

Home Weekly Parsha KI TEITZEI
Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

The idea of the necessity of a fence on one's roof and exposed staircases and high landings is a very logical and realistic one. The Torah itself advances this simple reasoning by stating that otherwise one may fall from that exposed area with painful if not tragic consequences. Halacha and practicality indicate that not everyone is obligated in this mitzvah and that there are physical instances where such a fence is impossible to construct or is even unnecessary. The moral imperative that drives the mitzvah seems to be always operative. A house, a home, a family always needs to be protected, both physically and morally. Just as negligence in failing to erect a fence around one's exposed roof is a cause for monetary and even criminal liability, so too negligence in failing to construct the moral fence to protect our home and family from the ravages of a rather depraved society is seen to be a serious transgression.

In raising children, as well as in governing society generally, there can be no doubt that fences have to be fashioned and protected. The rub always is as to how many fences and where they are to be placed and how high the actual fence should be. When it comes to the issue of the physical fences around our rooftops, halacha answers all these questions for us. But when the issue is regarding the moral fence that we must construct for our family and ourselves, there we find minimal guidance. Just as every physical fence must be constructed to conform to the dimensions of the roof it protects – a circular fence will not completely protect a rectangular roof – so too there is no one-size-fits-all moral fence that is appropriate for every home and family. Tragically, in today's Jewish world, there are many homes that have no moral fence at all protecting the house and family.

Everyone is allowed, if not even encouraged, to live a life without limits, restraints or moral discipline. And at the other end of the spectrum of Jewish society there are homes where the fence has been constructed too high and is too constrictive as to impede and prevent healthy individual development and constructive discovery and innovation. It is obvious that knowing where, when, and how to create this moral fence that will safeguard the Jewish home is the main challenge of parenting and family dynamics.

The Torah in this week's parsha speaks of ben sorer u'moreh – a rebellious, undisciplined youth – who will grow to be a very destructive force in society. Such a child in most cases represents the failure in the family in erecting and enforcing the proper moral fence in the house. That negligence of safeguarding the home spiritually, emotionally and morally will invariably come back to haunt that family and all society generally. There are no

magical ways to build these necessary fences. Every family and home is different and unique and there is only the common necessity for all families to erect the proper and fitting fences within their family. Patience, wisdom, restraint, and prayer are key ingredients in accomplishing this vital task.

Shabat shalom
Rabbi Berel Wein

KI TEITSE
The Limits of Love
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

In a parsha laden with laws, one in particular is full of fascination. Here it is:

If a man has two wives, one loved, the other unloved [senuah, literally "hated"], and both the loved and the unloved bear him sons but the firstborn is the son of the unloved wife, then when he wills his property to his sons, he must not give the rights of the firstborn to the son of the beloved wife in preference to his actual firstborn, the son of the unloved wife. He must recognise [the legal rights of] the firstborn of his unloved wife so as to give him a double share of all he has, for he is the first of his father's strength. The birthright is legally his.

Deut. 21:15-17

The law makes eminent sense. In biblical Israel the firstborn was entitled to a double share in his father's inheritance.[1] What the law tells us is that this is not at the father's discretion. He cannot choose to transfer this privilege from one son to another, in particular he cannot do this by favouring the son of the wife he loves most if in fact the firstborn came from another wife.

The opening three laws – a captive woman taken in the course of war, the above law about the rights of the firstborn, and the "stubborn and rebellious son" – are all about dysfunctions within the family. The Sages said that they were given in this order to hint that someone who takes a captive woman will suffer from strife at home, and the result will be a delinquent son.[2] In Judaism marriage is seen as the foundation of society. Disorder there leads to disorder elsewhere. So far, so clear.

What is extraordinary about it is that it seems to be in the sharpest possible conflict with a major narrative in the Torah, namely Jacob and his two wives, Leah and Rachel. Indeed the Torah, by its use of language, makes unmistakable verbal linkages between the two passages. One is the pair of opposites, ahuvah/senuah, "loved" and "unloved/hated". This is precisely the way the Torah describes Rachel and Leah.

Recall the context. Fleeing from his home to his uncle Laban, Jacob fell in love at first sight with Rachel and worked seven years for her hand in marriage. On the night

of the wedding, however, Laban substituted his elder daughter Leah. When Jacob complained, “Why have you deceived me?” Laban replied, with intentional irony, “It is not done in our place to give the younger before the elder.”[3] Jacob then agreed to work another seven years for Rachel. The second wedding took place a mere week after the first. We then read:

And [Jacob] went in also to Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah ... God saw that Leah was unloved [senuah] and He opened her womb, but Rachel remained barren.

Gen. 29:30-31

Leah called her firstborn Reuben, but her hurt at being less loved remained, and we read this about the birth of her second son:

She became pregnant again and had a son. ‘God has heard that I was unloved [senuah],’ she said, ‘and He also gave me this son.’ She named the child Simeon.

Gen. 29:33

The word *senuah* appears only six times in the Torah, twice in the passage above about Leah, four times in our parsha in connection with the law of the rights of the firstborn.

There is an even stronger connection. The unusual phrase “first of [his father’s] strength” appears only twice in the Torah, here (“for he is the first of his father’s strength”) and in relation to Reuben, Leah’s firstborn:

“Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might and the first of my strength, first in rank and first in power.”

Gen. 49:3

Because of these substantive and linguistic parallels, the attentive reader cannot help but hear in the law in our parsha a retrospective commentary on Jacob’s conduct vis-a-vis his own sons. Yet that conduct seems to have been precisely the opposite of what is legislated here. Jacob did transfer the right of the firstborn from Reuben, his actual firstborn, son of the less-loved Leah, to Joseph, the firstborn of his beloved Rachel. This is what he told Joseph:

“Now, the two sons who were born to you in Egypt before I came here shall be considered as mine. Ephraim and Manasseh shall be just like Reuben and Simeon to me.”

Gen. 48:5

Reuben should have received a double portion, but instead this went to Joseph. Jacob recognised each of Joseph’s two sons as entitled to a full portion in the inheritance. So Ephraim and Menasseh each became a tribe in its own right. In other words, we seem to have a clear contradiction between Deuteronomy and Genesis.

How are we to resolve this? It may be that, despite the rabbinic principle that the patriarchs observed the whole Torah before it was given, this is only an approximation. Not every law was precisely the same before and after the covenant at Sinai. For instance Ramban notes that the story of Judah and Tamar seems to describe a slightly different

form of levirate marriage from the one set out in Deuteronomy.[4]

In any case, this is not the only apparent contradiction between Genesis and later law. There are others, not least the very fact that Jacob married two sisters, something categorically forbidden in Leviticus 18:18. Ramban’s solution – an elegant one, flowing from his radical view about the connection between Jewish law and the land of Israel – is that the patriarchs observed the Torah only while they were living in Israel itself.[5] Jacob married Leah and Rachel outside Israel, in the house of Lavan in Haran (situated in today’s Turkey).

Abarbanel gives a quite different explanation. The reason Jacob transferred the double portion from Reuben to Joseph was that God told him to do so. The law in Devarim is therefore stated to make clear that the case of Joseph was an exception, not a precedent.

Ovadia Sforno suggests that the Deuteronomy prohibition applies only when the transfer of the firstborn’s rights happens because of the father favours one wife over another. It does not apply when the firstborn has been guilty of a sin that would warrant forfeiting his legal privilege. That is what Jacob meant when, on his deathbed, he said to Reuben: “Unstable as water, you will no longer be first, for you went up onto your father’s bed, onto my couch and defiled it.” (Gen. 49:4). This is stated explicitly in the book of Chronicles which says that “Reuben ... was the firstborn, but when he defiled his father’s marriage bed, his rights as firstborn were given to the sons of Joseph son of Israel.” (1 Chron.5:1).

It is not impossible, though, that there is a different kind of explanation altogether. What makes the Torah unique is that it is a book about both law (the primary meaning of “Torah”) and history. Elsewhere these are quite different genres. There is law, an answer to the question, “What may we or may not do?” And there is history, an answer to the question, “What happened?” There is no obvious relationship between these two at all.

Not so in Judaism. In many cases, especially in *mishpat*, civil law, there is a connection between law and history, between what happened and what we should or should not do.[6] Much of biblical law, for example, emerges directly from the Israelites’ experience of slavery in Egypt, as if to say: This is what our ancestors suffered in Egypt, therefore do not do likewise. Don’t oppress your workers. Don’t turn an Israelite into a lifelong slave. Don’t leave your servants or employees without a weekly day of rest. And so on.

Not all biblical law is like this, but some is. It represents truth learned through experience, justice as it takes shape through the lessons of history. The Torah takes the past as a guide to the future: often positive but sometimes also negative. Genesis tells us, among other things, that Jacob’s favouritism toward Rachel over Leah, and Rachel’s firstborn Joseph over Leah’s firstborn, Reuben, was a cause of lingering strife within the family. It almost led the

brothers to kill Joseph, and it did lead to their selling him as a slave. According to Ibn Ezra, the resentment felt by the descendants of Reuben endured for several generations, and was the reason why Dan and Aviram, both Reubenites, became key figures in the Korach rebellion.[7] Jacob did what he did as an expression of love. His feeling for Rachel was overwhelming, as it was for Joseph, her elder son. Love is central to Judaism: not just love between husband and wife, parent and child, but also love for God, for neighbour and stranger. But love is not enough. There must also be justice and the impartial application of the law. People must feel that law is on the side of fairness. You cannot build a society on love alone. Love unites but it also divides. It leaves the less-loved feeling abandoned, neglected, disregarded, "hated." It can leave in its wake strife, envy and a vortex of violence and revenge.

