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Rabbi Moshe Taragin
Geulas Yisrael #68 Ki teze
The Color of redemption

The mitzvah of tzitzit is mentioned twice in the Torah. In parshat Ki teze, tzitzit is embedded within an extensive list of seemingly unrelated mitzvot. The mitzvah of tzitzit is implanted in a section of halachot pertaining travel, agricultural activity, house construction and, of course, personal clothing. It is an odd placement for the mitzvah of tzitzit. We typically view tzitzit as part of a ritual uniform. By situating tzitzit within this broad list of human activity, the Torah underscores that mitzvot are all-pervasive. Religious experience isn't limited to the "house of study" or the prayer hall and it isn't confined solely to ritual ceremony. Hashem's will penetrates all

precincts of the human condition, including travel, industry, domestic activity and personal clothing. Nothing is devoid of Hashem's will. The "other" reference to tzitzit appears in parshat Shelach, at a very depressing stage of history. We had arrived at the doorstep of Jewish history and were primed to enter the land of Hashem. Tragically, we slandered Israel, balked at this epic opportunity, and were sentenced to a 40-year detour through the hot deserts of Sinai. Looking to restore the people's faith in a redemptive future, Hashem delivered the mitzvah of tzitzit. As the Torah articulates, tzitzit elicits awareness of all mitzvot- 'ii niii5 צמ םתרכה צמ and, additionally, tzitzit recall our Exodus from Mitzrayim. Something about this mitzvah stokes our redemptive vision.

An "all-access" color The blue dye of techelet, mentioned in the "redemptive" tzitzit section of Shelach, but omitted from the more technical section of Ki teze, is an evocative color. The gemara in Menachot (43b) claims that tchelet-blue evokes the azure blue of the ocean, which in turn, conjures the blue horizon of the sky, which itself, alludes to the blue sapphire base of Hashem's heavenly throne. Through the color of tchelet, aided by a little imagination, we can trace our way to the divine throne in heaven. After the meraglim debacle our entry to Israel was severely delayed, and our encounter with the heavenly city of Yerushalayim was deferred. Though we could not physically stand in Yerushalayim under the gates of heaven, we could still virtually gaze at the gates of heaven- through tchelet. The "tchelet ticket" to Yerushalayim wasn't just a consolation for that generation, but an opportunity for every Jew who could not visit the city they so deeply longed for. Even at a distance from the heavenly city we could always pray in her direction and additionally, could be transported to the gates of heaven through a quick glance at the blue strings of tzitzit. Tchelet was a blue ticket back to Yerushalayim. Princely nobility Additionally, the tchelet blue dye showcases our lofty rank as Hashem's children. In antiquity this blue dye, extracted from the blood of sea-mollusks, was inordinately expensive. Cheaper dyes were harvested from plants or tree saps, but this luxurious and visually stunning pigment was animal-based. Being so pricey, it was reserved solely for the affluent and the noble. Stiff penalties were levied for illegal possession or illegal sporting of contraband tchelet. It was the aristocratic color of the upper. The politics of color were

quite rigid. Yet, every Jew wore four stringlets of tchelet upon each of their garments. We may not be affluent aristocracy, but we are all princely. As Hashem's selected children, we conduct ourselves with the class and dignity of our station. Tchelet dye always reminded us to conduct ourselves with the self-respect and pride of nobility. Tchelet was our badge of honor. In the aftermath of the meraglim, this message was especially resonant. We may have betrayed our covenant with Hashem, and we may have been condemned to certain death. Yet, as far as we fell, we were still princes of history, chosen to represent Hashem in this world, and bearing tchelet dye reminded us of our noble mission.

A "Lost" color Sadly, for thousands of years we lost tchelet, and with that loss our ticket to heaven expired, and our token of Jewish nobility vanished. Ironically, the color which was intended to connect us to heaven and remind us of our inalienable nobility was lost to Jewish exile. For thousands of years, without access to tchelet, we maintained a shell-performance of the mitzvah. From a purely halachik standpoint the blue strings aren't crucial to the performance of the mitzvah. As the Mishnah in Menachot (38a) rules, tchelet strings aren't "me'akeiv", which means their absence from tzitzit doesn't disable the mitzvah. For much of our exile, we fulfilled the kernel of the mitzvah even without tchelet. Even though the formal mitzvah wasn't diminished, the overall experience was clearly impacted. We lost our colorful ticket to heaven, and we lost our vivid reminder of Jewish nobility. Blue became yellow Tragically we didn't just forfeit the tchelet, but witnessed in horror, as our blue pride turned to yellow shame. As early as the eighth-century Jews were forced to wear demeaning badges -more often than not, colored yellow or faded white. This policy wasn't just a strategy to distinguish Jews from their neighbors, but was an attempt to humiliate Jews by forcing them to wear faded and colorless badges.

In an edict of 1215 Pope Innocent III justified the yellow badge policy based upon the mitzvah of tzitzit: "we decree that such Jews in every Christian provinceshall be marked off in the eyes of the public from other peoples through the character of their dress. Particularly, since it may be read in the writings of Moses [Numbers 15:37-41], that this very law has been enjoined upon them." What had once been a royal badge of sparkling blue had now deteriorated into a faded and yellowing badge of

embarrassment. The color schemes of the illustrious period of Jewish history were replaced with colors of debasement and subjugation. History was discolored. The return of blue As part of our return to Israel and our return to history we have resurrected our original badge of honor. In his redemptive essay entitled "Ikvita D'meshicha" (the Messianic era), the Chofetz Chaim claimed that, toward the end of history Jews will be particularly committed to the mitzvah of tzitzit !! We have begun to express his prophecy! We have recovered the full spectrum of tzitzit, once again combining blue and white strings in a complete mitzvah. Once again, we walk proud in this world, with the royal blue dye on our tzitzit and on our national flag. Once again, we stand in Yerushalayim, gazing at our tchelet strings while glancing upward at the actual gates of heaven. The restoration of blue tchelet has dovetailed with the resurrection of Jewish history. Yellow has become blue, shame has become pride. We are back in blue.

A New color To this palette of history, we have inserted an additional color. First the first time in 1900 years since the defeat of Rabbi Akiva and Bar Kochba, we have restored the tradition of Jewish soldier-scholars. As a teacher in a hesder yeshiva, I am exhilarated by the prospect that I am part of the restoration of this lost tradition. What a zechut! As part of this shift, a new color has become synonymous with Jewish pride. Green uniforms of Israeli soldiers have become a symbol of national dreams and messianic hopes. For centuries we lived in abject terror of soldiers and policemen. We finally have a Jewish army to protect us, and Israeli soldiers dressed in army fatigues is a visual affirmation of the great shift in history. One of the most gratifying scenes in Israel is watching an Israeli soldier dressed in a green army uniform, wrapped in blue tchelet tzitzit. History is closing and all the colors are merging. Green and blue have replaced yellow and white, and our world has become colored with redemption.

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subject: **Rabbi Hershel Schachter - Are our Sifrei Torah Kosher?**

Rabbi Hershel Schachter

Are our Sifrei Torah Kosher?

Our tradition has it (Rambam, Hilchos Tefillah,

beginning of chapter 12) that Moshe Rabbeinu instituted the reading of the Torah on Mondays and Thursdays in addition to the reading on Shabbos and yom tov. The Rambam wrote in a teshuva that a kosher sefer Torah is not needed for the purpose of fulfilling this takanah deRabannan. However, in Mishneh Torah (beginning of chapter ten, Hilchos Sefer Torah) he writes that a kosher sefer Torah is needed for this purpose. Rav Yosef Karo, in his commentary on the Rambam (Kesef Mishna), quotes a teshuva by the Rashba which says that the Rambam had a change of mind on the matter, and the position presented in Mishneh Torah is the Rambam's later and final view. Halacha l'ma'aseh, Rav Yosef Karo, both in his commentary on the Tur (Beis Yosef) and on the Rambam, quotes his rebbe, Mahari Bei Rav, saying that l'chatchila one should only recite a beracha when leining from kosher sefer Torah. But b'dieved, e.g. if in the middle of the kriaah one finds a mistake in the sefer Torah, one can rely on the original opinion of the Rambam and not reread the first part of the leining (from the second, kosher, sefer Torah which they would use in order to complete the sedra.)

Unlike Megillas Esther, where the halacha states that one can read from a Megillah which is missing a bit here and there as long as most of the text is intact, the Rambam's view regarding kashrus of a sefer Torah is that even if only one letter is missing, the sefer Torah is passul. Based on this position of the Rambam, the poskim have raised an issue regarding the kashrus of all sifrei Torah in the world because of one word in Parshas Ki Teitzei. There is a question regarding the correct spelling of the word "petzu'ah daka": should the word "daka" end with a hey or with an alef? If l'chatchila we follow the position of the Rambam in Mishneh Torah, then when there is no kosher sefer Torah available we ought not lein with berachos, based on the principle that safek berchaos l'hakeil. However, this is obviously not the common practice!

The generally accepted answer seems to be the suggestion of the Minchas Chinuch, who writes that if a word is misspelled, even in only by one letter, then the sefer Torah is passul. (For example, if the name "Noach" was spelled with a final nun in the beginning or a chof at the end. Yiddish folklore speaks of misspelling "Noach" with seven mistakes!) However, even though the word was not written in the sefer Torah in accordance with the mesorah, as long as according to the dictionary there is no

error in the spelling, it is true that the sefer should be corrected but we would not declare it to be a passul sefer Torah. The word "daka" in Aramaic should end with an alef, while in Hebrew it should end with a hey, so either way we spell it there is not an error in the spelling, rather there is only a question as to whether the sefer Torah in front of us corresponds to the mesorah. Since that alone is not sufficient to passul the sefer, we all recite berachos on the kriaah from all the sifrei Torah; b'dieved they are all kosher regardless of which spelling would be in accordance with the mesorah!

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from: **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** <ryfrand@torah.org> to: ravfrand@torah.org date: Sep 8, 2022, 10:43 AM
Parshas Ki Seitzei

A Tzadik Has the Same Yetzer HaRah as Everyone Else, But...

