



# הַמִּזְרָחִי

# HAMIZRACHI

## PARSHA WEEKLY

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**PARSHAT KI TEITZEI 5783 • 2023**








**ISRAEL**  
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**כִּי תָבֹא בְּכֶרֶם רֵעֶךָ וְאָכַלְתָּ  
עֲנָבִים כְּנֹפֶשֶׁת שִׁבְעָךָ**









דברים כג:כז

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Based in Jerusalem and with branches across the globe, Mizrachi – an acronym for *merkaz ruchani* (spiritual center) – was founded in 1902 by Rabbi Yitzchak Yaakov Reines, and is led today by Rabbi Doron Perez. Mizrachi's role was then and remains with vigor today, to be a proactive partner and to take personal responsibility in contributing to the collective destiny of *Klal Yisrael* through a commitment to Torah, the Land of Israel and the People of Israel.

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PARSHA WEEKLY

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# Refinery of Human Character

## Ramban & the Purpose of the Mitzvot



Rabbi Doron Perez

Executive Chairman, World Mizrachi

This week's *parasha* contains more *mitzvot*, by a long shot, than any other *parasha*. According to the Rambam's list of the 613 *mitzvot*, 74 appear this week in Parashat Ki Teitzei – over 12% of all of the *mitzvot*!

Although the Torah generally does not often give the specific reasoning for the fulfillment of individual *mitzvot* – is there an overall aim and spiritual purpose to all the *mitzvot*? If so, what ultimately is the overarching spiritual purpose of the commandments?

### A Crucible to Cleanse Character

The Ramban – Nachmanides – in his commentary on this week's *parasha*, answers both of these questions.<sup>1</sup>

There is, he maintains, a fundamental all-encompassing moral and spiritual aim to the commandments.

What exactly is it?

Ramban's philosophy of Judaism is deeply complex and multifaceted and difficult to sum up in a nutshell. He does however quote some midrashim of our Sages which point to an overall mission: "לא ניתנו המצוות אלא לצרף את הבריות" – "The commandments were given specifically in order refine (or purify) humankind."

The Hebrew verb לצרף refers to the activity of metal smithing – goldsmiths, silver-smiths and copper-smiths whose jobs are essentially all the same – to extract the desired beautiful and pure metal from the dross – the rough and impure components.

To separate the precious metals from the purposeless and putrid products.

This opines the Ramban is what the Sages believe is the essence of spiritual life and the very purpose of the *mitzvot*. They condition us to extract from our hearts the desirable refined and pure character traits and qualities from the rough, crass and impure ones. In short – to transform us from within, fashioning us into more refined, decent and noble people.

He makes this point through a subtle yet critical understanding of the rationale given for one of the *mitzvot* in this week's *parasha*.

The Torah mentions the *mitzvah* of שילוח הקן – sending away the mother bird before taking her eggs. The sages state in the Talmud (Berachot 33b) that the reason is not because of mercy for the mother bird but rather because this is a decree of G-d.

What does this mean?

According to the Ramban, it means that the focus is not on the bird but rather on ourselves. The reason we are required to display sensitivity and kindness to animals is less about other creatures and more about the person we become in the process. That we be transformed through this act into becoming a more sensitive, merciful and caring person. If we act unkindly towards living creatures then we are behaving with insensitivity and cruelty. G-d desires merciful and compassionate people, not critical and cruel ones. Similarly, the Ramban states that the *mitzvot* where we are commanded

to remember Hashem's miracles – with an emphasis on the Exodus – are not for G-d's sake but for our own. By constantly remembering the kindness and redemption that G-d did for us, we become more appreciative, grateful and humble people.

### Mussar – The Purpose of Life

The wisest of all men, King Solomon, highlights in his book of wisdom – Mishlei or Proverbs – that מוסר, an ethical emphasis and focus on character refinement is at the heart of the Jewish quest for wisdom.

Four times in the opening eight verses he emphasizes this:

“The Proverbs of Solomon son of David King of Israel – to strive for knowledge and mussar ... to draw lessons of mussar (מוסר השכל) ... Fear of G-d is the beginning of wisdom, knowledge and mussar ... Listen my son to the mussar of your father and do not forsake the Torah of your mother.”

Clearly, the pursuit of wisdom according to Solomon is inherently linked to mussar – a quest for ethical development and character refinement.

Indeed the Vilna Gaon gives a foundational insight into a life of mussar – ethical refinement – in his commentary on the verse: “Hold onto mussar, do not weaken, guard it as it is your life.” (Mishlei 4:13)

Says the Gaon as follows: “The purpose of a person's life is to overcome (those negative qualities) that he has not yet overcome, therefore one should strive continuously to strengthen oneself in this endeavor, because if not what is the purpose of life?”

Unsurprisingly, when Rabbi Yisrael Salanter noticed in the mid-1800s that character refinement was not as central as it ought to be in Torah life, he called the movement he founded to rectify this ‘The Mussar Movement’. What an appropriate name to capture the essence of moral and spiritual life.

A life of mussar growth, of spiritual enlightenment requires sacrifices. We are all familiar with the adage ‘no pain, no gain’. Only things we are prepared to sacrifice for and prioritize over other things are areas in which we succeed. A life of character refinement and growth requires ongoing focus and sacrifice. It

is for the reason that mussar – מוסר – is based on the שורש – the root word – יסר which means difficulty and a measure of suffering. It demands an ongoing quest for self-perfection. True perfection eludes us, but the quest shines a light on what the focus of life ought to be.

### A Building is only as Strong as its Foundations

Why is there no specific mitzvah in the 613 mitzvot of the Torah to refine our character? If it is so important then how come there is not a clearly stated commandment?

Rav Chaim Vital, the most famous disciple of the great kabbalist the Arizal, explains that the opposite is true – specifically **because** character refinement is so foundational to Torah living, there is no specific commandment. After all, the Rambam explains in the introduction to his Sefer HaMitzvot, where he lists and briefly explains each of the 613 mitzvot of the Torah, that there are many categories of mitzvot that are **not** included on the list. One such category is what he terms a מצוה כללית – a general mitzvah – one which is so central and therefore essential to the fulfillment of the entire Torah. Such is the centrality of character development says Rav Chaim Vital and the reason it is not included is that the entire Torah depends on it.

Using a building analogy – everyone knows that a building is only as strong as its foundations. If the foundations are weak then the safety of the whole building is at risk. The foundations are in many ways the most important part of the enterprise as the entire building structure depends on them. The entire edifice of Torah living rests on the ongoing focus of תיקון המידות – character refinement.

In fact, taking the building analogy even further, the higher you build the building, the more danger the building is to itself if the foundations are weak. In other words, the more floors that are added to the building the heavier it becomes, putting more pressure on the foundations. With weak foundations, the more one builds, the more the entire building is in danger of collapsing.

This is exactly what our Sages say about a life of Torah devoid of ongoing character development and laced with impurities. The Sages, in a very harsh observation, teach us that mitzvot fulfilled and Torah learned by someone who has perverse character traits that they are not aiming to correct, can be self-destructive. This teaching is based on the verse regarding the Torah's teachings being compared to rain:

“יערף כמטר לקחי ...”

“My lessons (the Torah) will penetrate like light rain ...” (Devarim 32:2)

The very word יערף – light rain – has an alternate much harsher meaning as well – to behead someone.<sup>2</sup> Based on this, Rava interprets the above verse (Ta'anit 7a) that if a Talmudic scholar is indecent then the Torah he learns (לקחי) will cause his own death like deadly storming rains (יערף כמטר). Furthermore continues Rabbi Bena'a, such an indecent person who studies Torah, instead of the Torah impacting them and becoming an elixir of life, it becomes an elixir of death – self-destructive instead of constructive.

Based on this, the Shulchan Aruch rules (YD 246:7) that Torah should not be taught to a student who is indecent but rather first they should be shown the ways of decency and only then should they be taught Torah.

### Conclusion

There are no shortcuts in spiritual life. Even the healing and enlightening words of the Torah and fulfillment of mitzvot will not only be ineffective and can even, G-d forbid, be destructive if a person is not basically decent. A constant focus on personal growth and character refinement is indispensable to religious life – the foundation of all the mitzvot. As Ramban has taught – transforming the inner qualities of a person's character is the essence of the whole Torah.

1. Ramban's commentary to Devarim 22:6.

2. In fact, we see an example of this at the end of this week's parasha regarding the עגלה ערופה – the calf which is beheaded. The word עורף means neck in Hebrew and therefore the verb ערף means to cut off at the neck - to behead, Heaven forbid.

PERSONAL GROWTH

# When “Bad” Things Happen: How To View Suffering



**Rabbi Reuven Taragin**  
Educational Director, World Mizrahi  
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Though we hope and pray for the best, suffering is part of life and can be hard to handle. In addition to dealing with the hardship, those suffering often struggle with the questions it raises about Hashem's relationship with us. It is, therefore, important to understand and account for human suffering. A healthy and robust religious identity hinges on this proper understanding.

## All from Hashem

First, we must remind ourselves that everything, including suffering, emanates from Hashem. Though Hashem is the source of ultimate good and wants the best for us, we know that grief also comes from Him:<sup>1</sup> “a person does not stub his toe below unless it was declared from above.”<sup>2</sup>

## Who Cares About Us

What does suffering indicate about our relationship with Hashem? The Torah predicts that suffering will cause many to think that Hashem is not “with us.”<sup>3</sup> This impression is mistaken and sadly distances Hashem from us.<sup>4</sup> Hashem's decree of suffering does not indicate distance — but our reaction can generate it.

In actuality, suffering reflects Hashem's *care* for us. Moshe Rabbeinu compares Hashem's decree to a father who causes his son pain to educate him.<sup>5</sup> In the words of Amos HaNavi: “You are the only nation I know (personally). I, therefore, punish you for all your sins.”<sup>6</sup> Knowing that our suffering emanates from Hashem, who cares deeply for us, should make handling it easier. This is why Dovid HaMelech felt comforted not just by Hashem's “assistance” but also by His “rod.”<sup>7</sup> Like a shepherd who uses his staff to support and discipline his sheep, Hashem guides us, His flock, through life — by helping and, sometimes, disciplining us.

## Source of Strength

Reb Nachum Margolios was able to appreciate and express this sentiment under exceptionally trying circumstances. Nachum

and his wife had only two daughters, both of whom died in an accident.

To everyone's surprise, Reb Nachum continued to appear in good spirits, smiling even during *shiva*. Some of his friends asked how he was able to maintain his happiness immediately after he lost both of his children.

He answered them, “Let me explain with an analogy. What happens if you walk in the street and feel a painful slap on the back? If you turn around and see that it is a stranger, you are upset at the person and rightfully complain about what he did to you. But if you turn around and see that it is a close friend, you immediately realize it is a slap of love. You embrace your friend with compassion and happiness.”

“So what can I say? I felt a huge slap of pain, but when I turned around, I saw Hashem behind me, and I know He loves me. That is how I am able to continue to rejoice even now, despite my tremendous pain.”<sup>8</sup>

The Shem MiShmuel<sup>9</sup> adds that seeing Hashem behind our suffering should give us the strength to work through it. This is why, when Yaakov heard that Yosef had survived and achieved a position of power in Mitzrayim, he assumed that he had survived spiritually as well.<sup>10</sup> Yaakov understood that Yosef was able to survive physically (only) because he had remained strong spiritually. Rav Elimelech Biderman expresses this idea through a story about an intelligence agent who was kidnapped and tortured to reveal state secrets. After many rounds of painful torture, the agent felt he was losing his strength and resolve. Just then, he overheard two of his captors speaking about how they were actually working for the same organization as the agent and that they had been sent to test the agent to see if he could be relied upon to keep the secrets even under duress. Hearing that those “torturing” him were really on his side and just testing him gave the agent the strength to withstand the pain and pass the test.

