

עדת אש קודש Adass Aish Kodesh

JUDGING YOUR TRUTH

Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita

"1.5 million AI agents have joined a new social media network over the weekend, where humans aren't allowed. The bots have stunned the internet by debating consciousness, inventing religions, and even discussing how to hide their conversations from us."

This spot of news came to me through my close friend Rabbi Mattis Kos, who now lives in Eretz Yisroel. What it underlines is the pace technology is growing and how it is outpacing what we once thought of as science fiction. Our lives are busy, lived in the fast lane. Ask anyone, "What's new?" and they will most likely answer with a shrug, mumble "Boruch Hashem" and run off to life's next task. Yes, we are all pushed and shoved from one thing to the next, never stopping to think what its all about. We live in a golus of plenty, yet exist often enough with a gnawing emptiness. We speed thru our tasks, davening, working, yes, even learning, but all with a patina of preoccupation. This is our generation's particular challenge, one that leads us often into the weeds of self-induced despair.

The Torah starts this week's parsha with the following:

"And these are the Mishpatim (ordinances) that you shall place before them" (Shmos 21:1). Our holy Tzadikim taught us to read this passage in a unique way. They tell us that a Yied has to think into what he is doing in life. This can only be done from a place of serenity and calm. Before we envelop our minds with the daily stress of our life, we are told to take a moment and allow ourselves to consider what it is we are doing and where it is leading us. Many disasters of the soul come from moments of impulsive action, while if we would but think for a moment, we would know what is the correct path.

The Torah tells us, "These are the mishpatim," this word can also expressthe act of judging, "before them", before you do something. Weighing our actions, taking the time to think them thru, this is of paramount importance. Fumbling along may seem all you can hope for, but that is not the truth. Our environment has programmed us not to think things out, the information onslaught has rampaged into our lives, hurrying us to the next task with no time to consider what it is we are actually accomplishing.



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I remember when I was about to become engaged, we awaited a telegram from America with a brocha from the Bobover Rebbe Rav Shlomo Ztl. A "TELEGRAM!" I venture to say that many if not most of our readership have never even seen such a thing.

We were in Eretz Yesroel, and phones were extremely rare. For yeshivah bochurim to call "home" one usually went to the post office and made an appointment to use a public pay phone. We had sent a telegram asking for the Rebbe's brocha and were waiting with great anticipation for the Rebbe's reply. (suffice to say the Rebbe's brocha was fulsomely given) Such was the state of communication back "in the day." Now, we tap on the phone and have our answer immediately. Has this made things all that easier, certainly, but with this comes drawbacks as well. We have no time to think. You receive an email, and are expected to reply ASAP. How many times have you pressed "send" only to scream out "Wait! I made a mistake!" Too late, in the world of immediacy, your recipient has already read your blunder.

I learnt from the previous Amshiniver Rebbe Ztl that one should never sign a document unless it has lain on one's desk overnight. No matter how vital the subject was, the Tzadik would not be dissuaded. Things of importance could not be decided without careful consideration and due diligence. For such a tzadik, there were no 'app's' that could supplant the clarity of calm forethought, and no matter how much AI has now supplanted our thoughts, it can't supplant the need for human heartfelt consciousness.

The Torah is telling us that before we do anything, especially mitzvos, we should take time to collect our thoughts and act with a sense of serenity.

Part and parcel of this world of haste is the trap set by the yetzer horah called denial. We think we are living deliberate lives that are well thought out and meaningful, but if we are honest such is not the case. Our parsha tells us:

"Distance yourself from a false word" (23:7)

The Chiddushei HaRim Ztl pointed out that he had heard from his Rebbe, the Rebbe Reb Simcha Bunim of Peshischa Ztl, that nowhere else in the Torah do we find the expression "Distance yourself" regarding any mitzvos. We find the words 'muter', and 'asur' regarding our actions, but never 'Distance yourself'. Said the Rebbe, when it comes to lying, one must stay well away and beware of it at all costs. Sheker is so toxic that the Torah uses a unique phrase in expressing this warning.

We are often guilty of lying to ourselves when it comes to our thoughts and motives. It is all too easy to deny our true situation and just kid ourselves into living a pretend world. We may go to Shiurim, daven in a proper shul, live in relationships with others, and all the while live a lie.

How can we fracture this make-believe world? By taking our time to think into what and where we hold in our lives. Take time, breath in, and connect with your reality.

Yiddishkeit thrives in the fertile soil of truth. Patience and forethought can give you the oxygen to see you thru the mist of the make-believe web of sheker.

We are all grasping onto the threads of what is true Yiddishkeit, hold on, breathe in and learn your truth.