



BS"D

To: [parsha@parsha.net](mailto:parsha@parsha.net)  
From: [cshulman@gmail.com](mailto:cshulman@gmail.com)

## INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON **SHOFTIM** - 5769

In our 14th year! To receive this parsha sheet, go to <http://www.parsha.net> and click Subscribe or send a blank e-mail to [subscribe@parsha.net](mailto:subscribe@parsha.net) Please also copy me at [cshulman@gmail.com](mailto:cshulman@gmail.com) A complete archive of previous issues is now available at <http://www.parsha.net> It is also fully searchable.

---

This week's Internet Parsha Sheet is sponsored by:

the **Planer family** [benjdor@yahoo.com](mailto:benjdor@yahoo.com)  
in honor of **Meyer Planer's 76th birthday.**

To sponsor an issue (proceeds to Tzedaka) email [cshulman@gmail.com](mailto:cshulman@gmail.com)

---

From Rabbi Yissocher Frand <[ryfrand@torah.org](mailto:ryfrand@torah.org)>  
To [ravfrand@torah.org](mailto:ravfrand@torah.org)  
Subject Rabbi Frand  
**Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Shoftim**

### The Measure of A Person Is His Sense of Gratitude

The Torah admonishes the judge not to show favoritism, not to corrupt justice, and not to take bribes "for bribes will blind the eyes of the wise and will pervert the words of the righteous" [Devorim 16:19]. No person is immune from the temptations of a bribe. Bribes attack a person's ability to judge fairly. Even if a person is righteous, even if he is extremely wise – he is not above falling prey to the power of a bribe.

The Gemara in Kesuvos [105b] states: "It goes without saying that monetary bribes are forbidden, but the Torah is coming to teach us that even 'verbal bribes' are forbidden." Flattery, kind words, and so forth can all affect a person's judgment. The Gemara lists several incidents demonstrating how particular Amoraim of the Talmud acted regarding rejecting bribes.

Shmuel was having difficulty crossing a rickety bridge. A certain person stuck out his hand and helped him cross the bridge. Shmuel asked what brought him to the bridge right then. The person told Shmuel that he had a case to be heard in Shmuel's court for adjudication. Shmuel disqualified himself from being a judge in the case since he had just received a favor from this person.

Similarly, Ameimar was sitting in court and a feather flew on top of his head. A fellow came over and removed the feather. When he told Ameimar that he was there to have his case heard, Ameimar disqualified himself from hearing the case.

A third related incident involved Mar Ukva. Someone spat in front of Mar Ukva and another person came along and covered up the saliva. Mar Ukva disqualified himself from hearing the case of the person who did him the favor of covering up the saliva.

A final case involved Rav Shmuel b'Reb Yossi and his sharecropper. The sharecropper who normally delivered produce to Rav Shmuel b'Reb Yossi every Friday showed up early one week and delivered the produce on Thursday because he had to be in town that day for a Din Torah. Rav Shmuel b'Reb Yossi disqualified himself from hearing the case, lest he be "bribed" by the favor of the early delivery that week.

Rav Pam, zt"l, asked a question about this narration: Are we to infer that these Amoraim were so fickle that the slightest favor could influence them? What's the big deal about any of these matters? Did these Amoraim have such little backbone that they could be swayed by trivial and incidental matters? Rav Pam said that the lesson of this Gemara is not so much about judicial integrity or the corrosive nature of bribes. The major lesson that this passage of Talmud teaches is the concept of Hakaras HaTov [gratitude]. This Gemara teaches us how indebted each of these Amoraim felt to anyone who did them even the slightest favor.

Such matters would be insignificant to us. As a result of our insensitivity to the proper attribute of Hakaras HaTov, such favors do not even register on our radar screens as necessitating any gratitude on our part. We do not even consider them favors. But people who are highly sensitive to the attribute of showing gratitude do consider these kindnesses to be favors, worthy in fact of favors in return.

Rav Pam explains that many of the problems in our society indeed stem from the lack of appreciation of one's obligation for Hakaras HaTov. Husbands take the kindnesses that wives do for them for granted and wives take for granted the things that husbands do for them. Everybody has expectations of the other party in a marriage because "that's their job!" "Why should they get 'Extra credit' for merely doing their job?" If each spouse would see the things done for them as a favor which needs to be recognized, marriages would be far happier and far more stable. The same is true in employer-employee relationships and in virtually all other relationships as well!

Rav Pam notes: If parents and alumni would have the proper sense of Hakaras HaTov to the institutions that educated themselves and their children, Yeshivos and Beis Yaakovs and Day Schools would not be in the sorry state of financial distress in which they find themselves today. All too often, the attitude is "I paid my tuition. I did my job. You did your job. Do not bother me anymore!" If they had a feeling for the proper sense of gratitude to these teachers and institutions, their ongoing gifts would be far more generous!

Rav Kook, when yet a Rav in Europe, before moving to Eretz Yisrael spent time in the summers on the Baltic seacoast in Latvia, as was the custom of many European Rabbonim. There was a hall there where they made minyanim. Rav Reuvain Bengas happened to be there one evening and had Yahrzeit. There were only nine people in the hall, so one of the people in the hall went outside looking for a tenth Jew for the minyan for Rav Reuvain's Yahrzeit. Meanwhile, outside there was a certain fellow also trying to form a minyan and he had an exact minyan. The person from the hall did not realize this and pulled one person from the outside group into the hall for the inside minyan.

Although this was all unintentional, the person who organized the minyan outside stormed into the hall and started yelling at Rav Bengas and heaping insults upon him. Rav Kook, well-known for his great Ahavas Yisrael for every Jew, nevertheless went to the person who was berating Rav Bengas and slapped him across his face for embarrassing a Talmid Chochom. The slapped person got so furious at Rav Kook that he decided to take him to the secular court for assaulting him. A whole commotion developed. A number of people asked Rav Kook to just apologize so that the matter would not go any further. Rav Kook refused. He said if this was just for my honor I could apologize, but this involves the honor of Rav Bengas who was shamed. I am not sorry I slapped him. I had to stand up for the honor of a Talmud Chochom. Let this person take me to court!

