



*Footsteps of our Fathers - Avos 5:10*  
**THE WHOLE WORLD IS NOT A STAGE**  
*Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita*

Moshe, a Jewish actor, is so down and out he is ready to take any acting gig that he can find. Finally he gets a lead - a classified ad that says:

“Actor needed to play ape.”

“I could do that,” says Moshe. To his surprise, the employer turns out to be the local zoo. Owing to mismanagement, the zoo has spent so much money renovating the grounds and improving the habitat that they can no longer afford to import the ape they need to replace the recently deceased one. So until they can, they decided to put an actor in an ape suit. Out of desperation, Moshe takes the offer.

At first, his conscience keeps nagging at him, he is being dishonest by fooling the zoo goers, and he feels undignified in the ape suit, stared at by crowds who watch his every move.

However, after a few days on the job, he begins to enjoy all the attention, and starts to put on a show for the zoo customers: hanging upside down from the branches by his legs, swinging about on the vines, climbing up the cage walls and roaring with all his might whilst beating his chest.

Before long, he was drawing a sizable crowd. One day, as Moshe is swinging on the vines to show off to a group of school kids, his hand slips, and he goes flying over the fence into a neighboring cage - the lion's den. Terrified, Moshe backs up as far from the approaching lion as he can, covers his eyes with his paws and prays at the top of his lungs, “Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echud!!”

The lion opens its powerful jaws and roars the response, “Baruch Sheim Kevod Malchuso Le’olam Va’ed!”

From a nearby cage, a panda yells, “Shut up! You’ll get us all fired!!!”

In real life we often imitate Moshe the actor. We suit up and dance about for the entertainment of others. Even worse we often do this so as to playact a vision of the person we know we should be, but haven't really become. At first we play this game with feelings of disquiet. We know we are not being true to ourselves, nor are we being real with those around us. However, in time all such irksome thoughts seep away. The crowd applauds our antics, they seem to be happy, and we begin to enjoy the “shpeel” ourselves.

בס"ד



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The disaster is that we lose sight of who we are meant to be, and become the fictitious being in the monkey suit. Then one day disaster strikes and we try to cry out to Hashem in our natural fashion. By then it may be too late, for it is then that we discover that many of those around us were playing the same game, and that no one dares to break the mold, frightened that he will lose the false identity that has become his persona.

Our mishna touches upon this irksome problem.

“There are four character types among people: One who says, ‘My property is mine and yours is yours,’ is an average character type, but some say this is characteristic of Sodom.”

If one really thinks that what he has is really his, then he is living in the realm of the monkey. Everything is Hashem’s; nothing exists without His will for it to be so. True, your average fellow will say that what’s mine is mine etc. but beneath the “live and let live” words is a strain of Sodom which was a world where every man grasped whatever he could. That world had no place for actual facts, only what was perceived to be truth. It is a place where people act in a certain way, but feel differently inside.

“He who says, ‘What is mine is yours, and what is yours is mine,’ is an ignoramus.”

The Koznitzer Maggid explains that this statement talks of those who try to make deals with Hashem. A fool figures that if he acts charitably towards Hashem, doing His mitzvos and learning His Torah, (mine is Yours) then Hashem will reciprocate by acting in equal measure, (Yours is mine), paying him back with worldly gifts. The man has no idea what his relationship with Hashem should be, instead he play acts through his mitzvos, thinking that he will receive some sort of golden payback.

The Rebbe Reb Bunim goes further and explains that the fool takes that which is truly in man’s hands - his fear of Hashem - and says, “well, that is ‘Yours’ Hashem. You make me fear You; and ‘what is Yours,’ prosperity - that which in reality is in Hashem’s hands - “is mine” by my own efforts I have acquired all my wealth.” Such thinking is true ignorance, often brought about by a lifetime of playacting when it comes to one’s inner beliefs.

“He who says, ‘What is mine is yours, and what is yours is yours,’ is pious.”

Here the Maggid continues his explanation. “Yours” refers to Hashem. Thus a truly pious Jew does nothing for his own self-serving image, rather it is all for Hashem. Even in the realm of the material he does everything for Hashem’s glory. He eats to have strength to do Hashem’s will, he dresses, he builds his home, everything he does is touched by the motivation that his life is G-d centered.

“What is yours is mine and what is mine is mine, is wicked.”

Well, here we see the worst of all possible outlooks. The person is so oblivious to the sacredness of Hashem’s world that he sees everything as being there just for his own ego. Even that which others would deem as being in the domain of Hashem, he sees as being there for himself. This fellow is like Pharaoh who saw himself as a deity. This type of person is devoted only to his own selfishness, and even that which he does supposedly for Hashem has a self-indulgent angle to it.

So, we have to decide upon which reality we see ourselves living in. Are going to be play acting, dressed up as monkeys, swinging through the trees for the benefit of applause? Or will we stop and accept that our inner thoughts are vital to our motivations, and that the choice of those motivations is up to us?

It is all too easy to just “act” at being a Yid, eating and sleeping for the entertainment of others. A whole life can pass by without ever really being in touch with who your inner self should aspire to be. Such thoughts are difficult to face, they mean we must make life changing decisions; however, the core of our Yiddishkeit stands on all this, so, perhaps it is worth a moment’s thought.

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