

DATA of Plano

Parshas Nasso | 12 Sivan 5778 | May 26, 2018

SERMON



GOOD TO BE KING

Friday

Mincha: 7:00

Candle lighting 8:08 (Earliest time: 6:58)

Shabbos Day

Class on the book of Ruth: 8:00

Shacharis: 9:00

Latest time for shema: 9:52

Learners' Service: 10:30

Childcare: 10:45

Kiddush following services at 11:45

Mincha: 7:45

Shabbos ends: 9:13

LEARNERS' SERVICE



THE OLDEST PRAYER OF ALL TIME

Guestlines

LAUREL OR YANNY?

Rabbi Jack Abramowitz



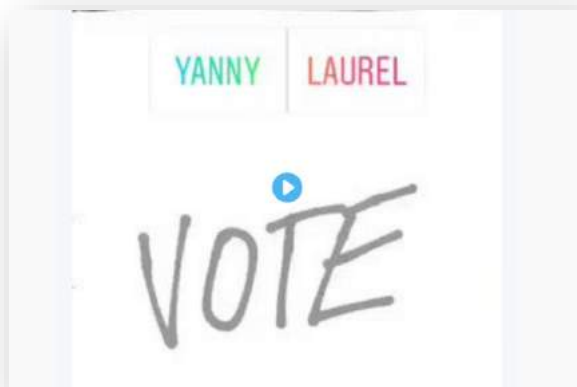
Last week, the Internet was thrown into a tizzy thanks to an audio clip that seems to have said "Laurel." Or perhaps it said "Yanny." People couldn't quite seem to agree.

This brought back a not-so-distant memory of a dress that is so famous, it has come to be known simply as "The Dress." You know the one: the dress that some people saw as blue and black even though it is obviously white and gold!

There are explanations for these phenomena. The *New York Times* explained the dress as follows:

Our eyes are able to assign fixed colors to objects

under widely different lighting conditions. This ability is called color constancy. But the photograph doesn't give many clues about the ambient light in the room. Is the background bright and the dress in shadow? Or is the whole room bright and all the colors are



washed out? Different people may pick up on different visual cues in the image, which can change how they interpret and name the colors.

We're used to optical illusions of various kinds but we're less used to auditory illusions. That's not to say that they should surprise us. You know how there are whistles that only dogs can hear? Well, there are also ranges of sound that only young people can hear.

Some stores in malls play high-pitched tones that only the young can hear to keep teens from loitering without affecting the more mature clientele at all. Since "Laurel" and "Yanny" have similar spectrograms, if you filter out frequencies that some people can't hear, you change the perception of the recording. (I also got different results on different computers based on the quality of the audio equipment.)

When thinking about this incredible phenomena, the following kept running through my head:

"Shamor v'zachor b'dibbur echad hishmianu Keil hameyuchad."

This is a line from *L'cha Dodi*, which we recite on Friday nights, telling us that God recited a single word but He caused us to simultaneously hear both "shamor" (guard the Sabbath) and "zachor" (remember the Sabbath). This is the explanation of the Talmud (Shevuos 20b) for the difference between the two versions of the mitzvah of Shabbos in the "Ten Commandments," Exodus 20:7 saying zachor, and Deuteronomy 5:11 telling us shamor.

The difference between G-d's simultaneous intonation of the two verbs for keeping Shabbat, and the Laurel vs. Yanny clip is that in the latter we don't actually hear two words simultaneously. Listeners hear

either "Laurel" or "Yanny," which are two equally valid interpretations. This led me to the Talmudic principle of *"eilu v'eilu divrei Elokim chayim"* – two opposing opinions can both reflect God's will (Eiruvin 13b). The Talmudic precept lies at the core of our belief and explains why, as Jews, we encourage debate and divergent opinions in the clarification of our tradition. The Talmud is built on this concept. Thousands of pages of discussion, all predicated on the

fact that respect for a divergent approach to your own interpretation is to be respected.

My dear riend, Dr. Eli Shapiro, made an insightful observation. He said, "These examples of varying perceptions on the internet greatly underscore the importance of perspective taking."

This, for me, was quite the eye-opener.



There's one photograph of the dress. It contains the visual information of both blue/black and white/gold. Our brains filter the information and choose one of these options. There's one audio clip. It contains spectrographic information appropriate for both "Laurel" and "Yanny." Our brains filter this as well, coming to an appropriate conclusion. You cannot rightfully say that someone is right or wrong. Everyone is exposed to the same data, but our biology filters it, predisposing us to one outcome or the other, each equally valid.