A few days passed, however, and the fellow had a change of heart. He came into Rav Kook and apologized and told him he was not going to take him to court. Seemingly that was the end of the story.

Years later, Rav Kook came to America and he was approached by the person who he had slapped years earlier in the Latvian seacoast town. He told Rav Kook "I cannot thank the Rabbi enough. I owe you a great debt of gratitude." He then took out a gold watch and gave it to Rav Kook. He explained that after Rav Kook slapped him, his life became miserable in

Europe. As a result of that tumultuous incident, he became notoriously known as the Jew who yelled at Rav Benges and the Jew who was slapped by Rav Kook. He had no choice but to leave Europe and go to America where no one knew him. In America, he became a millionaire! He felt his good fortune was all the result of the slap of Rav Kook and wanted to show Hakaras HaTov to him.

Sometimes we should feel gratitude even for a slap in the face! Likewise the Amoraim felt a super sensitivity for gratitude even for trivial matters. The same is true of righteous Jews in every generation. The Chofetz Chaim was a Kohen and could not attend funerals. A woman died who had once donated a window to his Yeshiva in Radin. (This was a simple window - not a fancy stained glass window.) Even though the Chofetz Chaim could not enter the cemetery and despite his old age, he walked a long distance behind the casket to the cemetery to accompany the body to burial, as Hakaras HaTov for the donation of the window.

If only we would recognized the obligation to recognize favors – however small – the world would be a far better place!

Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD

RavFrاند, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org.

---

<http://www.rabbiwein.com/>

### **Weekly Parsha**

#### **Rabbi Berel Wein**

Weekly Parsha :: SHOFTIM :: Rabbi Berel Wein

The pursuit of justice is an integral part of Judaism. Righteousness and justice are to be pursued through righteous means. Noble causes supported or achieved by questionable means no longer remain so noble. Since human justice is always tainted and influenced by preconceptions, prejudices, beliefs and societal pressures it can safely be said that there is no human court that can achieve one hundred percent true justice.

Yet the Torah bids us to pursue that almost unattainable goal. It is the Torah's policy to fully recognize the frailties of human beings and yet at the very same time not to compromise its spiritual standards for human behavior and values. The Torah sets for us goals and definitions. That we may be incapable of easily achieving those goals does not alter the obligation placed upon us to attempt to reach them.

True piety, justice and truth are absolutes that defy our systems of relative morality and changing societal norms and behavior. Yet it is obvious that we must have a clear definition of those lofty goals that we aspire to reach. The Torah sets very high standards for us in all areas of human life and behavior. We may not be able to live up completely to those standards permanently but a clear understanding and definition of what those standards are gives us the necessary frame of reference by which we may judge our life's activities and accomplishments.

Ignoring or watering down these standards in order to feel more comfortable with one's failings and weaknesses is a sure recipe for moral corruption and societal breakdown.

Judges and police – law and order – were to be established in all of the Jewish communities at all times. In most of the period of the long exile from our homeland, the Jewish society was a self-policing one, with or without the benefit of non-Jewish governmental authorization as the case may have been.

For most of this long period of time the justice system was entrusted to the rabbis, their courts and their decisions. Their verdicts were enforced by the norms of the society in which they lived. The rabbis respected the law of the land in all cases except where those laws were obviously discriminatory against Jews, opposed Torah laws or were patently unjust and evil. Yet the rabbis opposed having disputes between Jews adjudicated in non-Jewish courts. With the creation of the State of Israel there now exist in our country dual judicial systems – that of the secular court system and of the rabbinic court system.

Being courts composed of human beings, neither system has proven itself infallible in all instances. Yet for the most part all of us who live in Israel feel that we do live in a country that does aspire to a correct and moral system of law and order in our society.

As long as we do not compromise the lofty standards of the Torah regarding true justice we somehow are able to live with our society's shortcomings vis-à-vis those standards. The pursuit of true justice will always remain a goal in Jewish life. Shabat shalom.

---

From Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu>

To weekly@ohr.edu

### **Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Shoftim**

**For the week ending 22 August 2009 / 1 Elul 5769**

**by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - [www.seasonsofthemoon.com](http://www.seasonsofthemoon.com)**

#### **Overview**

Moshe tells Bnei Yisrael to appoint judges and officers in their cities. A bribe of even an insignificant sum is forbidden. Trees are not to be planted near Hashem's altar, as was the way of idolaters. Blemishes in animals designated for offerings and other points of disqualification are listed. The Great Sanhedrin is to make binding decisions on new situations according to Torah criteria to prevent the fragmentation of the Torah. A very learned scholar who refuses to accept the Halachic decisions of the Sanhedrin incurs the death penalty. A Jewish king may only have possessions and symbols of power commensurate with the honor of his office, but not for self-aggrandizement. He is to write for himself two sifrei Torah, one to be kept with him wherever he goes, so that he doesn't become haughty. Neither the kohanim nor the levi'im are to inherit land in the Land of Israel, rather they are to be supported by the community by a system of tithes. All divination is prohibited. Hashem promises the Jewish People that He will send them prophets to guide them, and Moshe explains how a genuine prophet may be distinguished from a false one. Cities of refuge are to be provided an accidental killer to escape the blood-avenger from the deceased's family. However, someone who kills with malice is to be handed over to the blood-avenger. Moshe cautions Bnei Yisrael not to move boundary markers to increase their property. Two witnesses who conspire to "frame" a third party are to be punished with the very same punishment that they conspired to bring upon the innocent party. A kohen is to be anointed specifically for when Israel goes to war, to instill trust in Hashem. Among those disqualified from going to war is anyone who has built a new house but not lived in it yet, or anyone who is fearful or fainthearted. An enemy must be given the chance to make peace, but if they refuse, all the males are to be killed. Fruit trees are to be preserved and not cut down during the siege. If a corpse is found between cities, the elders of the nearest city must take a heifer, slaughter it, and wash their hands over it, saying that they are not guilty of the death.

#### **Insights**

##### **Living Links**

**“And you will come to the priests, the Leviim, and the judge who will be in those days.” (17:9)**

Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi was extremely sensitive to the smell of garlic and could not tolerate its odor. Once, he was teaching a group of students. He paused, the smell of garlic reaching his nose... “Would the student who ate garlic kindly leave the room?” he asked. Not just one, but many students left. One of them was Rabbi Chiya.