That is what the Torah is telling us when it uses verbal association to link the law in our parsha with the story of Jacob and his sons in Genesis. It is teaching us that law is not arbitrary. It is rooted in the experience of history. Law is itself a tikkun, a way of putting right what went wrong in the past. We must learn to love; but we must also know the limits of love, and the importance of justice-as-fairness in families as in society.

[1] This is already implicit in the story of Jacob, Reuben and Joseph: on this, see below. The Sages also inferred it from the episode of the daughters of Tzelophehad. See Num. 27:7, Baba Batra 118b.

[2] Sanhedrin 107a.

[3] Gen. 29:25-26. A reference to Jacob buying Esau's birthright and taking his blessing.

[4] See Ramban to Gen. 38:8.

[5] Ramban to Gen. 26:5.

[6] This is the subject of a famous essay by Robert Cover, 'Nomos and Narrative', Harvard Law Review 1983-1984, available at http://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3690&context=fss_papers. Cover's view was that "No set of legal institutions or prescriptions exists apart from the narratives that locate it and give it meaning. For every constitution there is an epic, for each decalogue a scripture."

[7] Ibn Ezra to Num. 16:1.

from: Rabbi YY Jacobson <rabiyy@theyeshiva.net>
date: Aug 24, 2023, 5:33 PM Can You Forgive Your Child?

How Do You Deal with Children Who Put You through the Wringer?

Rabbi YY Jacobson

7 Elul 5783 The Lawyer

A grade school teacher was asking students what their parents did for a living. "Tim, you be first," she said. "What does your mother do all day?" Tim stood up and proudly

said, "She's a doctor." "That's wonderful. How about you, Amie?" Amie shyly stood up, scuffed her feet, and said, "My father is an electrician. "Thank you, Amie," said the teacher. "What about your father, Billy?" Billy proudly stood up and announced, "My daddy steals from people and drinks a lot." The teacher was aghast and promptly changed the subject to geography. Later that day she went to Billy's house and rang the bell. Billy's father answered the door.

The teacher explained what his son had said and asked if there might be some logical explanation. Billy's father said, "I'm actually a lawyer. But how can I explain a thing like that to a seven-year old?" Why Death? The law in this week's portion concerning a wayward son seems absurd and horrific. "If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who does not obey the voice of his father and the voice of his mother, and does not listen to them when they discipline him; then his father and mother shall take hold of him and bring him to the elders at the gate of his town. They shall say to the elders, 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He does not obey our voice. He is a profligate and a drunkard.'

"Then all the men of his town shall stone him to death. You must purge the evil from among you.

All Israel will hear of it and be afraid." How are we to understand this Torah passage? First, are we to believe that parents would actually take up the Torah's advice and have their son killed if he acts like a monster in his teens! Can you imagine a Jewish mother sending her son to the High Court to be punished: "Here, Ben, I want you should take along these cookies I baked for you; and don't forget to wear your cardigan; it gets cold in the death chamber." Besides, a death sentence for what? For eating meat and drinking wine? For stealing food? Isn't this punishment excessive? He is only a 13-year-old kid? And did his offenses really merit capital punishment?

The Mishnah and Talmud, quoted in Rashi on our portion, gives this answer:[1] He is not being punished for his current sins. Rather, given his outrageous current behavior, the Torah testifies that it is inevitable that he will grow up to be a robber and murderer. So better to kill him now, before he murders other people and before he destroys his own soul. The patterns of his behavior demonstrate that he is doomed to a life of inevitable evil. Let him die an innocent man. Yet this seems absurd. All of Judaism is based on the idea that even a sinner can repent. Certainly, a 13-year-old boy who is at this point not killing yet, certainly he may change his ways. How can we be certain that he will become a murderer?

An axiom in Judaism is, "Nothing stands in the way of Teshuvah." The most evil Jewish king, Menashe, was accepted as a baal-teshuva.[2] And here we say that a 13-year-old troubled boy is destined to grow into a monster? Why? True, as the Talmud says,[3] this story never happened nor will it happen. This Torah law is theory, not

practical. But how are we to understand the law in theory? What is a lesson the Torah is trying to impart in this law?

Forgiveness There is a beautiful answer given by the Shem Mishmuel, authored by Rabbi Shmuel Bornstein (1856-1926), the Rebbe of Sochotshov, Poland. (He was the son of the Avnei Nezer, Rabbi Avraham Borenstein, and grandson of the Kotzker Rebbe). He raises one more question. The Talmud says,[4] that at any point, a wayward son whose parents forgive him is forgiven and not punished.[5] But wait. We don't kill the boy because of what he did to his parents.[6] We kill him, as the Talmud explains because the Torah testifies that he is destined to become a killer. So what does it help that his parents forgive him?

The Holy Chain The answer contains one of the most critical lessons for our day and age in terms of how parents and educators deal with children who are difficult, challenging, and often take us through the wringer.[7] Every child, even the greatest menace, is inherently holy and good, Divine and sacred. For each of them carries the genes of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—each of them has a Jewish soul, which is eternally connected to the Divine.

To reveal that connection, a father and a mother must keep the bond with their children strong. When we sever our relationship with our children, even if we have good reason to do so, we deprive them of the ability to experience themselves as part of the golden, unbreakable chain from Abraham to this very day. Says the Shem Mishmuel: When the son feels the love inherent in his parents' willingness to forgive him, despite all of his misdeeds, this keeps him connected to his roots. And since his roots are so deep and sacred, there is now strong hope that he will find the ability to transform himself. If the parents do not forgive their child, they do not allow him to forgive himself and start his life anew. They ensure that he continues in his destructive path. Conversely, the moment they forgive him internally, the moment they can accept their child and love him despite his terrible and heartbreaking failures, they now allow him to discover his own spiritual power, which is deeper than all of his failings and trauma.

Never Disconnect

This is the great message the Torah is teaching us. Never ever disconnect from your child, even if it is not easy. Sometimes we are compelled to break the connection, to sever the bond, to alienate him or her. It is simply too painful to be in a relationship. But the Torah is telling us, this is the primary reason he will never be able to come back. You need to learn to forgive your children, to see the infinite light hidden in them, that light you saw in the child when he emerged from your womb as innocent and angelic as ever. Yes, there have been disappointments, perhaps betrayal, shame, and serious misdeeds. Your child is broken. So what does he (or she) need to find the stamina to repair himself? He needs to be able to believe in his soul, in his future, in his goodness.

How can we help him achieve that? If we can love him, if we can forgive him, if we can show him that he is not a worthless, helpless case, but a particle of the Divine, a ray of infinity, a fragment of G-d in this world. Keeping him connected to the chain, will allow him to see himself, ultimately, in the context of a 4,000-year chain, of which he is the next rung.

Imperfection

My brother Rabbi Simon Jacobson, author of *Toward a Meaningful Life*, shared with me the following story: A number of years ago, at one of my weekly classes I was discussing the fact that each one of us was sent to this Earth with an indispensable mission. And this mission imbues each human being with unique qualities, all the necessary faculties we need to fulfill our respective mission. Even if someone is weak or deficient in one area, even one born with a "handicap," this same person is blessed with other strengths that compensate for and allow this individual to realize his or her calling. Some of these strengths may often be less obvious than others, and then it is our sacred responsibility to help uncover these deeper resources. Nothing is holier and more dignified than to help a person discover hidden potential, allowing him to actualize his unique life calling. After my class, a striking young man approached me. As he got closer I saw that he suffered from some motor complications. He asked to speak with me privately. After everyone left we sat down, and he began to tell me his story. His words came out slowly, due to a speech impediment, and he shared with me that he was born with a rare disease that affected his nervous system, which also impaired his mental capacity and growth. He later discovered that his parents gave him away as a newborn, after hearing that he was diagnosed with severe mental handicaps. Over the years, it turned out that the diagnosis was not completely accurate, though he still suffered from many problems. At that point, his parents were not willing or unable to handle him and they chose to have no contact with him.

His parents were very wealthy and prominent, and they provided that he be cared for in a quality institution for children with special needs. But they never came to visit him, and for all practical purposes, he was brought up as an orphan. A "privileged orphan," he was told. All his physical needs met, except for the most important one: Unconditional love from nurturing parents.

As much as I tried, I could not completely control my feelings from pouring out for his soul. However, more powerful than all his pain was the refined light shining out of this young man. He was simply an exquisite human being. With a special charm, clearly the result of years of struggle, he had emerged with a very rare type of warmth, which basked everything around him in a soft glow. "And tonight," he tells me, "you said that each one of us has a unique mission despite appearances. I too, like the fellow in your story, lack certain abilities. But, unlike the wealthy

man in your story, I do not know what strengths I have in return. Can you help me discover my special qualities?"...

I was taken. He wasn't aware of his own level of refinement. This tortured man could give more love and kindness than most people I know, yet he was crying for help. What can I say, my heart went out to him in the deepest possible way, and we began to communicate regularly. He would attend many of my classes and I would converse with him about many things, and he would always elicit in me kindness I did not know I had. From time to time, he would address his own feelings of rejection and his desire to confront his parents. He had tracked them down but was terrified of contacting them. Mischievous thoughts began to creep into my brain about contacting them myself. But what would I say? Who am I to call them? I tried not to be judgmental; who knows what they have endured; what caused them to give up and desert their own child? But is it being judgmental to ask whether any parent has such a right – no matter what the excuse? And is it my role to be the one that confronts these parents?

