

Kinder Torah[©]

Parashas Haazinu

Whom Do You Listen To?

"Malkie, are you ready to go?"
 "Almost, Imma."
 "Hurry, we don't want to miss the bus."
 "Right, Imma. I'm ready now."
 "Come, let's go."

Malkie and her mother hurry to the bus, find a seat and sit down.

"I always like going shopping with you, Imma."
 "I like shopping with you too, Malkie. Where shall we go first?"
 "How about to the shoe store, Imma?"
 "Fine, Malkie."

Malkie and her mother reach the shoe store. They look in the window for a minute, enter the store, and sit down. The sales woman approaches them.

"Can I help you?"
 "Yes, we are looking for shoes for school."
 "We have a big selection. Let me show you a few styles."

The sales woman brings out three boxes. She takes out the first pair of shoes. They look almost like slippers. The sole is very thin. Malkie's eyes light up.

"I like those, Imma. They are the latest style."

The sales woman smiles. Malkie's Imma, however, is not so happy.

"They are not so practical, Malkie. They will wear out very quickly because they are so thin."

"That is okay, Imma. By that time, they will be out of fashion anyway. I can go buy new shoes. Maybe thick tractor soles will be back, like they were last year."

"Malkie, why is it so important to dress with the fashion?"

"Because EVERYBODY does it, Imma."

Malkie's mother thinks for a moment. This is not a simple matter. Styles and fashion have a powerful influence on a young girl's mind. How is she going to present her point properly?

"Malkie dear, you know that the school does not approve of the students wearing the latest fashions."

"Imma, do we have to listen to the school? We are here in the store by ourselves. Let's do what we want."

"Malkie, the school does have a dress code, and the students must follow it."

"Imma, this has been bothering me for a long time. Why should the school decide what I wear? Why do I have to listen to them? I don't want to listen to anyone. Let me decide for myself what shoes I want to wear on my feet."

Malkie's mother smiles. She realizes that she has the opening that she needs to turn the conversation her way.

"Malkie, you think that you are not lis-

tening to anyone. However, you are wrong. Why do you want these shoes?"

"Because everyone is wearing them."
 "If everyone was wearing a different style, would you still want these shoes?"

Malkie thinks for a moment.

"Probably not, Imma."

"Then you really are listening to someone, Malkie. You are listening to your friends and neighbors who are wearing that fashion."

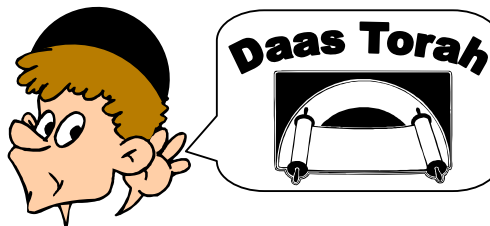
"I never thought about it like that, Imma."

"Now, let's take this one step further, Malkie. Who is everyone listening to? Who dictates the fashion?"

Malkie thinks for a minute.

"Ummm. I don't know, Imma."

"I will tell you, Malkie. Clothing designers who live in far away countries create new designs. Why? Because they want to make money. They profit when people buy their



Fashion Trends



clothes. Therefore, they create a new style of clothes, and make a big advertising campaign to convince people to buy these clothes. Part of the campaign is to make you feel like your current clothes are worthless because they do not fit the new style."

"I never realized that, Imma."

"That's not all, Malkie. Store owners also want your money. They buy large quantities of the new fashion. They also pressure you into buying it, so that that they can make a profit."

"That's terrible."

"I agree. Therefore, when you decide to buy these new shoes just because they are in fashion, you really are listening to someone. Who? Someone who has no interest in you or your pure *neshama* (soul). He is only interested in taking your money."

"Oy vey."

"That's right, oy vey. Let's now consider the other alternative. When you listen to the principal of the school, you are also listening to someone. He is committed to the spiritual growth of his students. He wants their *neshamos* to stay pure. There-

fore, he goes to *Gedolei Yisrael* (the leading Rabbis) to hear *Daas Torah* (the wisdom of the Torah) on these issues. He then sets the dress code of the school based upon *Daas Torah*. When you listen to him, you are listening to the Word of Hashem."

"How true, Imma. You explain it so clearly. We are always listening to someone. That little voice inside of us received its opinions from somewhere. We have the choice. Do we want to listen to *Daas Torah*, or to the voice of a fashion designer or storeowner who cares nothing about us? It is so clear. Of course we want to follow *Daas Torah*."

"Now your ears are tuned in, Malkie."

The first verse in the parasha states, "Give ear, o heavens, and I will speak" (Devarim 32:1). The Medrash Rabba expounds on the subject of listening. The ear gives life to all of the organs of the body. How? By listening to Torah. Torah is our life. It gives us a good life in this world and eternal life in the world to come. Therefore, when we listen to Divrei Torah, or *Daas Torah*, we are giving life to our body and soul. The opposite is also true. When one turns his ear away from listening to Torah, he cuts himself off from the source of life. Whom shall you listen to? The choice is clear.

Kinderlach . . .

Are you listening? Of course. The question is, "Whom are you listening to?" You may think that you are making your own decisions, listening to no one. However, your opinions were formed by listening to someone. Who? Someone who loves you and only wants the best for you? Someone who will tell you the pure emmes (truth) from the wisdom of the Torah? Or someone who cares nothing about you and only wants your money. Kinderlach, you know the answer. Keep listening to the right people. They teach you Divrei Torah. They tell you Daas Torah. They care about you. They give you life.

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