The next day Rabbi Shimon (Rabbi Yehuda's son) chided Rabbi Chiya for his lack of consideration in eating garlic before attending the lecture. Rabbi Chiya replied “I didn't eat any garlic. The reason I left was that so the offender should not have to be embarrassed by revealing himself.”

Where did Rabbi Chiya learn the need for this sensitivity to the feelings of others? The Talmud teaches us that Rabbi Chiya learned this behavior from

seeing Rabbi Meir conduct himself in a similar way. And from whom did Rabbi Meir learn it? From Shmuel HaKatan. And Shmuel? From Schania in the Book of Ezra. And Schania learned it from Yehoshua, who learned from Moshe Rabbeinu.

Why didn't the Talmud skip all those generations and just get to the point? Why didn't it just say, "Rabbi Chiya learned his sensitivity and noble behavior from Moshe Rabbeinu?"

We stand at the end of an unbroken chain of generations. A chain of generations that stretches back ultimately to Moshe Rabbeinu and a moment of supreme contact with G-d on Sinai. But our contact with that moment is with the great Torah Sages of our own generation. There are no "missing links" in the chain of the Torah. For every rabbi is a student of his rabbi.

When we seek wisdom and direction, we need look no further than our own living links to the past.

•Source: Based on Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz

---

From Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com>  
To Peninim <peninim@shemayisrael.com>  
Subject **Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum**  
Hebrew Academy of Cleveland Parshas Shoftim

### **Judges and officers shall you appoint in all your cities. (16:18)**

The commentators note the use of *lecha*, (for) you, in the singular form.

This prompts them to assert that every individual has a moral obligation to monitor and discipline himself, to make sure that he is following the laws of the Torah in letter and spirit. *Otzros HaTorah* supplements this with another thought concerning oneself. One should judge himself in accordance with "himself," with reference to his own abilities, his talents, his background, his G-d-given gifts, which enable him to function as a contributing member of the Jewish community. Some activities which might be viewed as sinful for one person may not have such a negative connotation for another. For one person a specific act might be viewed as meritorious, while for another it might not produce such positive feedback. It all depends on "*lecha*," you - nobody else.

Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl, legendary *Mashgiach* of Mir, related that he attempted to emulate some of the behaviors of Horav Yitzchak Blazer, zl, a preeminent student of Horav Yisrael Salanter, zl. For instance, Rav Itzele, as he was referred to endearingly, would refrain from speaking during the entire month of Elul until after Yom Kippur. Rav Yeruchem attempted to follow suit, but just could not. He realized that he just was not on Rav Itzele's *madreigah*, spiritual plateau. In fact, one who talks himself into believing that he should act to the extreme concerning a certain issue is doing nothing more than listening to the counsel of the *yetzer hora*, the evil inclination. Whenever a person attempts to go beyond his spiritual level, he is following the advice of the *yetzer hora*.

The act of imitating others who are greater than oneself is the expression of an insecure person, someone who is uncomfortable in his own skin. Horav Chaim Zaitchik, zl, relates a *mashal*, analogy, he heard from Horav David Bliacher, zl, Rosh Yeshiva of Bais Yosef/ Novardok in Mezrich. A horse once took note of his master's satisfaction with the family dog. The master would play with the dog and go for walks with the dog. The horse watched enviously when the dog placed its paws all over its master, even licking his face and falling all over him. It made the horse jealous. It also wanted to have such a loving relationship with its master. The decision was simple: when his master took a nap in the afternoon, it would join him, just like the dog. No more sleeping on hay in the barn and standing in its own waste.

The horse was going to act like a dog.

Well, the reader can imagine what happened. The horse entered the master's bedroom and, with all 2000 pounds, lay down on top of the master. Next came the licking, which almost suffocated what was left of the poor man. The clincher was when the horse attempted to place its hooves on the

master's head. The badly bruised and barely alive man screamed out for help, and the horse was shot by one of the servants.

The lesson is obvious: one who seeks to emulate another person must be certain that he has everything in common with him. To imitate for the purpose of being a copy cat can do greater damage than one thinks. Every person should strive to be who Hashem wants him to be - and not someone else.

Horav Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz, zl, the architect of Torah in America, was himself a master *mechanech*. He understood that every student in *Mesivta Torah Vodaath* had his own unique capabilities which needed to be refined individually. One of his resolutions in *chinuch* was to spend more time giving thought to the life goals of every individual student, rather than merely assessing how he was progressing in the *Mesivta*. His underlying assumption in guiding students was that each Jew has a particular destiny in life and a specific contribution to make to Klal Yisrael. The key to success in Torah *chinuch* is to help each student to identify the special qualities which Hashem has imbued in him, to unlock them, and to find the task for which those abilities make him uniquely suited.

Rav Shraga Feivel would interpret this idea into the *Mussaf Shemoneh Esrai* of Rosh Hashanah, when we say: *Ki zeichar kol ha'yetzur lefanecha ba, maaseh ish u'pekudaso*, "For these the remembrance of everything fashioned comes before you; everyone's deed and mission." From this we derive that man is judged on two scales: first, according to his *mitzvah* performance, his *maaseh ish*; and second, whether he has fulfilled the task for which he has been uniquely created, his *pekudah*. Rav Shraga Feivel would add that it was by no means certain that the first judgment is more severe than the second. Even if our slate of *aveiros*, sins, is relatively clean, we cannot ignore the fact that we are being judged on a second slate, in which we can expect strict judgment if we have not fulfilled our purpose in life. If one has not fulfilled the specific task for which he has been created, he has missed his *raison d'être*.

Rav Shraga Feivel would force each student to take a hard look at himself as an individual in order to figure out what he would do best with his life. Approaching one of the older students in the *Mesivta*, he asked him about his plans for the future. The young man was acutely aware of the pivotal role that *chinuch* played in Rav Shraga Feivel's life. Therefore, he answered, "*Chinuch*."

