



Likkutei Sichos

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Persuaded by None

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1.

OPENING QUESTION

On the verse,¹ “If your brother, the son of your mother, or your son or your daughter, or the wife of your bosom, or your friend who is like your own soul will incite you secretly, saying, ‘Let us go and worship the gods of others,’” Rashi comments:

your brother — from the same father, or,
the son of your mother — from the same mother
who is like your own soul — this refers to your father....

We need to understand: Among a person’s relatives, why does Scripture not also include a person’s mother and sister?² Since this is a difficulty in understanding the straightforward meaning of Scripture, and Rashi does not address it [as discussed many times,³ Rashi resolves **every** difficulty in *pshat*,⁴ and when he has no explanation according to *pshat*, he says “I don’t know”⁵ or something similar], we must say that in Rashi’s view, the solution is self-understood according to *pshat* (or it can be understood in light of an earlier comment by Rashi).

2.

ATTEMPTED RESOLUTION

Seemingly, we can resolve this by prefacing another question: Since the Torah lists here those who are — as Rashi says — “dear to you,” why should a person who is dear to you in the simple sense of the term — “your (literal) friend” — not be included?

¹ *Devarim* 13:7.

² As they are also included in the seven relatives named at the beginning of *Emor* {*Vayikra* 21:2-3}. Note that in *parshas Emor*, a person’s mother precedes the father.

³ See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 10, p. 13, and the sources mentioned there.

⁴ {The plain meaning of Scripture. Rashi says in his commentary to *Bereishis* 3:8: “I have come only to explain the plain meaning of the Scripture.” Though there are many levels and depths of interpretation on the Torah, Rashi adopts a straightforward approach}.

⁵ As in *Bereishis* 28:5; et al.

Mizrachi⁶ says that this is indeed Rashi's intention⁷ when he remarks, “*who is like your own soul* — this refers to your father”; {implying that} “the word ‘or’ is missing {from the verse}.” It is as if the Torah would have said, “your friend or one who is like your own soul [this refers to your father].” Accordingly, Scripture does {indeed} also include “**your friend**” in the literal sense.

However, it is difficult to read this into **Rashi's interpretation**, for then he would have said this explicitly, the same way as he says immediately prior to this, “**or** ‘the son of your mother.’” This is especially true since the expression, “**who is** like your own soul” is the meaning of the term “your friend.” As such, Rashi would have certainly specified that the *pshat* is — **or** one “who is like your own soul.”

We can interpret (albeit with some difficulty) that both relationships are encompassed by the clause, “your friend who is like your own soul,” not as two distinct types of people. Rather, the clause, “your friend who is like your own soul” (unqualified), refers to **all** levels of friends who are like your own soul (including a friend in the simple sense of the word). Rashi only explains the meaning that is a novelty, **in addition** to the simple meaning. Namely, the (highest) level of “your friend who is like your own soul” — “this refers to your father.”⁸

On this basis, the clause, “your friend who is like your own soul” also includes (the intermediate levels) “your mother” and “your sister.”⁹

The following, however, is still difficult:

- a. Why are all other relatives listed **individually**, while “your mother” and “your sister” specifically are included by the clause, “your friend who is like your own soul”?

⁶ {[Rabbi Eliyahu ben Abraham Mizrachi](#) (circa 5210-5286; 1450-1526), known as the ROM (or R'EM), is well known for his commentary on Rashi.}

⁷ {I.e., Rashi's intention is to separate the phrase in two clauses: “your friend,” which should be taken literally; and, “like your own soul,” which refers to your father.}

⁸ See [Gur Aryeh](#) on *Devarim* 13:7.

⁹ This also explains why Scripture does not say your father explicitly — see *Panim Yafos*, ad loc.

- b. In addition, since “Scripture has stated explicitly for you those **who are dear** to you,”¹⁰ then Scripture certainly ought to have specified “your mother.” After all, she is more dear to a person than “your brother, son of your mother” and even more than a person’s father. Therefore, there is a greater concern that she would attempt to incite you. {This is demonstrated in that} Rashi previously commented in *parshas Kedoshim*¹¹ on the words, “Every man shall revere his mother and his father,” that “with regard to honoring {parents}, Scripture placed a father before a mother because He knows a son honors his mother more than his father, since she curries favor with the son with her words.”