After a few months of hesitation, I got the number and I finally made the call. "Hello, good afternoon, this is Simon Jacobson. I am a friend of your son and would like to speak to you about him." Deathly silence on the other end of the line. What do I say now? "Hello, hi may we speak for a few moments?" "What can I do for you?" was the brisk and cold response. "I know your son. He is an extraordinary man and I thought that would make you proud." Click. The father hung up the phone. What do I do now? Call back? I decided to wait. A few days later I tried again. This time his secretary did not let the call through, so I left a message saying that "this matter is very personal and can have profound long-term consequences for good or for bad." I tried again the next day and what do you know, he took my call. Now what? I simply said: "Please understand. I am not in the business of meddling. I am not being critical or judgmental. I simply feel from the depths of my heart that it would be life-transforming for you and your wife to meet your son." "We don't want to talk about it, we don't want to go there, we did what we felt was best for everyone." "I am sure you did. Still, today, now, your son has grown to be a tremendous soul. He needs to see you and you need to see him. Please consider that." "I'll get back to you." He didn't. But now I was on the warpath. So I called again. He did apologize for not getting back – almost making me respect his cordiality until I remembered why we were here in the first place – and said that his wife would not be able to do it. Too uncomfortable. He mumbled something about having "long ago buried this." But I persisted. "So then I'll arrange for you to meet your son without your wife." "No, not yet."

After a few months, he finally relented, and together with his wife, we scheduled the fateful meeting that everybody dreaded. At their insistence, which surprised me, they wanted me to be present at the meeting, I figured, to serve

as a bit of a buffer. The big day came. We met at their lavish home in the living room, tea and biscuits on the table, all choreographed to the tee, except for the emotions that would be released.

Oh man, this was one of the most heart-wrenching experiences I would ever endure, and I wondered what havoc did I wreak, but it was too late. Here we were. Initially, everybody was cordial, even detached, like strangers meeting about buying a house. "What do you do?" "Where have you traveled?" "Are you a Yankee fan?" "How's the weather?" – you get the idea? After sitting silent, trying to be invisible and letting things take their natural, biological course (or so I hoped), I finally piped in and said the first serious statement of the evening. "Your son told me his story.

He must have a lot of anger inside of him, but he hasn't shown it to me, or maybe not even to himself. You must have many feelings yourself. I really don't belong here, but since I am here allow me to say that your son is one of the most beautiful people I know. I have discovered through him new horizons of human dignity and the capacity of the soul to shine in this harsh world. I think it would be truly life-changing for you to get to know each other." Before I stood up to leave, our hero, turned to his parents and uttered a few words that could melt any heart. With a stutter and a bit slowly – his speech was impeded, as you may recall – he began: "Mumma, Puppa" – I could tell that he worked long and hard to get those words out (he never referred to his parents that way when he spoke with me). "Mumma, Puppa... I, I am not perfect. You, too, are not perfect. I have forgiven you. Can you forgive me?"

We all burst into tears. I made my way out the door, leaving them alone... "Mumma, Puppa... I, I am not perfect. You, too, are not perfect. I have forgiven you. Can you forgive me?" Can you forgive me for not being perfect, their handicapped child asked. Can you forgive me for putting into your life a child who is less than perfect?...

Can you forgive your child for not being perfect? Can you forgive your loved one for not being perfect? Can you forgive yourself for being imperfect?

[1] רש"י כי תצא: בן סורר ומורה אינו חייב, עד שיגנוב ויאכל תרטימר [פסוק כ (בשר וישתה חצי לוג יין. שנאמר) פסוק כ זולל וסבא, ונאמר (משלי כג, כ) אל תהי בסובאי יין בזוללי בשר למו. ובן סורר ומורה נהרג על שם סופר, הגיעה תורה לסוף דעתו, סוף שמכלה ממון אביו ומבקש למודו ואינו מוצא, ועומד בפרשת דרכים ומלסטם את הבריות, אמרה תורה ימות זכאי ואל ימות חייב

[2] Rambam Laws of Teshuvah ch. 2-3. See there ch. 7

[3] Sanhedrin 71

[4] Sanhedrin 88b

[5] סנהדרין פה, ב: בן סורר ומורה שרצו אביו ואמו למחול לו מוחלין לו.

[6] As the Talmud says, a daughter can never become a "soror umoreh," it only applies to a male.

שם משמואל כי תצא תרע"א: ש"ס סנהדרין) פ"ח. (בן סורר ומורה [7] שרצו אביו ואמו למחול לו מוחלין לו. ויש להבין הלוא אינו נהרג על מה שהמרה נגדם אלא ע"ש סופו שסופו ללסטם את הבריות, א"כ למה תועיל מחילתם ונראה דהנה יש להתבונן במאמרם ז"ל (שם ע"ב) הגיעה תורה לסוף דעתו וכו' הלוא כמה רשעים גמורים שעשו כל התועבות שבעולם ולבסוף עשו תשובה, ושמא יהי זה כמותם, הלוא לא ננעלו דרכי תשובה לפני שום אדם וכמאה"כ (תהלים צ') תשב אנוש עד דכא ודרשו ז"ל (ירושלמי חגיגה פ"ב ה"א) עד דכדוכה של נפש מקבלין אך נראה דהנה איתא במד"ת פ' האזינו סי' ד' (שתשובה מועלת לישראל ולא לעכו"ם. ונראה דמחמת שישראל הם בני אברהם יצחק ויעקב, שהם בעצמם נפשיות טהורות וטובות רק שבמקרה נתלכלכו בעבירות, אבל כשעושה תשובה שוב מתעוררת בו הנקודה השרשית האחוזה בשלשלת הקודש עד האבות הקדושים ושופעת בו רוח חיים חדשים ממקור ישראל, ובודאי תמיד תשובתו וישאר נאמן להשי"ת ותורתו, אבל עכו"ם מאחר שנתקלקלו ונכרתה חיותם כענף הנכרת ממקום חיותו שוב אין לו תקנה, ואף כשיעשה תשובה בודאי לא תמיד ויחזור לסורו. הכלל שכל עצמה של תשובה שמועלת היא מפני ההשתלשלות עד האבות, ממילא זה שהוא סורר ומורה נפסק חיבורו מאביו ואמו ושוב אין לו חיבור בשלשלת הקודש בודאי שלא יעשה תשובה, ואף אם יעשה לא תמיד ויחזור לסורו, וסופו ללסטם את הבריות, אבל כשאביו ואמו מוחלין לו הנה הוא עדיין נקשר בשלשלת הקודש, שוב אינו נהרג, שיכול להיות שעוד ישוב בתשובה שלימה.

Shabbat Shalom: Ki Tetze (Deuteronomy 21:10-25:19)
By Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

RSR Head Shot Gershon Ellinson creditEfrat, Israel – “When you go forth to battle...and you see among the captives a beautiful woman and you desire her.... When a man has two wives, one the beloved and the other the hated.... If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son...” (Deuteronomy 21:10–18)

Every once in a while, a strikingly semantic connection and allusion helps us to understand how the Bible is truly a magnificently seamless entity, in which a proper reading of a passage in one of the biblical books sheds brilliant light on a heretofore hidden meaning in another one of the biblical books. An example of this may be found in the beginning of our Torah portion.

Ki Tetze opens with war and the possibility of an Israelite soldier marrying a captive war bride. He is forbidden to do so, however, until he first brings her home, observes her in her most unattractive state as she mourns her family for a full 30 days – shaven head, long fingernails – and, if at the end of that period his ardor has not flagged, he may have her converted and marry her.

We next read of a man with two wives, a loved one and a hated one; if the eldest son is the son of the hated wife, the father is forbidden to favor the younger son of the beloved

wife and bequeath the double portion to him rather than to his firstborn.

The third section concerns the rebellious son, a glutton and a drunkard, so disobedient to his mother and father that they are required to bring him to the High Court, where he could be condemned to death.

Rashi, citing the Midrash, weaves a profound, psychologically oriented narrative thread connecting these seemingly disparate rulings:

The Torah is making a concession because of man’s evil inclination, for had God not permitted the [gentile war bride] he would have married her nonetheless. However, if he does marry her, in the end he will come to hate her. He will rue the day that he gave up his family and traditions because of her, the excitement he had previously felt would turn to resentment as the Torah writes immediately afterwards: “If a man has two wives, one beloved and another hated,” and ultimately, he will parent a rebellious son by her. It is for this reason that these sections are put in juxtaposition. (Rashi, Deuteronomy 21:11)

Three stages: first, overwhelming attraction to an inappropriate woman for the wrong reasons and then, after the heat of lust turns into a dying ember, you end up hating her and hating the child born of that union. The hapless and despised child, cheated out of his rightful birthright through no fault of his own, will then assume the despicable characteristics of the rebellious son. In effect, Rashi connects these three laws by presenting the dynamics which form a dysfunctional family, leading to criminal behavior on the part of the offspring.

And it seems to me that in addition to the psychological underpinnings of the sequence of the incidents, this biblical passage also resonates with seminal occurrences in the life of our patriarch Jacob back in the book of Genesis, and sheds important light on the tensions and mishaps which shaped our patriarchal forbears and their children. Let us first review the precise words of the second ruling in Ki Tetze:

If a person has two wives, one beloved and one hated, and both the beloved and hated wives have sons, but the firstborn is that of the hated one, then it shall be when he makes his sons inherit his property, he may not declare the son of the beloved the firstborn before the son of the hated, who is the firstborn, by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the first; the right of the firstborn is his. (Deuteronomy 21:15–17)

Now didn’t Jacob have two wives? And didn’t he love one of them and hate the other, with the Torah itself testifying that Leah felt “hated” (Genesis 29:31)? And didn’t he bequeath to Joseph, the son of the beloved wife, Rachel, a double portion, while overlooking the inheritance due to his first-born, Reuven, the son of the hated wife?

