

## Ki-Sovoh

“And you should not go aside from any of the words which I command you . . . to go after other gods to serve them. (28:14)

In the past several years, we have been constantly reminded of the corruption of TORAH-TRUE *Hashkafas* through the demand by various segments of Jewry for new “*Minbagim*.”

The Sefer *Oker Horim*'s mussar approach, direct and straightforward with no pulled punches, is directed to the practical application of the Torah precepts—rather than their abstract meanings. He constantly forces the listeners to remember and practice the command of “*U'Vechukosayhem Loh Saylaychu*,” serving George Washington's green image is as false as that of *Baal*; whether it is an ultra modern wig (which defeats the original purpose of the *sheitel*); dressing toddler infants in \$30-\$50 suits; piercing babies' ears at three months of age; using marble bricks (even fancier than slabs) for exterior walk-up steps; \$450 baby carriages; dressing soil-prone infants only in “imported” knitwear; fixing up rental-unit bathrooms for several thousand dollars; throwing extravagant “*Kedayshim*” in Shul trying to outdo one another; buying “*Aliyos*” for exorbitant prices in the hundreds of dollars (at the expense of their families well being); fancy kitchen oak cabinets; luxury with all the elements of popular appeal of hedonistic dreamers; of opulence.

The *Oker Horim* remarks, in a courageous and reassuring way: the concept of “*chassidus*”—the “*Lifnim Meshuras Hadin*”—above and beyond the call of duty or law—requires the application and practice of stricter observance of the *halacha* as it relates to the individual, personally, rather than the establishment of a “holier-than-thou” attitude towards others, the acclimatization to the excesses of luxury or the absolution of finding “*heterim*” for one's self and burdening others with onerous “*chumros*.” It is ironic that these individuals running after these “*mosros*” cannot bridge the gulf between themselves and others since their attention is so firmly fixed on their own well-being. Ironically, it is they who need the

admiration to nourish the self-respect more than other people do. So they spend their life in the race for ostentatious achievement. They become accessories to the effort. The world which is their mirror may tell them that they are spectacularly successful. But inside there is a dead spot. They are narcissistic. The everloving values of the post-holocaust generation, receiving an upbringing desirous of abolishing any "complexes" their parents might have, and their hedonistic lifestyles subvert the psychological mechanisms that cause human beings to value one another. They are becoming more and more a group of unfeeling egotists.

The Torah tells us that this is not the way. "You should not go aside from any of the words which I commanded you this day, to the right hand, or the left." Extremes are sinful. The "*Derech Baynuni*" is the path to find Hashem.

Torah is a medium by which we can take anything or any person and carry it (him, her) out to the utmost reach of human invention, intelligence and spirit.

Two decades ago a MIT Professor, Douglas McGregor, stated that the central assumption of virtually all managers of men, capitalist or collectivist, is that we are lazy, heedless, irresponsible, that we will work only under the lash of fear, to avoid the punishment of material want or social sanctions. The assumption has received its rationale from that most denigrating of pseudo-sciences, behaviorist psychology.

In Torah we are what we do. We become as we behave. Perhaps, some opine, it gives us the capacity to develop and apply operant conditioning.

Torah study negates and diminishes the desires for excesses. Living the life of a Torah-true Jew bestows upon us all the Biblical blessings of long life, health, happiness, success in all our undertakings, and all the best.