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly portion: #1303 – Is A Woman Allowed to Carry a Gun? Good Shabbos. Parshas Ki Seitzei begins with one of the more difficult sections of the Torah to understand: When someone goes to war and sees an Eshes Yefas Toar with whom he falls in love, the Torah allows him to take her as his wife (under various conditions and requirements, which we are not going to get into today). Basically, something which is incomprehensible to us is sanctioned by Torah law! This is a very strange halacha. Rashi explains: "The Torah is speaking here to handle the evil inclination." In a time of war, a person has these tayvahs, and the Torah reluctantly permits him to do something which, under normal circumstances, would certainly be forbidden.

What makes this even harder to understand is the context of how and when such a thing happens. In last week's parsha, we learned that there are certain exemptions that prevent a person from being drafted into the Jewish army. The last of the exemptions is "the fearful and soft-hearted person shall go and return to his home" (Devorim 20:8). There are differing opinions as to what type of an individual is being exempted (Sotah 43a). According to at least one opinion, the fearful person here is not someone who is afraid of battle, but rather he is a G-d fearing person who is afraid that he will be punished at the Hand of G-d during the dangerous wartime scenario

because of aveiros he has committed. In fact, the Gemara says that this is the primary exemption, and that the other deferments (for new home owners, newlyweds, etc.) are only to provide “cover” for the person who is afraid of Divine punishment for his past aveiros.

The result of this is that the people in the Torah-prescribed Jewish army are virtually totally righteous individuals. This certainly magnifies our difficulty in understanding this parsha. Who are we talking about that the Torah found it necessary to permit marrying this woman with whom he falls in love with during war? We are talking about Tzadikim Gemurim! The Gemara in Sotah suggests the type of aveira for which such a deferment is granted: Someone who spoke between putting on his Hand Tefillin and his Head Tefillin! We are not dealing with Sabbath desecrators or those who consume non-Kosher meat. Becoming distracted in the midst of donning Tefillin is a relatively minor transgression.

How is it that such a fellow develops such an uncontrollable passion in the middle of a war? What happened to his tzidkus?

Rav Yakov Galinsky, a famous Maggid in Yerushalayim, explained this with a very important principle. We know that there are tzadikim and there are non-tzadikim. What makes a person into a tzadik as opposed to a regular person? People think that a tzadik conquers his Yetzer HaRah much easier than normal people. Normal people succumb to their Yetzer HaRah; the tzadik is stronger, is more principled, and he does not succumb.

Rav Yakov Galinsky said this is not true. The tzadik has as much trouble—if not more trouble—than the rest of us. So, what differentiates a tzadik from a non-tzadik? The answer is that the tzadik is careful not to put himself into situations that will tempt him to succumb. He knows when a situation involves spiritual danger. He could easily stumble and transgress. He therefore sets up fences and guardrails to keep himself away from those types of situations.

A tzadik does not have a stronger Yetzer Tov. He does not have more will power. He has the same will power as the non-tzadik, but he implements a plan to avoid aveiros. It is like dieting. What is the difference between people who are thin and people who are overweight? A person who knows he can’t gain weight or that he needs to diet, fills himself up with vegetables and salads before he goes

to a Chassanah so he is already half full. By the time he arrives at the wedding, he is not so hungry for the smorgasbord. He anticipates the fact that he will be in a tempting situation and takes preemptive action to ensure that he will not succumb to his natural inclination.

A person who is overweight does not take such preemptive action. He arrives at the Chassanah hungry and cannot help but say to himself: That looks so good! How can I pass that up? He eats it and he grows heavier. That is what it is all about.

So too, the tzadik has a plan. He takes preemptive action to avoid situations of temptation. However, this is all well and good under normal life circumstances. However, when someone goes out to war, he finds himself in an environment which he cannot control. Perhaps in his civilian life, he could set up certain boundaries that will ensure that he will not come into close contact with women, and certainly never be alone with them.

However, on the battlefield, he is not in control. “And you will see in captivity a beautiful woman...” Suddenly, he sees a beautiful woman and he is love-struck for her. How did this happen? It happened because in regular life, he was always careful not to put himself into those types of situations, but during a war, he can’t help himself. Therefore, even a Tzadik—the person who usually won’t even speak while donning his Tefillin—can succumb to the allure of an Eishes Yefas Toar.

Rav Galinsky remarked on the timeliness of this parsha always falling out a week or two before Rosh HaShanna. When a person makes a cheshbon ha’nefesh (internal reckoning) and asks himself “Why is this year going to be different than all other years?” he needs to be thinking about ensuring that he is not put into situations in which he nebech feels compromised such that he may not be able to overcome his Yetzer HaRah. It is the forethought and planning that prevents him from spiritually stumbling.

The Torah Is Not Just Speaking About Lost Oxen and Cows

The Baal HaTurim makes an interesting comment in our parsha on the pasuk regarding HaShavas Aveidah (V’Asafto el toch beisecha) (Devorim 22:2). When we find a lost object, we are instructed to “gather it” into our house. The Baal HaTurim says there are only two places in the entire Tanach where the word V’Asafto (meaning to gather in) appears with a vov at the end. One of them is

here by HaShavas Aveidah, and the other one is by Tzaraas (Melachim II 5:6).

The Baal HaTurim—as is his style—provides a connection between the two pesukim: The Gemara in Eruchin (16a) says that Tzaraas occurs as a result of Tzarei HaAyin (stinginess). “Can I borrow your lawnmower?” “It is broken.” “Can I borrow your folding chairs?” “I don’t have folding chairs.” The person always comes up with an excuse not to lend out his property. What does the Torah say happens to such a person? He gets House Tzaraas. He needs to take all his property outdoors when the Kohen pronounces the house tameh. Everyone will see that he has a working lawnmower, and he has plenty of folding chairs, etc., etc.

The Torah is saying “V’Asafto el toch Beisecha”—if you keep all your utensils inside your house and you are afraid to lend them out, then you will wind up with the plague of Tzaraas and you will need to take out all your utensils, and you will be shown to be a stingy miser. This is what the Baal HaTurim writes.

I saw a very interesting pshat in the sefer Marpeh L’Nefesh from HaGaon Rav Refael Zilber, Av Beis Din of Freiman. Many meforshim, among them the Schach in his sefer on Taryag Mitzvos, say that even though the simple reading of this pasuk by HaShavas Aveidah is that a person needs to take the found “lost objects” into his house, there is another meaning here as well: A person must return a sinner to his proper state of being—meaning to return his nefesh (soul) to him by giving him appropriate rebuke when necessary. The Torah is not merely speaking about returning ball point pens or cows. The Torah is talking about returning human beings—souls!

In a similar vein, the Maharam Schick, in his Sefer HaMitzvos, writes that the Mitzvah of HaShavas Aveidah does not only include returning lost property, but it also includes returning a person’s body (i.e. – through healing) and kal v’Chomer, it includes returning a person’s spirituality (hashavas nafsho).

In fact, the Ohr HaChaim haKadosh is the most elaborate in emphasizing this idea, literally learning every part of the pasuk as referring to kiruv rechokim (bringing people back to religion and spirituality). It is really worthwhile to read it inside to see how he explains every phrase of these pesukim.

“When you see the ox of your fellow man” – This refers to people who are so far removed from a Torah lifestyle that they act like animals. They don’t know the difference between good and bad.

“Your fellow man” (achicha) – This refers to the Holy One Blessed Be He.

“Wandering lost” (nidachim) – As in V’Nidachta v’hishtachaveesa lahem (you are spiritually straying, and you will bow down to them (i.e., idols)) (Devorim 4:19). Regarding the pasuk “And if your brother is not close” the Ohr HaChaim (writing in the 1500 and 1600’s) says that this is referring to a time way off in the future. People strayed from Torah. They are wandering and lost. Hashem commands us “You shall gather these lost objects into your home.” (V’Asafto el toch beisecha). Take those people—drag them—into the Beis HaMedrash and teach them the Ways of Life (Orach Chaim) so that they shall be lost no longer.

According to the Ohr HaChaim, the pasuk is referring—at least homiletically—not to a lost cow or ox. It is referring to a lost person. You must find him and bring him into the House of Torah study.

The sefer Marpeh L’Nefesh uses this explanation of the Ohr HaChaim to connect the two expressions of V’Asafto pointed out by the Baal HaTurim. V’Asafto el toch Beisecha means take him into the Beis Medrash and thus “gather him in” from his Tzaraas affliction. Tzaraas is Tzaar Ayin—a very limited perspective of life. He thinks that what is important in life is making money, having pleasure, etc. He has a very narrow view of man’s purpose in this world. Take him into the Beis Medrash (v’Asofto) and you will heal him from his Tzaraas Ayin, his limited perspective and his warped view of the world. A Message Hidden in Sofei Teivos Rather Than Roshei Teivos

Finally, I wish to share one last comment from the Baal HaTurim. If you have to speak at a 40th or 50th wedding anniversary – this is a perfect vort.

The Torah provides a draft deferment for the newlywed soldier—“He shall be totally devoted to his house for a complete year” (Devorim 24:5). The Baal HaTurim notes that the last letter of the words in this pasuk (Naki Yiheyeh l’Beiso Shana (Achas)) spells out the ineffable Name of Hashem—Yud, Hay, Vov, Hay. The Torah is hinting here that the purpose of giving newlyweds an initial year of complete dedication to one another is so

that the Divine Presence (Shechina) should reside in their midst.

The question is: Why is this allusion contained in the last letter of each word (Sofei Teivos)? Why is it not alluded to in the first letter of each word (Roshei Teivos)?

Perhaps this alludes to the following: Yes, in the early years of one's marriage people get along. Honeymoons are great. At that point, it is rather easy to create an environment of Shalom Bayis, where the Shechina is Shruyah Beineihem (the Divine Presence resides in their midst). The challenge is Sofei Teivos! When people have been married for quite some time—his idiosyncrasies drive her crazy and her idiosyncrasies drive him crazy. The respective parties of the marriage are perhaps not so particular that it should be such a loving relationship anymore.