Our pain and suffering also come from “agents” who are “on our side.” We, too, are

being tested to see if we react the right way. May this knowledge make it easier for us to respond correctly.

## All Right

Though we don't always understand why we are suffering, we must believe Hashem's decrees are just and fair.

Iyov had a hard time seeing this, and this caused him to eventually completely lose his faith. After Hashem took his possessions and children from him, Iyov responded, “Hashem gave, and Hashem took. May Hashem's Name be blessed.”<sup>11</sup> Iyov recognized that Hashem was behind his suffering and took what He had a right to take. This recognition was noble. Indeed, Christians follow Iyov's lead and use his words to respond to death.

Though noble, this view is incomplete; therefore, when Iyov's suffering intensified, he lost faith. Iyov recognized Hashem's right to take, but not that His taking was right. This philosophical flaw expressed itself after his next round of suffering when Iyov described Hashem's decree as “bad.” He decided that Hashem's decree was unjust and that He governs the world unfairly.

We are meant to respond differently to suffering. The *gemara* tells us that when the Romans executed Rabbi Chanina ben Teradyon and his wife, they recited the pasuk from the beginning of Shirat Ha'azinu: “*Hatzur tamim pa'alo, ki kol derachav mishpat; e-l emunah v'ein avel tzadik v'yashar hu.*” This pasuk expresses the recognition of Hashem's righteousness and faithfulness. Hashem's decrees are not just His right but also right, just, and fair.

King Yoshiyahu responded similarly to his death. After being shot with many arrows by Pharaoh's army (whom he confronted against Yirmiyahu's instructions), Yoshiyahu's death was imminent. Yirmiyahu drew close and heard his last words: “*Tzadik hu Hashem ki fihu marisi* (Hashem is righteous; I violated his words)...”

The death of the righteous Yoshiyahu even-

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HAFTARAH - PARSHANUT ON THE PARSHA

# Ki-Tetzei – Reassurance & Remembrance



**Rabbanit Shani Taragin**  
Educational Director, World Mizrahi

**T**his week as we read the fifth (and shortest) of the *haftarot* of comfort (Yeshayahu 54:1-10 “Sing, O barren one), we are reminded of the deliberate hierarchy of the order as discerned by the Ba’al Machzor Vitri:

“... And the latter ones, which all speak of comfort, are read from Tish’a B’Av until Yom Kippur, in the way that one comforts (a human mourner) slowly by stages, for someone who offers comfort too close to the time of tragedy is like one who predicts the future: “Tomorrow you will be king,” which the bereaved cannot believe... therefore “Comfort you,” “And Tzion shall say” – although Tzion is destroyed, do not say that she is abandoned. Since Hashem has “comforted” her already in His mercy, He does not call for mercy again. Up until this point the prophets comfort her; from here onwards He comforts her. **And once she has received consolation, we follow with: “Sing, O barren one,” “Arise and shine,” “I shall rejoice.”**

Since last week’s *haftarah* there is no longer a call for mercy, rather a response to the personal consolation offered by Hashem. The first *pasuk* in Chapter 54 of Yeshayahu describes reassurance of *geulah* – “Sing, O barren woman, you who never bore a child.” The *akarah* (barren woman) who felt alone and embarrassed in society, will soon express mirth and excitement, for in the future she will be surrounded by her own children who will be born without birth pains. Appropriately for this time of year, the Malbim explains that following a process of sincere *teshuvah*, HaKadosh Baruch Hu



**Hashem encourages us that His everlasting kindness, compassion and fulfillment of promises and covenant will be manifest once we are unified as one nation successfully returned to our Land.**

forgives the Jewish people and treats them as if they’ve never sinned; the experiences of childlessness/*galut* will be retroactively nonexistent.

The ensuing verses of the prophecy assure us that as redemption takes place, the people and subsequently the borders, will expand in all directions, thereby fulfilling the patriarchal promises (Bereishit 28:14). Hashem encourages us that His everlasting kindness, compassion and fulfillment of promises and covenant will be manifest once we are unified as one nation successfully returned to our Land.

Although these *haftarot* were selected for their theme of consolation, there are also particular connections between the respective *parshiyot* of the Torah read on the same *Shabbatot*. Some associations between this week’s *haftara* and Parshat Ki-Tetzei include the following:

(1) The prophet announces, “More numerous are the children of the desolate than the children of the married woman” (54:1). The prophet describes two women – one desolate and alone, the other married. The one who is married is loved by

her husband, while the desolate one is hated and abandoned. Indeed, she is “like a woman abandoned and of downcast spirit,” like “the woman of one’s youth whom one has despised” (6). But Hashem promises that “with great mercy” and “with everlasting lovingkindness” He will return this “wife of His youth” to Him. The subject of a beloved wife and a despised wife is mentioned at the beginning of this week’s *parasha*, and that of separating from the wife of one’s youth and sending her away is dealt with further on in the Torah portion (Devarim 24:1-2).

(2) Parshat Ki-Tetzei ends with the directive to remember how the Amalekites attacked us in a vulnerable state on our journey and how we must not forget when we are settled and complacent in our Land to obliterate their remembrance. The *haftarah*, conversely teaches us what we must NOT remember – “for the shame of your youth **you shall forget**, and the disgrace of your widowhood **you shall no longer remember**” (54:4), employing the exact inverse terminologies of the *parasha*. The *haftarah* thereby underscores when and what we must remember for the future, assuring us that while other nations’ will be obliterated over time, the Jewish people will survive and triumph. We will remember the evil perpetrated by Amalek but we will forget the shame and disgrace of exile and loneliness. Hashem’s wrath and war against Amalek continues whereas His rebuke to us is replaced with compassion and everlasting kindness.

# Halachic Q&A



## Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Head, Mizrahi Rabbinic Council | Rabbi of the Gush Etzion Regional Council  
Rosh Yeshivah, Jerusalem College of Technology | Founder and Chairman, Sulamot and La'Ofek

**Question: Can I work somewhere which sells vegetarian food without a kashrut certification? I would be working in the marketing department and not selling food products.**

Answer: It seems to be fine to work in the marketing department as there are no products which are explicitly non-kosher, and you are not selling or eating the food (you cannot eat it because of the following issues: *terumot* and *ma'asrot*, insects, *bishul nochri*, doubts regarding *yayin nesech*/liquids which include *yayin nesech*). Ideally, it would be best to work elsewhere if possible.

**Question: Should one say tefilat haderech when traveling on municipal road between cities, such as Jabotinsky Street from Petach Tikvah to Tel Aviv?**

Answer: If the city nearby is essentially a continuation of the previous city just with a different name, one does not say *tefillat haderech*. There must be at least thirty-five meters of area where people do not live in between.

**Question: Somebody approached my friend who is a kohen and asked him if he can have his two nieces in mind for a shidduch when he says Birkat Kohanim. My friend is wondering if this is okay. Can a kohen have specific people in mind when saying the blessings or must his thoughts be on all of Klal Yisrael?**

Answer: Great question. The Rambam (Rambam, Tefilah and Birkat Kohanim 15:7) describes *Birkat Kohanim*, explaining

that the *bracha* is not coming as a result of the *kohanim*, but rather from G-d who blesses us through the *kohanim*:

Do not wonder: "What good will come from the blessing of this simple person?" for the reception of the blessings is not dependent on the priests, but on the Holy One, blessed be He, as [Numbers 6:27] states: "And they shall set My name upon the children of Israel, and I shall bless them." The priests perform the *mitzvah* with which they were commanded, and G-d, in His mercies, will bless Israel as He desires.<sup>1</sup>

Because the *bracha* is said with a *tzibur* and during *tefilah*, it appears that the intention is meant to be for everybody. However, right after the *bracha* is finished, after the *kohen* turns around but is still on the *bimah*, he can daven for his nieces and, *be'ezrat Hashem*, the *tefillot* should be answered.

**Question: A boy who is almost thirteen wants to tie a pair of tzitzit in preparation for his bar mitzvah. Can he tie almost all of it and leave a bit for him to finish after his bar mitzvah?**

Answer: This seemingly should not work, because the basic obligation of *tzitzit* is fulfilled with one knot, and therefore once he ties the first knot, it is already considered *tzitzit*, and the ties after that would not make a difference. It would be considered as if it were tied by a minor.

However, *Biur Halacha* writes a major *chidush*. According to him, a minor may tie *tzitzit* for himself, and if he tied them *lishma*, he may wear them even after his *bar mitzvah*.

This *chidush* is not so simple and many others disagreed.

There is another *machloket* about the status of a minor who is being watched by an adult (see Mishnah Berurah 11:8). In practice, we generally are stringent and do not assume that this gives them the status of an adult.

In our case, we can combine the *Biur Halacha's* ruling together with the opinions who believe that a minor being watched by an adult makes a difference, and allow for the boy in this case to tie them and continue wearing them after his *bar mitzvah*.

**Question: Does one who drives to and from the Sinai Peninsula need to say 'hagomel'?**

Answer: It is not entirely clear. Seemingly, he needs to make the *bracha* as he has the status of "*holchei midbariot*." This seems to be the accepted *minhag*, similar to how most people say '*hogomel*' when returning from outside of Eretz Yisrael on a plane. However, *Mori v'Rabbi HaRav Aharon Lichtenstein zt"l* ruled that one only makes a *bracha* if he felt endangered. I am not sure that would be the case here. In practice, there are reasons for both opinions, and you may decide to bless based off the degree of danger you felt.

● Compiled by Yaakov Panitch.

1. Translation from chabad.org

# אחיק

הרבנית שרון רימון  
Tanach teacher and author



”לא תראה את שור אחיק או את שיו נדחים והתעלמת מהם השב תשיבם לאחיק.. וכן תעשה לכל אבדת אחיק אשר תאבד ממנו ומצאתה לא תוכל להתעלם: לא תראה את המור אחיק או שורו נפלים בדרך והתעלמת מהם הקים תקים עמו“ (דברים כ”ב, א-ד).

לפי דברי רבנו בחיי, התורה מחנכת אותנו לא רק להשיב אבדה ולטעון משא, אלא לסייע לכל אדם שצריך עזרה בכל תחום.

מדוע שאדם יעשה מאמץ גדול כל כך עבור אדם, שאפילו אינו מכיר?

קודם כל – מבחינה פרקטית – כל אחד רוצה שיחזירו לו אבדה או שישיעו לו בשעת צרה, וכדי שזה יקרה, כל אחד צריך גם לדאוג להחזיר אבדה של אחרים או לסייע להם. התנהלות אכפתית בונה חברה תקינה, וכולם מרוויחים מכך.

אך נראה שהתורה מלמדת אותנו עקרון הרבה יותר מהותי – להרגיש שהאדם השני הוא “אחיק”; לחוש אהבה וחמלה כלפי אדם אחר; להיות אמפטיים וקשובים למצוקות של אנשים אחרים, ולכאוב את מצוקתם באופן אישי, ממש להרגיש ש”לא תוכל להתעלם”, ומתוך כך לעשות הכל כדי להיטיב ולסייע.

