

Rabbi's Article II

Family & Friends

On the verse (-Deuteronomy 13:7), "If your brother, the son of your mother, tempts you in secret or your son, or your daughter, or the wife of your embrace, or your friend who is as your own soul saying, 'Let us go and worship other gods, which neither you, nor your forefathers have known,'" Rashi (-Link) comments: "your brother: 'from the father[']s side]. 'The son of your mother: 'from the mother[']s side]. 'Of your embrace: 'The one that lies in your embrace and is attached to you. 'Who is as your own soul: 'This refers to your father. Scripture enumerates those [persons] who are dear to you; how much more so [must you apply this] to others!" Why is there no mention of one's mother or sister, and why doesn't Rashi explain this absence of a mother and sister?

Now, we could say that the verse is being all-inclusive with the words, "or your friend who is as your own soul," meaning, "those who are dear to you," and Rashi is only commenting on the novelty of the words, "who is as your own soul," that this means even your father, and, as mentioned, "who is as your own soul," simply refers to mother, sister and all friends. However, the question still begs to be asked, (ii) why are all other relatives enumerated individually, but not one's mother and sister, and especially so (ii) if the verse, "enumerates those who are dear to you," then a mother is definitely dearer than a brother, and even of a father --(Rashi, Leviticus 19:3) "In the case of honoring [one's parents], Scripture mentions the father before the mother, because He (G-d) is privy to the fact that a child honors his mother more than his father, since she wins his favor."--!?

The explanation to this is that Rashi, as a rule holds that (-Exodus 21:28, and more), "The text spoke of what usually occurs." --And even on our verse Rashi applies this rule: "In secret: 'Scripture speaks of what commonly [occurs, but does not exclude the other case, i.e., one who entices publicly], for usually the one who entices speaks clandestinely.'"-- Therefore, to Rashi it is not a question as to why the verse makes no mention of a mother or a sister, since it is, "not common," that one should be influenced by a mother or a sister to worship other gods.

The explanation: Influence to serving other gods will happen through one of two ways: (i) Intellectually influencing with logic and reason, or (ii) neighborly or friendship *endearment*. Hence, the Torah is *enumerating* of both sorts: Paternal and maternal brothers, usually have an influence driven by logical and faith-based reasoning. Even more so, fathers have a great influence upon his son in matters of faith. However, the influence of sons, daughters and a wife, *most commonly* will be driven by their emotional closeness. Nevertheless, even within family there will be logical influence, only that by family there is closeness involved, as well. Hence, the verse includes both reasonings within one, listing family influence from the lighter to the stronger: (i) Paternal brothers, in which each already have their own family, which usually have contractual relationships (inheritance) and other dealings. (ii) Maternal brothers have a stronger closeness than just paternal brothers. --(-Kidushin 80b), "With regard to what is the plain (meaning) of the verse written, (i.e., in the context of enticement to idolatrous worship, why does it emphasize "the son of your mother")? Abaye said: (The verse) *is speaking* (utilizing the style of:) 'It is not necessary'. *It is not necessary* (to state that one should not be enticed by) *the son of a father, who hates him* (due to their rivalry for their father's inheritance) *and* (therefore) *gives him bad advice*. *Rather*, (the same is true) *even of the son of a mother, (who) does not hate him*, (since they are not rivals for the same inheritance, as each inherits from his own father. One might therefore) *say* (that) *he should listen to him* (and accept his advice. The verse consequently) *teaches us* (that he should pay no heed to his enticements)."-- (iii) Stronger yet, is the closeness between a father and his son or daughter. (iv) Even stronger yet, is the closeness and influence of a wife. (v) And above all is the strength of the closeness and influence (in matters of faith) of, "your friend who is as your own soul," both, closest friends and a father.

And with this, we will understand why the verse does not list (and Rashi doesn't find this absence problematic) a sister or a mother. Among an adult brother and sister, in which the sister is occupied with bringing up her own family, it isn't common that a sister should have an influence upon her brother in matters of faith, to the point of getting him to, "Let us go and worship other gods." And even with a mother, with whom there is a strong closeness, nevertheless, it is not common for the mother to have a strong influence upon an adult married-with-kids son in matters of faith to the point of, "Let us go and worship other gods." Unlike, daughters and a wife with whom he is living.

On a mystical level: Each of these relationships mentioned in the verse all exist within a person himself. Within a person there are his power of will, intellects, emotions, thoughts, speech and actions. The verse here is telling us, that in times of darkness, temptations and challenges, one cannot solely rely on any of his inner-faculties of logic and reasoning. Even his highest faculty of *Father*, which refers to his *Faculty of Wisdom*, to which idol worship is a non-option, and nevertheless, we are commanded (-Ethics, Chapter 2, Mishna 4), "Do not believe in yourself until the day you die." As we find even concerning Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai (-Link), who said (-Brochos 28b), "I have two paths before me, one of the Garden of Eden and one of Gehenna, and I do not know on which they are leading me," even though, (-Sukka 28a), "He never walked four cubits without engaging in Torah study and without donning phylacteries," and (-Rosh Hashanah 31b), "Forty years he studied Torah, and forty years he taught Torah"! How much more so, each and every one of us should not rely on our faculties of logic and reason! Rather, we must have *mesiras nefesh* (lit. *sacrifice of the soul* (life), however, *nefesh* also means *will*) to sacrifice our will, meaning to serve G-d, and remain committed to G-d, with absolute obedience and self-nullification.

And being that the power of will is superior to the faculty of wisdom, hence, through *mesiras nefesh* we influence our commitment to G-d upon all of our inner-faculties of *father, paternal brother, maternal brother*, etc. and ascertain that we always be in (-Deuteronomy 13:5), "You shall follow the L-rd, your G-d, fear Him, keep His commandments, heed His voice, worship Him, and cleave to Him."