Might this not be the same in other areas of disagreement? Maimonides and Nachmanides read the same Torah but they came to some very different conclusions. Rashi and Tosfos studied the same Talmud and also came to differing interpretations. Same input, different output. Can we really say that either party is "wrong?"

Yes, the dress in real life is only one color (blue and black, I'm told, though I literally don't see it) and the person who recorded the audio clip only said one thing ("Laurel") but we're not evaluating the objec-

tive reality. We're evaluating a reflection of reality in digital media. That small step removed is enough to affect our perceptions. Our interpretations of the reflection are equally valid even if only one resembles a reality to which we are not privy.

This is what happened in the Talmud, in tractate Baba Metzia 59b, where Rabbi Eliezer invoked all sorts of miracles to prove that his opinion on a certain matter reflected God's Divine position. The bottom line was that all these proofs were irrelevant. We don't rule in matters of law based on God's point of view (to which we are not privy) but through the perspective of our human filters. To that end, the Sages cited Deuteronomy 30:12, *lo baShamayim hi*, the Torah is no longer in Heaven. We can't evaluate the dress in the store window, so we evaluate the photo online. We can't interpret the Torah as it is seen in Heaven, we can only evaluate it as we understand it here on Earth.

(This is also true in politics. We are all given the same information about gun control, the Middle East, the economy, immigration, etc. We can legiti-

mately filter the information and come to different conclusions.)

Someone who sees the dress differently, or who hears "Yanny" where you hear "Laurel," doesn't disagree with you because they're stupid, greedy, megalomaniacal, disingenuous or evil. They filter the data, just as you and I do, and they legitimately perceive things differently. Similarly, someone who evaluates religious or political data and reaches a different conclusion need not be a liar, a fool, a zealot or a heretic. They just might see things differently. Or, as Dr. Shapiro put it in a subsequent comment, "I think the lesson here is that by trying to hear a different perspective you can actually overcome your biological predisposition and understand and value multiple truths." We can learn a lot about ourselves – and one another – from a two-syllable audio clip.

Rabbi Jack Abramowitz is the Content Editor at the Orthodox Union, better known as the OU. He is the author of six books on Jewish thought, all available on Amazon. A version of this article originally appeared on ou.org.

SAVE THE DATE!

- ☑ **Krav Maga Class** | Sunday, May 27 @ 12:00 P.M.
- ☑ **Friday Night Live** | Friday, June 1 @ 7:15 P.M.
- ☑ **DSX Awards Program** | Sunday, June 3 @ 10:00 A.M.
- ☑ **Community BBQ** | Sunday, June 3 @ 12:15 P.M.
- ☑ **Fast of the Ninth of Av** | Sunday, July 22
- ☑ **Champions Camp** | August 5 - August 10
- ☑ **Jewish Night at the RoughRiders** | Sunday, August 5 @ 7:05 P.M.

This Sunday

Eric Hicks from Krav Maga of Plano will be teaching another class exclusively for DATA of Plano members. It will take place next door in the studio at 12:00 P.M. on Sunday, May 27th. For more information, contact Patricia Kliman at 214.282.5657



Thank You

Kiddush this week is sponsored by Sandy Hubbard in memory of her grandmother, Florence Snitovsky, OBM

FRIDAY NIGHT LIVE

LIVE FROM PLANO, IT'S FRIDAY NIGHT SERVICES WITH A TWIST!
LIVELY CHILD-FRIENDLY SERVICE WITH SONG AND DANCE, FOLLOWED BY REFRESHMENTS. EXPERIENCE THE JOY OF USHERING IN SHABBAT WITH YOUR ENTIRE FAMILY.

JUNE 1ST // 7:15 PM // DATA OF PLANO
3251 Independence Pkwy, Plano 75075

PLANO COMMUNITY BBQ

Celebrate the end of the school year with a BBQ together with the entire community.

JUNE 3RD | 12:15 P.M.
PRESTON MEADOW PARK

\$5 per person / \$20 per family

For more information, contact
info@dataofplano.org



Champion's Mini-Camp

**BOATING // DAY TRIPS // OVERNIGHT
OUTDOOR ADVENTURES // WORKSHOP**

AGES 9-11 CHALUTZIM DIVISION // ALUFIM DIVISION AGES 12-14

\$225 PER CHILD SCHOLARSHIPS
AVAILABLE

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT RABBI ELI NISSEL AT
ENISSEL@DATAOFPLANO.ORG OR 970.402.2281

**August
5-10**