כסף לצורך השמירה על האבדה (למשל: להאכיל את הבהמה). בנוסף לכך, עצם העובדה שאדם מוצא חפץ ולא לוקח אותו לעצמו זו דרישה מוסרית גבוהה מאד, שלא קל לעמוד בה.

האלשיך מסביר, שמצוות השבת אבדה היא חלק ממצוות “ואהבת לרעך כמוך”, אך צריך לצוות עליה בנפרד מפני שזה ממש לא מובן מאליו: “שקשה הדבר בעיני בני אדם לייגע בעד זולתם, כי מי יראה אבידת אחיו שורו או חמורו ויהיה מחמר אחריו עד גשתו עד אחיו ויניח כל עסקיו?!”.

אך כאשר אדם מתרגל לנורמה המוסרית הגבוהה היא הופכת לטבעית עבורו, עד כדי כך שיגיע לדרגה של “לא תוכל להתעלם”. הוא פשוט לא יהיה מסוגל להתעלם מאבדה שהוא רואה.

רבנו בחיי מרחיב את המצווה לכל התחומים שבהם אדם יכול לסייע לחברו: “זה שאמר: לא תוכל להתעלם, אין להבין אותו בהשבת אבדה בלבד, אלא הוא הדין בשאר כל הפרטים ושאר כל התועלות שבד האדם להביאם לחברו או להסיר ולדחות נזקו ממנו הרי הוא חייב בכלן, וכענין שאמר הכתוב: “ואהבת לרעך כמוך” (ויקרא יט, יח).”

פסוקים אלה מופיעות שתי מצוות: השבת אבדה והקמת בהמה שכרעה תחת משאה. למרות שמדובר בשתי מצוות שונות, לשון הפסוקים רומזת על קשר ביניהן:

שתיהן פותחות במילים “לא תראה”; בשתיהן מדובר על שור או חמור; השייך ל”אחיק” (חוזר 6 פעמים); והתורה מצווה לא “להתעלם” (חוזר 3 פעמים).

ובכן, שתי המצוות עוסקות בקושי של אדם אחר שפוגשים ורואים בדרך. יש אפשרות להתעלם, כאילו לא ראינו, ולהמשיך בדרך, אך התורה מצפה מהאדם לרמה מוסרית גבוהה יותר – להרגיש שהאדם השני הוא “אחיק”, ומתוך רגש האחוה והאהבה לראות את הקושי שלו, לא להתעלם, אלא לעשות את המעשה הנכון.

המעשה הנכון דורש מאמץ רב. לא בכדי נוטה האדם להתעלם ולהמשיך הלאה בדרכו כאילו לא ראה דבר. אם הוא יראה הוא יצטרך להקדיש זמן ולטרוח טרחה מרובה על הקמת הבהמה והטענת המשא מחדש, או על השבת האבדה – לקחת אליו הביתה את האבדה ולהקצות לה מקום; להכריז עליה; לשמור עליה עד שהמאבד יגיע; לעתים זה ידרוש ממנו אפילו להוציא

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# Guardrail



**Sivan Rahav Meir and Yedidya Meir**  
World Mizrahi Scholars-in-Residence

כִּי תִבְנֶה בַּיִת חֲדָשׁ וְעָשִׂיתָ מֵעָקָה לְגִגֶּר ...

רש"י: מעקה - גִּדָּר סָבִיב לְגִגֶּר

When you build a new house, you shall make a guard rail for your roof, so that you shall not cause blood [to be spilled] in your house, that the one who falls should fall from it [the roof]. (Deut. 22:8)

Rashi: guardrail – a fence surrounding the roof.

It's interesting to note that thousands of years later, the same Hebrew word for guardrail (*maakeh*) in the above verse is applicable and relevant. We speak about the same guardrail, in the Torah and in life. I know that some of those listening to this speak biblical Hebrew and sometimes there are large gaps between it and modern Hebrew. A few years ago, when we spent Shabbat in Silver Springs, Maryland, I heard someone arranging to meet an Israeli next to a bush say, "Let's meet next to the *sneh*."

So let's speak about the guardrail, then and now. Here's an explanation from Rav Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin, otherwise known as the Natziv:

הנצי"ב: "מי שאין לו מזוזה רשאי לדור בביתו בלא מזוזה, רק שעליו מצווה לקבוע מזוזה כשישיג... מה שאין כן מעקה, שתלוי בבניין הבית, שאסור לדור בבית בלי מעקה, משום הכי שייך יותר לחדש ביתו במצוות מעקה"

"A person is allowed to live in his house without a *mezuzah*, as long as he will put one up as soon as he can get it . . . which is not so with a guard rail, that depends on the construction of a house since it is forbidden to live in a home without a guardrail, and therefore it is more appropriate to validate his building of a new home with the guard rail *mitzvah*."

Do we relate to safety rules as to *mitzvahs*? Before getting into a car, we need to check oil, water, and tire pressure. We need to pay attention that our windows have

baby-proof bars, and that when we rent a cabin, there is a rail around the swimming pool; but we must still look carefully after the children, and not let them go into the water at the beach where there is no lifeguard. Does this sound banal? It does not. It's a *mitzvah*. This appears to be a simple, primary level of observance, but it is super important. It is forbidden to live in a house without a guard rail.

Now let's go a little deeper. Rav Berel Wein writes that this is not only a physical guard rail, but also a spiritual one, a warning sign and symbol for "don't," what is not allowed in this house. When we put up a house, we need to establish rules regarding Shabbat, festivals, food, etc. Otherwise, there will be "blood" in our house as we "fall" to "spiritual death."

Life without a guardrail is something fearful and dangerous, but when there are limits. it's easier to move around. Limitations not only make a safer building but serve to build up your life as well.

Our commentators give many explanations as to why the verse speaks about "a new house."

For instance, we enter a new house each time we rise to a new rank or higher level in life. Rabbi Nachman writes: "It is known that the evil urge frequently provokes the person who keeps rising, one level after the next, in life. Therefore, he must be very careful, about making a guard rail for his roof and his stairs, that

he should make for himself a barrier and a fence in order not to fall, heaven forbid."

Or, for example, the Lubavitcher Rebbe writes that a "new house" is really a wedding, a new marriage. The bride and groom need to set up a guardrail, to establish rules and restrictions in their new relationship, around which they should put up a sign: "Caution, under construction!"

The commentator "Degel Mahaneh Efraim," Rebbe Moshe Hayim Efraim, grandson of the Baal Shem Tov, says that the new house is Rosh Hashana, the new year. "This day is the beginning of your deeds (for the new year), and on every Rosh Hashana the world is renewed and 'a new house' or a new world is constructed, for which you must make a guard rail." You should take upon yourself a new restriction, build a new guardrail, in the New Year.



# For the Shabbat Table



**Rabbi Danny Mirvis**  
Deputy CEO, World Mizrachi  
Rabbi of Ohel Moshe Synagogue, Herzliya Pituach

“If a man has a wayward and rebellious son, who does not listen to the voice of his father and the voice of his mother, and they discipline him and he does not listen to them ... they shall say to the elders of his city, ‘This son of ours is wayward and rebellious, he does not listen to our voice, he is a glutton and a drunkard’ ... and you shall remove the evil from your midst...” (Devarim 21:18, 20-21).

Towards the beginning of this week’s *parsha*, we come across the death penalty of the “*Ben Sorer uMoreh*” – the wayward and rebellious son. The death penalty is only imposed in extremely specific circumstances where it is perfectly obvious that the youth, if kept alive, will grow to become a monstrous human being.

In fact, the required circumstances are so extreme and so specific that the Gemara teaches:

“There never was a wayward and rebellious son and there never will be one. So why was it written (in the Torah)? Expound (the verses) and receive reward” (Sanhedrin 71a).

The “reward” referred to in the Gemara comes as a result of learning the messages of this passage. The *Kli Yakar* teaches that the main aim of this passage is to provide a warning to children, whereas the Maharsha sees its main purpose as providing lessons for parents. I would like to highlight just one of the lessons to be learnt from this passage.

“And they shall say to the elders of his city, ‘This son of ours is wayward and rebellious, he does not listen to our voice, he is a glutton and a drunkard’” (Devarim 21:18).

From the fact that the verse states, “he does not listen to our VOICE” in the

singular and not, “he does not listen to our VOICES” in the plural, the Gemara (Sanhedrin 71a) teaches that he can only be defined as a wayward and rebellious son if both his parents had spoken to him with an equal voice.

The *Sefer Ollelot Ephraim* explains that if both parents have not spoken with an equal voice, you cannot entirely blame the child for his rebellion. If one parent was much stricter than the other or the parents conveyed contradictory standards, messages or values, then it is natural for the child to grow up with a confused sense of right and wrong. It is essential for parents to speak with one voice to ensure the stable development of their children.

There may never have been a wayward and rebellious son and there may never be one, but the lessons are vital.

Shabbat Shalom!

*Continued from page 4*

tually led to *churban* and exile. Because Jews suffer greatly during exile, reaffirming Hashem’s righteousness becomes even more critical. Daniel, one of the leaders during the Persian exile, expressed this idea by including the words “*Lecha Hashem ha’tzedakah, v’lanu boshet hapanim* (Hashem is righteous, we should be embarrassed [for our sins])” in his *tefillah*.

We, too, include this *pasuk* in our *tachanun* and our *selichot*. The Kotzker Rebbe saw this as the essence of *selichot*. In fact, on the first night of the *selichot* before Rosh Hashanah, he would recite only this *pasuk*. Our ability to petition Hashem begins with our recognition that His decrees are just and that our problems flow from our own problematic actions.

Rebbe Yehudah HaNasi labeled the ben Tradyon family’s usage of the *Hatzur Tamim pasuk* as “*tziduk hadin*,” and it has become the model for future generations. When a close relative passes, one begins the *tziduk hadin* by quoting *Iyov*’s recognition of Hashem’s

right to take back the life He granted. We then *continue* with *Hatzur Tamim*, confirming Hashem’s decisions are just and fair.

We express the same recognition with the *berachah* of *Baruch Dayan Ha’emet*, which we recite upon hearing of someone’s passing or other bad news. When we face death or suffering, we use this *berachah* to reaffirm our belief that Hashem is just and righteous and that His decrees are fair.

## Sometimes, This Is All That Is Needed

Sometimes, this reaffirmation is all that is needed to change our fate. The *medrash* tells us that Miryam Bat Baysus’s laundry kept getting washed out to sea. Finally, she exclaimed, “Let His (Hashem’s) agents take what He is owed.” In response, Hashem had the sea return her clothing to her. The “debt” was her need to recognize her debt to Hashem. Once she expressed this recognition, Hashem considered the debt as paid. In addition to being painful, suffering is also a test of faith. May we have the strength

to sustain and reaffirm our beliefs at such times. May doing so merit Hashem’s continued blessings.

● *Written up by Rafi Davis*

1. This is contrary to the sentiment often felt by those who confront suffering (See *Megillat Eichah* 3:38).
2. *Talmud Bavli*, *Masechet Chullin* 7b. As we saw in previous pieces, this even applies to suffering caused by other people.
3. *Sefer Devarim* 31:17. See also *Shemot* 17:7.
4. *Sefat Emet* (*Likkutim Shabbat*), and *Shem MiShmuel* (*Vayigash*, 5677) in the name of *Rav Simcha Bunim*. See also *Seforno*, *Devarim* 31:18.
5. *Sefer Devarim* 8:5. See also *Mishlei* 3:12.
6. *Sefer Amos* 3:2.
7. See *Sefer Tehillim* 23:4 with *Metzudat Dovid*. See *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 2:4 which explains “*shivticha*” as referring to suffering.
8. Told by *Rav Moshe Weinberger* in *HaMizrachi*, *Matot* 5782. See *Sefer HaTanya* (*Iggeret Hakodesh* 11) for a source for this idea.
9. *Shem MiShmuel Vayigash* 5672.
10. *Bereishit Rabbah* 94:3
11. *Sefer Iyov* 1:21.