Generally speaking, and most justifiably, the story of Jacob and Rachel is viewed by the world as one of the most magnificent love stories in literature. His very first meeting

with Rachel is an expression of love at first sight, when this unlikely scholar and tent-dweller exhibits superhuman strength by dramatically and single-handedly rolling away the heavy stone covering the well where Rachel had arrived to water her father's flocks. And the seven years of work that Laban asks from Jacob in return for his daughter's hand pass "like a few days" for this man in love. But he is tricked into a marriage with "the other sister, Leah," a woman he married under false pretenses, and who is therefore an inappropriate mate for him.

The Bible – and especially the Midrash – helps us to see the terrible tragedy suffered by Leah, which was not unlike what could be in store for the hapless captive woman. After her marriage, "God saw that Leah was hated (senu'a) and He opened her womb" (Genesis 29:31). The word "senu'a" that appears in Genesis is repeated in our portion which speaks of the eldest son of the hated (senu'a) wife. (A wife who is cast aside in favor of another woman always feels herself to be hated if she doesn't feel really beloved.) The Torah goes on to describe the birth: "And Leah conceived and bore a son; she called his name Reuven [literally, behold, a son] because she said, 'God has seen into my affliction (be'oniyi), for now my husband will love me'" (Genesis 29:32). But alas, Jacob never grew to love Leah, who suffered silently throughout her marriage.

And remember the third incident in our Torah reading. An inappropriate marriage will lead to a cheated, "hated" son, who will express his resentment by becoming rebellious. Reuven sins with his father's concubine Bilha. To be sure, our sages modified the harsh literal meaning of the biblical text in describing the nature of that sin. "And it came to pass...that Reuven went and lay with Bilha, his father's concubine" (Genesis 35:22).

Our oral tradition insists that Reuven did not actually sleep with Bilha, but – when, after the death of Rachel, Jacob moved his couch into Bilha's tent – Reuven switched his father's couch into Leah's tent in order to save his mother from another act of brazen humiliation. "If my mother's sister was a rival to my mother, shall the bondmaid of my mother's sister be a rival to my mother?" cried out Reuven, according to the Midrash. "Thereupon he [Reuven] rose and transposed his couch" (Shabbat 55b). But however we understand the situation, Reuven rebelled against his father Jacob!

Perhaps Jacob understands the positive motivation behind Reuven's rebellious action – that in this perverse way of taking his father's concubine he was crying out to become his father's true heir and continuation, and thus recognizes his own guilt in having rejected his biblical firstborn. After all, despite the egregious sin, the Torah records that "Jacob heard" of the mishap, does not comment, but then our Masoretic tradition leaves an empty space, which apparently hints at Jacob's rage, guilt, and perhaps tears – as well as his ultimate decision to remain silent. Finally, the story concludes "And the children of Jacob were

twelve" (Genesis 35:23). Reuven is not rejected by his father. He is forgiven – and Talmudic law ordains that "if the parents of a rebellious son forgive him, he is forgiven" (Sanhedrin 88a).

Apparently, the Torah recognizes the complexity of relationships of individuals caught in circumstances beyond their control – and the familial suffering which often results. Jacob was Laban's victim, as were Leah and Rachel. Reuven suffers the fallout brought about by the situation of a long-barren favored wife who suffers an untimely death.

And it is even more complex than this. Following the incident of Reuven's sinful act, Jacob finally is able to return to his father's house, to Isaac, "in peace" (Genesis 23:21). Jacob absented himself from his father for more than two decades – and then wanders about in Shekhem even after he leaves Laban – at least partially because he felt guilt-ridden about his having deceived the patriarch in order to receive the paternal blessings. But now he has the courage to confront his father. He now can legitimately expect that just as he forgave Reuven his transgression because Reuven had wrongly been treated as the "hated" son, so Isaac would forgive him – Jacob – because Jacob, too, had been rejected by Isaac as the "hated" or, at least, rejected son.

Hence the legal material in our portion resonates with the previously recounted tragedy of Jacob's family – and attempts to legislate a lifestyle intended to prevent such future occurrences. Our Bible is a magnificent unity, from Genesis to Deuteronomy, of connections, reverberations and repair between the generations.

Shabbat Shalom

Office of the Chief Rabbi Mirvis

Elul: We can have hope in the future!

Confidence and trepidation are an integral part of the rollercoaster of our lives. This is so well presented in Psalm 27, LeDavid Hashem Ori, which we recite at this time of the year.

This psalm is comprised of two elements: In the first instance, it's full of confidence. Hashem is my light; he is my salvation. Even if war breaks out, 'bezot ani boteach' – I will be absolutely certain; we will prevail, we will triumph. There is enormous confidence expressed.

But then we come to the second part. Here we have fear and trepidation; fearing the absence of Hashem in our lives; fearing even our closest family turning their backs upon us. These two parts of LeDavid Hashem Ori are actually followed by a third, a most significant conclusion, and it's all about hope. (Psalm 27:14)

"Kavei el Hashem," – "Let us have hope in Hashem."

"Chazak v'ameitz libecha, let us be strong and courageous,"

"vekavei el Hashem." – "and let us have hope in Hashem."

After the tablets were smashed, Moshe ascended Mount Sinai for a second time and remained there for a second period of 40 days. Those 40 days are mirrored by the 40 days from the beginning of the month of Elul until Yom Kippur. Why did Moshe need a second period of 40 days? He had already received the Torah from Hashem!

He needed these days because he needed to repair his relationship on behalf of the people in the presence of the Almighty. He needed to go through the Torah again. He needed to emerge with the second set of tablets now in a position of strength, full of hope for the future.

That's how we hope to emerge from this High Holy Day period, through Elul, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Sure enough, in Elul our cheshbon hanefesh, our introspection during this time will be full of confidence and, yes, trepidation as well. But thanks to the presence of Hashem and his blessings in our lives we will be able to fulfil 'kavei el Hashem', to have hope in the future because the Almighty will always be with us.

Shabbat shalom.

Torah Weekly

Parshat Ki Tetzei

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

PARSHA OVERVIEW

The Torah describes the only permissible way a woman captured in battle may be married. If a man marries two wives, and the less-favored wife bears a firstborn son, this son's right to inherit a double portion is protected against the father's desire to favor the child of the favored wife. The penalty for a rebellious son, who will inevitably degenerate into a monstrous criminal, is stoning. A body must not be left on the gallows overnight, because it had housed a holy soul. Lost property must be returned. Men are forbidden from wearing women's clothing and vice versa. A mother bird may not be taken together with her eggs. A fence must be built around the roof of a house. It is forbidden to plant a mixture of seeds, to plow with an ox and a donkey together, or to combine wool and linen in a garment. A four-cornered garment must have twisted threads tzitzit on its corners. Laws regarding illicit relationships are detailed. When Israel goes to war, the camp must be governed by rules of spiritual purity. An escaped slave must not be returned to his master.

Taking interest for lending to a Jew is forbidden. The Jewish People are not to make vows. A worker may eat of the fruit he is harvesting. Divorce and marriage are legislated. For the first year of marriage, a husband is exempt from the army and stays home to rejoice with his wife. Tools of labor may not be impounded, as this prevents the debtor from earning a living. The penalty for kidnapping for profit is death. Removal of the signs of the disease tzara'at is forbidden. Even for an overdue loan, the creditor must return the collateral daily if the debtor needs

it. Workers' pay must not be delayed. The guilty may not be subjugated by punishing an innocent relative. Because of their vulnerability, converts and orphans have special rights of protection. The poor are to have a portion of the harvest. A court may impose lashes. An ox must not be muzzled while threshing. It is a mitzvah for a man to marry his brother's widow if the deceased left no offspring. Weights and measures must be accurate and used honestly. The Torah portion concludes with the mitzvah to erase the name of Amalek, for, in spite of knowing about the Exodus, they ambushed the Jewish People.

PARSHA INSIGHTS

The Marital Recipe

“And he wrote her a bill of divorce” (24:1)

Nothing is sadder than family break-up. Divorce is the scourge of our modern world. In all sectors of the community, divorce is on the rise. In some areas, more people now get divorced than stay married. Prenuptial agreements are par for the course. More and more couples enter marriage with fewer and fewer expectations.

The Torah acknowledges that not all marriages will be successful. If necessary, it gives us the mitzvah of divorce with a document called a get. The concept of “till death us do part” is not really a Jewish idea. However, divorce, while being a mitzvah, is no source for joy. Judaism teaches that when a couple gets divorced, the mizbeach (holy altar) weeps.

How are we to understand this idea that the altar weeps? Nothing in Judaism is merely poetic. And why specifically should it be the altar that weeps? Why not the Tablets of the Covenant? Why not the husband's tefillin? Why not the wife's Shabbat candelabra?

Probably the greatest source of marital disharmony is misunderstanding the purpose of marriage. The secular paradigm, enshrined in every fairy tale, from the Brothers Grimm to the Brothers Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, is that the princess finds the prince of her dreams. She finds total fulfillment in Prince Charming, and he finds everything he wants in her: Beauty, poise, intelligence, money, someone who puts the top on the toothpaste. Everything!

