

דברי מנחם

Diarei Menachem

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In this day and age, we tend to see what we want to see and hear what we want to hear. Clearly, this issue is not new, whatever media specialists tell us. For in our Parsha, we come across the critical phrase, repeated in our prayers twice daily, "Take heed lest your heart be deceived and you turn aside and serve strange gods and bow down to them" (D'varim 11:16).

Notably, the Torah informs us that our perceptions stem from the heart. Or in other words, our emotions and subjectivity impinge on our consciousness so that we begin to sift out images that threaten us and filter what we see and hear so that these images conform to our comfort zones.

Consequently, we take things out of context and fail to see the bigger picture, rather like the passenger in the passing train who saw somebody, through the window of the second train, lifting a knife and presumed him to be a murderer - but not the waiter about to cut a cake!

The Rambam is said to have commented that if we just noticed in the above Pasuk the words, "serve strange gods", we would, of course, get the totally wrong impression. No wonder the Chafetz Chayim warns us to listen very carefully to others, so that our selective hearing (and our favored icons) do not "deceive us" or cause unnecessary ill-feeling. Yes, from that perspective, let us better give people the benefit of the doubt and judge them favorably.