead of his fresh start. And utter despair and malignant hopelessness

mud's tale, introducing the addict to the dynamic force that is spirituality and G-d consciousness (six of the Twelve Steps involve a Higher power), to feed the hunger pangs long quieted by vice.

A September 2005 article in Business Report ("Rabbi Claims to Have Cracked the Addiction Code") featuring Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski, a world renowned addiction specialist, effectively describes the successful Twelve Step phenomena and its core tenet of spirituality.

Whether the person is a specialist or a ho-ho (or both), if they have an addiction problem, the underlying symptoms are the same: hungry ghosts demanding to be fed. All addicts describe the gaping, empty hole inside; they feel something is missing in their lives and they try to fill it with substances or relationships or careers, ever

seeking the secret to happiness that will change their haunted lives.".....

"I too searched far and wide for the cure to addiction, but my medical and psychiatric background did not lead me to the cure because the source of addiction does not lie here," Twerski says.

"After half a century in psychiatric practice, I know without a doubt that the source of addiction is spiritual deficiency. Irrespective of whether we are religious or atheist, all human beings are spiritual by nature and spirituality is the cornerstone of our recovery."

Spirituality, he says, is the secret substance that feeds our hungry ghosts, that fills the gaping hole. "Spirituality comes to all of us when we finally face ourselves, are honest with ourselves and learn to respect and care for ourselves and others. Without it we die."

Such is the cycle of not only addiction, but of man's continued reliance upon sin. When spiritually deficient we seek to feed our disquieted inner void with counterfeit goodies, only to find that these goodies are more impediment than resolution, more disease than salve. And so, in sheer desperation, we begin the long and difficult trek up the sacred mountain, uncovering our long dormant spiritual sides and feeding our "hungry ghosts" the only genuinely nutritious food that will sustain it - soul food.

We can all learn much from Rabbi Eleazar ben Dordaya's death as well as from the life-saving formula of the Twelve Steps. For a teshuva process to be successful in the long run, it's just as much about stopping the bad as it is about replacing it with the good.

## CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

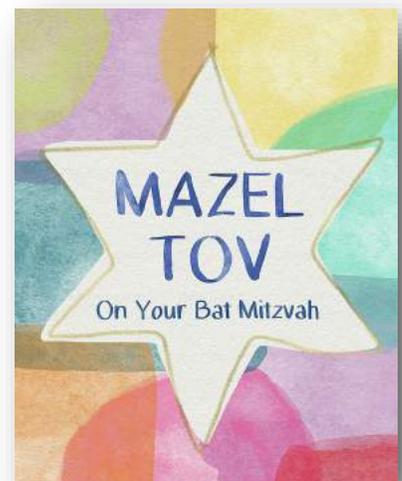


Demolition will begin this week on the coat room and classrooms.

***Please remove all personal belongings by Sunday at noon.***

Check your inbox for exciting upcoming updates on the expansion project, including updates about childcare on Shabbat.

Mazel Tov to Sarah Fradkin on her  
Bat Mitzvah this weekend.  
Kiddush is sponsored by the Fradkin  
family in honor of the occasion.



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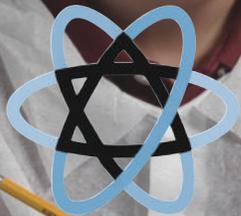
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