But marriage is not about finding someone to fulfill you. It's about finding someone you can fulfill. Marriage is a machine for giving. Marriage is about living the principle that you are not the center of the world. In the Book of Genesis, the Torah says, It is not good for man to live alone. When you live alone, you only have one person to give to — yours truly. The world revolves around you. You are the center of the universe.

The mizbeach is the place where man gives to Hashem. Man gives of his best and offers it to his Creator. The word korban (woefully inadequately translated as sacrifice) derives from the root “closeness.” When you give, you become close. When you take, you distance yourself.

The Torah tells us that no korban could be offered on the mizbeach without salt. Salt is the archetypal giver. Salt has

only one purpose: to give taste to something else. By itself, it is nothing. When a person sees himself as salt, when he sees the whole purpose of his existence is to give, he has added the vital ingredient to his marriage. He has added the spice of life.

Rabbi Yissocher Frand
Parshas Ki Seitzei

Amalek and the Worst of the Three Cardinal Sins

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly portion: #1347 – The Case of the Frail Grandfather and the Bracha Under the Chupa. Good Shabbos!

The pasuk at the end of Parshas Ki Seitzei says, "Remember that which Amalek did to you on the path when you came out of Egypt." (Devorim 25:17) This is the parsha we read on the Shabbos before Purim. The truth is that a person can fulfill his obligation to 'remember the obliteration of Amalek' by hearing this reading this week on Parshas Ki Seitzei as well, provided the Baal Koreh has in mind to be 'motzi' him and he has in mind to be 'yotzei' with the reading of the Baal Koreh.

Rashi here comments on the juxtaposition of the parsha of "Zachor es asher asa lecha Amalek" with the previous parsha which warns against possessing improperly calibrated scales (allowing the owner of those scales to cheat his customers in business). A person is required to utilize strictly calibrated weights and measures in his commerce transactions.

Rashi explains in the name of the Medrash Tanchuma: If a person possesses deceitful weights and measures, he must worry about the enemy. Cheating in business will lead to attacks from Amalek and his ilk.

This seems like a rather novel idea. There are so many significant prohibitions in the Torah. Someone fixing his scales so that he can cheat his customer out of a couple of ounces of merchandise does not seem to be the worst thing in the world. True, it is dishonest, and it is a form of theft, which is very bad, but why is this the aveira (sin) that invites attack from Amalek? If the issue here is g'neivah (theft), let the Torah state here "Lo signov" (you shall not steal), which indicates a much more blatant aveira than tweaking scales. Why will the specific aveira of owning imprecise weights and measures cause the Ribono shel Olam to send Amalek against us?

There is a very important Netziv at the end of the parsha on this pasuk of "Zachor es asher asa lecha Amalek..." The Netziv asks this very question. The Netziv further points out that there were no weights and measures in the midbar because there was no commerce taking place there. But more generally, the Netziv asks, why specifically this prohibition? The Netziv magnifies the question by citing a Gemara (Bava Basra 88b) that the aveira of possessing

improper weights is greater than the aveira of gilui arayos (sexual immorality)! This is a scary statement! Gilui arayos is one of the gimel chamuros – the three categories of aveira for which a person needs to suffer martyrdom rather than transgress them.

Why is that true? The Netziv quotes the Gemara in Baba Basra about these "Three Cardinal Sins" — Giluy arayos, Shefichas damim (murder), and Avodah Zarah (idolatry). Why are these three aveiros the most serious? It certainly is not merely because each carries the death penalty, for there are also other aveiros that carry the death penalty.

The Netziv explains that there are only three reasons why a person sins. All aveiros are a result of one of three spiritual shortcomings:

(1) Lack of Emunah (belief in G-d). I commit an aveira because I believe that G-d does not know or care about what I am doing.

(2) Tayvah (lust). In other words, my Yetzer HaRah overcame me. It was too tempting – whatever it may be – forbidden sexual relations; forbidden food consumption, whatever it is.

(3) Midos ra'os (bad character traits) – Anger, haughtiness, jealousy, etc.

The Netziv says that these three categories are considered the most severe because they represent the essence of these three shortcomings. Avodah Zarah is pure, unadulterated, lack of emunah, in that idolatry epitomizes the aveira of lacking belief in G-d. Gilui arayos is the quintessential aveira of tayvah, in that sexual immorality epitomizes this second branch – the classic aveira of lust. Finally, Shefichas damim: Murder results from extremely bad character traits. They are either so angry with a person or they have lost control of themselves. Either way, it is midos ra'os. That is why these three categories of aveira are the Cardinal Sins.

Sometimes a person can have a combination of more than one of these spiritual shortcomings. If someone keeps his store open on Shabbos, what is that all about? For one thing, it indicates a lack of emunah. But it also involves a tayvah for money.

The Netziv asks, which is the worst of these three Cardinal Sins (and corresponding root spiritual shortcomings)? The Netziv suggests that Avodah Zarah is worst. With sexual immorality, we can understand how the person succumbed to his passions. His Yetzer HaRah got the better of him. Anger, Jealousy, and all the bad character traits are a terrible thing. To lose control and want to kill someone is terrible. But we know what it's like when we get angry and lose control. We can relate to it even if we cannot justify or condone it. But the worst of the worst is Avodah Zarah – lack of emunah. There is no lust for idolatry. So what is it? It is simply that the person does not believe in the Ribono shel Olam. That is the worst aveira.

The Netziv concludes: Now we understand the gravity of "If one is deceitful in weights and measures..." The

essence of this aveira is not lust for money. Making an extra five cents or ten cents on the sale of another quarter pound of corned beef is not a tayvah issue. Maybe stealing a car or some precious jewelry is rooted in tayvah. The person's Yetzer HaRah overcame him. But cheating in weights? I don't think anyone ever became wealthy because he tampered with his weights. Of course, pennies add up to large sums, but people with a lust for money are not satisfied by acquiring ill-gotten gains in such small increments.

The essence of the aveira of someone who cheats on weights and measures is that he doesn't believe the Ribono shel Olam provides for the livelihood of individuals. Therefore, he needs to cut corners. He needs to squeeze every little extra bit out of his commercial transactions because he is not sure he is going to make enough money otherwise. This demonstrates lack of emunah.

That is why the preamble to Zachor es asher asa lecha Amalek is not just "Lo signov" (Do not steal). Lo signov is about lust for money. That is a bad enough aveira. However, possessing dishonest weights and measures is an aveira rooted in a far greater spiritual shortcoming: Lack of emunah.

What is Amalek all about? The pasuk says: "V'lo Yareh Elokim" (Devorim 25:18) – They did not fear G-d. Amalek is that power in the world that denies the existence of the Ribono shel Olam. That is why they "jumped into the scalding hot bath before any other nation." They could not tolerate a nation who represented Hashem in this world. Amalek is all about lack of emunah. If a person is dishonest regarding weights and measures, he does not believe that the Ribono shel Olam provides parnassah (livelihood). That lack of emunah creates a susceptibility to the punishment of Amalek, who represent lack of emunah.

Parshas Ki Seitzei

Rabbi Yochanan Zweig

This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Yoram Ben Meir, Nechama bas Ozer, and Shmuel Favish ben Michael HaLevi, z"l

Double Vision

Remember what Amalek did to you on the way, when you came forth out of Egypt; how he attacked you on the way and struck at your rear those who were feeble [...] (25:17-18).

This week's parsha ends with a short retelling of the story of Amalek attacking Bnei Yisroel after leaving Mitzrayim, and the exhortation that we never forget what they did to us. Rashi (ad loc) explains that the word "korcha – attacked you" has its roots in the Hebrew word "kor," which means cool. In other words, they cooled off the Jewish people. Meaning, until now the other nations were afraid of the Jewish people and wouldn't fight them, but when Amalek

came and attacked them it "cooled them off" and showed the other nations that it was possible to fight Bnei Yisroel.

Rashi continues with the following analogy: There was a bath that was scalding hot, to the point that it was unusable. One fellow came along, jumped into the bath, and got severely burned. However, since he had bathed in it, he succeeded in cooling it sufficiently to be usable for others. So too, Amalek attacked us and cooled us to the point where other nations were now able to conceive of the idea that they too could fight us.

Superficially, this sounds like an acceptable way of looking at what Amalek achieved. But if we probe just a bit deeper we begin to see how perplexing the logic behind this analogy really is. Amalek came and fought with Bnei Yisroel and Amalek was decimated. Wouldn't their epic failure serve as an incredible statement and proof of the power of Bnei Yisroel? In fact, logically, this story seems to convey quite the opposite – that the Jewish people are absolutely not to be messed with. Amalek's defeat literally showcased the power and might of the Jewish people! What can Rashi possibly mean that "they cooled us off?"

When Bnei Yisroel left Mitzrayim they were supposed to get the Torah and go right into Eretz Yisroel and begin the era of messianic times with Moshe as King Moshiach. The splitting of the Red Sea, according to Chazal, reverberated across the world to the point that everyone was aware of it. The Jewish people were supposed to lead a revolution against idol worship and fulfill Avraham's vision of monotheism for the world. We were supposed to bring everyone back to Hashem. When we left Mitzrayim, we were on an unstoppable mission of bringing the world to its final resolution.