That is why the pasuk emphasizes that the Shechina's presence should be perceived in a marriage through Sofei Teivos and not only through Roshei Teivos. For this reason, the name of Hashem is spelled out at the end of the words rather than at the beginning.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem DavidATwersky@gmail.com
Edited by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.org This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion. A listing of the halachic portions for Parshas Ki Seitzei is provided below: #020 – Non-Halachic Marriage Ceremonies #065 – Polygamy and the Cherem of Rabbeinu Gershom #110 – Mamzeirus: Possible Solutions? #156 – Reconciling Divergent Customs Between Husband and Wife #203 – The Pre-War “Get” #250 – The Mitzvah of Ma’akeh #293 – “Get Me’useh”: The Prohibition of the “Forced Get” #339 – Shana Reshona: The First Year of Marriage #383 – The Mitzvah of Burial #427 – Trying on Suits that May Have Shatnes #471 – Autopsies on Non-Jews #515 – Women Wearing Men's Clothing #559 – The Double Portion of the Be’chor #603 – Burying a Rasha Next to a Tzadik #647 – Ramps and Stages – Do They Need a Maakeh? #691 – Chassanah Minhagim #735 – Brachos in a Bathroom? #779 – Shehecheyanu at a Chasuna #823 – Tzar Ba'al Hachayim – Does It Apply to People? #867 – Dying Hair For Men – Asur or Mutar? #911 – Returning a Lost Pacifier #955 – The Un-Cancelled Stamp – Can You Re-use it? #998 – Making a Bracha for Building a Ma’akeh? #1042 – Dressing Up As A Woman for Chasunah Dancing and on Purim? #1086 – A Bracha for Shiluach Hakein? #1129 – The Ani Who Picked Up Your \$20 bill #1171 – Dating Someone Before You Are Divorced? #1259 – Shiluach Hakain – On Shabbos? From Your Back Porch? #1303 – Is A Woman Allowed to Carry a Gun? #1347 – The Case of the Frail Grandfather and the Bracha Under the Chupa #1391 – Shalom Aleichem – Before or After Kiddush? #1435 – Paying a Worker on Time- A Mitzva De'oraisah A complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. Rav Frand © 2022 by Torah.org. support Do you have a question or comment? Feel free to contact us on our website. Join the Jewish Learning Revolution! Torah.org: The Judaism Site brings this and a host of other classes to you every week. Visit <http://torah.org> to get your own free copy of this mailing or subscribe to the series of your choice. Need to change or stop your subscription? Please visit

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From: **Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein** <ravadlerstein@torah.org>
to: targumim@torah.org date: Sep 8, 2022, 10:04 AM subject: Parshas Ki Seitzei - Reb Yeruchem

Taking Stock

Based on Daas Torah, by **Rav Yeruchem Levovitz** zt”

You shall bring her into your house. She shall shave her head, and let her nails grow.[2]

Rashi explains: The Torah arranges for the star-struck soldier to constantly encounter her in her least attractive state. Hence, he brings her into his home, where he will constantly run into her looking disheveled and unkempt – decidedly not glamorous. The Torah aims to cool his ardor by repeatedly exposing him to her less desirable aspects, hoping that he will lose romantic interest in her.

This seems to us like a clever way – we would expect nothing less from the Torah! – to deal with the difficult challenges that a soldier faces in wartime, and of little relevance to the rest of us non-combatants. But this would be missing the point entirely. The section of yefas to'ar places an extraordinary obligation upon all of us. The Torah indicates that it doesn't limit its teaching to the “usual” conditions of Man. The Torah has something to say about the non-typical situations as well. And it obligates Man to take honest stock of those situations, and seek the Torah's counsel.

Many people – to their credit – create finely-tuned schedules for themselves, through which they maximize their learning time, and provide the best conditions for their davening. Should they find themselves on the road, however, they founder. They are so accustomed to their routine, that when forced to operate outside of it, they tell themselves that they simply can't do a good job. Learning and davening will have to suffer until they can return to their “normal.”

Our parshah tells us that this is an error. The soldier is us. We are all soldiers engaged in battle with the yetzer hora. Sometimes his weapons are predictable. At other times, he deploys surprise and cunning, and catches us off guard. Our first response has to be that the Torah provides advice for these conditions as well.

Chazal[3] teach us how to deal with an upwelling of ta'avah. If a person finds that his yetzer hora has taken hold of him, and he finds himself unsuccessful in resisting, he should dress himself in black and go to a place where no one recognizes him and sin there. This effectively provides two lines of defense. First, he many lose interest in the aveirah if he has to put himself

through so much trouble. Second, even if he succumbs, he minimizes the chilul Hashem when no one knows him. “Gehinom is cooled for one who recites krias Shema and is meticulous in the pronunciation of all its letters.”[4] Gehinom is a terrible place; cooling it down for someone who is already there is also an accomplishment. The Torah addresses itself even to the person doing time in the place he didn’t want to be. There is no respite from the war with the yetzer hora, even in times of weakness and failure. We are always, always expected to have a strategy of how to fight back. First and foremost, must be acute self-awareness under all circumstances. A person must know who he is, and where he stands. If a person is swept away by a strong current, with no idea how to save himself, he still possesses the advantage that he knows that he is in desperate straits. He is far better off than the person who doesn’t even realize that he is being carried out to sea. The Torah will always have something to say to the person who is trying to deal with his mission in life and with its struggles. Not so for the person who has stopped dealing. He has taken himself outside of the boundaries of what Man is supposed to be.

1. Based on Daas Torah, by Rav Yeruchem Levovitz zt”l, Devarim v.2 pgs. 1-4 ↑ 2. Devarim 21:12 ↑ 3. Kiddushin 40a ↑ 4. Berachos 15b ↑

from: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org> date: Sep 8, 2022, 9:35 PM

Rabbi Sacks on Parsha

To the Third and Fourth Generations

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks ztz”l

There is, on the face of it, a fundamental contradiction in the Torah. On the one hand we hear, in the passage known as the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy, the following words:

The Lord, the Lord, compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in loving-kindness and truth ... but who does not acquit the guilty, holding descendants to account for the sins of the fathers, children and grandchildren to the third and fourth generation.” Ex. 34:7

The implication is clear. Children suffer for the sins of their parents. On the other hand, we read in this week’s parsha: Parents shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their parents. A person shall be put to death only for their own sin. Deut. 24:16

The book of Kings records a historic event when this principle proved decisive.

When Amaziah was well-established as king, he executed the officials who had assassinated his father. However, he did not kill the children of the assassins, for he obeyed the command of the Lord as written by Moses in the Book of the Law: ‘Parents shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children

be put to death for their parents. A person shall be put to death only for their own sin.’ 2 Kings 14:5-6

There is an obvious resolution. The first statement refers to Divine justice, “at the hands of Heaven.” The second, in Deuteronomy, refers to human justice as administered in a court of law. How can mere mortals decide the extent to which one person’s crime was induced by the influence of others? Clearly the judicial process must limit itself to the observable facts. The person who committed the crime is guilty. Those who may have shaped his character are not.

Yet the matter is not so simple, because we find Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the two great prophets of exile in the sixth century BCE, restating the principle of individual responsibility in strong and strikingly similar ways. Jeremiah says:

In those days people will no longer say, ‘The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge.’ Instead, everyone will die for their own sin; whoever eats sour grapes – their own teeth will be set on edge. Jer. 31:29-30

Ezekiel says:

The word of the Lord came to me: “What do you people mean by quoting this proverb about the Land of Israel: ‘The parents eat sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge’? As surely as I live,” declares the Sovereign Lord, “you will no longer quote this proverb in Israel. For everyone belongs to Me, the parent as well as the child – both alike belong to me. The one who sins is the one who will die.” Ezekiel 18:1-4

Here the prophets were not speaking about judicial procedures and legal responsibility. They are talking about Divine judgment and justice. They were giving the people hope at one of the lowest points in Jewish history: the Babylonian conquest and the destruction of the First Temple. The people, sitting and weeping by the waters of Babylon, might have given up hope altogether. They were being judged for the failings of their ancestors that had brought the nation to this desperate plight, and their exile seemed to stretch endlessly into the future.

Ezekiel, in his vision of the valley of dry bones, hears God reporting that the people were saying, “Our bones are dried up, our hope is lost.” (Ezek. 37:11) He and Jeremiah were counselling against despair. The people’s future was in their own hands. If they returned to God, God would return to them and bring them back to their land. The guilt of previous generations would not be attached to them.