To the young man's chagrin, Rav Shraga Feivel was unimpressed with his response. He immediately told the student that one does not just decide on *chinuch* as a vocation. It is a lifelong mission for which one must prepare himself. It is a demanding career in which excellence does not just happen. One must work at it. Rav Shraga Feivel was intimating to the young man that he might not make the greatest educator unless his heart was really into it. The exchange was still not over. He asked the student whether he was good with his hands. Assured that he was, the astute *Menahel* said, "You are a *yarei Shomayim*, a G-d-fearing man and you are good with your hands. Why not become a *mohel*, *circumciser*, or a *shochet*, ritual slaughterer? There is a shortage of qualified people in these fields."

Rav Shraga Feivel understood his students, their individual talents and unique abilities. He harnessed the widest array of talent on behalf of Torah education, putting together a group of highly motivated and talented young men to form the nucleus of the original Torah *U'Mesorah*, the organization that steered and guided the development of Torah education in America post World War II. He showed each individual how he contributed his own vital quality to the larger whole in order to create a well-tuned organization, such that the unique strength of each individual was being utilized to its maximum.

### **You shall come to the Kohanim, to the Leviim, and to the Judge who will be in those days. (17:9)**

While this *pasuk* is addressing the adjudication of cases involving capital punishment and other issues of primacy to the Jewish community, we also derive from here the importance of listening to the *Daas Torah*, wisdom

derived from the Torah, as expounded by the Torah leaders of each respective generation. This applies to halachah, as well as advice in accordance with the Torah's view. Jews must first turn to their rebbe, rabbi, rav, rosh yeshivah - anyone who represents true Torah perspective and lives according to the standards of what he represents. A Torah personality is not only to provide a brachah, blessing. He is there for advice and guidance, since his counsel is based upon years of Torah study and ethics. I take the liberty of citing a psak, decision, from Horav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita, which many have heard, but perhaps not quite as many have understood. I hope that I will do justice to the explanation.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, relates that he was asked by the chief neonatologist at Shaarei Tzedek Hospital concerning the use of ultrasound for a pregnant woman in determining the possibility of any defects or illnesses in the unborn fetus. Rav Zilberstein presented the question to his brother-in-law, Rav Kanievsky, who rendered the following decision. For a woman who has no reason to believe that anything is wrong with her fetus - she is having a perfectly normal pregnancy - it is better that she not take any tests. Despite the safety of the test and its possible therapeutic effect in the event that they discover a problem, it should not be performed - unless a specific health issue has raised the doctor's concern. As long as no specific concern exists, prayer has greater efficacy, since it supplicates Hashem to perform a covert miracle. In contrast, once the ultrasound has been performed and a critical problem detected, then overt Heavenly intervention is required. Under such circumstances, the supplicant needs greater merit in order for his prayers to achieve efficacy.

Rav Zilberstein explains the above statement based upon Rashi's commentary to the episodes with Elisha Hanavi and the two women. In the first incident, the woman's husband had died leaving her with two sons who were about to be seized by creditors for the widow's debt. Elisha instructed the woman to gather as many empty containers as she could obtain. She was then to shut the door and the miracle would occur: all of the pots would fill with enough money to repay her creditors. Rashi explains that the door was to be closed because "it is more honorable for the miracle that it occur in private." Likewise, we find that when the Shunamis' son died, Elisha dispatched Geichazi with instructions not to speak about it with anyone on the road. Rashi explains that Elisha feared that, in the course of conversation, Geichazi might divulge that a miracle was about to take place. Once again, this is not kavod, honor, for the miracle.

In Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 35:10, it is stated: "One who has a sick person in his home should go to the chacham ha'ir, wise man/rav/tzaddik, of the city, and ask him to entreat Hashem for mercy on behalf of the ill person." The Klausenberger Rebbe, zl, added that this "prescription" is intended to be used before one goes to the doctor for a diagnosis. Once the physician has stated his verdict, it becomes increasingly difficult for the chacham to rescind it. It is so much easier and more efficacious to pray before the medical community has issued its diagnosis. In this way, the miracle that must take place can do so with much less fanfare.

#### **You shall not deviate from the word that they will tell you, right or left. (17:11)**

The decision which the Torah leaders have rendered must be accepted and adhered to, regardless whether it defies our sense of logic. All too often, our perspective is mired by political expediency, vested interests, or just plain distorted objectives. Our Torah leaders view issues through a different spectrum, one whose clarity is refined by their total relationship with the Torah. Rashi explains "right and left" as, even if they tell you about right that it is left or vice versa; i.e., if what they say does not make any sense, to the point that they seem to mix up the two extremes of right and left. Ramban explains it a bit differently: even if you are as certain that they are wrong, as you are sure that right is right and left is left. In any event, one must maintain a strict sense of emunas chachamim, trust and faith in our Torah leaders.

This is a powerful exhortation. We are clear beyond any shadow of a doubt that what we are hearing from Daas Torah, the wisdom of Torah as expounded by our Torah leadership, is incompatible with what our mind deems sensible. Yet, we are enjoined to listen to what Daas Torah says. This is the definition of obedience: to listen even if it clearly does not seem rational. When we think about it, the Torah's use of the extremes "right" and "left" seems questionable. Why not use the terms "night" and "day" or "Heaven" and "earth"?

Otzros HaTorah explains that herein lies the underlying concept of emunas chachamim. When one faces the east, his right hand coincides with the south and his left is opposite the north. In contrast, when one faces the west, his right hand is on the north side and his left hand coincides with the south. There is no contradiction between the "hands". It all depends upon which direction one is facing. We must understand that what we accept is "right" and "left" is based upon our perspective. The Torah scholar views this same issue from a perspective that is not tainted by vested interests and other personal objectives. Thus, "his right" is quite different from "our right".

The Alter, zl, m'Kelm, felt that the entire Purim miracle was the result of the merit that Esther HaMalkah accrued by following Mordechai's instructions not to reveal "her nation or her birthplace." Obviously, people had begun to talk. They had no idea where this woman came from. For all they knew, she had been a homeless vagabond with questionable pedigree, who just happened to be in Shushan at an opportune time. Such talk was not helpful to fulfilling Esther's objective, but her uncle Mordechai, who just happened to be the gadol ha'dor, preeminent leader of the generation, told her to keep quiet. Who was she to disagree? In the end, Mordechai was proven right. Had she revealed her background, Haman would have been careful not to reveal his diabolical plans in her presence and, quite possibly, the Purim story would have had a different ending.

