

Dvar Torah for Chanukah

written by Yossi Katz
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By Ozer Bergman

Based on *Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom* #81

Your home has a front door, right? You probably lock it at night. Even during the day, if you don't lock it, you surely close it. Why? Because you don't want uninvited guests or pests—squirrels, pigeons, bears—to barge in, walk around and ruin anything. Two-legged intruders may take food, furniture, jewelry and even the peace of mind that the security of home bestows.

So, when “Greeks” and other intruders want to barge in on your brain and take control of your thinking it's not a bad idea to shut them out *before* they get a foot (or an idol) in the door. Being close-minded has its advantages. It allows you to identify who's you and who's not. That in turn will bring you back to the One God. Rebbe Nachman says:

Other people can be great deterrents. If one were alone, without others deterring him, he would always direct himself towards the path of life. Despite every type of confusion, doubt and worry he would face, he would still eventually end up on the right path. Even if he sinned—God forbid, may the Merciful One spare us—he would greatly regret it and find the true path in the end.

We're never alone. A lot of what passes for “our own thinking” is really nothing but a confused collection of tweets, pokes and advertisements, a hodgepodge of undirected, unguided and misguided reading and listening. Most of the rest of “our own thinking” is a result of our befriending or chumming around

with the wrong type of people.

It becomes much more difficult when others confuse matters. For example, if, God forbid, one associates with those who think they know something because they are familiar with philosophy, or with cynics whose studies ridicule everything sacred...This type of deterrent and confusion is worst of all. These studies severely confuse and impede because they teach that any path a person takes is valid, God forbid.

Dressing up cynicism in quasi-Torah (Torah facts sans Torah-consciousness) doesn't make it kosher, only kosher-style. That's the most insidious type of non-kosher thinking because it pretends to be what it's not, so you don't even consider closing the door on it.

Sarcastic wit of the seemingly religious is also extremely harmful. This sarcasm is literally the same as philosophical skepticism, even be worse, since most Jews recognize the dangers of philosophy and avoid it, knowing it can drag them down into the deepest pit, God forbid, may the Merciful One spare us. But people are not so careful to avoid sarcasm and sophistry, especially when it emanates from people who seem legitimate, who clothe all their opinions in religious expressions....

Now, you may never have entertained the notion that your mind is a holy temple, *the* Holy Temple, the Beit HaMikdash. But it is (*Sanhedrin* 92a [middle]). But it is also overrun by Aristotle's children and Olympians, misguided logic, false and faithless gods. They confuse us so, that we think we're worshiping God when in fact we're serving idols. When others set up idols in our home it has to upset us to the same degree the Chashmonaim (Hasmonean) were upset by the Greeks. We have to drive out the trespassers and re-claim what's ours.

Are you open to what I'm saying? Are you sufficiently democratic and intellectually limber enough to wrap your post-

Socratic thinking around a Chashmonaim-mind that is willing to discriminate and reject, a Beit HaMikdash-mind that outlaws trespassers and intruders from its precincts because it recognizes only One Master and will allow no pretenders? Or are you close-minded when it comes to shaping, forming and sanctifying *your* mind along sacred lines?

Survey your thoughts to see where they're from. Examine each to decide if it's what *you* want, if it's worthy of remaining in the Beit HaMikdash between your ears. You'll need Chashmonaim-class courage and determination to say "No!" and "Go!" in order to expel the long-time trespassers who've made themselves at home. Kick them out and close the door behind them. Don't worry about being left empty-handed or alone. When the intruders are gone you'll discover a jar of sacred oil that can illuminate your Beit HaMikdash for a long, long time. And you'll re-discover God.

A happy and glowing Chanukah!

Chanukah sameach!

agutn Shabbos!

Shabbat Shalom!

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