# The Limits of Love



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l

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

If a man has two wives, one loved, the other unloved [*senuah*, literally “hated”], and both the loved and the unloved bear him sons, but the firstborn is the son of the unloved wife, then when he wills his property to his sons, he must not give the rights of the firstborn to the son of the beloved wife in preference to his actual firstborn, the son of the unloved wife. He must recognise [the legal rights of] the firstborn of his unloved wife, so as to give him a double share of all he has, for he is the first of his father’s strength. The birthright is legally his. (Deut. 21:15-17)

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

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

What is extraordinary about it is that it

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

Recall the context. Fleeing from his home to his uncle Laban, Jacob fell in love at first sight with Rachel and worked seven years for her hand in marriage. On the night of the wedding, however, Laban substituted his elder daughter Leah. When Jacob complained, “Why have you deceived me?” Laban replied, with intentional irony, “It is not done in our place to give the younger before the elder.”<sup>3</sup> Jacob then agreed to work another seven years for Rachel. The second wedding took place a mere week after the first. We then read:

And [Jacob] went in also to Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah ... G-d saw that Leah was unloved [*senuah*] and He opened her womb, but Rachel remained barren. (Gen. 29:30-31)

Leah called her firstborn Reuben (“G-d has seen my suffering, maybe now my husband will love me,”), but her hurt at being less loved remained, and we read this about the birth of her second son:

She became pregnant again and had a son. “G-d has heard that I was unloved [*senuah*],” she said, “and He also gave me this son.” She named the child Simeon. (Gen. 29:33)

The word *senuah* appears only six times in the Torah, twice in the passage above

about Leah, four times in our *parsha* in connection with the law of the rights of the firstborn.

There is an even stronger connection. The unusual phrase “first of [his father’s] strength” appears only twice in the entire Torah: here in Ki Teitzei (21:17) “for he is the first of his father’s strength”, and in relation to Reuben, Leah’s firstborn:

“Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might and the first of my strength, first in rank and first in power.” (Gen. 49:3)

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

“Now, the two sons who were born to you in Egypt before I came here shall be considered as mine. Ephraim and Manasseh shall be just like Reuben and Simeon to me.” (Gen. 48:5)

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

How are we to resolve this? It may be that, despite the rabbinic principle that the patriarchs observed the whole To-

rah before it was given, this is only an approximation. Not every law was precisely the same before and after the covenant at Sinai. For instance, Ramban notes that the story of Judah and Tamar seems to describe a slightly different form of levirate marriage from the one set out in Deuteronomy.<sup>4</sup>

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

Abarbanel gives a quite different explanation. He proposes that Jacob transferred the double portion from Reuben to Joseph because G-d told him to do so. The law in Ki Teitzei is therefore stated to make clear that the case of Joseph was an exception, not a precedent.

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

It is not impossible, though, that there is a different kind of explanation altogether. What makes the Torah unique is that it is a book about both *law* (the primary meaning of "Torah") and *histo-*



## You cannot build a society on love alone.

ry. Elsewhere these are quite different genres. There is law, an answer to the question, "What may we or may not do?" And there is history, an answer to the question, "What happened?" There is no obvious relationship between these two at all.

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

Not all biblical law is like this, but some is. It represents truth learned through experience, justice as it takes shape through the lessons of history. The Torah takes the past as a guide to the future: often positive but sometimes also negative. Genesis tells us, among other things, that Jacob's favouritism toward Rachel over Leah, and Rachel's firstborn Joseph over Leah's firstborn, Reuben, was a cause of lingering strife within the family. It almost led the brothers to kill Joseph, and it did lead to their selling him as a slave. According to Ibn Ezra, the resentment felt by the descendants of Reuben endured for several generations, and was the reason why Datan and Aviram, both Reubenites, became key figures in the Korach rebellion.<sup>7</sup>

Jacob did what he did as an expression of love. His feeling for Rachel was overwhelming, as it was for Joseph, her elder

son. Love is central to Judaism: not just love between husband and wife, parent and child, but also love for G-d, for neighbour, and stranger. *But love is not enough.* There must also be justice and the impartial application of the law. People must feel that law is on the side of fairness. You cannot build a society on love alone. Love unites but it also divides. It leaves the less-loved feeling abandoned, neglected, disregarded, "hated." It can leave in its wake strife, envy, and a vortex of violence and revenge.

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

### AROUND THE SHABBAT TABLE:

- What lesson can we learn for our lives from Yaakov and his family?
- Can you think of a time when someone made a decision because of love, yet it was the wrong decision?
- Why is love not enough? What other values do we need in society?

1. This is already implicit in the story of Jacob, Reuben, and Joseph (see below). The Sages also inferred it from the episode of the daughters of Tzelophehad; see Numbers 27:7; Baba Batra 118b.

2. Sanhedrin 107a.

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

4. See Ramban to Gen. 38:8.

5. Ramban to Gen. 26:5.

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

7. Ibn Ezra to Num. 16:1.

# Taamei Ha'Mitzvos



**Rabbi Hershel Schachter**

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If a bird's nest happens to be before you on the road ... you shall not take the mother with the young. You shall surely send away the mother and take the young for yourself (Devarim 22:6-7).

The Mishnah teaches that when one asks for mercy, it is improper to say, "Your mercy extends to the bird's nest." One of the explanations given in the Gemara for the inappropriateness of this statement is that it renders the *mitzvah* of *shilu'ach hakein* an act of mercy on the mother bird, while in truth, all of the Torah's *mitzvos* are exclusively *gezeiros* (decrees) from Hashem.

It would seem that according to this opinion in the Gemara, Hashem gave us the *mitzvos* only to discipline us, "in order to purify mankind through them." The *mitzvos* are merely a reflection of Hashem's Will, and through them, we demonstrate our submission to His Will. That is why it is improper to ascribe any intrinsic reasoning to the *mitzvos*; instead, we should regard them as arbitrary Divine edicts, devoid of rationale.

The Rambam writes in Moreh Nevuchim that we do not accept this approach. In fact, the Ramban argues that there was not even a minority opinion to this effect. According to the Rambam, the accepted opinion is that the *mitzvos* most certainly do have reasons, although we do not always understand them. The Gemara's reference to *mitzvos* as *gezeiros* means that Hashem did not give the *mitzvah* of *shilu'ach hakein* out of compassion for birds, but rather as a decree for us, to instill in us the quality of mercy.

Rav Aharon Soloveitchik was fond of saying that *ta'amei hamitzvos* are to be compared to the *ta'am* – literally, the taste – of food. It is more enjoyable if nutritious food is tasty, but one must eat nutritious

food to remain healthy even if it does not have a good taste. Here too, one must perform the *mitzvos* whether he knows their *ta'am* or not. There is added "flavor" if one appreciates their *ta'am*, but the *mitzvos* must be observed even if they are beyond our comprehension.

The Meiri similarly comments on the *passuk*, "Teach me good reasoning and knowledge, for I have been faithful to Your commandments" (Tehillim 119:66). Recognizing that the word *כי* bears numerous meanings, Dovid HaMelech's request of Hashem may be interpreted as follows: "Teach me the reasons behind Your *mitzvos*, despite the fact that I have *emunah* and that I will perform the *mitzvos* regardless of reason."

This is what *kabbalas ol malchus Shamayim* entails – an obligation to observe the *mitzvos* only because the Melech commanded us to do so. One who decides to perform *mitzvos* only when he comprehends them and agrees with their meaning is deficient in his *kabbalas ol malchus Shamayim*. We do what Hashem commands even when it does not make sense to us; our observance is not dependent on our investigation.

Yirmiyah HaNavi was instructed by Hashem to purchase a field in Eretz Yisrael and to preserve the contract so that his grandchildren would be able to claim the land. Yirmiyah first complied with the instruction, and only later asked Hashem for its rationale, given the impending Babylonian conquest of the Land. At that time, Hashem responded that Yirmiyah's purchase of the field would serve as a sign to others that Bnei Yisrael would indeed return to Eretz Yisrael after a relatively brief *galus* Bavel of seventy years (Yirmiyah 32:6-44).

Like Yirmiyah, one must first do what he was commanded; only afterwards does

he have the right to seek its explanation. There is a Tannaitic dispute between Rebbi Shimon and Rebbi Yehudah as to whether *דרשינן טעמא דקרא* "we expound the rationale of Scripture." Ascertaining the *ta'am hamitzvah* certainly does constitute an important aspect of Torah study. It allows us to glean the moral, ethical, or religious principle that the Torah is trying to teach us through any particular *mitzvah*. The Tanna'im argue, however, regarding whether the reason for a *mitzvah* can regulate the application of the *mitzvah*, such that the *mitzvah* does not apply if the reason does not apply. In other words, the *machlokes* of *דרשינן טעמא דקרא* centers around whether or not *ta'am hamitzvah* constitutes one of the *מידות שהתורה נדרשת בהן* (exegetical principles through which the Torah is expounded) and can serve as the source of a *derashah* of the Torah *SheBe'al Peh*.

The accepted opinion is *לא דרשינן טעמא דקרא*; the rationale of the *mitzvah* does not define the limits of its *dinim*. However, there is an exception to this rule. It is evident from the Gemara in Sanhedrin that when the Torah itself states the reasoning behind an *issur* explicitly, even Rebbi Yehudah maintains *דרשינן טעמא דקרא*.

That is how the Chachamim in the days of Dovid HaMelech knew to expound the *passuk* in our *parsha*, "An Ammonite or Moavite shall not enter the Congregation of Hashem" (Devarim 23:4), to limit the Ammoni and Mo'avi restriction to males: – *עמוני ולא עמונית מואבי ולא מואבית* – "Ammoni, but not a [female] Ammonis; Mo'avi, but not a [female] Mo'avis." When the Torah prohibits marriage to an Ammoni or Mo'avi, it reveals to us the reason for the *issur*: "Because of the fact that they did not greet you with bread and water on the road when you were leaving Egypt." Since it was customary for only men,

*Continued on next page*

# Being Honest With Others And Ourselves



**Rabbi Yisroel Reisman**  
Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshiva Torah Vodaas

In the seventh *aliyah* of our *parsha*, we find a *pasuk* that teaches about the honesty one should have in business. We are taught לֹא יִהְיֶה לְךָ בְּכִיסֶּךָ אָבֶן וְאָבֶן וְגִדּוּלָה וְקִטְצָנָה – Do not have alternate weights in your pouch, larger or smaller (25:13). The weights used in business should be honest – we should not mark a smaller one falsely to be bigger than it really is. After speaking of this topic, the *parsha* ends with Amalek – the *mitzvos* both to eradicate them as well as remember what was done to us in the Midbar. The question is what is the purpose of this *smichus parshiyos* – juxtaposition between honesty in business being and Amalek? The answer may just be that when we fail to be truthful in our business ventures, our enemies are brought upon us.