But, if this is so, then the words of Jeremiah and Ezekiel really do conflict with the idea that God punishes sins to the third and fourth generation. Recognising this, the Talmud makes a remarkable statement:

Said R. Yose b. Hanina: Our master, Moses, pronounced four [adverse] sentences on Israel, but four prophets came and revoked them ... Moses said the Lord punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth

generation. Ezekiel came and declared, “The one who sins is the one who will die.” Makkot 2b

In general the Sages rejected the idea that children could be punished, even at the hands of Heaven, for the sins of their parents. As a result, they systematically re-interpreted every passage that gave the opposite impression, that children were indeed being punished for their parents’ sins. Their general position was this:

Are not children then to be put to death for the sins committed by their parents? Is it not written, “Visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children”? – There the reference is to children who follow in their parents’ footsteps [literally “seize their parents’ deeds in their hands,” i.e. commit the same sins themselves]. Brachot 7a, Sanhedrin 27b

Specifically, they explained biblical episodes in which children were punished along with their parents by saying that in these cases the children “had the power to protest/prevent their parents from sinning, but they failed to do so.” (Sanhedrin 27b; Yalkut Shimoni, I:290) As Maimonides says, whoever has the power of preventing someone from committing a sin but does not do so, he is seized (i.e., punished, held responsible) for that sin.[1]

Did, then, the idea of individual responsibility come late to Judaism, as some scholars argue? This is highly unlikely. During the rebellion of Korach, when God threatened to destroy the people, Moses said, “Shall one man sin and will You be angry with the whole congregation?” (Num. 16:22) When people began dying after King David had sinned by instituting a census, he prayed to God: “I have sinned. I, the shepherd, have done wrong. These are but sheep. What have they done? Let Your hand fall on me and my family.” (II Sam. 24:17) The principle of individual responsibility is fundamental to Judaism, as it was to other cultures in the ancient Near East.[2]

Rather, what is at stake is the deep understanding of the scope of responsibility we bear if we take seriously our roles as parents, neighbours, townspeople, citizens, and children of the covenant. Judicially, only the criminal is responsible for his crime. But, implies the Torah, we are also our brother’s keeper. We share collective responsibility for the moral and spiritual health of society. “All Israel,” said the Sages, “are responsible for one another.” Legal responsibility is one thing, and relatively easy to define. But moral responsibility is something altogether larger, if necessarily more vague. “Let a person not say, ‘I have not sinned, and if someone else commits a sin, that is a matter between him and God.’ This is contrary to the Torah,” writes Maimonides in the Sefer ha-Mitzvot.[3] This is particularly so when it comes to the relationship between parents and children. Abraham was chosen, says the Torah, solely so that “he will instruct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what

is right and just.” (Gen. 18:19) The duty of parents to teach their children is fundamental to Judaism. It appears in both the first two paragraphs of the Shema, as well as the various passages cited in the “Four Sons” section of the Haggadah. Maimonides counts as one of the gravest of all sins – so serious that God does not give us an opportunity to repent – “one who sees his son falling into bad ways and does not stop him.” The reason, he says, is that “since his son is under his authority, had he stopped him the son would have desisted.” Therefore it is accounted to the father as if he had actively caused his son to sin.[4]

If so, then we begin to hear the challenging truth in the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy. To be sure, we are not legally responsible for the sins of either our parents or our children. But in a deeper, more amorphous sense, what we do and how we live do have an effect on the future to the third and fourth generation. Rarely has that effect been more devastatingly described than in recent books by two of America’s most insightful social critics: Charles Murray of the American Enterprise Institute, and Robert Putnam of Harvard. Notwithstanding their vastly different approaches to politics, Murray in *Coming Apart* and Putnam in *Our Kids* have issued essentially the same prophetic warning of a social catastrophe in the making. For Putnam, “the American dream” is “in crisis”.[5] For Murray, the division of the United States into two classes with ever decreasing mobility between them “will end what has made America America.”[6] Their argument is roughly this, that at a certain point, in the late 1950s or early 1960s, a whole series of institutions and moral codes began to dissolve. Marriage was devalued. Families began to fracture. More and more children grew up without stable association with their biological parents. New forms of child poverty began to appear, as well as social dysfunctions such as drug and alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancies and crime and unemployment in low-income areas. Over time, an upper class pulled back from the brink, and is now intensively preparing its children for high achievement, while on the other side of the tracks children are growing up with little hope for educational, social, and occupational success. The American Dream of opportunity for all is wearing thin.

What makes this development so tragic is that, for a moment, people forgot the biblical truth that what we do does not affect us alone. It will affect our children to the third and fourth generation. Even the greatest libertarian of modern times, John Stuart Mill, was emphatic on the responsibilities of parenthood. He wrote

The fact itself, of causing the existence of a human being, is one of the most responsible actions in the range of human life. To undertake this responsibility – to bestow a life which may be either a curse or a blessing – unless the being on whom it is to be bestowed will have at least the ordinary chances of a desirable existence, is a crime against that being.[7]

If we fail to honour our responsibilities as parents, then – though no law will hold us responsible – society’s children will pay the price. They will suffer because of our sins.

[1] Hilchot Deot 6:7. [2] See Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel*, New York, Schocken, 1972, pp. 329-333.

[3] *Sefer ha-Mitzvot*, positive command 205. [4] Hilchot Teshuvah 4:1. The reference is of course to a son under the age of thirteen. [5] Robert Putnam, *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015). [6] Charles Murray, *Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960–2010* (New York: Crown Forum, 2012), p. 11. [7] *On Liberty and Other Writings*, ed. Stefan Collini (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 117. Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks ztz"l was a global religious leader, philosopher, the author of more than 25 books, and the moral voice for our time. Until 1st September 2013 he served as Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, having held the position for 22 years. To read more from Rabbi Sacks, please visit www.rabbisacks.org.

from: Rabbi YY Jacobson <rabiyy@theyeshiva.net> reply-to: info@theyeshiva.net date: Sep 8, 2022, 8:35 PM subject: A Tale of Two Spouses - Essay by Rabbi YY

A Tale of Two Spouses

Struggling with My Challenging Parts Brings Me a Double Portion of Light

By: **Rabbi YY Jacobson**

Who's Doing the Talking?

"Does marriage change one's personality?" Greg asked his buddy Mike.

"In a way," says Mike. "You see, when I was engaged, I did most of the talking and she did most of the listening. When we just got married she did most of the talking and I did most of the listening.

"Now we both do most of the talking and the neighbors do all of the listening."

Firstborn Rights

This week's Torah portion (Ki Seitzei) states the following law[1]:

"If a man will have two wives, one beloved and one unloved, and both the loved and unloved wives have sons, and the firstborn son is that of the unloved one; on the day that this man wills his property to his sons, he cannot give the son of the beloved wife birthright preference above the son of the unloved wife, the firstborn.

"Rather, he must recognize the firstborn, the son of the unloved one, to give him the double portion in all his property."

On the most literal level, these verses mandate that a firstborn son shall inherit a double portion of his father's estate, while each subsequent son shall inherit an equal portion of the property. A father does not have the power to bequeath the

double portion reserved for the firstborn to one of the other sons he loves, and any attempt to do so is ignored by Jewish law.

As the Talmud makes clear[2], a person is certainly empowered to distribute his entire estate to one of the other sons (or to any other individual for that matter), as long as he conveys it as a gift. But if he chooses to bequeath the estate to one of the sons as an inheritance and so deny his firstborn son's rights as a natural heir, then the father's attempt has no legal validity in the Jewish judicial system[3].

What is disturbing, however, is the Torah's need to state the point via a negative example of a man who loves one of his wives and loathes the other. Why was it necessary to use a crude and offensive illustration in order to make the simple point that the firstborn son is entitled to a double portion of the inheritance regardless of the father's preferences?

A Spiritual Manual

One of the essential factors to bear in mind during Torah study is the idea that each mitzvah, law, and episode described in the Torah contains—in addition to its physical and concrete interpretation—a psychological and spiritual dimension as well[4]. In his commentary on the Torah, 13th-century Spanish sage, Nachmanides, writes[5]: "The Torah discusses the physical reality, but it alludes to the world of the spirit." Another great Kabbalist went even further. 17th-century mystic Rabbi Menachem Azaryah of Fanu (in Italy) states that "The Torah discusses the spiritual reality, and it alludes to the physical world[6]."

The stories and laws in the Torah ought to be understood first and foremost as events and laws in the spiritual realm, and this is actually the primary method of Torah interpretation. But in its communication of spiritual truths, the Torah also lends itself to be interpreted in a physical and concrete fashion.

What then is the spiritual meaning of the seemingly coarse description of "a man who will have two wives, one beloved and one unloved, and both the loved and unloved wives have sons, and the firstborn son is that of the hated one"? How are we to understand this in the universe of the spirit?

The Struggling Vs. the Romantic Soul

Judaism teaches that the relationship between each husband and wife reflects the cosmic relationship between G-d (the Groom) and the Jewish people (the Bride). The entire book "Song of Songs" by King Solomon is based on the notion that our human relationships are capable of reflecting the Divine marriage with Israel[7].

There are two types of people who enter into a marriage with G-d: the "beloved spouse" and the "unloved spouse." The "beloved spouse" represents those individuals who enjoy a continuous romance with G-d. Their souls are overflowing with spiritual ecstasy, selfless idealism, and fiery inspiration. They cannot stop loving G-d, and G-d cannot stop loving them. On

the other end of the spectrum stand the "despised spouses," people possessing numerous qualities that can easily be spurned: immoral urges, depressing feelings, vulgar passions, ugly temptations, and angry sensations.

These are the people whose hearts are not always ablaze with love toward the Divine oneness of reality; their marriage to their Divine soul is a struggle. Their psyches vibrate with paradox. Throughout their life, they must battle not to become a victim of challenging instincts and cravings [8].

The Torah teaches us that G-d's "firstborn son" may very well come not from His union with the beloved spouse but rather from His relationship with the despised spouse[9]. The spiritual harvest that a struggling human being produces as a result of his or her tumultuous romance with G-d, may often be far deeper and more powerful than that of the spiritually serene person.

Working with all the parts in my brain and heart, discovering the goodness deeply hidden in all of my emotions and dispositions, brings me to a much deeper space of oneness and love [10]. The morality and the integrity that emerges from the midst of my confronting daily the parts of me that seem so loathsome contain a unique depth and splendor not possessed by the straightforward saintly path.

Thus, "On the day that He wills His property to His sons, He cannot give the son of the beloved wife birthright preference above the son of the hated wife, the firstborn. Rather, He must recognize the firstborn, the son of the hated one, to give him the double portion in all His property." On a spiritual level, this means, that on the day that Moshiach will come, when humanity will finally taste the full-Divinity in the world--and when I discover the Moshiach consciousness in my own intimate life--a "double portion" of G-dliness will be revealed in the arduous labor and sweat of the individual who never stopped fighting for his soul.

During the Struggle

You might recall the moving poem written by a profound heart: One night I had a dream. I dreamed I was walking along the beach with G-d. Many scenes from my life flashed across the sky. In each scene, I noticed footprints in the sand.

Sometimes there were two sets of footprints, other times there was only one.

I noticed that during the low periods of my life, when I was suffering from anguish, sorrow or defeat, I could see only one set of footprints. So I said to G-d, "You promised me, Lord, that you would walk with me always. But I have noticed that during the most difficult times of my life, there has only been one set of footprints in the sand. Why, when I needed you most, you were not there for me?"

