

Friday 5th April 2019

Candle Lighting	6.28pm
Mincha	6.30pm
Maariv	6.45pm

Shabbat 6th April 2019

Shacharit	9.00am
Mincha	6.10pm
Maariv	7.22pm

DAYLIGHT saving ends on Sunday 7th April
Kashering of Pesach Keilim Sunday 14th April 10.30am to 11.30am

A word from the Rabbi

NATURE IS NOT GOOD

As a father, I have a vested interest in keeping not only myself healthy, but my children too. For this reason I try to purchase healthy products for lunch boxes and household nibbles. It's hard for us nutritional lay-people to distinguish between junk and healthy foods and often we rely on the products themselves to inform us about their nutritional qualities. 'Fat Free' seems quite clear. 'No preservatives' – that must be good!

But there is one term that has duped me, and perhaps you as well: 'The product is 100% natural'. It sounds healthy, and of course I would always pick it over 100% unnatural. The problem is that 'natural' does not mean 'healthy'. In hindsight, this is obvious; marijuana is natural, snake bites are natural, falling off a cliff is natural – although all three are not in your best interests.

This week's Parsha opens with the Mitzvah of Brit Milah. There is a Midrash that tells of a debate between the Roman governor, Turnus Rufus, and Rabbi Akiva.

"Whose actions are more beautiful, those of God or of man?" asked Rufus. "Surely those of God, and therefore I ask, why do you circumcise yourselves?"

Rabbi Akiva replied, "Those of man are more beautiful." Rabbi Akiva then brought Rufus raw wheat and some cakes and said, "This [wheat] is the work of God and these [cakes] are the work of man. Aren't the cakes better than the wheat?"

The debate between these two characters is not purely about Brit Milah; it's about the role of Hashem in general and of nature in particular.

Turnus Rufus understands nature as being a wholesome and perfect creation. It is not only how Hashem created it, but also how Hashem wants it to be. One's nature is determined by God Himself and therefore all behaviour is acceptable as long as it's not an aberration of nature. By living according to nature in general, and our nature in particular, we are conforming to the Divine will.

Rabbi Akiva's response is one that is not only sharp, but profound. The Torah's commands, both positive and negative, are not about reforming wayward and unnatural behaviours.

On the contrary, every sin is, by definition, a progression from a natural, normal desire to a natural action. The command not to steal or murder is not referring to abnormal desires, 'aberrations of nature' so to speak. It is natural to want to steal. It is natural to want to murder.

But it is not good!

Every command in the Torah comprises Hashem's description of the natural inclinations of man, and then the appropriate modes of behaviour.

"I know," says Hashem, "that you truly desire your friend's car and wish to take it. That is a normal and natural reaction. But you are not allowed to do it."

It's natural to get angry, feel jealous, frustrated and sad – but that doesn't make it good. Like nutrition, being natural doesn't necessarily make it good.

The Torah's goal is to encourage goodness and morality, not naturalness. The Torah demands of man that he overcome his nature to feel compassion rather than disdain, love rather than hate, patience rather than anger, and fidelity rather than promiscuity. All our negative feelings are natural God-given emotions, but they are not good.

Shabbat shalom

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov on your Bar/Bat Mitzvah Anniversary to:

Avishai Bender
Bryan Resnik

Julian Hotz
Ian Rosenbaum

Maxine Lorge
Ben Rosenbaum

We wish a hearty Mazal Tov on your Wedding Anniversary to:

Larry and Hilary Coleman
Gavin and Megan Rosettenstein

Greg and Susan Reinhardt

We wish long life to the following Members who commemorate Yartzeit this week:

Hylton Bernstein
Anthony Rom
Rennie Chertkow
Helen Silber
Evan Fittinghoff
Lewis Folb
Rennie Chertkow
Leora Schleissner
Lauri Sherman
Ian Satill
Bentley Sacks
Avigdor Saks and
Sarya Saks

for his mother
for his grandfather
for her father in law
for her father
for his grandmother
for his brother
for her brother
for her father
for her father
for his grandmother
for his father

for their mother
for her mother
for his brother
for her brother

Sadie Bernstein
Jacob Chernotsky
Chaim Chertkow
Bernard Ende
Mercia Fittinghoff
David Folb
Isaac Joffe
Bram Katz
Alan Michel
Reilke Russak
Arnold Sacks

Pesia Saks
Iris Schuck
David Shakenovsky
Leor Yudelowitz