Now let's compare our *parsha* to *parshas* Beshalach where the story of the war with Amalek took place. As opposed to a teaching about an issue *Bein Adam L'Chavero* (like we see in Ki Teitzei), the Torah speaks of a matter *Bein Adam L'Makom*. As Bnei Yisrael continues travelling through the *midbar* we are taught the story of *Mei Merivah* – where the Jews complained about the lack of water they had and Moshe brought water from a rock after striking it. Rather than a reaction of appreciation, the response of Bnei Yisrael was וַיִּצְלַח נִסְתָּחֵם ה' בְּקִרְבָּנוּ אִם־אֵין אֶת־ה' לְאִמֹר הַיֵּשׁ ה' – They tried Hashem saying, “Is Hashem here with us or not” (Shemos 17:7). Immediately following this *pasuk* is the beginning of the

battle with Amalek. Rashi on this *pasuk* explains that the attack from Amalek was a response to their lack of *emunah* in Him, their failure to recognize his constant presence.

There is seemingly a contradiction as Rashi makes it clear in our *parsha* that Amalek being brought up (or physically being present) is a response to a lack of honesty in business. Which reason is it?

Rav Schwab (*Maayan Beis HaShoeva* – Page #217) has a piece that discusses our service of Hashem, primarily dealing with *Limmud HaTorah*. The main point to the ideas that are spoken of there is that one must approach their Torah learning with the proper *Hasagas HaSeichel* – the proper intellect and understanding in order to grasp what they are learning. On the other hand, there is also the need for a level of *Hasagas HaNeshama*. In our *Limmud HaTorah* we also require a special spiritual connection to reach its deeper meaning.

Rav Schwab there also brings the Gemara in Shabbos (31A) discussing the six questions that one will be asked in *Shomayim*, one of which is נִשְׂאָת וְנַחַת בְּאִמּוּנָה – Did you conduct your business honestly? What is the greater understanding of these words? Rav Schwab continues, with what we have already learned, that here this is both an intellectual understanding and a deeper spiritual understanding. According to the *pshat*, the simple understanding, this means that we will be asked about how

we came about dealing with our business ventures. The *Hasagas HaNeshama* though forces us to think more profoundly to understand. Did we do business בְּאִמּוּנָה – with the recognition and active knowledge that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is with us while doing so? Rav Schwab then teaches us that these two approaches are interconnected. We have the constant intellectual obligation to act properly and honestly with everything we do while simultaneously being spiritually obligated to have faith in Hashem. Someone with a true sense of *emunah* recognizes that everything they are given and however much success or lack thereof comes from Hashem despite no matter how great their efforts may have been.

This, explains Rav Schwab, is the reason we have these two different ways of serving Hashem juxtaposed to Amalek. Often, we may find ourselves in a position where our *Yetzer Hara* is pushing us to do something honest in speech, in business or maybe in how we conduct ourselves. This lack of honesty with others stems from a lack of faith and trust that we have in Hashem. We need to have a sense of integrity which stems from the recognition that הַיֵּשׁ ה' בְּקִרְבָּנוּ – He is constantly with us and because of this, need to better think for ourselves how we can constantly be better in our relationship with others.

● Edited by Zac Winkler.

Continued from previous page

and not for women, to greet travelers with bread and water, the women of Ammon and Mo'av could not be blamed for

being negligent in providing food to Bnei Yisrael, as this was never expected of them. Since the Torah itself provides the

*ta'am hamitzvah*, we do maintain דְּרִשְׁיָן טַעְמָא דְקִרְיָא.

● Adapted from Rav Schachter on the Parsha II.

# Coincidences are much more than just coincidences...



**Chief Rabbi Sir Ephraim Mirvis KBE**

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth

**W**hat is the significance of coincidences?

In parashat Ki Teitzei we are given a fascinating *mitzvah*, which I doubt you have ever – or will ever – perform. The Torah says *'ki yikarei kan tzipur lefanecha'* – if you are out and about, and happen to come across a bird's nest, and you want to take the young or the eggs, then you must first send the mother bird away in order that it should not witness you actually taking her young. As a result, the Torah promises a reward: *"l'ma'an yitav lach"* – in order that it will be good for you, *"v'harachta yamim"*, and you will enjoy length of days.

Now there is an apparent misspelling here – *"ki yikarei"*, 'when it just happens that you find this bird's nest'. *Yikarei* comes from *'mikreh'* which means a coincidence, and therefore *Yikarei* should have been spelt *'Yud - kuf - reish - hei'*, however its spelt *'Yud - kuf - reish - alef'*, which comes from the word *'koreh'* which means 'to call', indicating that literally, what the Torah is telling us here, is that this bird's nest is calling out to us. What can this mean?

Hashem obviously wants us to know that every single coincidence issues a call to us to do something in the responsible manner. In this particular case, the call of the bird's nest is for us to reach out with compassion towards one of

Hashem's creatures. And when it comes to the reward, *"l'ma'an yitav lach"* – it will be good for you, you'll feel good! But more significantly *"v'harachta yamim"* – you will have length of days. With *'arichut yamim'*, you will squeeze value out of every single moment of precious life that you have here on earth.

If we relate to every coincidence as an opportunity, then our days will be filled with incredible fulfilment.

In every single coincidence there is a hidden opportunity, and when it calls out to us, let us respond in the best possible way.

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# Hakem Takim Imo – Doing Our Part



**Rabbi Shalom Rosner**  
Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh

*You shall not see your brother's donkey or his ox fallen [under its load] on the road, and ignore them. [Rather,] you shall pick up [the load] with him. (Devarim 22:4)*

**T**he *mitzvah* referred to above requires an individual to assist another when his donkey or ox falls due to carrying a heavy load. One is prohibited from ignoring the situation only if the owner involves himself with reloading the donkey or ox as is stated “*hakem takim imo*” (see Rashi on this *pasuk*). It is to be done together. The owner cannot sit idly by and demand of others to engage in this difficult task. He himself **must partake** and only then are others obligated to assist.

Based on this principle and *al derech drush*, Rav Moshe Soloveitchik (cited by the Esh Tamid) offers a new way of understanding a *pasuk* that we recite from Rosh Chodesh Elul through the end of Succot. In the *mizmor* – *L'david Hashem Ori* we recite the following *pasuk*: אחת שאלתי מאת ה' אותה אבקש – *One thing I ask of God that I seek...* (Tehillim 27:4). This language seems superfluous. Why do we need to refer to a question (*sha'alti*) and then state that is what I request or seek (*avakesh*). It would suffice to simply state “One thing I ask of G-d” (*achat shalati me'et Hashem*) and end the sentence there!

Rav Moshe Soloveitchik explains that Hashem follows the principle of “*hakem takim imo*.” If we want G-d to fulfill a request, we have to do the utmost we can in order to seek to achieve the result. That is why the sentence ends with “*ota*

*avakesh*”. **I will do all in my power** to seek the result and I beg Hakadosh Baruch Hu to do His part as well.

A similar idea is expressed by Rav Asher Weiss in another context. In connection with Yetziat Mitzrayim the Torah uses the phrase “*I have lifted you upon the wings of eagles and brought you to Me* (Shemot 19:4). Rashi explains that an eagle (some define neshet as a griffon vulture), carrying its children is compared to Hashem carrying Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt for the following reason. Most birds hold their young in their claws to protect them from the predatory birds that fly above them. Since the eagle flies higher than all other birds, it fears only the archers that shoot at it from below. It therefore carries its young upon its wings to protect them from arrows that may be fired from below. So too, Hashem placed His Clouds of Glory between Bnei Yisrael and the Egyptians, to absorb the arrows and slingshots of the Egyptians lest they harm Bnei Yisrael.

The eagle's young enjoy the best possible protection. However, **they** must make the effort to climb onto the eagle's wings and hold on tightly, since the eagle does not have arms long enough to lift them up or hold them in place. The eagle can only bend its back to make their ascent easier, but they must make the ascent themselves. These offspring must take the

first step and only thereafter can their mother assist them.

The same is true of the physical and spiritual protection that Hashem offers His children. He descends to help us during the month of Elul, but we must make the effort to ascend in *teshuvah* and thus climb onto His proverbial wings. After the Yomim Noraim pass, it then becomes our duty to hold on tightly, lest we fall from the spiritual heights we have attained.

The Midrash on Shir Hashirim 5:3 states:

פתחו לי פתח כפתחו של מחט ואני אפתח לכם פתחים שיהיו עגלות וקרונות עוברים בהם.

*Open for Me an opening in your hearts no wider than the eye of a needle, and I shall open for you an opening wide enough for wagons and carts to drive through.*

May we internalize the lesson of “*hakem takim imo*” and during the month of Elul do our part in playing an active role in getting closer to Hashem. He is there waiting for us to take the first step!

# Protecting Our Spiritual Selves



**Michal Horowitz**  
Judaic Studies Teacher

**P**arsha Ki Seitzei, begins with the unusual and remarkable *mitzvah* of the *Eishes Yefas To'ar*, the woman of beautiful appearance. When the *Bnei Yisrael* go to war, and the Jewish soldier sees an attractive female among the enemy, the Torah outlines the process whereby such a woman can actually become his wife (Devarim 21:10-14). Rashi explains that the Torah speaks to the evil inclination, for if he would not be permitted to take her *halachikally*, so strong would the passions and heat of battle be, that he would take her in a forbidden fashion.

While this is a most interesting *mitzvah*, and there is much to be learned from it, Rabbi Shalom Rosner teaches a fascinating *chiddush* (unique and novel insight) regarding the Jewish soldier and the woman (from the enemy nation) that he desires.

“Rabbi Eliyahu Schlesinger, in the *sefer Elah HeDevarim*, highlights a crucial point. In the previous *parsha*, *Parshas Shoftim*, we are told of certain individuals that are exempt from going to battle due to their current life stations and situations. Chazal in the Gemara (Sotah 44a) add that one who was afraid could join those who were exempt and return home as well. Chazal explain that this condition “one who is afraid”, refers not to people who are afraid of battle, but rather, it refers to people who fear that they may have committed sins and therefore, would not merit Divine protection to save them during the war. The Gemara goes so far as to say that this includes the seemingly slightest transgression of talking between laying *tefillin shel yad* and *tefillin shel rosh*.

“If individuals who committed the slightest transgressions went home and

were exempt from fighting, then the remaining soldiers must have all been the most righteous individuals, the most learned and pious amongst the people! We can therefore deduce from here that the entire *sugya* of the *Eishes Yefas To'ar* is addressed to the lusts and passions of the *tzadikim in Klal Yisrael*, the most righteous of men who remain as soldiers on the battlefield!” (Shalom Rav, v.II, p.424-425).

What an incredible *chiddush* Rabbi Rosner quotes! We might think anyone interested in the *Eishes Yefas To'ar* would be the Jew on the lowest rung of the spiritual ladder! Surely anyone interested in taking a woman of the enemy nation must not be a G-d fearing, Torah living, *mitzvah*-practicing Jew! It must be, rather, a Jew who has fallen far in his *avodas Hashem*.

And yet, once we put these two different *sugyos* together – those who are exempt from battle and those who desire the *Eishes Yefas To'ar* – we indeed realize that it was the *greatest tzadikim* in the nation who went to war!

With this fascinating insight, it behooves us to ask ourselves what we can learn from the *Eishes Yefas To'ar* and the Jewish soldier who desired her.

