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Floundering within the hustle-ridden framework of a philosophically elusive physical world, we often lose sight of a salient truth: we live in a giant cake. Cohesive though each aspect of our daily existence may appear within our limited, human perception, the fact remains that we inhabit a multilayered universe. To give this notion more meat – or cake mix, as it were – let us consider the analogue between the various layers of a culinary masterpiece and the respective levels or planes of existence. (Note: if you've ever tried Tiramisu, please keep reading; if not, it is suggested that you put this down, go try some, and return to this reading with at least a slim chance of gustatory self-actualization.)

Our universe is comprised of a series of levels, each closer to G-d than the next. Just so, we can regard the layers of Tiramisu – alternating strata of chocolate dough and mascarpone cheese-doused lady-fingers, all interwoven with ribbons of cream - as ascending towards an epitomic cherry, adorned with chocolate flakes. (The cherry, of course, is representative of God.) The key factor in this analogue is humanity's place within the framework of such layers. A strong argument can be made for the notion that humanity indeed inhabits *two* of the numerous aforementioned layers – akin to the chocolate crust which comprises the Tiramisu's base, as well as a portion of the cream ribbon which connects this base with the then *third* plane of existence – the lady-fingers. Whether humanity can ever attain connection with this third layer (or, indeed, what this

third layer even represents) is left to the discourse of those far better versed in Talmudic study than am I. Suffice it to say that the bottom chocolate layer is representative of the base, the physical, the pentasensory. The ribbon of cream, which *intersects* and connects both this first layer and the next, arguably unattainable third layer, is representative of a higher form of interaction with the world: communication, both written and oral.

If we follow such a perspective on these two separate layers of human existence (the purely physical, and the more abstractly communicative), we arrive at a deductive conclusion: abstract communication is a loftier, more sophisticated, more G-dly manner of interacting with the world than is physical exertion. This conclusion answers all sorts of questions for humanity. Why, for example, is the United States Constitution legally binding? Why, indeed, do legal documents have to be written – even notarized? The answer is clear: the written and the spoken are endowed with greater significance than the simply *done*. By the cake analogy, man feels that his more sophisticated form of affecting the world is the one which ought to be given more weight.

This notion is reinforced when Judaic scripture and belief are examined. According thereto, G-d's first creation was the Hebrew language. Indeed, He had to *speak* in order to create the things He did. Coupled, these facts tell us two things:

1. The level of speech (of more abstract reference) is paramount to that of physical action. (G-d didn't make discreet physical units and just lump them together like building blocks; rather, He contracted himself to a level lower than Him but loftier than physicality.)
2. Our capacity for abstract communication (speaking rather than pointing, for example) is a potent one, and to be handled with care. Our species is

alone in its ability to communicate by the spoken and even the written *word* – and this is telling of the immense responsibility of cautiousness that is placed upon us in the exercise of such a power. Indeed, as many as three of our Ten Commandments incorporate allusions to this responsibility: the third (Do not take G-d's name in vain), the eighth (Do not steal), and the ninth (Do not bear false witness). Repetition lends emphasis, of course, and so the sheer fact that a third of our commandments reference the importance of our communicative abilities must be significant.

So we can safely assume that there is considerable weight placed upon the words we say and the things we write. The Judaic system of thought supports this idea in part by asserting that the Hebrew language was G-d's first creation. And the system proves itself through the neatness of example.

Look no further than the names of animals in the Hebrew language. Interestingly, each name is representative of (phonetically akin to) said animal's chief characteristics. The letters in the names of each are indicative of their central components. An example can be found in the name of the donkey (*chamor*), the consonant components of which reference the act of bearing or carrying. It is said that Adam named the animals – inasmuch, we can assume that G-d endowed him with the capacity to utilize the Hebrew language from the get-go, which further supports the claim that Hebrew was the first thing invented.

