

have a Nageela Shabbos

A Kid Friendly Weekly Publication of Nageela West Coast Joyfully Jewish Experiences

Season 3
Episode 13

Jacob's Philharmonic by Rabbi Dani Locker

special expanded
edition!

I was a choir boy.

But first, a question about something I read in this week's Torah segment. You've heard of Jacob, the great father of the twelve tribes, and third forefather of the Jewish nation. As he lay on his deathbed, he called all of his sons and blessed them. These were unusual blessings. They weren't simple blessings like the kind you hear at a family gathering; "Mazel Tuff. May you live to be gezunt until 120, pu, pu, pu (imagine a grandma voice)!" Jacob's blessings talk about each one of his sons in a very unique and special way. He described each son's personality or talent. Judah is a lion (the king and leader). Dan was the father of judges and justice. Zebulun was a merchant who would live at the seashore. On and on, Jacob showed each son's strengths, and in some case, their greatest challenges as well.

Why did he do that? At the very end of his life, shouldn't he say, "Sons, put away your differences and be unified!" At the sunset of his days, wouldn't Jacob want to ignore his children's differences and focus on their similarities?

I was a choir boy.

Yes I admit it. We had a choir in my elementary and middle school, and I proudly stood there in my jumbo bowtie and white yarmulka singing at school banquets. The choir leader, pitch pipe in hand, would often instruct us to sing 'in unison', and sometimes, 'in harmony'. I didn't really understand those terms as a 4th grader. But unison sounded like unity, which meant working together, and harmony is a word that's usually used to mean peace and, well, working together. So what's the difference between unison and harmony?

Unison is when people are singing the exact same note at the exact same time. They are identical, and perfect.

Harmony is when people are singing DIFFERENT notes that still sound good together (not to be confused with some people I know who just sing different notes, without the sounding good part).

Which is better? Well you might have heard a kids choir singing in unison, but you'll never catch a symphony orchestra all playing the same

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notes at the same time. If you've ever heard a good band perform, or an acapella group, you'll recognize that different sounds made to work together are far more beautiful than all the same sounds. Harmony rocks. And waltzes. And... pretty much everything (except rap).

That's deal deal with the tribes. If all the tribes would be the same, sure, everyone might get along, yet it would not be the best way to create a beautiful society. For the Jewish nation to thrive we need farmers, singers, scholars, soldiers and businessmen. Rabbis, traders, warriors, leaders and followers. We need the people who are extremely generous, and those who watch

every shekel. We need the patient, caring souls, and the fiery idealists who make things happen. Jacob's blessings are a blueprint for a successful nation and society. Don't try to make everyone the same. Let everyone utilize they're unique strengths, face their own challenges, and add their own voice. Add a pinch (or a large cup full) of mutual love and respect, and you have an incredible, diverse, happy, productive nation.

The Torah hints to this after Jacob finished blessing his sons in such variety. It says "All of these are the tribes of Israel, twelve." All of the sons, with their differences are all needed to be a part of the true harmony.

PICKLE JEWES GALACTICALLY SYNDICATED COMIC STRIP



Question of the Week

Adapted with permission from Question of the Week by Rabbi David Zaback. Dedicated in memory of the author.

Many commandments are dependent on time. For example, certain dates of the year or certain times of the day. All commandments only take effect at the age of bar or bat mitzvah...

What commandment has an expiration age, meaning once you pass a certain age you're no longer obligated to do it??

ANSWER ON PAGE 5

CHECK OUT THE COMPLETELY REDESIGNED WEBSITE AT NAGEELALV.ORG



Awesometastic birthday wishes to Nageela family members celebrating their birthdays:

Peyton Schwitters
Yossi Koppel
Sam Lipke
Israel Smolyansky



Where does the royal family put their car when they go golfing?

The parking lot

OUCH! GROAN!

got a better joke? email it to dlocker@nageelawest.org



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tinyurl.com/selfietorah

Subscribe to the Camp Nageela West YouTube channel for up to date Nageela content. www.youtube.com/nageelawest



Photo of the Week

San Diego Nageela Event

Last week, Nageela continued our tour of the West coast, meeting over 100 children in San Diego, and solving a mystery with our core San Diego Nageelans! Guilty!

