



Ohr Somayach Light Lines

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Light Insight

Ultimate Payola

There are a few ways to make a hit record. You could write a great song and make it into a terrific record. But there are a lot of other good records out there. How can you make sure that whenever people turn on their radios, they will hear your record?

In 1960, a famous New York disc jockey's reputation and career were destroyed when he was indicted on commercial bribery charges and accused of taking money to play records.

While the direction of the '50s investigations and the Congressional payola hearings of 1960 focused on disc jockeys, the 1972 "Project Sound" investigation by the U.S. Attorney's Office in Newark, N. J. went after a larger target. That investigation looked into claims that a major record label had bribed radio stations to play their records. As a result of those investigations, nineteen people were indicted in 1975.

The specter of "payola" continued to haunt the music industry. In late 1976, Congress and the FCC once again investigated the business, including concert promoters. And the issue came up yet

again in 1986 when the practices of independent record promoters were called into question.

The music industry is certainly not the sole domain of payola. Wherever there is money and power, there will be people prepared to exploit the weakness of others for their own ends.

But don't think that payola rules only among the seedy and the unscrupulous. All of us are susceptible to bribery.

In this week's Parsha, the Torah prohibits taking bribes. The Torah doesn't define the lower limit of what is called a bribe, and thus a bribe could even be a few pennies.

Similarly, since the Torah gives this commandment without any qualification, it follows that there is no ceiling as to who might be affected by a bribe. Thus even as lofty a soul as that of Moses could, theoretically, be influenced by a bribe.

The Torah is teaching us that even the greatest people can be influenced by the smallest amounts. Naturally, there will be a sliding scale: A small bribe will affect a great person very little, a large bribe, more so; a small bribe will influence a lowly person somewhat, and a great bribe — considerably. The more elevated the person the less will be the

affect of even a large bribe, and the more lowly the person the greater will be the affect of even a small bribe.

However, what emerges clearly from the Torah's blanket statement "the bribe will blind the eyes of the wise" is that everyone is susceptible to bribery. It's impossible not to be affected at all.

What's in a Name

"Malki-Tzedek, King of Shalem, brought out bread and wine" (Genesis 14:18)

"Abraham called that place G-d Yireh" (Genesis 22:14)

Both of these saintly men — Malki-Tzedek, who was Shem, son of Noach, and his descendant Abraham — were referring to the site upon which stands Jerusalem (whose Biblical name is Yirehshalem).

When G-d wished to name His holy city, He faced, as it were, a Divine dilemma.

"If I call it Yireh like Abraham did, the righteous Shem will feel slighted, and if I call it Shalem like Shem did, the righteous Abraham will feel slighted. I will therefore call it Yireh-Shalem like both of them called it."

Shaleim means both peace and perfection, while Yireh, as Targum Onkelos translates, means human service of G-d. Only when man serves G-d can he hope to achieve the peace and perfection symbolized by Yirehshalem.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY

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Giving people the benefit of the doubt

The Blasting Radio

Here's a story about giving the benefit of the doubt that taught me that I still have a lot to learn.

Our downstairs neighbor had just given birth and was staying with her parents for a few weeks. Her husband alternated between staying with her and staying at their own home, downstairs from us. One night their radio was playing so loudly that I actually got a headache from it, and I was afraid it would wake up my children. I went down to ask them to lower the volume, but no one answered. I telephoned and left messages on their machine. Each message I left was more abrupt than the previous one. It was getting late, and I wondered how I would be able to fall asleep.

I went down a few more times to ring their bell, steam coming out my nose. I had a whole lecture ready.

My husband said to me, "Have pity on the poor fellow, his wife is away and he's all alone. He needs the music to liven up the place."

"I'm sure it's not him blasting the music," I replied self-righteously, giving our neighbor the benefit of the doubt. "He probably gave his friends the key to the apartment and is letting them stay while he's away."

What really bothered me was that his friends didn't even have the decency to open the door when I buzzed!

I considered going to the window to get a word with them, but I was trying to be the 'good neighbor,' and could not stoop to poking in other people's windows.

A few days later I met the wife in the park. She apologized profusely for the disturbance. (At least she listens to the telephone messages, I thought to myself.) She went on to explain that her husband had indeed been away (Just as I thought, I said to myself proudly) and had left the lights and radio on the automatic timer to ward off would-be thieves while he was away.

Was I ever embarrassed!

Response Line

Using Step-Father's Name

Name Withheld wrote:

May a Bar Mitzvah be called to the Torah as the son of his step-father's Hebrew name or must he be called as the son of his real father's name? The boy considers his step-father his father and has no contact with his real father.

Dear Name
Withheld,

The commandment "honor your father and your mother" refers to the person's biological parents. A person must certainly show the utmost honor to his step-parent, but this in no way exempts him from the Divine decree to honor his biological father.

I spoke with Rabbi Moshe

Sternbuch, *shlita*, regarding your question. He cited a responsa of the Yaavitz that if there is absolutely no contact between the child and his father, then it is permissible to call the child to the Torah using his step-father's name. However, said Rabbi Sternbuch, if there is even the most minimal amount of contact between the father and his son, then the son should use his biological father's name.