

## Rabbi's Column

Marketing and the value of things and experiences is something I have been dealing with a little bit this week. There is also a connection to this week's Torah portion - more on that later.

We recently received a bill for one of the items we had normally purchased in every town, as something normally considered kind of important for clergy. When we first moved to town, I called to order this item, and was given (even though I did not know about it at the time) a super fantastic introductory price just for moving into Cheyenne and ordering the item. When it came time to renew the next year, the price tag went up 100%, but it still was not too unreasonable for what was being offered. It came time to renew this year, and the first change was that there was not yearly rate listed.

The amount listed was for 3 months.

It was almost what I had paid the first year.

It gets better (worse). According to the Customer Service Representative, because I had had such an amazing offer the first year, I was slowly being increased to the regular rate. The first two three month installments would be this low rate, and the next two three month amounts would double that, so the total for the year would still be less than normal.

It sounds good - but - the new, not quite as high as usual price, averaged out to a 300% price hike per year.

I will admit that if the value for the item had gone up even 400% I might have considered continuing my purchasing relationship with this item. It hasn't.

To be fair, I suppose the producers of the item might think that it was new and improved because there is an internet aspect, supposedly with value added, which is part of the package. However, I do not make use of the internet aspect, and do not foresee myself being that interested in any one aspect of the original item that I would look up more about it on the internet.

I keep thinking that the people responsible for the price change could have taken a longer view. Had the increases been a bit more gradual (say only 100% more per year at most until the normal amount is reached, any problem with renewing would have been based on dollars available, and not on actual increased cost. If the wording on the bill would have included a statement like, "the average person will be paying X for this item, and you can have it today for just half (or three fourths) of X:" I might have thought a little bit more before deciding the item had now priced itself out of my idea of what it is worth.

This coming week we read the last portion in the book of Leviticus. It contains two main items - what will happen in general if I do or do not pay attention to God, and a sliding guide to donations.

Most modern people will look at the donation section and go, "Aaargh! How can some people be valued for X, and others for much less?!" Most likely some of the ancient ones would have looked at the section and gone, "Aaargh! How can some of these people be assigned any value at all?!"

God possibly looked over the text and said, "I told you, Moses, every single person is priceless, and value assessed against a person will lead you into trouble. Tell them it is based on being publicly productive and spending the value of what I have given to them personally. When they are less productive, or if the donation comes from somebody else, then the value is lessened because it is transferred through more than one person." Moses replied, "I thought clarifying the ages and genders will make it quite clear to everyone." God answers, "Moses, you haven't seen the future the way I have. How much harder will it be to understand this when infants die much less frequently, and women are just as productive (or unproductive) as men? Pardon me, but Aaargh!"  
[personal Midrash (as far as I know)] Feel free to apply the God's main lesson in your lives, anyway.