3.

THE COMMONPLACE

The explanation: Rashi has already conveyed many times¹² the principle that “Scripture speaks of that which is commonplace.”¹³ Even in this context here, Rashi comments on the word “secretly” and says, “Scripture speaks of that which is commonplace, for the words of an inciter are {conveyed} only in secrecy.” This means that, in Rashi’s view, the principle that “Scripture speaks of that which is commonplace” does not mean only that when given a choice of two expressions, the Torah chooses the one that is commonplace, but also that the Torah even adds to its wording {to speak in a more usual context}. And in our case, it adds the word “secretly.”

Similarly, since the verse, “If {your brother...} will incite you...” speaks about a person who may be susceptible to being ensnared by — “your son or your daughter, or the wife..., or your friend who is like your own soul [this is your father] will incite you,” i.e., a grown adult with a family and grown children — it

¹⁰ Rashi, *Devarim* 13:7.

¹¹ *Vayikra* 19:3.

¹² *Shemos* 21:28, 22:17, and 21:30; see also *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 6, p. 130 ff., regarding the differences and necessity of all the explanations.

¹³ {In the original, “דיבר הכתוב בהווה.”}

would be typical for the incitement to only come from those whom Scripture lists, and not from one's sister or mother.¹⁴

4.

HOW TO INFLUENCE PEOPLE

The explanation: Inciting others by suggesting, “Let us go and worship the gods of others” can happen in two ways:

- a. By using reason and faith — someone who holds sway over someone else in matters of faith, and so forth, can entice them by saying, “Let us go and worship the gods of others.”
- b. By virtue of being someone's neighbor and having a close emotional rapport¹⁵ with someone, a person might also be persuaded and influenced to worship idols, without the instigator appealing to reason or faith.

Nevertheless, it is clear that even the first method of incitement by saying, “Let us go and worship the gods of others” is frequently based on the like-mindedness that results from familial bonds. This enables audacious incitement that can lead to something like idol worship, particularly since it happens clandestinely, “in secret.”

Broadly speaking, the two ways described above are represented by the two categories of relations described by our verse: A person's paternal or maternal brother is likely to resort to reason and faith to tempt. Likewise, and even more so, a father who has a greater influence on his son in matters of faith is likely to use such methods. The influence of “your son, or your daughter, or the wife of your bosom” is not based on reason and faith. (For it would be highly atypical for “your son,” “your daughter,” “or the wife of your bosom” to offer intellectual and

¹⁴ Especially, since Scripture speaks in the form of a narrative, which makes it more likely to say that this is due to Scripture speaking of that which is commonplace.

¹⁵ See Rashi on *Bamidbar* 3:29 and 3:38.

faith-based reasoning {to their father or husband} to the extent that it could influence a person to abandon the service of Hashem, and go worship “the gods of others that you did not know...”). Rather, their influence is through the familial bond that children and wives share with their fathers and husbands, respectively.

However, since the first method of secret incitement (by reason and faith) is possible typically when the parties share a bond, as discussed, Scripture includes both methods together, and presents them in the order of increasing closeness: Your paternal brother (who has his own family), with whom you share a bond as a fellow heir of your father, which brings them in contact with each other, and then your maternal brother — there is a deeper bond with him since you share the same mother, as we can readily observe.¹⁶ Greater still is the bond and closeness between a son or a daughter and with their father. And there is yet greater closeness with “the wife of your bosom.”¹⁷ Greater than all this is {the bond with} “your friend who is **like your own soul.**” Therefore, Scripture lists them in this order.¹⁸

5.

WHO CAN INFLUENCE A MAN?

With this in mind, it becomes patently clear why Scripture does not list “your sister” and “your mother”: It is unusual for an adult man with a family of his own to maintain an **extremely** close relationship with his sister (who typically also has her own family), to the degree that she would succeed to lure him (“secretly”) to the sedition described in the verse, “Let us go and worship the gods of others that you did not know....”

¹⁶ See *Kiddushin* 80b; *Ibn Ezra* and *Baalei HaTosafos* here; see also *Bereishis* 20:12. Note **Rashi’s** commentary on *Bereishis* 27:29.