Then Amalek came and made an incredible statement. They attacked knowing that they would be annihilated – which was EXACTLY their point. Their startling statement was: This world is not worth living in if it is to be the world of the Jewish people – we would prefer to die than live in a world where God is revealed and relevant. This is a powerful statement (and the obvious precursor to suicide murderers), and resembles those who perform self-immolation to bring attention to their cause; suicides are powerful arguments against the status quo. Amalek succeeded in saying that there is an alternative to living in this world according to the vision of the Jewish people.

What Rashi means by "they cooled us off" is that other nations then contemplated whether or not our vision was right for them. Once Amalek attacked, we no longer had the overwhelming singular truth of our world vision because Amalek succeeded in placing doubt in other people's minds. Even though they lost terribly, they succeeded in raising the question as to whether or not this world was worth living in if it was a world according to the Jewish vision. They gave credence to other nations; allowing them to consider fighting us and our vision for the

world. This was a devastating loss of credibility – something we can never forgive.

Family Interest

You shall not lend upon interest to your brother; [...] to a stranger you may lend upon interest; but to your brother you shall not lend upon interest (23:20-21).

This week's parsha contains the prohibition of lending money with interest to another Jew. It is prohibited to charge interest or pay interest to another Jew. Yet at the same time, the Torah makes it very clear that it is permissible to lend money to non-Jews and charge them interest. In fact, Maimonides (Yad – Malveh Veloveh 5:1) rules that it is a positive commandment to charge non-Jews interest. This dichotomy in lending practices has often been used as a pretext to attack Jews all over the world during the last two millennia.

In truth, the laws against charging interest and paying interest require a deeper understanding. As an example: Reuven needs money to pay for his daughter's wedding, and he happens to know that his friend Shimon has a lot of money sitting in the bank earning 2% interest. Reuven wants to borrow some of that money but he feels very uncomfortable asking Shimon, especially knowing that Shimon would be losing that two percent interest that the bank is paying him. Reuven also realizes that he is already asking for a big favor because he knows that Shimon is taking a bigger risk by withdrawing it from the bank and lending it to him. Moreover, by Shimon lending Reuven the money and thereby losing his two percent earned interest, Reuven now feels like a charity case.

In reality, Reuven would MUCH prefer to pay interest so that he isn't uncomfortable asking Shimon for the loan and isn't made to feel like he is receiving charity; so why should Reuven not be allowed to pay interest?

The answer is that the Torah is teaching us that paying interest between two Jews isn't appropriate. Why not?

Let's say that a person's mother needed money; would a healthy person charge his own mother interest? Or his son, or a brother? Of course not. Functional families are devoted to each other even at a cost. Moreover, a son asking his parents for a loan doesn't feel like he is receiving charity by not paying interest. The Torah is teaching us that the reason you aren't allowed to charge interest isn't because one should take advantage of another; the reason is because one Jew is obligated to treat another as family. This is why the Torah characterizes the borrower as family (23:20-21), "You shall not lend upon interest to your brother; [...] to a stranger you may lend upon interest; but to your brother you shall not lend upon interest."

This also explains why it is not only okay to charge non-Jews interest but actually a mitzvah to do so. We need to internalize that they aren't our family. Obviously, we shouldn't charge exorbitant interest, just something reasonable that they are happy to accept. Non-Jews understand that they aren't family and they, in fact, are

more comfortable asking for a loan and paying interest because otherwise it would be like receiving charity.

Planting Kil'ayim

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Spelt

I understand that spelt is a type of wheat. May I plant a small patch of it next to my wheat field?

Question #2: Trees and Ornamentals

I purchased a property in Israel that has grapes and other trees and ornamentals growing on it. What do I do to avoid violating the prohibition of kil'ayim?

Question #3: Tomatoes

May I plant various types of tomatoes next to one another?

Foreword:

In parshas Ki Seitzei, the Torah teaches the mitzvah not to plant your vineyard with kil'ayim (Devarim 22:9), after which the Torah mentions two other kil'ayim prohibitions: doing work with different animal species together and wearing shatnez. In parshas Kedoshim, the Torah introduces several mitzvos called kil'ayim when it says, "You shall keep my laws. You shall not breed your animals as kil'ayim, you shall not plant your field as kil'ayim and you shall not wear kil'ayim shatnez garments" (Vayikra 19:19).

I have written many times about the prohibitions of wearing shatnez, grafting one tree min (species) onto another and crossbreeding animals, but I have never written an article devoted to this week's topic -- the kil'ayim prohibitions in a vineyard and in a field. Please note that this article is only a general introduction to these mitzvos and not halacha le'maaseh -- the topics are far more complex than can be covered in one article. For this reason, the opening questions in this article are going to be left unanswered.

Kil'ei hakerem

Kil'ei hakerem is the prohibition of planting an herbaceous (meaning non-woody, i.e. – a plant other than a trees or a shrub), cultivated plant in a vineyard or adjacent to a grapevine. This mitzvah applies min haTorah in Eretz Yisrael and as a rabbinic prohibition in chutz la'aretz (Orlah 3:9; Kiddushin 39a). It also includes planting above or below grapes, such as, if the vine is trained onto a trellis or other framework.

Kil'ei hakerem is the only instance in which the Torah prohibits using what grows in violation of the kil'ayim prohibition. Other kil'ayim mitzvos prohibit only the act, but what grows or develops as a result may be used. (The Yerushalmi, Kil'ayim 1:4, permits using even the cutting developed from a forbidden graft.)

There is a major dispute among tana'im and rishonim whether kil'ei hakerem applies even when planting one species other than grapes in a vineyard, or only when two species other than the grapes are planted in a vineyard. Rav

Yoshiyah rules that the lo sa'aseh of kil'ei hakerem applies only when planting both wheat and barley (or any two other species that are kil'ayim with one another) in a vineyard. Since the Torah says, "You shall not plant kil'ayim in your vineyard," Rav Yoshiyah understands this to mean that someone is planting two varieties that are kil'ayim with each other, in a vineyard, which compounds the prohibition.

Vineyard vs. vines

There are major halachic differences between a few grapevines and what is halachically called a vineyard. The most prominent difference is that it is prohibited to plant any type of grain or most vegetables within four amos (about seven feet) of a vineyard, whereas it is forbidden to plant only within six tefachim, which is less than two feet, of a grapevine that is not part of a vineyard.

What is a vineyard?

So, what is a vineyard?

The halacha is that a vineyard must have at least five grapevines growing, four of which are positioned in a rectangle or square. Exactly how the fifth vine is planted is unclear from the Mishnah (Kil'ayim 4:6), and is disputed by the halachic authorities. The Chazon Ish rules that a vineyard requires that the fifth vine continues in a straight line from two of the other vines. In other words, the minimum definition of a vineyard is two parallel grape plantings, one of at least three plantings and the other of at least two.

Others contend that the fifth vine can also be similar to the way one would envision, from a bird's eye view, the location of the tail relative to the four legs of an animal standing in rapt attention. The four legs form a rectangle, and the tail is alongside the rectangle, but opposite the middle of a side rather than the continuation of one of its sides (Rambam, Peirush Mishnayos, Kil'ayim 4:6; Tosafos Yom Tov; cf., however, Rambam, Hilchos Kil'ayim 7:7).

If five vines have been planted this way, and alongside them many more vines were planted haphazardly, the disorganized vines might not be considered a vineyard, but individual vines. The practical difference is whether vegetables and grains may be planted nearby, as long as they are more than six tefachim from the vines, or whether the laws of a vineyard apply, which requires a much more substantive distance of four amos. In both instances, construction of a tzuras hapesach or other mechitzah will allow planting the vegetables or grains alongside the vines, as long as the mechitzah separates between the vines and the vegetables or grains.

One row of grapevines is not considered a vineyard, even if it contains hundreds of plantings (Kil'ayim 4:5). This means that one may plant vegetables or grains alongside the grapes, as long as there is a six tefachim distance between them.

Kil'ei hakerem in chutz la'aretz

The rules of kil-ei hakerem in Eretz Yisrael are stricter than they are in chutz la'aretz. In chutz la'aretz, there is a rule, kol hameikil ba'aretz, halacha kemoso bechutz la'aretz. For our purposes, this rule means that since the law of kil'ei hakerem in chutz la'aretz is only miderabbanan, Chazal ruled that whenever a recognized scholar ruled that a particular situation is not considered kil'ayim in Eretz Yisrael, even when the halachic conclusion rules against him, one may follow this minority position in chutz la'aretz. For example, since Rav Yoshiyah rules that kil'ei hakerem is prohibited only when planting two species (that are already prohibited together) in a vineyard, this is the only act of kil'ei hakerem prohibited in chutz la'aretz. However, in Eretz Yisrael, there is concern over planting even a single type of vegetable in a vineyard.

Kil'ei zera'im

Kil'ei hasadeh or kil'ei zera'im (two ways of referring to the same prohibition) is planting two non-woody (also called "herbaceous") commonly cultivated plants or seeds near one another, planting one species very close to another, already-planted species, or planting the seeds of one species on top or inside a specimen of another species. This mitzvah applies only in Eretz Yisrael. In chutz la'aretz, it is permitted to plant two herbaceous plants next to one another, although some authorities prohibit planting the seed of one species on top of or inside another in chutz la'aretz (Rambam, Hilchos Kil'ayim 1:5; Tosafos Chullin 60a s.v. Hirkiv). Therefore, in Eretz Yisrael, someone planting a garden patch must be very careful to keep the different species separate.

Both prohibitions, kil'ei hakerem and kil'ei zera'im exist, even if the species are not intentionally planted together, but grew on their own (Kil'ayim 2:5). In this instance, if the two species are too close together, one either must pull out one, or, as we will see shortly, build a mechitzah between them.

