

Light Insight

Lead off Batter

The other day I overheard a few of the neighborhood kids deeply involved in an important discussion. It seems that they were trying to reach a consensus about who was the most important, the ‘lead-off’ batter or the ‘clean-up’ batter, the first or the last one to take the plate. I passed out of earshot before the final vote was in and the philosophical conundrum was resolved, their question jingling in my ear.

While reading this week’s *Parsha* I had a little insight that may have helped with their question. In the description of the collection of funds and materials for the building of the Tabernacle, the Torah records that the precious stones that were donated for the High Priest’s breastplate came from the leaders of the Twelve Tribes themselves. In the verse the word for ‘leaders’ is written differently than any other time it appears in the Torah — it lacks a letter *yud*. The *medrish* explains that there was a certain flaw in the act of giving on the part of the leaders of the tribes, that is hinted at in the lack of the letter *yud*.

What was the leaders’ error?

When the first collection was taken from amongst the Jewish People in the desert, a collection of all the gold and silver and special materials that the initial construction of the Tabernacle called for, the leaders of each of the Tribes waited until the end of the collection to give. They promised that whatever was still necessary after all the people had finished making their donations, whatever had not been collected, they themselves would provide. When the final tally was taken, all the resources that were required for the Tabernacle’s intricate construction were already supplied. There was nothing left for them to give but the gems for the clothing of the High Priest.

On close inspection, it is difficult to understand what the Torah regards as the leaders’ flaw. Anyone who has ever raised money for a project knows that a donor that promises to fill any shortfall and guarantee that the goal is met is a fabulous asset. Who wouldn’t want such a person’s help, promising to make sure that the fundraising campaign would be successful? The fact that their donation was very small was only because there was nothing else that needed to be given. Why should the Torah draw our attention to their ‘mistake’ for

thousands of years?

When a leader wants to positively influence those around him, he has to lead. He has to be a role model for others through his own character traits, as evidenced by his own behavior, setting the standard for others to follow. When today’s political leaders make decisions by opinion poll, following the directions of those they presume to represent, they cease to be ‘leaders.’ In the desert, the leaders of the Jewish People should have acted with fervor and made their donation at the very beginning, as a model for the rest of the people. Waiting until last, even with the best of intentions, was a flaw in their leadership.

Correcting their error, the leaders of the Twelve Tribes made the first donation when the Tabernacle was later inaugurated. They brought generous offerings to be brought on the altar in its first few days, a model for the alacrity with which the Jewish People would bring offerings to the Tabernacle and the Holy Temple in the future.

With the subtle lack of a *yud* in the spelling of the word ‘leaders’ the Torah teaches us an eternal lesson in leadership qualities. A lesson not only for leaders themselves, but for anyone who wants to influence other people — and perhaps even an answer for the boys at the plate.

Response Line

Doctor Do Little

Tim Walz wrote:

In Exodus 15:26 it says "I am the Lord that heals you." How does this relate to us today? Is this a promise for us to take a hold of? I have some friends who are claiming this promise, and are refusing any kind of medical treatment. Is using a doctor not trusting G-d? Are we trusting man instead?

Dear Tim,

I have a story for you: A man swept away by a flood sees two guys approach in a rowboat. "Hop in!" they shout. "No, thanks," he says, "G-d will save me." Next, a tugboat passes by. "Climb aboard," calls the captain. Again he refuses. "G-d will save me," he says. Then the Coast Guard sends a helicopter but he refuses to board, giving the same reason. Finally, he drowns.

Up in Heaven, an angel asks why he refused help. "I wanted to rely on G-d alone," he replies. "Idiot!" says the angel. "Who do you think sent you the rowboat, the tugboat and the helicopter?"

G-d acts through the guise of doctors and medicine, just as He acts through the guise of employers

to provide us with a living. Would your friends refuse to take money from their bosses, saying they'll get it directly from G-d? I think not. Do they eat food, or do they wait for G-d to miraculously inject their bloodstream with nourishing vitamins, minerals, fats and carbohydrates?

The Torah gives explicit permission to engage in healing: If one person strikes another person, the verse says that the attacker "shall pay for his unemployment and for his medical expenses." (*Exodus 21:19*)

Our job is to do all that we can to heal the sick, and nonetheless to recognize that ultimately it is G-d who heals. While seeking proper medical attention, a sick person also engages in prayer, good deeds, and introspection. We don't accept prayer as "a last resort" — it's a "first resort," along with medicine and the doctor.

"G-d on my Palm-Pilot"

From: Email@Withheld

Can I have a prayer book that's loaded into my Palm Pilot and be able to take it into the bathroom without any problems?

Dear Email@Withheld,

You can take the Palm Pilot into the bathroom, but I would suggest that it would be inappropriate to actually have the text displayed on the screen at the time.

LOVE of the LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and the Land of Israel

Mount Gilboa

This mountain in the Valley of Jezreel is where King Saul and his son Yonatan were slain in

battle by the Philistines, leading a mournful King David to lament "how the mighty have fallen" and to pronounce a curse that "no dew nor rain should descend upon the hills of Gilboa." (*Shmuel II 1:19-21*).

The mountain itself indeed remains bare, but not far away is a village and some kibbutzim whose prosperity accentuates the impact of King David's historical curse on Mount Gilboa.