“This teaches us a very significant lesson,” Rabbi Rosner continues. “No matter how great we are and how strong we are in our beliefs and commitment to Torah, if we are placed in the wrong environment, we risk being influenced by it. Once a *tzaddik* enters the chaotic battlefield, where disorder, mayhem and killing reign, he can be adversely influenced by his surroundings; no matter how exalted he was when he entered the battle!

“What one experiences on the battlefield is very different from normal life. The

Torah had to carve out a *halacha* to address what transpires when an individual is in this environment. If it is essential to go to battle, the ramifications of that experience are taken into consideration in the *parsha* of the *Eishes Yefas To'ar*.”

In a wider, more global realm, this teaching holds great significance for each and every one of us. It is a particularly relevant and timely lesson for *Chodesh Elul* as well, as we prepare for *Yom HaDin* and engage in *teshuva*, return and repentance unto Hashem.

“In a broader sense, we should be careful to place ourselves in the proper environment. To fully observe Jewish tradition, one has to be part of a Jewish community. Prayer, *tefillah*, is best fulfilled with a *minyan*, *tzibbur* and *Rav*. Certain *mitzvos* can only be fulfilled communally, with others... It is essential that we select the proper community and educational institutions where we and our children can flourish as *yirei Shomayim*, G-d fearing, Torah-living and practicing Jews.

“If pious people could be adversely influenced on the battlefield, going so far as to desire, and take, a woman captive from the enemy, we should not place ourselves in the spiritual line of fire. We should take special care in protecting the environment in our homes so that we can strengthen our commitment and appreciation of Torah and *mitzvos*” (Shalom Rav, v.II, p.425-426).

No matter how much one has grown over the past year, no matter how many challenges we feel we have successfully conquered, no matter how much we have learned and how much *chizuk* we have given others, and received for ourselves, we can never be too sure of our successes. The battle field of the *yetzer*

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# The Dibrot and the Mitzvot of the Main Speech



**Rabbi Menachem Leibtag**

Tanach Study Center | Yeshivat Har Etzion

**M**itzvot, and more mitzvot; all kinds of mitzvot. That certainly sums up Parshat Ki-Teitze; but why here? And why in such a seemingly random order?

To explain this arrangement, our shiur will follow the approach of Rav David Tzvi Hoffman, who demonstrates that the mitzvot of the main speech in Sefer Devarim follow the order of the **Asseret Ha'dibrot**.

One may suggest that the **dibrot** also provide the general **framework** for all the mitzvot in the main speech of Sefer Devarim. In other words, the mitzvot of the main speech progress in topical order, similar and corresponding to the sequence of the **dibrot**. Each group of mitzvot 'expands' upon the underlying principle of each "dibur."

The rationale for this parallel is clear. The mitzvot of the main speech are the laws to be observed upon entering the Land. Thus, these laws apply the abstract principles established in the dibrot to the realities of life in the Land of Israel – conquering, occupying, settling and establishing a nation.

## Lo Tisa (chapters 12-14)

The primary topic of these chapters is **hamakom asher yivchar Hashem l'shakein shmo sham**. In order to make G-d's Name great (both to ourselves and to other nations), Bnei Yisrael must build a Bet Ha'Mikdash, frequent that site, and gather there on the national holidays.

This commandment relates to the third dibur – not to utter G-d's Name in vain. Just as it is forbidden to defile His Name through irreverent and inappropriate misuse, so is it imperative that we **proclaim** His Name in the **proper** manner.

The primary vehicle designated by the Torah to accomplish this goal is the Bet HaMikdash – “bamakom asher yivchar... l'shakein **shmo** sham.”

At this site the Leviim sing and praise G-d, proclaiming and sanctifying His Name. Ideally, the Bet HaMikdash leads all mankind towards the recognition of the Name of G-d.

## Shabbat [Devarim chapters 15-16]

In the second half of Parshat Re'ay, we find two types of “toladot” or derivations of shabbat. First, there appears the law of shmita, which follows a **seven**-year cycle, similar to the seven-day cycle of Shabbat. These laws require that we **rest** from working the land on the **seventh** year. In fact, we can even consider the laws of “maaser sheni” & “maaser ani” – which are functions of this seven-year shmita cycle – as the beginning of this section and a suitable ‘transition’ from the topic of “hamakom asher yivchar Hashem.”

The second “toladah” is the “shalosh regalim” – the three pilgrimage holidays described in chapter 16. Their most basic and obvious resemblance to shabbat is the prohibition of work. Furthermore, the number **seven** emerges as the prominent number in the context of these holidays.

## “Kabed et Avicha...” – Honoring Parents (16:18 -18:22)

The concept of respecting authority at the family level can easily be expanded to the national level as well, thus requiring us to honor our national leaders. Therefore, the next general topic – the national institutions of leadership: the shofet, kohen, levi, navi, and melech – can be understood as a “toladah” of “kibud horim.” This section includes the laws regarding proper and

effective leadership – judges, officers, priests, the king, and nevi'im – as well as laws pertaining to leaders who must be eliminated: those who lead others to idol worship, false prophets, and dissenters who disobey and snub the authority figures.

## Lo Tirtzach [chapters 19-21]

The “toladot” of “lo tirtzach” are the most obviously identifiable, as almost all the laws in these three chapters expand upon (or apply) this dibur.

## Lo Tinaf [22:10-23:19]

This section includes various laws relating to forbidden sexual relationships.

## Lo Tignov (23:20-26)

- The prohibition against taking interest;
- Stealing from “hekdesh” by neglecting one's vow;
- Stealing produce from one's neighbor's field.

Various other toladot of “lo tignov” sneak in at different places throughout Parshat Ki-Teitze, mostly as ‘digressions’ within other sections.

## Lo Ta'aneh B'rei'acha Eid Shaker (19:15-21)

The situation of “eidim zom'mim” could be considered a “toladah” of “lo ta'aneh...” It is included in the “lo tirtzach” section as a ‘digression’ from the laws of capital punishment. Admittedly, this case does not fit ‘perfectly’ into the overall structure, but is included within the framework of “bein adam l'chaveiro.”

## Lo Tachmod (chapter 24)

“Lo tachmod” is so general that almost any law can be considered its toladah.

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# The Yeser Hara Strikes When Man is Distracted: Eshet Yefat Toar



**Rabbi Eli Mansour**  
Edmond J Safra Synagogue, Brooklyn

**T**his week's *parasha*, Parashat Ki Teseh, discusses a very difficult *halacha*: the law of *eshet yefat toar*. The Torah describes the Jewish soldier who goes out to war and desires a non-Jewish woman. He is permitted to have a sexual encounter with her, but must then bring her home, and if they wish to be married, he must convert [her] to [Judaism].

Why does the Torah allow the soldier to have relations with this non-Jewish woman? The Torah usually demands restraint. Why in this case is the soldier permitted to succumb to his *yeser hara*?

In previous years, we discussed the interpretation of the Or Hahaim Hakadosh, which exemplifies the depth with which the Torah must be studied to avoid reaching incorrect conclusions. He explains that the soldiers who went out to war were righteous and holy *sadikim*, and thus when one of them felt attracted to a captive woman, there was good reason to suspect that this was due not to her physical appearance, but rather because

of the spark within her soul. If indeed, this woman had such a holy spark within her, he was encouraged to convert and marry her. Before he did so, however, he was required to first ascertain that his feelings of attraction were indeed spiritual, and not physical. The soldier would therefore bring the woman to her home and spoil her attractive appearance. If he still experienced a desire for her, then it could be assumed that he was drawn to the spark within her soul, and he would thus marry her.

This year, I would like to make another point. The simple understanding of this *parasha* is that the *yeser hara*, the evil inclination, is relentless, and its most successful tactic is to prevent a man from thinking. Men and women run from place to place, without ever thinking about why they were created. If a person would stop and think, 'Why did G-d create me,' he would conclude that he was created to serve G-d. And eventually, he will realize that he must follow the manual, the Torah, which offers us instructions for life. Just like every machine comes with

an instruction manual, so too, man was created, and was given an instruction manual – the Torah.

This life is a vestibule; it is a bridge between this world and the next. People are not supposed to stop on a bridge. The only way to get to eternity is through this world. However, people treat this world, the bridge, as if it is an eternity. Those who do not prepare in this world will not pass through the corridor into the next world.

The soldier who went out to war is completely focused on fighting. He is unable to think about other issues. G-d says that in this case, since he is completely preoccupied, G-d does not hold him responsible, and he is given permission to have relations with her, and then decide whether they are to be married. It is from this unique *halachic* dispensation that we learn a very important lesson about the strength of the *yeser hara*.

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*harah* (evil inclination) is the strongest one of all, and one who conquers it is more mighty than one who conquers a city (Pirkei Avos 4:1). For as great as our

potential for goodness is, so too is the potential to stumble and fall.

Let us be on guard from the ever present *yetzer harah* on the battle fields of life, so

that we can come close to Hashem this Elul in *kedusha* and *tahara* (holiness and purity) and merit, *b'ezras Hashem*, a *shana tova u'me'suka!*

# Redefining our Present State



**Rabbi Moshe Weinberger**  
Congregation Aish Kodesh, Woodmere

**T**he *mitzvos* related to the rebellious son are the most difficult of all to understand. If a *bar mitzva* boy steals from his parents and eats meat and drinks wine, the Torah shockingly tells us (Devarim 21:21), “And all of the people of his city shall stone him and he shall die.” Our only consolation is the fact that chazal tell us (Sanhedrin 71a) that “The [death penalty for] the rebellious son never occurred and will never occur.” What then is the point of this *mitzva* if it will never be carried out? The Gemara answers that the Torah teaches these rules in order that we “learn it and receive reward.” But we must understand what we can learn from this *mitzva* that applies to our lives on a practical level if such a thing can never happen according to the accepted view of *chazal*.

In order to understand this, we must first see why a rebellious son is killed. We know that although what he did is bad, stealing from one’s parents and eating meat and drinking wine are not capital crimes! Rashi, quoting the Gemara in Sanhedrin (72a), explains that the rebellious son is killed to prevent him from becoming guilty in the future. The Gemara says “The Torah understands the depths of his mind. In the end, he will use up his father’s money and he will seek to satisfy his habits but will not be able to. He will then stand at an intersection and rob people. The Torah therefore says ‘Let him die innocent [of the more serious crimes] and not die guilty.’”

In other words, this young man is headed down a path of guaranteed failure. But because there are so many variables and possible paths, it is difficult for *beis din* to be sure that his path will eventually lead him to rob and murder. The Torah’s teachings make one thing clear though. A person’s current direction is connected to his ultimate destination. This lesson is

so important that the Torah says about it, “Learn it and receive reward.”

Many of us are bothered by the following question raised by the Mizrachi: The Torah says (Bereishis 21:17) regarding Yishmael, “And G-d heard the voice of the boy. And an angel of G-d called to Hagar from Heaven and said to her, ‘What are you worried about Hagar? Do not be afraid because G-d has heard the voice of the boy at the present time.’” Rashi, quoting the Gemara (Rosh Hashana 16b), says “[The phrase [‘at the present time’] means that] he is judged according to his actions now and not according to what he will do in the future. The ministering angels were prosecuting and saying, ‘Master of the World! You want to create a well for someone whose seed will kill your children with thirst in the future?!’” While the Gemara was referring to a specific incident, based on the aggravation and terror the Jewish People and the whole world would suffer from the descendants of Yishmael, we can certainly sympathize with the angels’ question! But Hashem answered, “‘Now, is he a righteous person or a wicked person?’ They said to Him, ‘A righteous person.’ He said to them, ‘I will judge him according to his deeds now. This is why [the Torah said Yishmael was answered] ‘at the present time.’”