G-d replied, "My precious child, I love you, and would never leave you. The times when you saw only one set of footprints, was when I was carrying you."

(This essay is based on a discourse by Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi delivered in 1793[11]).(Please make even a small and secure contribution to help us continue our work. Click here.)

[1] Deuteronomy 21:15-17. [2] Mishnah Bava Basra 126b. Cf. Rambam Hilchos Nachalos chapter 6; Tur and Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat section 281; Sefer Hachenuch Mitzvah 400. [3] For an explanation of this law see Sefer HaChinuch ibid. [4] See Likkutei Sichos vol. 23 pp. 37-38 and references noted there. [5] At the conclusion of his commentary to Genesis 1:1. [6] Asarah Maamaros Maamar Chekur Din 3:22. [7] Cf. Rambam Laws of Teshuvah chapter 10. [8] See Tanya chapter 27 for an elaborate discussion of these two types of souls. [9] See Tanya ibid. Cf. Likkutei Sichos vol. 20 pp. 108-115 that this constituted the essential distinction between the souls of Jacob and his twin brother Esau and this was the superior potential of Esau's soul, for which reason Isaac desired to grant him his blessings. This fits well with Or Hatorah Ki Seitzei (vol. 6 p. 2359) where the author explains that the "two wives" discussed in this week's portion reflect the spirits of Jacob and Esau. [10] Cf. Or Hachaim on the verse, who explains on the literal level, that the Torah is promising the firstborn son to the unloved wife. [11] Maamarei Admur Hazaken Haktzarim pp. 118-119 (for the date of this discourse -- see footnote there). See also Likkutei Torah Seitzei pp. 37-38 and Or Hatorah quoted in footnote # 9 for a similar explanation on the subject.

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date: Sep 8, 2022, 7:00 AM

subject: Dimensions in Ki Seitzei

DIMENSIONS IN CHUMASH

Ki Seitzei - The Ben Sorer U'Moreh

One of the mitzvos in the opening section of the parsha is the ben sorer u'moreh (the wayward and rebellious son). The verse describes his situation as "אִינְנוּ שִׁמְעַתְּ בְּקוֹל אָבִיו וּבְקוֹל אִמּוֹ וְיָסְרוּ אֹתוֹ – he does not listen to his father or mother, they chastise him but he does not heed them... a glutton and a drunkard,"[1] and commands that he be stoned to death. The Talmud[2] states that there was never in fact a case of a ben sorer u'moreh, as the number of technical halachic requirements for him to be convicted practically guaranty that it will never happen. The Gemara asks: Why then was this section written in the Torah? To this, the Gemara responds: In order to expound upon it and receive reward.

This answer is somewhat enigmatic. Are there not plenty of other mitzvos which do have practical application that one could also receive reward for expounding upon? Why do we need another mitzvah which exists only for purposes of exposition? However, more intriguing still is the next line in the Gemara, which records R' Yochanan as saying that he, in fact, sat by the grave of a ben sorer u'moreh. It turns out that

the question of whether there was ever a case of this sort is the subject of a dispute, but what type of dispute is this?

Presumably there either was or was not such case! Rabbeinu Bachye addresses this question and explains that although it seems as if these two statements are arguing with each other, in reality there is no argument. Yet this comment is even more intriguing, for these two statements certainly look like they are in conflict. What is the meaning of then saying that they are not actually conflicting?

The Chasam Sofer explains. The problem with a ben sorer u'moreh is that, having developed expensive and addictive habits, for which he steals from his parents, he is likely to turn to other sources of funding when his parents' money runs out, and will likely stop at nothing – including bloodshed – to get what he craves and needs. The pure response to this issue is presented by the Torah: kill him before that happens. Now, the Torah does not require that we actually kill a thirteen-year-old child, but it is alerting us to what is likely to happen when he grows up. This is what Rabbeinu Bachye means when he says the two statements of the Gemara are not in conflict. When the first statement says that there was never a case of ben sorer u'moreh, it means no child was ever convicted and executed as such by a Jewish court. When R' Yochanan says that he sat by the grave of such a child, he is referring to that child who then grew up, continued along his addictive path and was killed, not at thirteen by the beis din, but at eighteen in an alleyway.

The goal of this parsha is, as the Gemara says, to “expound and receive reward.” This does not just refer to the reward for Torah study – for which the other mitzvos would also suffice – but the reward from being vigilant in ensuring that our children do not get into such a situation in the first place.

Mitzvos and Values – Returning Lost Property

לא תראה את שור אחיך או את שיו נדחים והתעלמת מהם השב תשיבם לא אחיך... וכן תעשה לכל אבדת אחיך אשר תאבד ממנו ומצאתה לא תוכל להתעלם.

You shall not see the ox of your brother or his sheep wandering and ignore them; you shall surely return them to your brother... And so you shall do for any lost item of your brother that may become lost from him; you may not ignore it.[3]

These verses deal with the well-known mitzvah of hashavas aveidah – returning lost property. The Alshich raises some fascinating questions regarding the nuances of the Torah's presentation of this mitzvah.

The opening prohibition seems overly wordy, for it says “לא תראה את שור אחיך או את שיו נדחים והתעלמת מהם... תראה – You shall not see... and ignore them.” By definition, ignoring something involves seeing it, in which case the verse could simply have said “You shall not ignore the ox of your brother etc.”

The double phrasing of the command, “השב תשיבם” is commonly translated as “You shall surely return them.” This is

somewhat difficult. If the verse had only said “תשיבם — You shall return them,” would we have thought that it isn't sure? Almost all mitzvos are written with just one word, and yet the Torah is quite sure that we need to do them. What then, is the meaning behind the double expression?

The final verse ends with the words “לא תוכל להתעלם”, which literally means, “You cannot ignore it.” Of course, we know that a person can ignore it; it is just that the Torah does not allow him to. If so, why not just say “לא תתעלם — Do not ignore it,” the way most prohibitions are phrased?

The Alshich explains. The mitzvah of returning lost property is one which is very easy to relate to. It is a wonderful act of kindness to reunite someone with their property, who otherwise may never have seen it again. However, as easy as it is to relate to it, is also very easy not to do it. Returning lost property can sometimes be inconvenient, taking one out of one's way, and we are all very busy people. To avoid this mitzvah is also remarkably easy — all one needs to do is ignore the lost object. Ignoring things that are inconvenient for one to see is a human specialty. It is possible to ignore the object because one is on his way to a business meeting, a get-together with friends or, for that matter, a conference on ethics, including one devoted to the topic of having regard for other people's property!

This aspect of human nature is addressed in the first verse which states “והתעלמת”, which we noted seems somewhat redundant, and which literally means, “You will ignore it.” This is the Torah telling the person that, left to his own devices, he will ignore the object, and the highly celebrated and much admired value of returning lost property will remain forever extrinsic to his being. Thus, the Torah commands to give it back using the double phrase “השב תשיבם”. The difference between these two words is that the first word, השב, is a command form — “give it back”; whereas the second word, תשיבם, is a descriptive form — “you will give it back.” These two words make up the educational process of this mitzvah, whereby initially the Torah commands the person to return it and, after heeding that command enough times, the person then naturally comes to return it. The transition from השב as command to תשיבם as description represents the transition of this value from one's ethical lexicon to one's moral makeup. The end result of all this is described in the final phrase, “לא תוכל להתעלם”, which as we noted literally means, “You are unable to ignore it.” This is the transformational result of the process of fulfilling this mitzvah. Prior to doing the mitzvah, you may have been incapable of seeing the object. Having trained yourself through the mitzvah, you are now incapable of ignoring it!

[1] Devarim 21:18, 20. [2] Sanhedrin 71a. [3] Devarim 22:1-3
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Rabbi Reisman - Parshas Shoftim 5768

ט לא-תטה משפט, לא תכיר פנים; ולא-תקח שחד--כי השחד יענר 16:19
עניי תקמים, ויסלף דברי צדיקים In the beginning of the Parsha we find the Issur of taking Shochad (bribery) which is already mentioned in Parshas Mishpatim. The Chazon Ish in his Sefer Emunah Bitachon has an incredible Chiddush in Maamor 3 Perek 30 which is not well known.

He says the warning of taking a bribe in not one of the Mishpitai Hatorah, meaning it is not one of the Dinim that are Mistaver, it is a Chok. What he is talking about is not taking a bribe to judge unfavorably, however, he is talking about taking a bribe and pledging to judge properly. Nevertheless, that is called Shochad because as the Posuk says עניי תקמים the fact is when someone gives you something you are going to judge on his behalf. He says, Chas V'shalom. We are not suspect that the judges will impart judgment based on receiving a bribe, however, it is a Chok.

He brings 2 Rayas. The first is from Dinei Issur V'heter. A poor person is allowed to Pasken if a piece of meat is Kosher or Treif even though if it is Treif he may not have anything to eat. Nevertheless there is no Issur for a person to Pasken Dinei Issur V'heter on himself. You see from here that even though there is Negiyos that there is no Chashad that a Chochom B'yisrael will change the Din.

The second Raya is from Dinei Mamon, Avid Inish Dinei L'nafshi, a person is permitted to take the law into his own hands based on his Yediya. Now of course for a Poshite Yid we say to be careful as you may do things improperly. Nevertheless, the Shulchan Aruch says that someone who is sure that he is Paskening correctly that Avid Inish Dinei L'nafshi.

The Chazon Ish says that it is a Chok. Ai the Posuk says that כי השחד יענר עניי תקמים? So the Chazon Ish says that just like Traifos are Metamtem Es Haleiv, it is a Chok. So the same thing here, it is in the Metzios of the world that the Koach of Tumah of taking Shochad can end up making you Pasken incorrectly. Not because in exchange of the favor he will change the Din, Chalila, but it is Metamtem the heart and makes a person judge not properly. This is what the Chazon Ish writes. Avada it is a Chiddush Atzum and the other Sifrei Machshava do not say this way. They say that a person who accepts bribes has no control over himself and judges based on his own bias.

