

Temple Beth El Torah Study

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בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ
בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְעֲסוֹק בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה.

*Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech haolam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav
v'tzivanu laasok b'divrei Torah*

Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all, who hallows us with mitzvot, commanding us to engage with words of Torah.

Deuteronomy 22:4

If you see your fellow's donkey or ox fallen on the road, do not ignore it; you must help him raise it.

Exodus 23:5

(5) When you see the donkey of your enemy lying under its burden and would refrain from raising it, you must nevertheless raise it with him.

Pesachim 113b:4-6

R. Shmuel son of R. Yitzhak said in Rav's name: It is permissible to hate him, as it is said, "If you see the donkey of your enemy lying under its burden" (Shmot 23:5).

Now, which enemy is meant?

Shall we say, a non-Jewish enemy? It was taught: The enemy of whom they spoke is an Israelite enemy, not a non-Jewish enemy.

Hence it obviously means an Israelite enemy. But is it permitted to hate him? Surely it is written, "You shall not hate your brother in your heart" (Vayikra 19:17).

And conversely, if there are witnesses [who can testify] that a Jew transgressed, all agree that he should be hated!

Why is this particular person singled out? Hence it must surely apply to such a case where he had seen something indecent in him.

R. Nahman b. Yitzhak said: It is a duty to hate him, as it is written, "God's commandment is to hate wickedness" (Mishlei 8:13).

Bava Metzia 32b:16

The Gemara suggests: **Come and hear** proof from a *baraita*: If one encounters **a friend** whose animal collapsed and it is necessary **to unload** its burden, **and** one also encounters **an enemy** who needs assistance **to load** a burden onto his animal, **the mitzvah** is **to assist the enemy, in order to subjugate** one's evil inclination.

The Gemara reasons: **And if it enters your mind that the requirement to prevent suffering to animals is by Torah law, that option, to unload his friend's animal, is the preferable course of action for him.** The Gemara answers: Even if the requirement to prevent suffering to animals is by Torah law, **even so, loading his enemy's animal in order to subjugate his evil inclination is preferable.**

Onkelos Exodus 23:5

When you see the **donkey of your enemy** lying under its burden, you **must let go of what is in your heart against him**; you must nevertheless raise it with him.

Sefer HaChinukh 16:2

You must know, that a man is acted upon according to his actions; and his heart and all his thoughts always follow after the actions that he does - whether good or bad... **for the hearts are drawn after the actions.**

A story about a lady who came to the Lubavitcher Rebbe complaining that she wasn't kind. He suggested taking the month to do one deliberate act of kindness a day and these see and report back. At the end of this "experiment" she reported back how good it felt to act kind and that for the first time, she realizes that she's a kind person.

Originally, she was waiting to feel like she wants to be kind in order to do kindness. But the Rebbe was teaching her that by acting kindly, she will feel the pleasure of being kind.

Shenei Luchot HaBerit, Torah Shebikhtav, Ki Teitzei, Torah Ohr 50

The commandment requiring us to help the owner of an overloaded animal or human being (22,4) by unloading the excessive load is directed at the natural tendency to ignore the discomfort of our detractors.

The Torah demands that we put aside such petty considerations and display empathy with the pain of such a human being. By having demonstrated this kind of empathy you may feel confident that, should the occasion arise, you too will become the beneficiary of someone else's empathy. [Thus, helping to load an enemies donkey before unloading a friends donkey] helps restore harmonious relations between him and you (cf. Exodus 23,5).

Excerpt from 'Covenant and Conversation- Exodus: The Book of Redemption by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, page 160'

There are two principles at stake here. One is **concern for the animal**. Jewish law forbids *tza'ar ba'alei hayim*, the needless infliction of pain on animals. It is as if the Torah is here saying: a conflict between two human beings should not lead either of them to ignore the fact that the ass is labouring under its load. It is innocent. Why then should it suffer? That in itself is a powerful moral lesson.

The second is stronger still. It says, in effect: **your enemy is also a human being**. Hostility may divide you, but there is something deeper that connects you: the covenant of human solidarity. Distress, difficulty- these things transcend the language of difference. A decent society will be one in which enemies do not allow their rancour or animosity to prevent them from coming to one another's assistance when they need help.

Midrash Tanchuma, Mishpatim 1:2

What is meant by *You have established equity* (ibid.)?

R. Alexandri explained it as follows: Two mules are being led along a road by men who despise each other. Suddenly, one of the mules falls to the ground.

As the one who is leading the second mule passes by, he sees the mule of the other man stretched out beneath his load, and he says to himself: “Is it not written in the law that *If you see the donkey of someone that hates you lying under its burden, and you hesitate to leave what you are doing for him; you must surely release it for him* (Exod. 23:5)?”

What did he do? He turned back to help the other man reload his mule, and then accompanied him on the way.

In fact, while working with him he began to talk to the owner of the mule, saying: “Let us loosen it a little on this side, let us tighten it down on this side,” until he reloaded the animal with him.

It came to pass that they had made peace between themselves. The driver of the mule (that had fallen) said to himself: “I cannot believe that he hates me; see how concerned he was when he saw that my mule and I were in distress.”

As a result, they went into the inn, and ate and drank together. Finally they became extremely attached to each other. Hence, *You have established equity, You have made justice and righteousness.*