Based on this Gemara, the Mizrachi asks why the rebellious son is judged based on what he will do in the future while Yishmael was judged based purely on his actions at the present time. He gives a very simple answer. He explains that the difference is that Yishmael was on a perfectly righteous path and so could only be judged based on his present righteous state while the rebellious son was already on a destructive path and was therefore judged based on the destination his path was already leading him on.

Especially as we approach Rosh Hashana, we now understand what Hashem wants us to learn as we read about the rebellious son. Rav Chaim Goldvicht, zt”l, the Rosh Yeshiva of Kerem B’Yavneh, expressed it this way:

The question before every person is: Where are you holding “at the present time?” Are you like the rebellious son whose evil is progressing and developing within him as a ‘root full of rot and wormwood’ (Pasuk)... Or are you like Yishmael, cast out into the desert crying out to Hashem from the depths of your heart? If it is the latter, then even if you experience failures in the future, you are judged according to your present state.

What a powerful lesson! On the one hand, one may never close his eyes to his faults which could evolve over time into a way of life that is completely against Hashem’s will. He must certainly work on even small aspects of his character which could lead him down the path of the rebellious son.

But on the other hand, our focus should be on the present, ensuring that our “present state” is the good path. Rather than thinking about what happened yesterday or what we will be like in the future, we have to focus our attention on the present moment. We learn from the Torah’s message regarding the nexus between the rebellious son and Yishmael that our present state is the most important thing. There will always be failures along the way, but if we’re on a good path, Hashem will look at the goodness of our present state.

May Hashem grant all of us the wisdom and will to redefine our “present state” for the good and be judged immediately for good life and peace.

# Why Children Rebel



Rabbi YY Jacobson  
TheYeshiva.net

“If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who does not obey the voice of his father and the voice of his mother, and does not listen to them when they discipline him; then his father and mother shall take hold of him and bring him to the elders at the gate of his town. They shall say to the elders, ‘This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He does not obey our voice. He is a profligate and a drunkard.’

“Then all the men of his town shall stone him to death. You must purge the evil from among you. All Israel will hear of it and be afraid.”

The harshness of the law led the Talmudic sages to conclude that “there never was nor ever will be a stubborn and rebellious son,” i.e. this Torah law was a matter of theory rather than practice. In fact, the rabbis derived from the biblical text so many conditions that were required for this law to be enacted, that its practical application was an impossibility.

To cite just a few examples: Both parents must consent to have their son declared as a “stubborn and rebellious son” and receive the death penalty. The boy must be within three months of his bar mitzvah in order to receive this penalty, not a day younger or older. He must have stolen money from his parents, used it to buy a tremendous amount of meat and Italian wine, eaten and drunk it in one go, in a place other than his parents’ house, and so on.

For the law to be applied, the Talmud states, both parents need to have identical voices, a similar appearance and profess equal height. Since it is virtually impossible to have all of these conditions in place, this particular Torah law could never be applied in the real world.

Why then was it written? The sages answer, “So that we should expound the law and receive reward.” What the Talmud seems to be suggesting is that expounding this law in depth will be rewarding for parents; it would enrich parenting and educational skills.

Indeed, when we focus on these verses, we can deduce extensive psychological, emotional and practical guidance on the goals and methods of a moral education. Today, I wish to focus on one aspect.

As usual in biblical study, a discrepancy in the text intimates deeper meanings:

“If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who does not obey the voice of his father and the voice of his mother,” is how the case is introduced in the Bible. His parents are described as having two distinct voices: “the voice of his father and the voice of his mother.” Yet later on, when the parents bring their son to court to mete out the penalty, we encounter a slight, but meaningful, variance: “They shall say to the elders, ‘This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He does not obey our voice.’” No more “the voice of his father and the voice of his mother.” Now it has become “our voice.” Their distinct voices merged into one.

What is the meaning behind this subtle textual change?

The message, it has been suggested, is critical in education. The phrase “If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who does not obey the voice of his father and the voice of his mother,” hints at one possible reason for this son becoming stubborn and rebellious. In his home there was not one voice, but two distinct and dichotomized voices. The parents never merged their distinct “voices” to create a unified and integrated vision for themselves and

their children. Each of the parents was pulling the home in a different direction, and the poor children were left stuck in the middle, torn by the discord of people they love so dearly.

And if this were indeed the case, this child is not rebellious and stubborn at all. He is a victim of his parents’ stubborn refusal to work on their emotions and discover peace in their fragmented home. The child need not suffer the consequences of his parents’ unreadiness to confront their egos and their demons, and build an ambiance of mutual respect and harmony.

Of course, even if you did not grow up in an idyllic and loving home, you are accountable for your actions. A human being could overcome his or her past. Yet you can’t call this child “stubborn and rebellious.”

If we are going to punish this child, we must be sure that his disposition is indeed corrupt from within. Thus, in the continuation of the incident, the Torah states, “They shall say to the elders, ‘This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He does not obey our voice.’” To determine that this child has embarked on an irrevocable path to disaster, we must ensure that the parents spoke in one voice, and that the home was filled with serenity and human dignity.

Parents are not, nor do they need to be, perfect. Yet, as long as we work toward transforming our distinct voices into a single voice, as long as we learn to truly respect the otherness of our spouse and create together a loving ambiance in our homes, we are likely to raise children who will lovingly embrace the morals and values their parents hold dear.

# Ki Teitze: For Others



**Rabbi Judah Mischel**

Executive Director, Camp HASC; Mashpiah, OU-NCSY

**W**hen the Lubavitcher Rebbe shared the following story, which he heard from his father in law, the Frierdiker, or 'Previous' Rebbe, he remarked that there was a time when the chasidim refrained from sharing it publicly....

One Yom Kippur morning, Reb Shneur Zalman, the Alter Rebbe, stood in shul among his *chassidim*, deep in *deveikus*, when suddenly he became motionless, gazing into space. Snapping out of the trance, he closed his *siddur*, took off his *tallis* and *kittel*, and walked briskly out the front door.

Concerned, as well as curious, one *chasid* followed him at a distance, as the Rebbe strode along an icy road leading to the edge of the city, and then onto a footpath entering the woods. The *chasid* was stunned to see that when the great Alter Rebbe stopped at a clearing, he picked up an ax and began chopping wood. Then he carried the wood into a small house and, through the frosty window, he was visibly stoking a fire, heating water, making soup, and dipping a towel into the remaining water. Each of these activities was strictly prohibited on Yom Kippur!

However, when the *chasid* caught sight of the Rebbe serving the soup to a woman inside, who was helplessly shivering under her blankets, clutching a newborn baby... he understood.



The Rebbe expounded on this story of *chesed* and sacrifice:

*"Immersed in prayer, dressed in his tallis and kittel like a malach, the exalted spiritual level and deveikus that the Alter Rebbe reached on Yom Kippur is beyond our comprehension. Even so, the Alter Rebbe took off his tallis and kittel and went to the edge of the city, just to help bring another Jew into the world. This story also illustrates the necessity for action and doing all that we can in the service of*

*others...This was the way of the Alter Rebbe: without pausing to draw up accounts, he interrupted his avodah in order to help a simple Jew, waiving his gashmiyus (physical well-being) and even his ruchniyus (spiritual pursuits) for the sake of loving another."*



Of the numerous *mitzvos* commanded in our *sedra*, the Torah forbids welcoming any male of Moavite or Amonite descent as a convert:

No one from the nation of Amon of Moav shall be admitted into the congregation of Hashem; none of their descendants, even to the tenth generation, shall be admitted into the congregation of Hashem... because they did not meet you with food and water on your journey after you left Egypt... (23:4-5)

*Sefer haChinuch* explored the essence of this law and suggests a reason for the underlying principle:

והודיענו הכתוב מזה, גודל מעלת גמילות חסדים והרחקת מדת הנבלה והכילות, ועל כן צונו לקבוע שנהא עמהם שהשחיתו והתעיבו להראות תכלית רשעם ונבלותם, שלא להקדים אפילו בלחם ובמים לקראת קהל גדול עייפי הדרך העוברים בגבולם...

"From here the Torah informs us of the greatness of the virtue of acts of loving-kindness, and the need to distance oneself from villainy and stinginess. And therefore we are commanded to prescribe a hatred for them, as they were wicked and abominable, in order to display the fullness of their evil and villainy in not even greeting with bread and water a large congregation exhausted from the road, passing their border..."

One of the fundamental human traits that Hashem expects of us is to engage in *ahavas chesed*, loving-kindness. The idea of *chesed* transcends a simple definition, yet gives voice to the essence of being a Jew and a human being. With every act of service and kindness, the

*tzelem Elokim*, the Divine likeness within a person, is given expression. With each such expression, that person more fully realizes his or her mission on this earth.

The cruel refusal of Amon and Moav to extend any help to the forlorn people at their border showed that they were at odds with the *tzelem Elokim* itself. This is why it would be impossible to welcome them into our spiritual community and our collective mission.

Rav Daniel Z. Feldman, Maggid shiur at Yeshiva University, wrote eloquently on the nature of the *midah* or quality of *chesed*: "...It is a feeling to possess, an attitude to maintain, an action to perform, a personality to develop, a mindset to cultivate, a habit to acquire, a perspective to apply; it is mandatory and voluntary, basic and extraordinary, routine and outstanding all at once. It is a birthright and an inheritance, and yet it is actualized only through personal initiative and commitment. The Jewish mission is to bring this trait to life in all of its manifestations, and to pursue every method and every opportunity to do so.... To quantify or to limit this endeavor in any way is to do no less than hold back the very development of what a human being can be."



In the early 1980s, the Lubavitcher Rebbe began to speak on the importance of sharing the Torah's universal code of morality with the whole world through the Seven Laws of Noah. At that time, he related the above story, and said that if the Alter Rebbe could break the laws of the holiest day of the year to help a vulnerable person, then surely every Jew can set aside time to reach out to the rest of humanity.

As we approach the *Yamim Nora'im*, may we internalize the lesson learned from our *sedra* and turn our attention toward providing for the needs of others!

# Forever

## Mrs. Shira Smiles

International lecturer and curriculum developer

Forever seems like a very long time, yet a Moavite or Amonite is forever forbidden from marrying into the Jewish people. The Torah cites the following reasons: Moav and Amon hired Bilam to curse the Jews and did not offer us bread and water when we passed through their land. Does this sanction not sound a bit harsh; is there no way for these people to right their wrongs?

Ramban explains that Amon and Moav, the children of Lot, should have felt gratitude for all that Avraham Avinu had done for their father. Avraham rescued Lot from the four kings and it was in Avraham's *zechut* that Lot and his daughters escaped the destruction of Sedom. A nation that lacks this basic human attribute may not join with our people. Rav Yerucham Levovitz, in *Da'at Torah* points out that every nation has intrinsic characteristics that are passed down

from one generation to the next. Jews for example, are known for being *bayshanim*, *rachmanim*, and *gomlei chasadim*. Therefore these two nations cannot mix with ours as their nature is antithetical to our essence.