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Local NageeLattes and Nageela Hebrew School are off for Winter Break. We resume January 6th
December 31st- Nageela New Years Party, details TBA

January 15th- CNW open house, LA
January 22nd- Phoenix Event
February 3rd- Super Bowl Party
February 15th- Presidents Weekend Shabbaton

Mitzvah Minute

A quick intro to one of the Torah's 613 commandments

Source:

On that day, you shall give his payment (Book of Devarim, chapter 24, verse 15).

You shall not delay the wages of a worker with you over night (Book of Vayikra, chapter 19, verse 14).

Details:

If someone works for you, you've got to pay them on the same day.

If you make up to pay weekly or monthly, you have to pay on the day that was agreed upon.

If someone does work for you but hasn't delivered it yet, you don't have to pay until it's delivered.

Lessons:

- We should not take advantage of people. If we owe someone, we've got to take care of it
- Do stuff right away. Don't do it tomorrow or next week, cause you don't know if it'll happen. Today works best.
- The Torah wants people to do business honestly.

Same Day Service



stump the rabbi

To Tree, or Not To Tree

Hi Rabbi,

My 12 year old son really wants to have an Xmas tree, like all his friends have. Even if it's just in his room. What do I tell him? I don't want him to resent being Jewish.

Thanks

Hannah K. Bush

Stump the Rabbi is a forum where kids can ask ANY Jewish question.

Have a question? Please send it in to stump@nageelawest.org

Questions here are real. Names and some wording have been changed

Last week we printed this REAL question from a concerned mother. We asked you for your feedback and answers. Thanks for the overwhelming response. More than twenty people contributed via email, Facebook, text or in person. I will share with you some excerpts of a few of those messages.

We don't have this issue, but I don't know how I would handle it if we did.

Chanukah can be a beautiful festival of light and love.

move to Israel 😊

There are likely millions of Jews who think Christmas trees are beautiful or cool (myself included) or even a secular symbol of a religious holiday (I do not feel this way) who do not have them in their homes and do not grow up resenting being Jewish. I would suspect that if someone grows up resenting being Jewish, that resentment has other roots and is not related solely to the lack of a Christmas tree

Santa Claus is really the Klausenberger Rebbe

Easy. Sit him down and explain to him just exactly what went on in Europe on Christmas in the past 1600 years. Tell him how they persecuted Jews at untold numbers in pagan rituals in worship of Christmas. Christmas is a holiday which incorporates the customs and traditions of dozens of pagan cults and barbaric tribes.

Show the child how beautiful Judaism is by using fun channuka customs. i.e.: building a beautiful menorah every year and displaying it. (In the window). Children require consistency. If the mother gives in to xmas then the child's connection to God may be severed. Instead, show the child how fun and amazing our religion is. It may start with an innocent xmas tree but the effects could be detrimental.

This kid needs an education on his heritage

I can understand your son's desire to fit in with his friends. A normal outlook for a boy his age- however; we are descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob- and we are commanded to be holy unto G-d. What a privilege- to be the bearers of truth, in a day and age when the multitudes are lost in desires and goals that are not relevant to what's real and true in this world

"My son, I think that the reason you want a X-mas tree is that you like the lights, the decorations, the smell of the pine, and I think that I understand.

"So, I promise you that soon we will have something better. We will build [not buy a pre-fab one at Walmart] and decorate an entire dwelling, not just a tree. We will decorate it with lights, pictures, flowers, and we will have branches all over the top of it. And you my son can invite your friends, and they will probably wish, just as you wanted a tree, that they will want to have a Succah like yours."

None of this really matters to the kid, though, because he's just trying to fit in with his friends and just sees it as a festive custom. I would tell the mother to let this one slide, especially if this child doesn't have a formal Jewish education. Let him have the tree and perhaps after the holidays blow over, consider introducing him to Judaism with love.

There are many beautiful symbols in many religions but we don't have to adopt every symbol, thereby diluting our connection to Judaism

Right—depriving the child of the tree is not going to damage him. Kids have to learn that life consists of some rules—the Torah is a guidance system... For me, the glow of the Chanukah candles has become a warm reminder of the great life I've been blessed with and the amazing people I've had the pleasure to know. A tree? Well—it's basically just a tree

A tree in his room with blue and white deco? I wouldn't see an issue with that. The Russians have a "Xmas" tree for New Years haha it's just considered a holiday tree haha

This was never even considered an option so my kids would not have ever thought to even ask for one

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Dear Hannah,

Those were some of our followers' thoughts. Now, my own two cents:

In theory, having a tree is not a really big deal. If you ask most Americans what the religious significance of an Xmas tree in their house is, they'll look at you like you just sprouted antlers. The tree has religious roots (not necessarily Christian, but clearly religious), but is used quite innocently. Yet the Torah, and certainly the Talmud strongly disapprove of using gentile symbols that have their roots in other religions, even if that's not what they're used for now. I think the reason for this will become clear in a minute.