However, L'mayseh his Raya is a good Raya. Why by Treifos can a person Pasken and by Dinei Mamon we have Avid Inish Dinei L'nafshi. He brings good Rayas?

Rav Pam said a Vort that would answer the Kasha in Baltimore at the Chanukas Habayis of Ner Yisrael in the 1960's and he said that after saying this Machshava that Rav Ruderman came over to him and complimented him very warmly that it was Mechavein Al Ha'emes.

Rav Pam's Yesod was the following. When Gedolei Yisrael make mistakes, it is not because of a Zilzul in their Koach Hayosher, but because of the strength of Koach of Hakaras Hatov. He spoke about Yitzchok, that Yitzchok favored Eisav, (Beraishis 25:28) וַיֵּחֶק אֶת-עִשָׂו, כִּי-צִיד רָפְיוֹ because Eisav gave Yitzchok food to eat, he liked him. Rav pam said it wasn't because of his weakness in judging, it was because of his tremendous sense of Hakaras Hatov. Meaning Yitzchok Avinu's Hakaras Hatov was so great that he couldn't see something wrong with Eisav.

The same thing he explained about Shoichad. Why is Shoichad a problem? Because if a person has Hakaras Hatov for someone he can't help it but to feel favorably towards that person. Rav Pam brought a Raya from a Gemara in Maseches Kesubos 105b (24 lines from the top) ת"ר (שמות כג) ושוחד לא תקח אינו צריך לומר שוחד ממון אלא אפילו שוחד דברים נמי אסור מדלא כתיב בצע לא תקח היכי דמי שוחד דברים כי הא דשמואל הוה עבר במברא אתא ההוא גברא יהיב ליה ידיה אמר ליה מאי עבידתיך אמר ליה דינא אית לי א"ל פסילנא לך לדינא אמימר הוה יתיב וקא דאין דינא פרה גדפא ארישיה אתא ההוא גברא שקליה א"ל מאי עבידתיך א"ל דינא אית לי אמר ליה פסילנא לך Shmuel was crossing a bridge and someone gave him a hand and Shmuel said that I can't be the judge in your case. In the next incident someone blew a feather off of Ameimar's head and Ameimar said he can't judge his case because of Shochad. Rav Pam said do you think that Shmuel and Ameimar would be influenced by these incidents, this is not Shochad? The Shulchan Aruch doesn't say that if you blow a feather off of someone's head that it is considered Shochad?

It is the Gadlus of Shmuel and Ameimar in that they were such Makirei Tov that when someone did Tov to them they would always see things in their favor. That is the Pshat in כי השחד יענר עניי תקמים. The more Chochom he is, the more Hakaras Hatov he feels.

This answers the Chazon Ish's question of that a person may Pasken Dinei Issur V'heter by himself. The Chazon Ish is right. Of course for money a person will not be Mekalkeil Es Hadin and he will judge properly, however, when it comes to Shochad it is different in that he has the feeling of Hakaras Hadin. From that strength of feeling of Hakaras Hatov by the Chochom that will be Mekalkeil and will answer the second Kasha of Avid Inish Dinei L'nafshi, a person is allowed to Pasken for himself and we are not afraid that he will be Mekalkeil, but it is not a Stira to the fact that there is this Chashash by Shochad. This is the tremendous Yesod of the appreciation and Gadlus a person has to have of Hakaras Hatov.

יה שפטים ושטרם, תתן-לה בקל-שעריה, אשר ירור אלקיה נתן לה, 16:18
The first Posuk of the Parsha the Rambam and Chinuch count it as one Mitzvah. In Sefer Hamitzvos 176. This is a Stirah to the Klolim of the Sefer Hamitzvos. One of the Klolim of the Sefer Hamitzvos is that if there are 2 Mitzvos in one Posuk, they still count it as 2 Mitzvos. For example in Bamidbar 28:4 ד אַת-הַכֶּבֶשׂ אָהָד, תַּעֲשֶׂה the Tamid Shel Shacharis and a Tamid in the evening. It is 2 Mitzvos as counted by the Rambam even though it is found in one Posuk. Why is Shoftim V'Shotrim counted as one Mitzvah?

The Maram Shik in his Sefer Hamitzvos (491) answers based on a Pesikta, on a Braissa. The Braissa as is brought by the Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh is, if there are no Shotrim then there are no Shoftim, meaning if there is no one to enforce the judgment it is as if there was no judgment at all. The Mitzvah is Shoftim V'shotrim, both together. Shoftim without Shotrim is useless and is not the Mitzvah D'oraissa.

The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh adds that today if you have someone who will be Mekabail on himself the judgment even though there are no Shotrim, for them Shoftim is a Mitzvah D'oraissa. The Shofeit is the Shoteir. The Shofeit makes it that there is a judgment that is listened to.

In the Kuntras Chachmei Leiv from Rav Weinfeld he brings a thought. The way we understand it is, that if you make rules in a Yeshiva and there is no Mashgiach to enforce the rules then it is as if there are no rules. It is just a waste of time. This is most probably a true Pshat.

So Rav Weinfeld adds that a Shofeit will Pasken one way when he knows that his judgment will be enforced because he knows that the judgment is coming from a measure of strength. When he comes from a position of weakness and he knows that it is Talui in their Ratzon, he will Mimeila look at the Din in a different way, from a position of weakness. So it is that when the judge knows that his judgment will be enforced that he will look at the Din in a different way, from a position of strength.

There is a well known Vort on the Parsha from the Shla and the Darash Moshe, that Shoftim V'Shotrim goes on a person on his own body and on his own mind. A person has to be careful to have a Seichel Hayashar when he is Dan himself, to be careful to do things properly and wherever you go judge what you are doing.

According to this there is a tremendous insight. If a person thinks about what is right he can come to a good conclusion. When a person is not committed to do what is right then his Paskening is going to be Mikulka. The way he looks at himself is Mikulka, it is like a judge whose judgment he is not sure if it is going to be followed. It is a Kilkul in the entire action and Mayseh that has to take place.

Rebbi said over a Mayseh of someone he knows who had a grandparent or great grandparent who came from Europe

between the two world wars. His boat docked in NY and it was Erev Shabbos. He had money which he had brought from Europe and didn't know what he would do with it over Shabbos as he didn't have a place to stay. He found a Rav who he figured would be trustworthy to hold for him until after Shabbos. This Rav was an American Rabbi who was obviously not trustworthy. So he went over to the Rav after Shabbos and asked for his money back and the Rav said what money? So the person went berserk, what do you mean, I gave you money! The Rav was very firm with him, you are an immigrant and you are accusing a Rabbi of being a thief? Get out of here! So the person left and was very scared. Fortunately this person had a relative who was a strong person who was described as a butcher. So the butcher and this man went back to the Rabbi and the butcher bent over the Rabbi's desk and said Rabbi, give my friend the money and when he saw that the Rabbi was hesitating, he grabbed him by the collar and said GIVE HIM THE MONEY! So the Rabbi said of course I will give him the money why didn't he just ask for it and he took out the money and gave it to him. So this person was Tzebruchen. You call yourself a Rabbi? So the Rabbi said the Gemara says that Yidden if they are Tovai'a they give. You weren't Tovai'a, you came in like a Lemechel, and so I pushed you off. This butcher, he knows how to be a Tovai'a, so I gave.

Rebbi mentioned this story in order that people should be Shoftim and Shotrim with themselves. Be Tovai'a on yourself. Elul which in America doesn't mean all that much, however, it still is a time of preparation for Rosh Hashono. Be Tovai'a on yourself and then you will see results.

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Rav Kook Torah

Rav Kook on Ki Teitzei: The Rebellious Son - Preventive Medicine

Rabbi Chanan Morrison

Only Theoretical

Is there really a death penalty for rebellious children? Even in Talmudic times, it was clear that the severe punishment for the "wayward and rebellious son" (Deut. 21:18-21) is only "on the books."

"There never was, nor will there ever be, a child who meets all of the legal qualifications of the 'wayward and rebellious son.' Why then was this law written? That you may study it and receive reward [for the Torah learning, despite its lack of practical application]." (Sanhedrin 71a)

Does this law serve no other purpose other than as a theoretical area of study?

Preventative Medicine

While the field of medicine has made tremendous strides over the centuries, it is widely recognized that its greatest successes have been in the area of preventive medicine. Efforts to ensure clean air and water, sewage treatment, public education on healthy lifestyles and food, and immunization against infectious diseases, have been the most important factors in fighting disease and increasing life expectancy.

We should similarly appreciate the benefit of the Torah and its mitzvot in terms of the most effective assistance: preventing harm and ruin. Thus, God promised, “If you obey God ... keeping all His decrees, I will not strike you with any of the sicknesses that I brought on Egypt. I am God, your Physician” (Exod. 15:26). The healing powers of the Torah should be compared to preventive medicine. It provides a healthy lifestyle that does not leave room for affliction. God did not promise that He will cure us of the sicknesses of Egypt. Rather, by faithfully following the Torah, we will not be visited by those maladies.

What does this have to do with the hypothetical “rebellious son”? By educating the people about the draconian punishment for the rebellious child, the Torah helps prevent this tragic breakdown in family and society from occurring in the first place. This is what the Talmud means by “Study it and receive reward” — the very study of the subject is its own reward. As each generation is educated about the dangers of the “rebellious son” and absorbs the message of the gravity of the offense, this deplorable situation is avoided.

Teaching For Free

We often take for grant the truly important things in life, such as peace, freedom, mental and physical health. They safeguard our happiness and well-being, yet we only properly appreciate them in their absence. Inconsequential matters, on the other hand, are just the opposite. They come to our attention only when they are present and visible. As the Talmud (Sotah 8a) teaches, “The evil inclination only rules over what the eyes can see.”

