

Ohr Somayach **Light Lines**

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Light Insight

A Little Is A Lot

*“...a satisfying aroma to G-d.”
(Leviticus 1:9)*

Among the other mitzvos of Purim, like reading Megillas Ester and giving gifts of food and money to the poor, there is a mitzvah to make a festive meal and to drink wine. Not just a sip of kiddush — Purim is the one day of the year when it is a mitzvah to really drink wine.

Rabbi Moshe Isserles, in his commentary on the Code of Jewish Law, says that when a person drinks on Purim, he doesn't need to become so drunk that he will be fuzzy for days afterwards. Quite the reverse — as it says, “It is the same whether one does much or whether one does a little, provided that the intention of his heart is for our Father who

is in Heaven.” Quantity is unimportant, and more is not necessarily better. What matters is drinking with the proper intention — to fulfill the Divine Will.

There is an interesting parallel to this idea in this week's parsha: When a person brings an offering to the Holy Temple, he may bring either cattle, sheep, birds or fine flour. After describing each of these categories, the Torah uses the phrase “a satisfying aroma to G-d.” Obviously, cattle are more expensive and valuable than sheep, which are more expensive and valuable than fowl, which are more than flour. Nonetheless, each one creates “a satisfying aroma to G-d”, be it the greatest or the least.

Why repeat the same phrase four times? If the Torah wanted to tell us that any of these offerings are pleasing to G-d, wouldn't it have been enough to say

that fine flour is for “a satisfying aroma” and we would make the logical inference that fowl, sheep and cattle, which are bigger and more costly offerings, are certainly “a satisfying aroma?”

In fact, the Torah's repetition teaches a fantastic lesson. Had the Torah only told us that a flour offering, the least expensive type of offering, was “a satisfying aroma”, the logical inference would have been that fine flour is “satisfying” and fowl all the more so; sheep are very desirable, and cattle, most of all.

Thus, the Torah repeats after each category, “a satisfying aroma to G-d” to teach us that whether an offering is large or small, G-d regards it absolutely equally provided that our intentions are for the sake of Heaven. “It is the same whether one does much or whether one does a little, provided that the intention of his heart is for our Father who is in Heaven.”

Light Lines wishes our readers a

HAPPY PURIM

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY

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Giving people the benefit of the doubt

I was sitting in the doctor's office. They were extremely behind on the appointments and the waiting room was packed with impatient people. Finally, the door to the doctor's room opened and someone emerged. The next person in line, a woman, got up and slowly walked towards the doctor's room. "Hurry up," I thought to myself, "there are so many people waiting and you take your time?" I looked more carefully and noticed that all the while she was typing into a small

database computer. "What audacity!" the little voice inside me was saying, "Can't you wait until after your appointment to finish your typing?!"

The doctor stood waiting for her, and all the while she was busy with her database. By now I was fuming; how inconsiderate! Doesn't she realize that everyone, including the doctor, is waiting for her! I continued surveying the scene as the doctor started asking her questions. Instead of answering, she just typed into her computer; then she handed the palm-top computer to the doctor, who glanced at what she had written. I suddenly realized what was going on and felt an acute sense of shame for misjudging her. Each time the doctor asked her a question, she typed the answer and showed it to the doctor. The unfortunate woman was mute.

Response Line

CHI-KI

L. Froehlich wrote:

Several years ago, I took a class in Aikido, one of the eastern martial arts. Like its counterparts, Aikido is premised on the concept that a "force"—in this case known as "ki" or "chi"—flows through the body and the universe and can be focused by a person to use, for example, in personal defense. Is this concept of "ki" (or "chi") inconsistent with mainstream Jewish belief? In other words, can a Jew believe in one G-d and also accept the idea that there is an unseen energy flowing in the universe and through one's body that can be tapped with proper training? (After all, there are other unseen forces and things in the universe that do not seem to conflict with Jewish belief, e.g., gravity,

electromagnetic energy, cosmic rays.) Is there any analogous concept in Judaism?

Dear L. Froehlich,

I'm not an Aikido expert, but I do have a black belt in Judo-ism. Ahem.

Before I answer your question, I would like to say that I find martial arts truly amazing. I mean, people with years of training in martial arts can, using only their hands and feet, make some of the worst movies in history.

Now to your question: The idea that there can exist such a force as you have described is not inconsistent with mainstream Jewish belief, as long as you believe that this force, like all forces, is created and controlled by G-d. I think your analogy to gravity is a good one.

Is there an analogous concept in

Judaism? Perhaps the analogous concept is "ruach Elokim," a Divine "wind" or spirit, which can give a person extra-human powers, or abilities. This is the power to which the Torah attributes Samson's source of strength.

On the other hand, Judaism also has a concept of "ruach tumah," an impure "wind." This force also lets a person tap into certain powers, but doing so is destructive to one's spiritual being.

Another point to consider is that some Eastern disciplines may involve what we consider idolatrous practices. For example, bowing to the room, bowing to the force, or "talking to" the force. We are not allowed to make requests of spiritual forces, only of G-d. Believing in the existence of such a force could be okay, but the way one relates to that force could border on idol worship if done incorrectly.