If you had to weigh the Torah's priorities of which commandments are more or less important (and the Torah does give us some direction), then having a tree would not be high up on the list. It would be nowhere as important as say, keeping Shabbat. Based on that standard, it would be better to have an Xmas tree and keep Shabbat than to have no tree and no Shabbat. So what's the big deal about the tree?

It's the statement that matters. We live in a world where most Jews are very disconnected from Judaism. The statistics are clear that the grandchildren of the most disconnected of our people will no longer identify as Jews. The more connected Jews are to Jewish traditions, the better the chance that their children and grandchildren will remain Jewish. A couple of hundred years ago, concerned Jews thought, "If

only we acted more like everyone else, our children would be happy to stay Jewish." Well that plan has failed, and current numbers show that Jews who are MORE Jewishly connected and less like everyone else tend to stay Jewish at a drastically higher rate.

We may not mean to, but there are certain things we do that symbolize something for ourselves and others. Pinstripes are the symbol of the New York Yankees. The McDonalds arches are the symbol of affordable fast food. The US flag is the symbol of patriotism, and a lightning bolt shaped scar is the symbol of a powerful wizard. A yarmulka, a Jewish star necklace and a menorah are symbols of a proud Jew. An Xmas tree is the symbol of being gentile. It's the iPhone of 'not- Jewish.' It's the Coca- Cola of 'not- Jewish.' So if you ask me... what am I saying, you DID ask me. This is a Stump the Rabbi question, so yeah... I think that the statement of having a tree in the home is a very frightening one. It's one that's hard to come back from. About a third of the Jews in the United states celebrate Xmas. Let that number sink in for a moment. Are those the Jews whose great grandchildren will be celebrating their bnei mitzvah in 50 years? Some will, but the cards are stacked against them.

You don't want this to be a fight. If you make it a fight, he won't appreciate what you're trying to accomplish, and will likely feel resentful toward you AND Judaism. What's the strategy? How can you get your son to agree to give up the tree without it being a fight?

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**HEY, DON'T PEEK!
THINK FIRST!**

There is a commandment to stand up in respect for an elderly person (usually considered to be someone who has passed the age of 70. However, an elderly person doesn't have to stand up for another elderly person. So once you turn 70, you're exempt from the commandment!

GUESS WHAT?

I sent this tweet to LeBron James.



For some inexplicable reason he has not taken me up on my offer. Really man? How can you refuse?

Why did King James ignore my offer? It's because (in his eyes) he's got something better. The trick is helping your son realize that HE HAS SOMETHING BETTER. By the way... yes, I really did send that tweet.

Many people wrote in answers to your question, but there was one common theme. Families where joyful Judaism is LIVED each day don't have this problem. If Jewish learning and traditions come alive in your home, and Shabbat is celebrated with excitement... holidays are enjoyed and Judaism plays a central role in your daily life... if you can do that, then your children will not need a tree. They will not want a tree. Not with a fox and not in a box. They will brag to their friends about the incredible traditions and way of life they're so fortunate to have. Though the only way to be absolutely sure these feelings are instilled is by

starting really young, you can still create exciting Jewish traditions in your home. Here are some ideas: Make Friday night completely tech free, and just hang out with your son, play board games, read and chat. Let him indulge in some not-quite-perfectly-as-healthy-as-you'd-like treats on Shabbat and Jewish holidays. Find some fun, educational Jewish videos on YouTube, and if possible, find a really exciting Jewish youth group to become a consistent member of. Take a Kosher cooking class together, and experiment with some delicious traditional Jewish foods. I'll be happy to give you more specific personal recommendations if you'd like (that's for everyone reading this).

Have-A Nageela Shabbat,

the Rabbi

GIRLS

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BOYS

**JULY 18-
AUG 7**

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Camp Nageela West

**hits the road
in 2019!**



Nageela West breaks the mold of old school Jewish outreach by providing out-of-the-box social and educational programs for Jewish children across the west coast. Through afterschool activities, weekend retreats and our signature summer camp, we engage elementary and middle school children in a fun and meaningful experience.

Our "questions encouraged" mindset makes Nageela a comfortable learning and growing environment for Jewish children of all backgrounds.

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