

SCHEDULE

שבת קדש

Mincha Erev Shabbos **7:00 PM**

Shacharis- Followed by Kiddush **8:30 AM**

Sof Zman K"ס- מ"א 9:13 < גר"א 9:49

Gemara Chabura- **5:00PM**

Pirkei Avos- **6:35PM**

Mincha- Followed by Shalosh Seudos **7:20 PM**

Maariv **8:34 PM**

Sunday

Shacharis **8:30 AM**

~ Followed by Shiur

Mincha / Maariv **7:25 PM**

Weekday Minyanim & Shiurim

Shacharis

Mon , Thur **6:40 AM**

Tue, Wed., Fri **6:45 AM**

Mincha (Mon-Thur) **1:45 PM**

Mincha / Maariv **7:25 PM**

Maariv (Mon-Thur) **9:45 PM**

**Rabbi Teichman's Thursday Night
Shiur After Maariv**



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אהל משה



Rabbi Zvi Teichman

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Issue#154

RABBI'S MESSAGE

Heads or Tails?

In less than two weeks from now we will be sitting at our tables on Rosh Hashana eve engaging in the meaningful and inspiring customs of the Yom Tov.

One such tradition is the partaking of the head of a sheep or fish and reciting the prayer, that *may it be His will*, שנהיה לראש ולא לזנב, *that we be ("to") a head and not ("to") a tail.*

This wish echoes a blessing bestowed by Hashem to His nation in this week's parsha. The Torah states that when the Jewish nation will adhere to the covenant, then; ונתקד ד' לראש ולא לזנב והיית רק למעלה ולא תהיה למטה (דברים כ"ג), *Hashem shall place you as a head and not as a tail, you shall only be above and you shall not be below.*

What are really asking for on Rosh Hashana on a personal level? Do we all in truth aspire to be leaders? Why can't we just be happy and loyal lieutenants?

What is the implication in the added "ל'י", לראש, "to a head"? It should simply state שנהיה ראש, that we "be a head, a leader".

In Pirkei Avos (יד יד), we read; והי זנב לאריות ואל תהי ראש לשועלים; *Be a tail to lions rather than a head to foxes.* This directive seems to imply a goal of merely attaching ourselves to great leaders; not necessarily becoming one. How does this Mishna jibe with the verse that calls for leadership?

Even more intriguing is the use of the word זנב, tail, by the mishna in a positive connotation, which is in direct conflict with the Torah's seemingly total negation of ever being a tail, **ולא לזנב!**

The Talmud (סנהדרין ל.) relates how there were three rows of tamudic scholars, each row occupied by twenty three men, who sat in front of the convened Sanhedrin, the supreme Jewish court. Each row was respectively greater in scholarship than the next one. When a member of the Sanhedrin would die, the Sanhedrin would summon the greatest student, who sat at the head of the first row, ordained him and appointed him as a jurist. Subsequently, the students would then each shift over one seat assuming the next level in this hierarchal system. There were inevitably those who previously sat at the head of the second and third rows who would now leave their position as "head" of their row and ascend to the "tail" end of the ascending row. The Talmud asks, why can't he claim that he prefers to be a "head" rather than a "tail" and remain in his honorable position? Abaye answers that we encourage him to take his new seat with the words of the Mishna, *Be a tail to lions rather than a head to foxes.*

We are dealing with students who are worthy to become members of the Sanhedrin and yet they are worried about their seats and stature?! Are they preoccupied with such pettiness?

The answer to our dilemma lies in understanding the Mishna in Avos.

Why does the Mishna refer to the tails of a lion and fox particularly as symbolic of strong and weak leadership?

The Midrash Shmuel cites a commentary in the name of the *Ari ibn Shushan*, who has a textual reading that adds a few words to the original Mishna: *Be a tail to lions rather than a head to foxes, וראש שועל שועל, שזנב ארי ארי, because a tail of a lion is a lion and the head of a fox is a fox. ibn Shushan explains; because a lion instinctively raises his tail above his head, the fox lowers his head beneath his tail, so it is with people, a noble person honors those inferior to him and perceives the qualities of greatness in others above his, while the despicable degrade those more honorable than he and cast them down to the earth.*

Every human is distinct, and every person needs to feel special and valued. It is not the need for honor as much as a desire for validation. A person may sometimes be hesitant to relinquish his status lest he lose his sense of self worth. The Mishna teaches us that when one is in the company of "lions", you are assured they will place their "tail" above their heads, appreciating the unique character you possess and contribution you add, assuring you maintain the confidence needed to grow ever higher. One who finds himself, however, a "head" of foxes, will quickly lose his self assurance by the denigration they wily foxes will foist on him, burying him under their tails!

Abaye assures the young student who worries lest he lose his poise by becoming a "tail", "have no fear, be a tail to lions, because a tail of a lion is a lion". You will feel even greater value, because the lion places the "tail" even above his own head!

The goal is not in being a "לראש" but rather "לראש", "to" a head. Associate with great people because in the presence of those who are truly noble everyone feels vital, valued and number one!

This gives profundity to the second part of the verse, והיית רק למעלה, and you shall only be above. In the company of nobility everyone wins.

The greatest Jewish leader of all time, Moshe Rabbeinu, is told by Hashem, ויטול ידו ויחזק בו, *grasp its (the snake) tail, he stretched out his hand and grasped it tightly, ויהי למטה בכפו, and it became a staff in his palm.*

In the able hands of Moshe the "tail" became the "head" of his staff!

If we encourage each other and "grasp" mightily each other's unique strengths, we will all feel vital and "head" collectively towards ever greater accomplishments.

באהבה,
צבי טייכמן

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