Introductions

Several important introductions will facilitate understanding the laws of these mitzvos.

A. Firstly, many assume that kil'ayim prohibits hybridization or crossbreeding (two ways of saying the same thing) of unlike species, or, in simpler terms, attempting to mix genetic material and create new species. However, this approach is inaccurate, since only one of the many kil'ayim prohibitions, crossbreeding animals, attempts to create something that does not occur in nature. All the other mitzvos ban the appearance of mixing two species. This distinction is very important in understanding many of the laws of kil'ayim.

B. Secondly, for clarity's sake, I will use the word "species" in this article to mean items that halacha prohibits "mixing." The dictionary definition of the word "species" is "a pool of individuals that breed together and will not breed with other individuals." However, neither halacha nor science uses this definition. Since this article is

a halachic talk about kil'ayim, I will discuss only aspects of the halachic definition germane to these mitzvos.

What defines a halachic species? Although there is a great degree of uncertainty about this, certain principles can be derived from the various passages, particularly of the Talmud Yerushalmi Kil'ayim.

(1) Two varieties that naturally cross-pollinate are halachically considered one species (see Yerushalmi Kil'ayim 1:2).

(2) At times, similarity of leaves or appearance or taste of the fruit are sufficient evidence to consider two varieties as members of the same species (Yerushalmi Kil'ayim 1:5). Small differences are never considered significant (Bava Kama 55a). Thus, different varieties, one of which grows wild and the other of which is cultivated, are usually one species (Mishnah Kil'ayim 1:2). Frequently, the rules are difficult to define and, therefore, most authorities recommend not growing two similar varieties of squash or beans together.

C. It is also important to note that the definition of "species" for the laws of kil'ayim is not the same as it is for the laws of challah. Spelt and wheat are considered different minim for the laws of kil'ayim, notwithstanding that they are the same min for the laws of challah. (This means that dough made of spelt and wheat flour can combine to create enough dough to be obligated to separate challah, notwithstanding that wheat and spelt cannot be planted next to each other.)

Cultivated

D. As I mentioned above, kil'ei zera'im and kil'ei hakerem apply only to species that are cultivated or maintained in your location for food, forage, clothing, dye or other similar purposes. The Mishnah states that the laws of kil'ayim apply to a species called zunin, usually understood to be darnel, a ryegrass that, in earlier generations, was used as bird seed. Planting zunin in a field of barley, rye, oats or spelt violates the prohibition of kil'ei zera'im. (Why it is permitted to plant zunin in a wheat field [Mishnah Kil'ayim 1:1] is a topic that we will leave for a different time.)

Proximity

Planting two crop species together or near one another is prohibited as kil'ayim. How far apart the two species must be depends on several factors, including the layout of the planting and what and how much was planted. In some situations, when growing small amounts of certain vegetables, planting the two species in alternate patterns is sufficient to permit the planting, notwithstanding that the different species grow alongside one another (Kil'ayim 3:1; Shabbos 84b ff.).

Between two grain fields of different species -- for example, one growing spelt and the other rye -- there needs to be an empty area greater than ten amos squared, approximately twenty feet by twenty feet, between the two fields. On the other hand, between two kinds of vegetables,

the requirement is that the separating area be only six tefachim squared, approximately two feet by two feet. And even the size of this requirement is only miderabbanan. Min haTorah there is a dispute among rishonim whether the distance is one tefach squared, or 1.5 tefachim squared (Raavad, Hilchos Kil'ayim). The Chazon Ish (5:1) ruled according to the Rambam, the lenient opinion, that requires only one tefach squared, approximately four inches by four inches.

Mechitzah

Although we usually think of mechitzah as a separation necessary in a shul, the word has significance in several other areas of halacha, and particularly in the laws of kil'ayim. For the purposes of kil'ayim, whenever one wants to plant two species and there is not enough space to allow this, a halachically acceptable separation between the plantings permits the planting (Kil'ayim 2:8; 4:6). The rules here are similar to what is called a mechitzah for other halachos, including permitting carrying on Shabbos, although, for the laws of Shabbos, the entire area must be enclosed by mechitzos on all sides. For the laws of kil'ayim, it suffices that there is a halachic divider separating the plantings from one another. Among the many ways that someone can separate the two areas is by building a wall that is ten tefachim tall (approximately 32-40 inches) or piling rocks to a height of ten tefachim. Another option is a furrow or crevice in the ground, either natural or dug, that is ten tefachim deep.

The Mishnah (Kil'ayim 4:4) notes that lavud, openings that are smaller than three tefachim (about ten inches), does not invalidate a mechitzah, and therefore a fence that is more open than closed, but is ten tefachim tall, is a valid mechitzah for kil'ayim purposes. Similarly, one may build a "wall" with sticks placed either horizontally or vertically every three tefachim, and it is a satisfactory mechitzah.

This means that someone may have a vineyard on one side of a fence, in which the grapes grow alongside the fence, and plant grain or vegetables on the other side of the fence; it is completely permitted, even though the two crops may be growing within inches of one another.

Gaps

Large gaps in the middle of a mechitzah may not invalidate it. The general halachic principle is that an area that is mostly enclosed is considered "walled," even in its breached areas (Kil'ayim 4:4; Eruvin 5b). For example, a yard enclosed by hedges tall enough to qualify as halachic walls may be considered enclosed, notwithstanding that there are open areas between the hedges, since each side is predominantly enclosed either by the hedges or by the house. This is true as long as the breach is smaller than ten amos, about 17 feet (Kil'ayim 4:4). This means that someone may have a vineyard on one side of the hedges (inedible growths usually do not create prohibited kil'ayim), and grain or vegetables on the other side of the

hedges, even though the two crops may be extremely close to one another.

Tzuras hapesach

The Gemara (Eruvin 11a) rules that a tzuras hapesach, which we customarily use to make to enclose an area to permit carrying on Shabbos, may be used to separate two species, so that there is no prohibition of kil'ayim. A tzuras hapesach consists of two vertical side posts and a horizontal "lintel" that, together, vaguely resemble a doorway. Thus, it is permitted to grow a vineyard on one side of the tzuras hapesach and grain or vegetables on the other side.

Weeding

What about weeds? Do weeds present a kil'ayim concern?

As anyone who gardens knows, the definition of a "weed" is whatever the gardener does not want in his garden. Halachically, if the "weed" is from a species that is not maintained in your area, it is not a kil'ayim concern.

Conclusion

Targum Onkelos (Vayikra 19:19 and Devarim 22:9) understands the word kil'ayim to mean "mixture." However, other commentaries explain the origin of the word from the Hebrew root כלל, the same as the word beis ke'le "prison" (see Bamidbar 11:28). Rav Hirsch (Vayikra 19:19) explains that the root כלל means to hold something back, and that the plural form kil'ayim -- similar to yadayim, hands, or raglayim, feet -- means a pair. Therefore, the word kil'ayim means to pair together two items that should be kept apart.

Concerning this, Rav Hirsch (Vayikra 19:19) writes, "The Great Lawgiver of the world separates the countless numbers of His creations in all their manifold diversity, and assigns to each one of them a separate purpose and a separate form for its purpose."

In addition, observing the laws of kil'ayim helps us remember how various species obeyed Hashem's instructions to remain separate during their creation. This reminds the contemplative Jew that if the plants heeded Hashem's word during the Creation, how much more are we obligated to obey His instructions!

Rabbinical Leadership of Communities

Revivim Rabbi Eliezer Melamed

In continuation of last week's column: an answer regarding the comparison between priests and Levites and Torah teachers * Instead of appointing city rabbis by the Minister of Religion, it is fitting to introduce a model of local community rabbis who will be elected by the public, and their status enhanced * The main work of the rabbi will be to increase Torah learning, teaching the basics of the Torah, and empowering goodness among the members of the community * Decisions on matters of principle will be made by the gabbai's and the public, and thus, there will be no concern of an appointment of a rabbi who will impose his positions

I received a question about my position that only local residents should choose a rabbi.

Last week I wrote that the members of a community should choose their rabbi, consequently, the law that gives the Minister of Religion influence over the choice of a rabbi is contrary to the guidance of the Torah. As a source for my words, I cited the mitzvah of terumot and ma'asrot (tithes), and wrote that the Kohanim (priests) and Levites are similar to rabbis and educators, and the Torah commanded that each person choose which Kohen he would give his terumot, and to which Levite he would give his ma'asrot, as written (Numbers 5:10):

"And each shall retain his sacred donations: each priest shall keep what is given to him."

The right to choose to whom to give their terumot and ma'asrot created a personal connection between the Israelites and the Kohanim and the Levites, and compelled them to devote themselves to their sacred work among their communities, so that the members of the community would want to give them their gifts. Thus, a Kohen or Levite who went out of his way to teach Torah to children and adults, and the members of his community benefited from his good advice and resourcefulness, was given preference in receiving their gifts. On the other hand, a Kohen or Levite who alienated himself from the community, condescended them, or were lazy and did not teach Torah, received similar treatment during the distribution of gifts.

Some readers wondered about the connection between the terumot and ma'asrot to the role of teaching and education, since the very fact that they are Kohanim and Levites and serve in the Temple, obliges the public to give them terumot and ma'asrot, and my words are a kind of 'tama de'kra' (an explanation of a biblical commandment whose meaning does not appear in the Bible), and cannot be ruled by halakha.