Horav Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler, zl, was a firm believer and exponent of the concept of emunas chachamim. He did not just believe in the concept, he literally felt it. In the late summer of 1915, Rav Dessler's uncle, Horav Chaim Ozer Grodzenski, zl, came to their home in Homel to escape persecution from the Russian government. Already the presence in Homel of one of the generation's preeminent Torah leaders, Rav Chaim Ozer, attracted many other Torah leaders to Rav Dessler's home. The young man of 23 was privy to many a Torah meeting in which decisions were addressed concerning the future of the Jewish People, both physically and spiritually. In one of his letters, Rav Dessler records from memory a statement made by Rav Chaim Ozer, in response to the argument by a certain Rabbi that the yeshivos were doomed by the apparent lack of any natural means of support. Rav Chaim Ozer replied, "Do not worry. The Torah always exists on miracles; it will never have a natural basis."

It was this period of about a year in which Rav Dessler saw Torah come alive in the guise of the various Roshei Yeshivah and rabbanim who gathered together with Rav Chaim Ozer. Thus, in his later years, when he became the venerable Mashgiach who was transforming the yeshivah man's perspective with his powerful ethical discourses, he would often speak of the necessity for faith in the judgment of the generation's Torah leaders. He himself would frequently seek the advice of Rav Chaim Ozer, Horav Elchanan Wasserman, zl, and in later years, the Chazon Ish.

Following the Holocaust, Rav Dessler penned a letter to a young student concerning the impact of Rav Chaim Ozer and the other gedolim on him. Apparently, the student had raised the question that had been on the mind of many others: Did the gedolim err in not encouraging European Jewry to emigrate to Eretz Yisrael?

In responding, Rav Dessler came as close to anger as he ever did. He wrote, "Were it not that I understand that you must have picked up these ideas from other people who call themselves bnei Torah, I would not have replied at all." This was totally uncharacteristic of a man who was the paradigm of ethics and self-control. He continued with a description of what it was like

to experience being in the presence of such gedolim as they deliberated matters concerning all of Klal Yisrael.

"I had the merit of knowing several of these great men personally... men such as the Chafetz Chaim, zl, Rav Chaim Brisker, zl, and Rav Chaim Ozer, zl, and I have observed them during meetings on matters concerning Klal Yisrael, and I can tell you with all sincerity that the amazing ability of their minds could be perceived even by puny intellects such as ours... though there was not the slightest chance than anyone like you or me could follow completely the crystal-like clarity of their understanding.

"Furthermore, whoever was present at those meetings would have seen with their own eyes the extent and depth of the sense of responsibility with which they approached these matters. It was written all over their faces, as they deliberated the solution for Klal Yisrael's problem - all for the sake of Heaven. One who has not seen this personally has never observed feelings of responsibility in his life. Whoever had the merit to stand before them on such an occasion could not doubt that he had seen the Shechinah resting on the work of their hands and that the Holy Spirit was present during these deliberations."

Rav Dessler leaves us with a characterization that a lack of self-effacement towards our rabbinic leadership, is the root of all sin and the beginning of all destruction. On the other hand, faith in the sages is the root of all spiritual progress.

**And he shall write for himself two copies of this Torah in a book... It shall be with him, and he shall read from it all the days of his life. (17:18, 19)**

The Torah instructs the Melech Yisrael, Jewish king, to "read from it (the Torah) all the days of his life." This seems a bit demanding. It is not as if the king has nothing else to do all day but to learn Torah. That would be wonderful, but who would address the needs of the kingdom? Being king does carry "some" responsibility. The Chasam Sofer teaches us a compelling lesson. The Torah contains within it everything a person needs to know to respond to any question which arises in life. In the preface to his commentary to the Torah, the Ramban writes that every wisdom in the world is hidden within and alluded to in the Torah. In addition, writes the Chasam Sofer, every individual should be able to derive the answer to his life's questions in the Torah.

This is the meaning of, "He shall write for himself two copies of this Torah. It should always be with him." The Torah demands a level of erudition on the part of the Jewish king that he should see and discern the events of his life in the Torah. In this way, he will appreciate the unparalleled value of the Torah, and it will elevate his perception and fear of Heaven, so that he will be an outstanding king.

I think we might take this idea further. During one's lifetime, an individual writes his own book of life. This is more than a mere autobiography. His actions, both positive and negative, comprise his legacy for the future and his testament which accompanies him to his eternal reward. One cannot ignore his own autobiography. Most important, his life story should mirror the Torah, to the point that his actions complement the Torah's instructions for Jewish life. If one receives his direction from the Torah, it is "with him all the days of his life," such that he can be assured that his book of life will receive a prominent position in the Heavenly library.

**It shall be with him, and he shall read from it all the days of his life, so that he will learn to fear Hashem. (17:19)**

The Torah commands the Melech Yisrael, Jewish king, to write two Sifrei Torah, one to keep in his private possession, and one to keep with him at all times. In this way, he will become G-d-fearing and totally observant of Hashem's laws. Ibn Ezra writes that the purpose of this Torah is so that the king himself becomes spiritually complete. Interestingly, the Torah does not instruct the king to increase yiraas Shomayim, fear of Heaven, among the people. He is not told to reach out and elevate the people's level of mitzvah observance. All he is told to do is to work on himself. This teaches us that

before one can reach out to others, he must first work on himself and, only afterward, will it have a ripple effect on those around him and the rest of Klal Yisrael.

That is how one reaches out to others. He first reaches out to himself, perfecting his own character, correcting his own deficiencies, addressing his own issues, before he is ready to work with others. Horav Shmuel Berenbaum, zl, related that when the Chafetz Chaim, zl, was a young man, his goal was to change the world, to return everybody to Hashem in order to live a life of Torah. After awhile, he saw that he could not do that, so he decided to focus on his own country. When that did not prove successful either, he decided to center on his own town. This endeavor also did not meet with success. It was then that he realized that he would have to proceed - the other way around - with himself as the focal point. Once he had perfected himself and became the saintly Chafetz Chaim, his influence spread far and wide, with his community, city, country and, eventually, the world, falling under the inspiration and influence of the saintly Chafetz Chaim from the small town of Radin.