This explanation can shed light on why one should not accept payment for teaching Torah. “Just as I taught for free, so you shall teach for free” (Nedarim 37a). The most vital aspects of life, protecting our health and well-being, cannot be procured with money. Thus, a doctor who heals a sick patient may request remuneration for his services, but one who chases away a lion and averts damage to his neighbor’s possessions may not demand a reward. What is the difference? The doctor may be paid for after-the-fact healing, but the greater benefit — preventing potential injury — must be provided free of charge. This is the lesson of the “rebellious son,” the Torah’s preventive medicine to safeguard familial and social order. “Study it and receive reward.”

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www.matzav.com or www.torah.org/learning/drasha
Parsha Parables By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Oh Hear! My Yid

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetsky

I was recently stuck in an airport in Toronto for more 14 hours. I won’t detail the nuances of the extended ordeal, which embodied the Murphy’s Law of air travel, but during the hours of frustration, there was always one or two signs of solace popping up.

Each time I would see a yarmulka or maybe a Magen Dovid necklace, or someone whom I just felt was Jewish, I would break my exasperation by giving a shalom aleichem and exchanging pleasantries, usually commiserating about shared plights and missed flights.

I thought about this coming week’s parsha, in which the Torah tells us about the kohen’s preparatory remarks and questions to potential soldiers in the Army of Hashem. To prepare Klal Yisroel for war, a series of queries were presented to them. Soldiers who were newlywed or had recently built new homes or planted new vineyards were told by the officer in charge to leave the army and return home. Furthermore, soldiers who were faint of heart — morally or spiritually — were asked to return home so as not to weaken the hearts of others in battle. But war must begin with encouragement. So before the officers ask the questions that may relieve some soldiers from active duty, the kohen gives a morale-boosting speech. The kohen opens with Yiddishkeit’s most famous words, “Shema Yisroel — Hear, Oh Israel! You are about to approach battle against your enemies. Let your heart not wither, and do not fear, tremble, or be broken before them. For Hashem, your G-d, will go with you, fight for you, and save you” (Devorim 20:3-4). Rashi comments on the hauntingly familiar expression of “Shema Yisroel — Hear, Oh Israel!” Those words are the opening words of the national anthem of Jewish faith, whose doctrine of belief is contained in the declarative that follows: “Hashem our G-d, Hashem is One” (Devorim 6:4). Rashi quotes the Gemara in Sotah connecting the pre-battle pep-talk in Parshas Shoftim with the famous words read weeks earlier in Parshas Vo’eschanan. He explains that the expression, “Hear, Oh Israel” used in the kohen’s prologue is actually used as a hint to Hashem. The kohen is essentially reminding Hashem of the unofficial anthem that Jews recite twice daily, worldwide. He is basically declaring that, “Even though you have no other merit than Krias Shema morning and night, you would deserve that He should help you (from the ravages of war).” I began to think about the embodiment of yichud Hashem, the Oneness of

Hashem, being referred to by the opening words in the soliloquy, “Shema Yisroel.” Chazal chose those words, which sound like a call to order, as representative of the most important foundational declaration in our faith. Instead of calling it the Hashem Echod, it is forever known as “Shema Yisroel.”

I recently heard a story about **Rabbi Mordechai Becher**, [who in addition to his career as a professor of Jewish history at Yeshiva University and a rebbi for Aish HaTorah, also serves as a rebbi to thousands via the “Ask the Rabbi” site hosted by Aish HaTorah]. As the story was told to me, Rabbi Becher was lecturing in South Africa, hosted by Rabbi Gavriel Eliyohu Klatzko, who served as a rov and a well-known and beloved kiruv professional. One day, Reb Gavriel invited Rabbi Becher to take a break and visit the African safari, where lions, giraffes, and elephants roamed freely. From a distance, Rabbi Klatzko spotted two burly fellows sitting on a rock, perhaps drinking a beer. Rabbi Klatzko turned to Rabbi Becher and said, “Let’s go down and schmooze with them! I bet you that one of them is a Yid!” Rabbi Becher was a bit intimidated by the two and chose to remain behind while his chaver walked toward the pair. With a warm and cheery voice, Rabbi Klatzko approached them and said, “Hi, how are you?” One of them grunted, “What do you want?” Rabbi Klatzko persevered, saying, “Hello! By the way, are any of you Jewish?” The same fellow replied, “Nah! I have nothing to do with Jews, and I am not Jewish! So please bug off!” Rabbi Klatzko did not give up. “No connection? No relatives? Nothing?” “No! Now get lost!” Rabbi Klatzko saw it in his eyes and smiled. “Come on now, nothing? I see something...” The fellow, for some reason, suddenly gave in. “All right, I actually had a grandmother who claimed she was Jewish.” “Was that your father’s mother, or your mother’s mother?” “My mother’s mother. Why?” Rabbi Klatzko became excited. “Why? Because that means you are as Jewish as I am! So let me talk to you about Judaism!” Suddenly, the fellow became irate. “What are you talking about? I have nothing to do with Judaism! Don’t bother me! Get out of here!” Rabbi Klatzko was not moved. As Rabbi Becher listened from the distance, he exclaimed, “Wow! That’s really fascinating. That’s unbelievable! You’re the first person I met like this!” Now confusion set in the eyes of the burly man. Rabbi Klatzko continued, “You’re the first Jew in the world that I met who wasn’t interested in anything Jewish! Usually, people who have some Jewish blood in them are interested to know something about Judaism. They have the intellectual curiosity to find out more about this fascinating people, for better or for worse. But you say you never asked a single question about Jews and have no interest? Astounding!” The fellow softened. He moved away from his friend, toward where Rabbi Becher was standing. Although still a bit intimidated, Rabbi Becher could not help but be intrigued by the

conversation. “All right! I’ll tell you,” the man told Rabbi Klatzko. “I did want to know more. I found somebody online who answers questions about Jews and Judaism, and I have been corresponding a bit. We write back and forth.” He listed a few questions he had asked, but then he barked, “But that doesn’t mean I have to keep anything! I’m just telling you that I’m not the ignoramus you make me to be!” Rabbi Becher’s heart skipped a beat. He emerged from the background, approached the biker, and in a thin voice asked, “Jonathan?” “Rabbi Beker?” There was a bear hug and even some tears. I don’t know if the biker is a maggid shiur in Eretz Yisroel yet... but the warm hello began a trail that led to history. We say in davening, during Tachanun, the tefillah of Shomer Yisroel: “Guardian of Israel, guard the remnant of Klal Yisroel, and let not Yisroel perish, who say, Shema Yisroel, Hear, Oh Israel.” At first glance, Shema Yisroel means the entire posuk — but wait! The next stanza, Shomer Goy Echod, says, “Guardian of the unique nation, guard the remnant of the unique people, and let not the unique nation perish, who proclaim the Oneness of Your Name, saying: Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echod — Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is One.” Rav Yeruchom Olshin asked a powerful question. If the second stanza finishes the posuk, what is the first stanza saying? What is the value of “Shema Yisroel” without the last half of the posuk? The rosh yeshiva powerfully answered that it seems from here that even calling out to Yidden — saying, “Shema Yisroel! Hear, my fellow Jews!” — is also tremendously worthy and a great merit for all of us. Perhaps (as a drush, of course) the merit that Rashi refers to as the Yidden having is merely the calling of “Shema”! Greeting Yidden, talking to them, and engaging with them! After searching out some Jewish faces while spending hours in a world of airport chaos, I hope that my “Shema Yisroel” was a merit.

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The Obligation to Bury by R. Gidon Rothstein

Last week, I took on a mitzvah we find ways not to observe, this week let’s discuss a mitzvah Jewish communities work to observe in the best possible way, burying the dead. From the Criminals to the Rest of Us Rambam in Obligation 231 points out we derive a general obligation to bury those who have passed away from the obligation on a court to bury criminals on the day they were put to death, Devarim 21;23, ki kavor tikberenu, you shall surely bury him, on that day. (Those put to death for worshipping a power other than God, or for being megadef, blaspheming by invoking God’s Name to express a curse on the divine, God forbid, would then be hanged, to make a point of their punishment.) Sifrei confirms it

is a mitzvah 'aseh. Rambam throws in a tidbit, this mitzvah is the reason we call a person who has no one to take care of his/her burial a met mitzvah. Since no specific person is obligated to bury him/her, all Jews have the mitzvah, a mitzvah that pushes aside prohibitions on becoming ritually impure, such as for a Kohen Gadol, a High Priest, or a nazir, a man or woman who took a vow to abstain from grape products, haircuts, and contact with those who have passed away. Our mitzvah says Jews must be buried, and a Jew without buriers becomes the responsibility of whatever Jew encounters that corpse. This is one of those mitzvot with an accompanying, largely the same, lo ta'aseh, Rambam's Prohibition 66, the Torah warned against leaving the hanged overnight, confirmed by Sifrei to count as a Biblical prohibition. Burial to Avoid Worse Outcomes The verse says ki killelat Elokim talui, which English translations render "for the hanged are an affront to God." Rambam instead understands it to allude to the restricted group of people who are hanged after being put to death by the court, blasphemers, either verbally, as with a megadef, or with their actions, by worshipping other powers. I understood Rambam to mean seeing them hanging long-term draws attention to someone having committed this sin, makes it seem more reasonable, where our goal is to deter such crimes. Sefer Ha-Hinuch 537 takes it differently, thinks that if people see the person hanged, they will repeat what s/he did, will then put themselves in a position of having blasphemed (or be tempted to, perhaps). (Minhat Hinuch wonders about a non-Jew put to death for these crimes. He cites Rashi's reason, the sight of the son of a king hanging embarrasses the king, and Minhat Hinuch therefore assumes it would not apply to non-Jews. He seems to assume the idea of people bearing the image of God is only true of Jews, perhaps ever since the Giving of the Torah. He concedes Ramban assumed the obligation does apply—equally - to non-Jews.] The expansion of the obligation to bury to all Jews, let alone to all those put to death by a court, blurs all this reasoning. Sefer Ha-Hinuch 537 brings up halachah's assumption there were more and less serious forms of capital punishment. Those put to death in more serious ways—sekilah or serefah, being thrown off a roof and then stoned or having molten lead poured down one's throat—were buried separately from the hereg or henek criminals, the ones decapitated or strangled. I think gradations within capital punishment is an idea deserving more thought, but it's not our mitzvah. Until When, For Whom, How Soon After the buried bodies decompose, Sefer Ha-Hinuch says, the bones would be gathered and moved to the familial burial plot. The idea assumes decomposition ends a person's corporeal existence; the punished criminal can now return to his/her family plot, his/her crime fully addressed. Minhat Hinuch 537 notes a view quoted in Magen Avraham, even a nefel, a baby born prematurely, is buried, and adds he thinks the obligation applies to any time we