Another example of communicative and linguistic significance appears in the spelling of the most common reference to G-d: yud-hey-vav-hey. Each letter is representative of a set of mental experiences. (Such intricacies, which fit so well together, give us a clue to the deep significance of language and to the therefore deducible importance of the communicative prowess of our species.) The first letter (*yud*) represents wisdom (*hachma*), or the first flash of inspiration experienced before the development of deeper thought. It is all too fitting that this letter is the first in G-d's name. The next letter (*hey*) represents the disjointedness between man's level and the limit to his mental capacity, and the level of G-d and the comprehension thereof. To return to our cake analogy, this second letter is representative of the layers between the bottom chocolate crust and the crowning cherry. There are many layers (levels) separating men from G-d, and the gap between the smaller portion of the *hey* and the remaining arch is symbolic of this separation. In essence, this second letter reminds us that we cannot understand G-d. The third letter (*vav*) is essentially a *yud* with a long lower portion. Again, the *yud* stands for *hachma*, while the lower portion stands for *bina* – the transmission of intellect. This transmission is the follow-up mental digestion to the initial flash of inspiration. It is representative of man's attempts to understand portions of G-d's existence and creations. The last letter, a repetitive *hey*, reminds us (for repetition is emphasis) that man cannot fully understand G-d, given that we are separated by numerous levels of existence. (This same neatness can be found in the formation of G-d's signature – *emet*. The letters comprising it, *aleph*, *mem*, and *taph*, are the beginning, middle, and end letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This is fitting: G-d, after all, encompasses everything.) The system fits neatly into place. We are told by three

commandments that what we say and write matters, and the immense amount of meaning with which every portion of every letter is endowed justifies this notion.

In fact, the very nature of Hebrew's etymological structure echoes this. We won't delve too deeply into linguistics, but suffice it to say that the manner in which Hebrew words derive their meaning appears to be based more in semantics than in mechanics, in contrast to the structure of other languages. In other words, other languages (we'll take English as an example) derive cognates from yet older languages (like Latin) in a mechanical manner. What do I mean by mechanical? I mean that words are constructed from roots that are directional or action-oriented in nature. Take the word *prostitute* as an example. It comes from the Latin *pro* (in front of), and *stare* (to stand), indicating that a prostitute stands or physically puts herself forward in order to be seen and utilized. In contrast, the Hebrew word for "prostitute" is *kedesha*, which comes from the Hebrew *kiddush*, which means "holy, separate, or distinct." Two key differences are noticeable here. The first is that in the Latin-English case, there was one language feeding into another, whereas in the Hebrew-Hebrew case, the only language at hand is self-sufficient enough to interpolatively create its own derivatives. This fits well with the idea that Hebrew was G-d's first creation, because there logically could not have been any other languages around for it to derive its meanings from. The second key difference is that in the first case, the etymology was based on mechanical words. In the second case, however, the word *kedesha* derives from a more semantic (meaningful) approach: it signifies the fact that a woman takes her body and sets it aside for a new and unconventional purpose. Such an interpretation is far less mechanical than the sheer notion of a woman physically taking a step forward to be beheld. In much the same

manner, the word *kiddushim* (marriage) comes from the same root, here meaning that two people set themselves apart from the rest of society into a holy union. The argument can be made that the notion of “separateness” is no less mechanical than the notion of “standing forward.” However, it is the coupling of this term with the notion of “holiness” that lends it a more semantic feel – and justifies the argument that Hebrew is a language whose comprising words derive their meanings on a more “meaningful” level, which in turn bolsters the argument that G-d intended to take their communicative abilities very seriously.

We find similar proof in the fact that Torah scribes are allotted only three errors in the whole of the text, and that none of these errors may be committed while writing G-d’s name, for while His name is written, the writing must be perfect. Such restrictions tell us remind us of the colossal importance that Judaic thought and scripture place upon the written (and spoken) word. Of course, this furthermore reminds us of the *responsibility* placed upon mankind to keep our communicative activities in check, because we have been given the power to *control* those activities. We therefore must not lie (Commandment 9), lest our words distort and misrepresent the true nature of things. The system of letters and words is so perfect and so cohesive, that our misuse thereof could have disastrously entropic effects on their own scale. We must also be wary of using G-d’s name in vain (Commandment 3), for it would distort the truth of His existence. Indeed, even the eighth Commandment warns us from speaking contrary to the nature of things, because lying to someone is the equivalent to “stealing their mind”, at which point we deprive them of complete knowledge of the true nature of reality. Thus, telling

threefold to check errant tongues and quills, Judaic thought is emphatic in its mandate not to misrepresent reality.

Of course, while all the aforementioned puts a huge responsibility on humanity to be communicatively accurate in describing the world, it is all the while an honor that we are the only species given the privilege to interact with and affect the surrounding world in a form more sophisticated and nearer to G-d than is pure physicality. As evidenced by our cake analogy, we inhabit two of the lowest layers with no real way of transcending the ones which separate us from the cherry on top. We can, however, revel in the fact that the cream ribbon which binds our very lowest level to the one above it is a means for us to at least get closer to the crowning layer. The creative yet meticulously cautious use of our communicative faculties allows us to achieve a greater nearness to G-d; the more we take care to aptly represent reality, the higher up within the cake's second layer we permeate.