Indeed, it was the Chafetz Chaim who distinguished between the physical geographical map of the world and the spiritual projection of the world. On the secular topographical chart, the larger the city, the larger is the "dot" which delineates it. A small town is represented with a small, thin, gray dot, while the larger cities are marked by a larger and darker dot. Not so the spiritual map, which delineates a community in accordance with its spiritual impact. Thus, the small town of Radin, whose dot on the secular map was probably inconsequential or even non-existent, has a large, dark dot on the spiritual map. The Chafetz Chaim and his yeshivah changed the world's impression of this town.

Outreach works with a mushroom effect, such that the individual first sees to it that he himself has no issues, that his own life is in order, his character is ethically correct, and his relationship with the Almighty is sound and filled with awe and trepidation. One who fears the consequences of his errors is careful not to err. In contrast, one whose attitude is spontaneous, impulsive, will be guided by his heart, often ignoring what is appropriate, out of a desire to reach out, out of a sense of love for fellow Jews. One who reaches out is mashpiah, which means influences others. Horav Yaakov Kamenetzky, zl, saw a deeper meaning in this world, which he felt was related to shipuah, which means slanted. Parents and rebbeim - anyone who reaches out to others - do so through shipuah: it slides down from him to his child/student. Thus, in order for it to slide properly, for the influence to be correct, the one from whom it is being propelled must himself have a "smooth slant."

---

From TorahWeb <torahweb@torahweb.org>

To weeklydt@torahweb2.org

Copyright © by The TorahWeb Foundation. All rights reserved.

**Rabbi Benjamin Yudin  
The TorahWeb Foundation  
Glatt Yashar**

The opening mitzvah of parshas Shoftim mandates that courts of law be established throughout the land. That same verse directs the judges to execute "mishpat tzedek"- righteous judgment. Judges are then further instructed not to pervert judgment, to not show any favoritism to a litigant by giving him preferential treatment, and to not take a bribe. Then the Torah seems to be repeating itself again when it says (16:20) tzedek tzedek tirdof- righteousness righteousness shall you pursue". Rav Ashi in Sanhedrin (32A) understood the repetition of the word righteousness to teach that circumstances might warrant different "righteous" approaches. There are instances in which the course of righteousness is to pursue justice, din, and other circumstances in which righteousness dictates we pursue compromise, psharah. In addition, the Talmud (ibid) understands "tzedek tzedek tirdof" as an instruction to seek out the best court available.

The Dubner Maggid in his *Ohel Yaakov* (parshas Mishpatim) has a novel understanding of “tzedek tzedek tirdof”. Rather than understand the teaching as addressing judges, he learns the verse as a directive to each individual that in their personal and business affairs they are to be scrupulously careful to ensure that what is theirs is really theirs. In fact, he questions the nature of the *dinei Torah* that arose in the midbar and suggests that unlike most court cases, in which each individual claims rights and possession, here they were asking the judges to verify and ensure their rightful claim of ownership, with each one saying, “No! Maybe it is yours”. There is a delicious Medrash (*Vayikra Rabbah* 27:1) that illustrates this idea. The Medrash teaches that Alexander the Great once visited the community of Afriki and wished to observe its judicial system. Two men came before the king for justice. The first said, “I purchased a plot of land from this man, and when I dug to lay the foundation of a home, I found a treasure buried there. I only bought the land, not the treasure, therefore it is not mine.” The seller said, “I too am fearful of the biblical prohibition of ‘lo tiggzo’ - do not steal’ and I too do not want it back unless it is definitely mine.” The king (judge) asked the buyer if he had a son, he answered “yes”. The seller answered positively to having a daughter. “Wonderful,” said the king, “let them marry and share the treasure.” This is “tzedek tzedek tirdof” - affirming with certainty that what’s yours is really yours. The Arizal was known to have the ability to identify sins and transgressions of individuals by looking carefully into their face. The Rav of Tzfas, Rav Moshe Galante (1540-1614) once came to the Arizal for his “spiritual check-up”, whereupon the latter said “you have safek gezel” - literally you are suspected of thievery/ borderline theft. The rabbi who had a silk business fasted, cried. He then called in all his workers, put a pile of money on the table, and asked if he had cheated any of them. They all answered in the negative and left. The last to leave, a woman, took a few coins. When the rabbi / employer asked why she took the money, she answered “you paid me as a regular worker, and I am a specialist.” The rabbi cried for joy that his record was now cleaned. He was able to say about himself “tzedek tzedek tirdof”.

The internet can be a wonderful tool to use, but it is also subject to much abuse. Too many are guilty of pirating information that is copyrighted from the internet. Rav Moshe Feinstein zt”l said it is not permitted to copy any item that is being sold by the creator (maker) of that item. Every time one copies it, they are taking away sales from him. “Everyone does it and it really should be permitted (mutar)” - in no way justifies it.

Our children must be taught the definition of plagiarizing and the prohibition thereof. Again, the internet contains much scholarly material. It is also an opportunity to bring much *geulah* to the world- by giving proper credit to the author and earning the approbation of “tzedek tzedek tirdof”. Applying for scholarships from *yeshivot* when one doesn’t need it (this is often done by hiding income), is stealing from *tzedakah*, and the practical consequences of not getting a scholarship when one truly needs it, is because of a lack of “tzedek tzedek tirdof”.

It is not sufficient to be careful about eating *glatt kosher*, our money has to be *glatt yashar*.

Copyright © 2009 by The TorahWeb Foundation. All rights reserved.