However, one who examines the halakha will see that the intent of terumot and ma'asrot is to assist the Kohanim and Levites in their spiritual role of instructing halakha and teaching Torah, as explained in the Gemara:

"Rav Shmuel bar Nahmani said that Rabbi Yonatan said: From where is it derived that one does not give a gift of the priesthood to a priest who is an am ha'aretz? It is derived from a verse, as it is stated: "And he commanded the people who dwelled in Jerusalem to give the portion of the priests and of the Levites, so that they may firmly adhere to the Torah of the Lord" (II Chronicles 31:4). This indicates that anyone who firmly adheres to the Torah of the Lord has a portion, and one who does not firmly adhere to the Torah of the Lord does not have a portion" (Chullin 130b).

We see clearly that the mitzvah is to give the terumot and ma'asrot specifically to Kohanim and Levites who are talmidei chachamim (Torah scholars), who study, and teach Torah.

Is it Permissible to Give Terumot and Ma'asrot to Those Who Do Not Teach Torah?

Not only that, but in the opinion of two eminent poskim (Rash and Rosh), it is forbidden to give matanot kehuna (priesthood gifts) to Kohanim and Levites who are amei ha'aretz (unlearned rural masses), in other words, even when there are no Kohanim and Levites who are talmidei chachamim, they are not given to amei ha'aretz.

On the other hand, according to Rambam it is permitted to give gifts to Kohanim and Levites who are amei ha'aretz, though it is proper to give to talmidei chachamim.

The halakha follows the opinion of the majority of the Rishonim, who take the middle path, according to which it is a mitzvah to give matanot kehuna to a Kohen or Levi who is a talmid chacham specifically, and only if there are no talmidei chachamim there, is it given to an amei ha'aretz, and one does not have to go out of his way to bring them to talmidei chachamim (thus wrote, Tosefot, Ramban, Rashba, Ran, Ritva, and Meiri on Chullin 130b. And so it was ruled in SA, YD 61: 7; Peninei Halakha:Kashrut 7:3, 1).

Apparently, the reason for giving gifts to Kohanim and Levites who are amei ha'aretz when there are no talmidei chachamim, is that in general, the entire tribe is intended for Torah and education, and even if for a certain time they do not fulfill their duties, we must continue to give them terumot and ma'asrot so as not to become accustomed to neglecting the mitzvot. Thus, as soon as it becomes possible to give the terumot and ma'asrot to talmidei chachamim, they should be given to them, as appropriate.

Rabbi of a Synagogue

Since chances are the Ministry of Religious Affairs will not ensure the selection of worthy rabbis who are acceptable to the public, I proposed to correct this distortion from bottom up – namely, that each synagogue choose its own rabbi. The disadvantage in the fact that the rabbi is not an official appointee and does not receive a salary, could in retrospect turn into an advantage.

The main role of a rabbi is to teach Torah, and the main thing in studying Torah is to emphasize the general rules from which the details derive and the foundations on which the building stands since most people are able to learn traditional study by themselves, and the main benefit of learning from a rabbi is in the distinction between ikar and tafel (the more important, and secondary). For this purpose, it is unnecessary for the rabbi to deal with matters of the running of the synagogue and disputes – the main thing is that he teach the basics of Torah in his classes, from the general rules, to the details. From the foundations of emunah (faith) that are revealed on the Sabbaths and holidays, to all the mitzvot that sanctify the Jewish people, such as prayer and blessings, and all laws of kashrut. Out of sanctity of the family, to education for all good character traits. From mitzvah 'and love for your neighbor as yourself' and 'what is hateful to you, do not do to your friend', to all the mitzvot and laws between man and his fellow neighbor. From the mitzvot of yishuv ha'aretz

(settling the Land of Israel), to the mitzvot of serving in the army and engaging in developing the world, including the values of science and work, honesty, and diligence. From studying the purpose of the people of Israel – to bring blessing to all families of the earth, to the special purpose of each individual to contribute to Tikkun Olam according to his ability, and from this, to educate the youth to develop their talents, in Torah, and in science and art, with morals and good deeds, and to choose the profession in which they can contribute to the world.

When he participates in Bar Mitzvah parties, Shabbatot Chatan, Sheva Barachot, the rabbi should talk about these foundations, and know how to praise each member of the community for his or her good work in education, science, volunteering, and empower them as much as possible.

In general, his role will be more fundamental – to express the Torah, and not to manage the synagogue. In doing so, they will remove from the rabbi most of the problems that may complicate him, and at the same time, will strengthen his honor, and the honor of Torah, and as a result, they will merit receiving encouragement from him for all the great deeds that the members of the community do in their work, and volunteering.

The Question of Making a Living

Indeed, the question of making a living is difficult. Since terumot and ma'asrot were abolished, there is no organized framework for compensating rabbis, and this painful issue has not subsided from the agenda of the communities. Since the need to receive a salary degraded the status of a rabbi, the Rambam was of the opinion that it was forbidden for Torah scholars to impose themselves on the public. Nonetheless, it was impossible to maintain the rabbinate without a salary, and thus, rabbis and congregations conducted themselves with difficulty. But as for synagogue rabbis, today the problem has greatly diminished, because in the past, the rabbis were responsible for all religious matters in the community – slaughtering, treifot, sofrei stam, erubin, marriages, divorces, and all types of trials and arbitrations. Today, on the other hand, most of these occupations are assigned to specific rabbis who are professionals in their areas, such as marriage, divorce and arbitration, which are done by dayananim (religious judges). Therefore, by the grace of God, the rabbi's role has been reduced to the most important and noble thing, learning and teaching Torah, which is the root of all good.

And just as there are teachers all over the country who manage to make a living, so too, rabbis of synagogues and communities can serve as teachers of Torah, halakha, and emunah in surrounding schools, and in the evening hours, be able to volunteer as rabbis. And if one rabbi is not enough to teach all the requested lessons, as is expected to happen after having succeeded in increasing Torah in his community, one or two more rabbis could be appointed with the communities' help, who will also be considered rabbis in the community. Thus, the status of the rabbinate

in the community will rise, and most importantly, there will not be disputants, rather, focus on increasing and glorifying the Torah.

If the members of the community want the rabbi to devote himself more to his community, then it would be very good if they could find a way to compensate him, provided this is done by way of volunteering, and not as an obligation that would keep even one worshiper away from the synagogue. And if they cannot find a way to pay him in an honorable way, he should fulfill his role to the best of his ability within the free time he has. The main thing is he should sit in the front of the synagogue, and give sermons from time to time on Torah and mitzvot, the love of Israel, on yishuv ha'aretz, the mitzvah of service in the army, and on developing and bringing blessing to all the families of the world. This is how they will raise the honor of the Torah, for the glory of the community.

More on the Question of Livelihood

It is worth adding that in practice, in the central cities of Israel, even when the synagogues take care of the salary of the synagogue rabbi, it is usually a payment of a couple of thousand shekels, far from a salary that can sustain a family. In most cases, this amount is not enough for rent or mortgage in the central and large cities. Usually, they live there thanks to inheriting the apartment and help from their parents, and perhaps also thanks to the particularly successful work of the Rabbanit. There is nothing new about this, since for generations, rich families married their daughters off to rabbis, and provided for them. Incidentally, even rabbis of established neighborhoods do not earn more than teachers, and if instead of supervising the kashrut of restaurants or taking care of the eruv the rabbi of the synagogue teaches halakha in a primary or high school, in practice, his Torah level will be higher than that of the neighborhood rabbi, and his salary will also be higher.

The Concern of Appointing a Synagogue Rabbi

Indeed, many members of the Dati-Leumi (Religious-Nationalist) public are apprehensive to appoint a

synagogue rabbi, lest he become arrogant, and pass harsh decrees on them. And when a rabbi is appointed, they try not to sit him in the front of the synagogue, lest he stir up disputes. And even when it comes to a rabbi who is a tzaddik and there is no concern he will stir up disputes, out of fear that the rabbi who comes after him will stir up disputes, they prefer he sit in the middle of the synagogue, and not the front. In order to overcome the problem, it is necessary to define in advance that the rabbi's role is to teach Torah, and answer questions. And in everything related to public affairs, the gabbai's will decide, in consultation with the public. For example, will the ezrat nashim (women's section) be in the back, or on the side? Will charity-seekers be allowed to speak in front of the worshippers? Can a woman give a sermon at a Bar Mitzvah, or not? Should we send an army to help Ukraine, or other countries in Africa? Will politicians from orthodox or liberal streams be allowed to speak before the community? And how will the customs of different ethnic groups be intermixed? In all of these matters, the public and the gabbai's will decide according to what suits the community. Additionally, the rabbi of the synagogue should not intervene in debates about opening Talmud Torah's, or more liberal schools. Every nuance has value, and the rabbi should see the good in all nuances.

Concern exists that there will be rabbis who will say: if I don't have the power to act to establish a Talmud Torah, to send the army to Ukraine, to promote feminism, or to warn about the neo-reformers – then, what use do I have in the rabbinate?! Indeed, such people are not suitable for the position of the rabbinate. Their place of activity is in the public, or political arena.

Rabbis who will teach Torah, and strengthen the truth and goodness – to honor them, it is appropriate to seat them in the front, and this will give them the strength to add goodness and blessings. And the more such rabbis are respected, even without a salary, the status of the Torah will rise, and in the end, the official rabbis will also have to follow their path.

לע"נ

שרה משא בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה
ביילא בת (אריה) לייב ע"ה
אנא מלכה בת ישראל ע"ה