DEBAR TORAH by RABBI ROHDE

A Jewish Psychology of Discipline

The “Tough Love” Song of Haazinu depends upon a certain understanding of human psychology to make sense. According to that understanding, people require admonishment, chastisement, and criticism to make them better. As it says in Leviticus 19:17: “Do not hate your brother in your heart: You should surely rebuke your fellow [so] that you not share in their guilt.” It’s not that people are all bad, but at least for the past and present, the Torah tends to view human nature, including most of the best of us, as having a “dark side” which must be kept in check. Sigmund Freud was not per se a believing Jew, but his view of the “dark side” of human personality, which must be both kept in check as well as harnessed somehow for the good, was in keeping with much Jewish thought. Freud’s view of this “dark side” of personality was opposed by the Swiss psychologist Carl Jung, who came from an avowedly Christian background. Many Christians tend to view our present era as at least partially Messianic. They tend to see the “dark side” of human psychology as able to be overcome. Our American secular culture’s more positive view of human psychology seems to derive from such Christian sources. The Bible sows seeds of a more positive evaluation of human nature, but it is put off until the future. For now, we need to be rebuked and commanded to do good. The Talmudic dictum of Rabbi Hanina is: “Greater is he who is commanded [to do the right thing] and does it than he who is not commanded to [to do the right thing] and does it.” For Jews, perhaps in the future there may be a “circumcision of the heart,” as Jeremiah writes, but for now we need to actively circumscribe our thoughts and actions through the discipline of the Torah.

This view of human nature’s ever-present “dark side” often puts traditional Jewish thought at odds with the current psychology which pervades American culture. Personally, I find the pervasiveness of American culture’s quest for “authenticity” in all things to be deeply flawed, from a Jewish point of view. And indeed, perhaps such an insistence upon “truth” is itself phony. But all discipline must be meted out with love, even if it is “tough love” at times. As we mentioned above, the reason cited for rebuking our fellow is that we love him. At the end of Haazinu it is clear that God is rebuking the Israelites because He loves them and wants a great and better future for them.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mazal tob to Adam Kalman, upon becoming a Bar Mitzvah. Congratulations to his parents, Hanna Pincas-Kalman & Michael Kalman, and the whole family.
**COMING UP**

**Hatanim Luncheon 5783**
Shabbat Bereshit, October 22 | following Shabbat Morning Services

You are cordially invited to Congregation Shearith Israel's **SHABBAT BERESHT 5783 CELEBRATION**

honor our Hatanim and their families

RABBI IRA ROHDE Hatan Torah
LAURENT NAHON Hatan Bereshit

and a special birthday toast to JON MENDES, Shearith Israel centenarian

Register by October 13 at shearithisrael.org/hatanim2022.

**Shearith Israel’s Three Sets of Myer Myers Rimonim:**
A Special Friday Night Lights Talk & Exhibit

October 28 | Following Evening Services | At Shearith Israel

Myer Myers: the preeminent Jewish silversmith of the colonial era; congregant and Parnas of Shearith Israel; creator of three of Shearith Israel’s priceless sets of historic rimonim, admired by experts and collectors of American Judaica. All three sets will return home from their temporary abodes at the New-York Historical Society, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and at the Touro Synagogue, respectively, and before re-loaning them, Shearith Israel will be exhibiting them as part of a very special Friday Night Lights talk by Rabbi Soloveichik.

Sponsorship opportunities will be available at shearithisrael.org/events/mm-rimonim5783.

DEADLINE: This Sunday, Oct 9

**Hershey Park Trip**
Thursday, October 13 | Bus Departure at 8:30 am

CSI Youth joins with the rest of UWS youth on this all-day field trip to Hershey Park in Pennsylvania! Teens and families welcome. Children under grade 7 must be accompanied by an adult. Register at wsisny.org.