have an olive's worth from a person who has passed away. Sefer Ha-Hinuch 536 puts the prohibition, lo talin, before the obligation (like the verse). The prohibition, however, speaks of not leaving the deceased hanging; in theory, leaving it in a room or mausoleum is not included. Sefer Ha-Hinuch folds the two together, assumes leaving unburied violates lo talin just as much as failing to fulfill ki kavor. This is all only if it done degradingly; we are allowed to delay burial for the honor of the deceased, such as to give time for beloved relatives and friends to gather and provide proper honor. Or, as Aruch HaShulhan writes in Yoreh De'ah 347;2, we are not required to resist or circumvent governmental regulations to wait three days before burial, because it is not a lack of respect. Other valid reasons for delay, in his view, include to secure a burial shroud or build a coffin. In such cases, he says to wash the deceased right away, fully prepare it for burial, then wash it again after the three days have passed. Defining That Day Minhat Hinuch 536, in Kometz Ha-Minhah, his added later comments, writes that he had gotten hold of Shu"t Radbaz 1;311, where Radbaz was asked why we do not make sure to bury before sunset, to fulfill "for you shall surely bury him ba-yom ha-hu, that day." Radbaz argued we define the day based on the opening of the verse, not to be malin, not to allow the corpse to stay in its hanged position overnight. While I would have said he meant the obligation and prohibition are linked to each other (as we saw Sefer Ha-Hinuch assume), Radbaz instead limited the obligation of ki kavor tikberenu to those hanged by a court. For others, there is no positive obligation, only the prohibition to leave it overnight. Minhat Hinuch thinks Rambam's Laws of Sanhedrin 15;8 gives that impression, because he writes only there is a positive obligation to bury those put to death by the court. Aruch HaShulhan Yoreh De'ah 357;1 wonders at the claim, because there would then seem to be no reason to extend the prohibition to others. Regardless of Rambam's view, Sefer Ha-Hinuch clearly includes all who have passed away in the obligation as well. Minhat Hinuch adds that the author of Sefer Ha-Hinuch was an important authority himself, and Ramban's commentary on the Torah sounds that way as well. Therefore, we should be stringent to bury the person before sunset. In 537, Minhat Hinuch also thinks we must bury someone who passed away at night before the break of dawn, or we violate halanah. At a very basic level, if we make sure Jews are buried, we have done what was needed. This Torah mitzvah adds the importance of doing it as quickly as is most honorable to the person who passed away, plausibly including non-Jews, all a way to honor people and the God in Whose image we have been made.

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Peninim on the Torah - Parashas Parashas Ki Seitzei

פרשת כי תצא תשפ"ב

איננו שמע בקול אביו ובקול אמו

Who does not hearken to the voice of his father and the voice of his mother. (21:18)

The *parshah* which deals with the *ben sorer u'moreh*, the wayward and rebellious child, is one of the most difficult *parshiyos* to address. As a rule, *pikuach nefesh*, saving a Jewish life, pushes aside *Shabbos*. Yet, the young *ben sorer* – who so far has not committed an act of defiance that carries capital punishment – is sentenced to death, due to what he might (possibly will) do one day when he is unable to satisfy his desires. He could take an innocent life. Apparently, the Torah, with its far-reaching perspective, views his execution as necessary, as it is better that he should die when he is still innocent, rather than when he has taken a life and is guilty of murder. The question that plagues every educator and parent: How did he get this way? How does a seemingly good boy descend to such a nadir of iniquity at an early age?

The *Chasam Sofer, zl*, offers an explanation that is not only frightening, but it should also generate a sense of parental introspection about how they raise their children – as opposed to what they see (or do not see) at home. *Einenu shomea b'kol aviv u'b'kol imo*, “He does not listen to the voice of his father and the voice of his mother.” The child does not listen to his parents. He displays no respect, and he does whatever he pleases. His parents’ instructions to him carry absolutely no weight. The *Chasam Sofer* explains that the voice of his parents which he does not hear is not the voice of instruction, but rather, their expressions of Torah and *tefillah*. The boy grew up in a home in which the *kol Torah*, the sounds of Torah, were stilled. He never saw his father learning or even being *maavir sidrah*, reviewing the weekly *parshah*. He saw him reading the newspaper or a book, or glued to the computer for no educational reason. Likewise, he did not hear his mother’s weeping when she lit the candles *erev Shabbos*. This was common fare in homes throughout the Orthodox Jewish landscape. The mother would usually walk in dressed for *Shabbos*; some wore a white apron and white *tichel l'kavod Shabbos*. It was her private time to communicate with Hashem, to ask Him to bless her family. This was usually followed with the recitation of the first *perek*, chapter, of *Sefer Shmuel* (which includes *Shiras Chanah*, which became the prototype for prayer). He never saw his mother *davening* or reciting *Tehillim*. His home was observant, but lacked the warmth generated by “sound” – the sounds of love for Hashem, His Torah and *Yiddishkeit*. Had the young boy heard these expressions of love, he might have altered his trajectory from “down” to “up.”

Horav Eliezer HaLevi Turk, Shlita, supplements this idea. The *parshah* commences with the incident of the *yefas toar*, the maiden of beautiful form. The Jewish soldier sees a young gentile maiden in captivity, and, since it is during a war, everyone is frightened and his mind and common sense are under intense pressure. The soldier is unable to think straight, and suddenly he wants to marry this captive. Nothing will stand in his way. His *yetzer hora*, evil inclination, is working overtime and refuses to let go. If he cannot have her legally, then he will have her through illegal channels. The Torah grants him a special dispensation. The “why” is not important – now. The Torah, however, does allude to one thing: the consequences of this marriage is; having two wives, one whom he hates and one whom he loves. When a person marries purely for physical gratification, the marriage will not endure. The couple might live under one roof, but the love and respect that constitute the glue of marriage will disappear with time. The second result of this marriage is the *ben sorer u'moreh*. When one marries to satisfy his *yetzer hora*, he will not produce a worthy child, a child of whom he is proud.

Rashi attributes the hated wife and the wayward child to the soldier’s marrying the *yefas toar*. What was wrong with that? The Torah explicitly permitted this marriage under the appropriate circumstances. If he did nothing wrong, why should he be punished? *Rav Turk* explains that *ben sorer* is not a punishment, but rather, a direct result of his marriage to the *yefas toar*. It is inevitable when: a child grows up in a home in which his parents are concerned primarily with *gashmius*, physicality and base desire; a child sees his father involved in Jewishly inappropriate, lustful behavior; he sees his mother adorning herself in a manner unbecoming a *frum*, observant woman – *Mah yaaseh ha'ben v'lo yecheta*, “What should the child do but sin?” He was a good boy in a miserable situation. We can never forget that our children are watching and will, for the most part, outdo us.

The following story was written up in *Peninim* a while ago. It is a classic from which we all can – and should – learn. I repeat it because of its inspirational value. Who knows? Someone might read it and take heed. *Horav Moshe Sherer, zl*, was America’s *shtadlan*, intercessor. As head of *Agudas Yisrael* he, with the guidance of the *gedolei Yisrael*, Torah giants, was the primary mover of American Orthodoxy post World War II. His devotion to *Klal Yisrael* and to the Torah was legend. He did not make one move without first consulting with Torah leadership. What were his roots? What inspired his phenomenal growth? What motivated him to devote his life to *Klal Yisrael*? His mother with her sincerity in faithfully trusting in Hashem, was his primary inspiration.

Whenever any of the Sherer children came down with an ailment (of any sort), Mrs. Basya Sherer immediately ran to the *Stoliner Rebbe, zl*, to petition his blessing. (In those days,

emunas chachamim, faith in our Torah scholars, was very real. I witnessed this attitude in my own home. My parents were not learned Jews, but their faith was fierce and unshakable.) The *Rebbe* instructed the devoted mother to add another candle to light along with, her *Shabbos* candles. If we take into consideration that she had a sizable family to begin with and the number of typical children's ailments, Mrs. Sherer's *Shabbos* candles were numerous. Indeed, when the young Rabbi Sherer brought his *kallah* home for a *Shabbos*, she took one look at the various *leichter*, candelabra, and thought she was marrying into a family of epic numbers!

While this in and of itself was meaningful, Mrs. Sherer's ritual during *hadlokas ha'neiros* was the primary event that inspired the young boy. His mother would light the candles and proceed to weep profusely for some time. The young boy took this all in and wondered what it was that his mother was saying. She had no *siddur* in front of her, so she could not be *davening*. Why was she crying so much? Everything seemed to be fine in their home. He decided that he would find out what his mother cried so much about. He decided to hide under the table secretly when she lit candles. The table was not big enough to cover his entire body – so his hands were sticking out. His mother did not notice this.

His mother, walked over to the *leichter*, candelabra, and covered her face. She recited the *brachah* with an added personal prayer. *Ribbono Shel Olam...baleichten zolst Du Di oigen fun meine kinderlach in Dein heilige Torah*, "Please Hashem... Light up my children's eyes through the precious words of Your holy Torah." She spoke these words over and over, "Please let my children perceive the beauty of Your Torah." The young boy just sat there and listened. It sunk into him. His mother was praying for him to grow in Torah. At that moment, one of his mother's hot tears fell on his exposed hand (sticking out from under the table). He would never forget that tear drop. He closed his hand as if it were a precious diamond. That teardrop which touched his hand seared through to his heart. He was determined to make his mother proud of him. He would illuminate the world with Hashem's Torah. He kept his word.

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A dear friend whose contribution to Peninim's success will always be remembered.

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