¹⁷ Note Rashi’s commentary on *Bereishis* 24:67; note also that in the beginning of *parshas Emor*, it says, “to his relative who is close to him” — which (according to Rashi) refers to his wife — even before “his mother and his father.”

¹⁸ On this basis, we can understand why “your friend” in the literal sense (who is included in “your friend who is like your own soul,” as discussed) is listed following “your son or your daughter, or the wife of your bosom,” as it is readily seen that a dear friend has greater influence on a person than his family members have; see, also, *Abarbanel*, ad loc.

Similarly, regarding a person's mother: Although a grown man is close to his mother, she does not hold sway over him in matters of faith. As for the emotional attachment, since we are dealing with an adult, whose own children are already grown,¹⁹ his feelings toward his mother are (typically) not in such a **manner** of extreme closeness that would enable her to affect and bring him to a state in which he worships idols. In contrast, a son, a daughter or “the wife of your bosom” with whom he lives with constantly, and who has a strong bond of the sort that they *can* potentially influence him in such a way.

6.

THE TAKEAWAY - TRANSCEND INCITEMENT!

One lesson we can learn from here:

All these enumerated relatives, “your brother...” (also) correspond to levels of the human faculties²⁰ — emotions, intellect, and so on. This implies that, on all these levels in the soul, incitement is possible. Meaning, in our divine service, we cannot depend (solely) on an approach predicated on emotions and intellectual rationality.

Even regarding “your friend who is like your own soul,” “this refers to your father” — which corresponds to the level of *chochmah*,²¹ which negates the notion of idol worship — as the Alter Rebbe explains in *Tanya*,²² we have a lesson here on how deeply one must “not trust yourself.”²³ Even from the perspective of “father” — *chochmah* of the soul — since it is “as your self,” i.e., it mixes in a bias of self-interest, a person cannot be confident in being protected from idol worship; from this perspective, it is also possible to be incited.

¹⁹ {As evidenced by the fact that his children are recorded as potential inciters.}

²⁰ See *Or HaChaim* here; the explanations in Chassidus on “your land, your birthplace, your father's home” — the *maamarim* beginning with “*Lech lecha*” of the years 5666, 5667, 5702, 5705, et al.

²¹ *Tanya*, “*Likkutei Amarim*,” ch. 3.

²² *Tanya*, “*Likkutei Amarim*,” ch. 18.

²³ *Avos* 2:4.

[This is especially so²⁴ in light of the explanation²⁵ regarding Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai, who said, “I don’t know in which direction they will lead me”²⁶ — even though he never walked four cubits without Torah-learning or without wearing tefillin,²⁷ and he had learnt and taught Torah for eighty years.²⁸ But his doubt concerned the {state of the} **inwardness** and **essence** of his soul, as explained in Chassidus.]

To be protected against incitement to “worship the gods of others,” a person must adopt a posture of self-sacrifice, submitting his will {to Hashem}, which is higher than *chochmah*. This, then, will also affect the lower levels of his faculties, starting from “father” — the level of *chochmah* — and lower, to “your brother, son of your mother.” As a result, not only will the person be safeguarded and immunized against incitement, but on the contrary — {he will fulfill the what it says in the verse},²⁹ “You shall follow Hashem, your G-d, and fear Him; you shall keep His commandments and heed His voice; you shall serve Him, and cleave to Him.”

— From the talk delivered on Shabbos *parshas Re’eh*, 5732 (1972)

²⁴ For in the case of Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai, the concern was in regards to the level of lottery in the soul, the essence of the soul, as explained in the sources in the following footnote.

²⁵ *Or Hatorah*, “*Pinchas*,” pg. 1059, et passim; see also *Maamar* “*Ach B’goral*” 5626 and 5735; see also *Likkutei Torah*, “*Vayikra*,” 50d, near the end; *Maamar* “*Ashreinu*” 5688 and 5696; see also *Likkutei Torah*, “*Massei*” (90b) for another approach.

²⁶ *Brachos* 28b.

²⁷ *Sukkah* 28a.

²⁸ *Rosh Hashanah* 31b; *Sanhedrin* 41a.

²⁹ *Devarim* 13:5.