[http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2009/moadim/dtwe\\_elul.html](http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2009/moadim/dtwe_elul.html)

**Rabbi Dr. Abraham J. Twerski**  
**The TorahWeb Foundation**  
**Interpersonal Teshuva**

The season of heightened *teshuvah* is before us. The daily sounding of the *shofar* in the month of *Elul*, the early morning *selichos*, *Rosh Hashanah*, the Ten days of Penitence, culminated by *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Forgiveness. It is of interest that *Yom Kippur* is generally translated as the “Day of Atonement” rather than “Day of Forgiveness,” although the term

*kapara* generally refers to forgiveness. It is unknown who coined the term “Day of Atonement,” but perhaps there is something to be learned from it. In contrast to forgiveness, atonement connotes making restitution and compensation. This concept is not really relevant to sins of *bein adam lamakom*, between man and Hashem, because we cause Hashem no harm when we sin, as Elihu said, “Were you to have transgressed, how would you have affected Him, and if your rebellions were numerous, what would you have done to Him?” (*Iyov* 35:6). *Chanun hamarbeh lisloach*, Hashem’s mercy is infinite and His forgiveness is abundant, but that is only for sins between man and Hashem. If one has sinned against another person, Hashem does not forgive those sins until one has appeased whomever one offended. The Chasam Sofer said, “I am worried much more about sins *bein adam lachavero* than *bein adam lamakom*. I trust Hashem’s forgiveness, but I cannot be sure about people.”

So for there to be forgiveness on *Yom Kippur*, there must be atonement, restitution, and that is not always easy to achieve. Ironically, easiest of all is if you were a *goniff* (thief) and stole something, because then all that is required is that you make monetary compensation. It is much more difficult if you maligned someone by speaking disparagingly of him. Here you may be in a quandary, because if you were to ask the person to forgive you for having spoken badly about him, you may cause him to agonize, “I wonder what he said about me and to whom.” Rabbi Yisrael of Salant said that in this case it is better not to tell the person that you spoke badly about him, hence there is no way to ask for forgiveness. In addition, if you spread a false rumor about him, *halacha* does not require that he forgive you. Whereas one can make restitution by returning the money one stole, there is no way of making restitution if you “stole” someone’s time. I.e., if you promised to meet someone at a certain time and you kept him waiting for twenty minutes, you deprived him of time, a commodity which cannot be replaced.

Perhaps you mistreated your child with improper discipline. You might have come from work having had a very difficult day and were very irritable, and were unjustly harsh to your child. That is an offense against another person which requires that person’s forgiveness. However, inasmuch as a child is legally incompetent, he cannot grant forgiveness, and *Yom Kippur* cannot erase that sin!

*Bein adam lachavero* applies to husbands and wives *vis-à-vis* one another. An abusive spouse incurs a sin when one mistreats one’s partner, and the aggrieved spouse may not forgive wholeheartedly.

Suppose someone asked your advice, and you told him what you thought would be best, but it turned out that your advice was misguided, and the person sustained a loss because of your advice. Although your intentions were good, you did inadvertently cause him damage, for which you are just as responsible as if you accidentally broke his window. The Steipler Gaon, in the very last moments of his life, cried bitterly, saying “I am afraid that perhaps I may have given someone bad advice.”

What can we do about those situations where restitution is not feasible?

One of the students of the *Vilna Gaon* felt that he had offended someone by sarcastically rejecting the latter’s explanation of a difficult Talmudic passage. He went from *shul* to *shul* throughout *Vilna*, looking for the man to ask his forgiveness, but did not find him and he was heartbroken. The Gaon told him, “If you have truly done everything within your power to ask his forgiveness, you can be sure that Hashem will put it in his heart to forgive you.”

That is the solution for those incidents where one cannot atone. If one makes serious effort to make restitution and appease the offended person, then Hashem will put it in their hearts to forgive one. But one must be thorough in making restitution and asking forgiveness wherever possible, and that includes your spouse and your children if you have offended them, because only then will one merit Hashem’s intervention on one’s behalf.

Copyright © 2009 by The TorahWeb Foundation. All rights reserved.



From: yatedusa@yated.com  
To: <usa-weekly@yatednews.com>

**YatedUsa Parshas Shoftim 1 Elul 5769**  
**Halachah Discussion**  
**by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt**  
**Eating Baked Goods as a Meal**

Washing hands, reciting Al netilas yadayim, and reciting Birkas ha-Mazon are required when eating an amount of baked goods that constitutes kevius seudah, i.e., an amount of food that has the halachic status of eating a regular meal (as opposed to a snack). When one eats such a substantial amount, the baked goods are halachically treated like bread.

Note: When we refer to baked goods, we are speaking of products such as cake or other baked goods known as pas haba b'ksinin, which have "bread-like" properties and appearance, e.g., cookies, crackers, pretzels, Cheerios, etc. However, pasta, blintzes, farfel, oatmeal cereal and other cooked mezonos items which do not resemble bread at all are not considered baked goods for the purpose of our Discussion.

There are several opinions as to the amount of baked goods which is necessary for kevius seudah. Some poskim rule that one who ate as little as eight k'zaysim is obligated to bentsh. Others hold that Birkas ha-Mazon is not recited unless one eats an amount of baked goods equal to the amount of bread he would eat at a main meal. It is exceedingly difficult to figure out what this amount is, since the amount of bread one would eat at a main meal varies according to the differences in eating habits between men and women,<sup>1</sup> different age groups,<sup>2</sup> and different localities.<sup>3</sup> A rough estimate, however, is an amount similar to two bagels, or five middle pieces of a 2 lb. loaf of bread, or about eighteen to twenty k'zaysim.<sup>4</sup>

In general terms, the halachah breaks down as follows. One who eats an amount of baked goods:

Between one to eight k'zaysim recites Al ha-michyah.

Over twenty k'zaysim — must wash his hands, recite Al netilas yadayim and recite Birkas ha-Mazon.

Between eight and twenty k'zaysim (an halachically questionable area), and feels satiated from this amount of food, should recite Birkas ha-Mazon. If he does not feel satiated, he should recite Al ha-michyah.<sup>5</sup> [If he is satiated but only because he ate other foods as well at the same time, see follow-up Question and Discussion.]

Here are some practical examples:<sup>6</sup>

A slice of pizza<sup>7</sup> contains about eight to nine k'zaysim of flour. Typically, a single slice is eaten as a snack and one does not become satiated from it; Al ha-michyah is recited. In the case when it is eaten as a substitute for lunch and the person is satiated from it, Birkas ha-Mazon is required. But if one eats two slices of pizza, which, for most people would constitute a meal, one must definitely bentsh. In the atypical case where one is not satiated from eating two slices, Al ha-michyah will suffice. But one who eats more than two slices is required to bentsh even if he is not satiated from that amount of pizza.

A standard cupcake is four k'zaysim. One who ate two cupcakes and is satiated is required to bentsh. If, however he is not satiated, he could eat up to five cupcakes before it would be mandatory to recite Birkas ha-Mazon.

A slice of a standard (3"x3") seven layer cake an inch thick contains two k'zaysim of flour. One may eat four such slices before running into a question of reciting Birkas ha-Mazon. At what point bentshing is mandatory will depend on how many slices one needs to eat in order to feel satiated. Eating ten such pieces, however, would require bentshing no matter the degree of satiety.

Question: We mentioned earlier that eating one slice of pizza would not necessitate Birkas ha-Mazon since often one is not satiated from it. What if one ate a portion of French fries (four medium-sized French fries total a k'zayis) along with the pizza and is now satiated from the combination of the two foods — is he required to bentsh?

Discussion: It depends on how the foods were eaten. If the pizza and the French fries are eaten together as when bread is eaten together with fish or meat, then we view the pizza as a "bread," since it is acting as a bread substitute. In that case, Birkas ha-Mazon is required, since one became satiated from a meal with a bread substitute. But if the pizza and the French fries were eaten separately — independent of each other — then the pizza did not serve as a substitute for bread but rather as a separate food; no Birkas ha-Mazon is required. Al ha-michyah and Borei nefashos are said instead.

In other words, for other foods to be counted as part of the kevius seudah and require Birkas ha-Mazon, three conditions must be met: 1) One must be satiated. 2) At least eight k'zaysim of baked goods must be eaten.<sup>8</sup> 3) The other foods are eaten together or along with the baked goods.<sup>9</sup>

A number of examples to illustrate this point:

A croissant (made with pure fruit juice for the purpose of a snack) eaten by itself, or at the beginning or end of the meal is mezonos/Al ha-michyah.<sup>10</sup> But if it is eaten

together with other foods (e.g., at a lunch together with fish and vegetable salads), and is used as a substitute for bread, Birkas ha-Mazon is required — if one becomes satiated from eight k'zaysim of croissant roll plus any amount of the other food served at the meal.

Baked goods which are served as an appetizer and removed from the table, or as a dessert after the meal is cleared away, are not being used as bread substitutes. The other foods do not count towards the amount of kevius seudah.

Tuna fish or chopped liver served together with crackers or flat bread are counted towards the amount of kevius seudah. Thus if one ate eight k'zaysim of crackers (about 48 Tam Tams) or flatbread (about 14 pieces) plus tuna fish or chipped liver and he is satiated, he must recite Birkas ha-Mazon.

Note: The subject discussed here, the formula for determining kevius seudah when combining baked goods with other foods, is an issue intensely debated by the poskim, and there are numerous, often conflicting, approaches. While the approach that we took is based on the decision of several leading poskim, it is by no means the one and only approach. There are more lenient views who hold that the entire amount of kevius seudah must be composed of the baked goods only; other foods do not count at all.<sup>11</sup> There are also more stringent views who hold that Birkas ha-Mazon is recited even when the baked goods are eaten at any time during the meal (and not only if they are eaten together or along with the baked goods), and even if the total amount of baked goods is less than eight k'zaysim.<sup>12</sup> We have chosen a middle-of-the-road compromise, which seems to be the prevalent custom, and it is based on the halachic decisions of Rav S.Z. Auerbach.<sup>13</sup>

Footnotes

Rav S.Z. Auerbach (Vesein Berachah, pg. 488) rules that women and girls who eat less than men have a smaller shiur of kevius seudah.

<sup>2</sup> See Beir Halachah 168:6, who rules that kevius seudah for children and elderly people varies according to their individual eating habits.

<sup>3</sup> Igros Moshe, O.C. 3:32.

<sup>4</sup> There are several factors and many views which must be taken into account when calculating this amount. See Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 28-36 and pg. 219-226 for a lengthy explanation of this very difficult subject. See also Pischei Halachah 8:15-21.

<sup>5</sup> Mishnah Berurah 168:24.

<sup>6</sup> Based on the calculations of The Halachos of K'zayis, pgs. 31-41.

<sup>7</sup> Our Discussion follows the opinion who holds that when pizza is eaten as a snack its berachah is mezonos/Al ha-Michyah. While many poskim hold that one always washes his hands, recites ha-motzi and Birkas ha-Mazon over pizza regardless of the amount, and one who conducts himself in accordance with that view has upon him to rely, the general custom seems to follow the first opinion.

<sup>8</sup> Shulchan Aruch Harav 167:8; Rav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Vesein Berachah, vol. 2, Hebrew section, pg. 10 and pg. 490); Shevet ha-Levi 7:25.

<sup>9</sup> Derech ha-Chaim (Mezonos 3); Mishnah Berurah 168:24; Emes l'Yaakov, O.C. 168, note 196; Minchas Yitzchak 1:71-10; Rav C.P. Scheinberg (quoted in Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 32); Teshuvos v'Hanhagos 2:125; Lehoros Nossan 7:9. This may be the view of the Chazon Ish as well; see O.C. 26:8; 34:8, Orchos Rabbeinu 1:80 and Pischei Halachah 8:21, note 53. See Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 36 and 220, for an elaboration.

<sup>10</sup> See Shevet ha-Levi 8:32.

<sup>11</sup> Birkei Yosef 168:6; Aruch ha-Shulchan 168:17; Kaf ha-Chaim 168:47. Sefardim conduct themselves according to this view; Yabia Omer 8:22-21.

<sup>12</sup> Igros Moshe, O.C. 1:56; 3:32 and 4:41; Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (quoted in Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 32 and 34); Mekor ha-Berachah, pg. 113.

<sup>13</sup> Rav Auerbach's ruling on the subject may be found in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 54, note 132, Vesein Berachah, vol. 2, Hebrew section, pg. 10 and pg. 490, and Vezos ha-Berachah, pg. 32.