The *middah* of *hakarat hatov*, explains Rav Ezrachi in *Birkat Mordechai*, is a fundamental *middah* of the universe. Kindness is not something to be ignored. Indeed, a little further in the *parashah* we find the prohibition against oppressing an Egyptian because we sojourned in their land. Imagine! The same Egyptians who tortured us, who threw our babies into the Nile! Nevertheless, our interactions with them must appropriately reflect our appreciation for their hospitality. Although they themselves forgot the kindness of Yosef Hatzadik, we can never forget that they gave us a place to stay. Notes Rav Ezrachi, the contrast imparts a powerful lesson in Torah *middot*.

One underpinning of a thankless attitude is the desire to live without being bothered, observes Rav Goldstein in *Sha'are Chayim*. When one ignores his surroundings and is complacent within his own sphere, he loses opportunities to express thanks. We are all guilty of this, as we are continually surrounded by the endless beneficence of Hashem's bounty, yet at times we neglect to convey our recognition of this infinite blessing. *Chodesh Elul* is a fitting time to notice and appreciate the goodness and grace that Hashem showers upon us, as well as the generosity that others share with us. *Elul* is a wonderful time to pick up the phone or send a quick message to someone thanking them for a kindness done. Thus, we can approach the *Yamim Noraim* with feelings of appreciativeness and gratefulness for Hashem's boundless mercy and commit ourselves to using our blessings for the good of others.

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*Continued from page 17*

Most likely, the laws of divorce and the prohibition of the divorcee to remarry his remarried wife prevent a 'legal affair', and could be considered a *toladah* of coveting. Also, throughout the *mitzvot* in *Parshat Ki-Teyze* we find many references to "rei'echa," such as the laws of eating while walking through one's neighbor's vineyard or field. These laws could also be considered *toladot* of "lo tachmod."

### The Finale

The final *mitzvot* of the **chukim u'mishpatim** section include the *mitzvah* to destroy Amalek and "mikra bikurim."

One could view the law of destroying Amalek as a "tolada" of "lo tirtzach" and the finale of this unit of the last five *dibrot*.

Similarly, the laws of "mikra bikurim" in chapter 26 complete the topic of "ha'makom asher yivchar Hashem" and hence close the entire "chukim & mishpatim" section which now forms a chiastic structure.

### Significance

This parallel emphasizes the fact that all of Torah originates from Har Sinai. The "Dibrot" serve as "avot," the very basic principles of the covenant between G-d and Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai. Their application in the *mitzvot* of the main speech of *Sefer Devarim* serve as "toladot," which govern our national and individual conduct. This model of 'avot and toladot' teaches us that we must apply the principles of *Matan Torah* to every aspect of daily life.

Furthermore, this model teaches us that when we apply the principles of the **dibrot**, we raise them to a higher level. For example, not only is one forbidden to steal, one is also required to return a lost item to its owner. The laws of "hashavat aveidah" and the obligation to help even one's neighbor's animal in distress, both "toladot" of "lo tignov," expand the fundamental precept established by this "dibur" to maintain a heightened sensitivity to the property of others, beyond the actual prohibition of stealing.

Expanding the principles of Har Sinai to every aspect of our daily life, as exemplified by *Sefer Devarim*, forms the basis and foundation of our development into an "am kadosh."

# What, My Son?



**Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi**  
Popular Torah teacher and author

**B**atsheva is the name of a great educator. When Batsheva wanted to identify Shlomo as her son, she said, “What, my son! What, O son of my womb! What, O son of my vow!” With these wonderful words she reminds him, but above all herself, of the beginning of this child, how much she wanted him, how many vows she made for him to be born, how many hopes she had when he was in her womb.

This is how the “Batshevas” look at children, this is how the kindergarten teacher Batsheva Negri looked at her kindergarten children every morning. With a look of beginning. A look that reminds her and them how welcome they are.

This week, in a lecture to teachers in the Jewish community in Sao Paulo, Brazil, I painted for the women a picture of Batsheva, may G-d avenge her blood, opening her arms wide to the children who arrive

in the morning. This is the gate, I told them, that opens anew every morning, for all of us.

In this week’s *parsha*, the parents of the unruly boy bring their son to... the teacher! “And they bring him to the elders of his city in the public square of his community.” They bring him to those who may open a new gate for him because, as parents, they can no longer believe that he is “new.” With them he is already “condemned because of his final end,” and they fear that this son will “ask for his education and not find it” and then... will become violent and oppress humanity...

You are right, parents. A child asks for his education. It asks at the beginning of a year, at the beginning of each day for someone to relearn its name, to spell it, like a teacher who reads the names on the first day, it wants the “gate of its place”, a gate that will open for it exactly where it

is now, it will remember that it was in its belly, it will remember all the vows that everyone believed in it like that.

Batsheva Negri, may G-d avenge her blood, opened every morning the gates of the *gan*, the gates of the heart, the hands as wide as she could. This is how she will be remembered by so many children and mothers who worry at the beginning of the year.

In this way, even if her cruel end is now remembered, we will accept the wonderful will she left us all: to ask every morning, “What, my son?” In the astonishment of the beginning, with a look that only a woman who raises the king of children has, a look of Batsheva.



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# Hebrew Language in the Parsha



**David Curwin**

[balashon.com](http://balashon.com)

Author of the book *Kohelet: A Map to Eden* (Maggid)

**A**mong the many mitzvot in Parashat Ki Tetze are the laws of *kilaim* (planting mixed seeds in the same field).

The law mentioned in Devarim 22:9 is fairly straightforward, but it uses a very unusual verb:

לֹא-תִזְרַע כְּרֵמְךָ כְּלֵאִים פְּרוֹ-תִקְדָּשׁ הַמְלֵאָה הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר תִּזְרַע ...

One translation renders it as follows:

“You shall not sow your vineyard with a second kind of seed, else the crop—from the seed you have sown—and the yield of the vineyard may not be used.”

But this translation for the word תִּקְדָּשׁ - “not be used,” doesn’t capture the full essence of the Hebrew. It is from the root קדש, which implies holiness. So a more literal translation, such as “lest you forfeit-as-holy” or “lest you sanctify it.”

A less literal translation of תִּקְדָּשׁ that still expresses the special status of the mixture, without the positive connotations of “holy”

or “sanctified” is “you defile it.”

Another verse which includes the root קדש with negative connotations is Shemot 29:37, which prohibits touching the altar during the consecration period:

... תִּכְפֹּר עַל-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְקִדְשֵׁת אֹתוֹ וְהָיָה הַמִּזְבֵּחַ קֹדֶשׁ קִדְשִׁים כָּל-הַנִּגָּע בַּמִּזְבֵּחַ יִקְדָּשׁ:

“Seven days you shall perform purification for the altar to consecrate it, and the altar shall become most holy; whatever touches the altar shall become consecrated.”

It’s noteworthy that the verse has two verbs with the root קדש (as well as two nouns). Both here are translated as “consecrated,” but only the latter one is associated with a forbidden act. Like our earlier example in Devarim, both of these verbs are in the *kal* form. Linguists note that this form generally refers to something forbidden.

But the verse also includes the more common *piel* form, which has a positive sense regarding the consecration or sanctification of the altar. That form generally

means “to sanctify” or “to dedicate,” and in some verses (like Shemot 19:10), “to cleanse, purify.” In Rabbinic Hebrew, it’s used to describe sanctifying Shabbat and holidays with קידוש, and to betroth, with קידושין.

The *hifil* form of the verb - הקדיש - in Modern Hebrew means “to dedicate, allocate, designate, devote,” with either religious or secular connotations. But in earlier periods, it could also mean “was set apart as holy, regarded as holy.”

Finally, in the *hitpael* form - התקדש - the verb means “to keep (oneself) separated” or “purified (oneself).” It can also mean “to become sanctified,” and this is how it is used in the Kaddish prayer, when we pray that G-d’s name become sanctified.

Overall, the root קדש has two primary connotations: “to be holy,” in the sense of “lofty, exalted,” even “perfect,” and perhaps closer to divine. The other meaning is “to set apart, separate.” These two meanings exist in some degree of tension, and both are reflected in our understanding of קדושה.

## Parsha Riddle



**Reb Leor Broh**

Mizrachi Melbourne

Find four consecutive words whose last letters make up the letters of Hashem’s Name (Yud-Kay-Vav-Kay) in order.

### Answer to the Parsha Riddle

These words appear in the following verse (24:5)  
וַיִּזְכַּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת-אַרְבַּע בְּרֵי יִצְחָק וַיִּבְרַךְ אֹתָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶת-יִצְחָק וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶת-יִצְחָק וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶת-יִצְחָק וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶת-יִצְחָק  
When a man has newly taken a woman [into his household as his wife], he shall not go out with the army or be assigned to it for any purpose; he shall be exempt one year for the sake of his household, to give happiness to the woman he has taken.  
The Baal HaTurim comments that this is to indicate that G-d testifies concerning them (husband and wife) and tells them of their excessive talk (when he stands before the Bet Din Above).  
Rabbeinu Bechaye comments that the Chatan and Kallah symbolize G-d and the Bnei Yisroel who “wedded at Har Sinai” and stayed there for almost an entire year.



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## SWEDEN

The Jewish Community of Stockholm  
Kehilat Adat Yeshurun  
Kehiliat Adat Yisrael

## SWITZERLAND

### BERN

Jüdische Gemeinde Bern

### ZURICH

HaKehila HaYehudit Zurich  
HaKehila HaYehudit Lausanne  
Mizrachi  
Wollishofen

## TANZANIA

### ARUSHA

Bayit Kneset Shalem Al Shabazi

## UNITED KINGDOM

Mizrachi UK

## UNITED STATES

### NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Kol Hatorah Kulah  
National Council of Young Israel  
RZA-Mizrachi USA

### CALIFORNIA

Beth Jacob Congregation  
Harkham Hillel Hebrew Academy  
West Coast Torah Center  
Young Israel of North Beverly Hills  
YULA High School  
Young Israel of Century City

### COLORADO

DAT Minyan  
East Denver Orthodox Synagogue  
The Denver Kehillah

### CONNECTICUT

Beth David Synagogue  
Congregation Agudath Sholom  
Young Israel of West Hartford

### FLORIDA

Beth Israel Congregation  
Hebrew Academy RASG  
PlayHard PrayHard  
Congregation Torah Ohr  
Sha'arei Bina Torah Academy for Girls  
Young Israel of Hollywood-Ft. Lauderdale

### GEORGIA

Congregation Beth Jacob  
Congregation Ohr HaTorah

### HAWAII

Kehilat Olam Ejad Ganim

### ILLINOIS

Mizrachi-Religious Zionists of Chicago

### MARYLAND

Kemp Mill Synagogue  
Pikesville Jewish Congregation

Bnai Jacob Shaarei Zion Congregation

## MASSACHUSETTS

Congregation Beth El Atereth Israel  
Congregation Kadimah-Toras Moshe  
Congregation Shaarei Tefillah  
Young Israel of Brookline

## MICHIGAN

Young Israel of Oak Park  
Young Israel of Southfield  
Congregation Kadimah-Toras Moshe

## MINNESOTA

Congregation Darchei Noam

## MISSOURI

Yeshivat Kadimah High School Nusach  
Hari B'nai Zion Congregation  
Young Israel of St. Louis

## NEW HAMPSHIRE

Hillel at Dartmouth

## NEW JERSEY

Ahavas Achim  
Volunteer Chaplain Middlesex County  
Congregation AABJ&D  
Congregation Adath Israel of the JEC  
National Council of Young Israel  
Congregation Ahavat Achim  
Congregation Ahavath Torah  
Congregation Brothers of Israel  
Congregation Darchei Noam of Fair Lawn  
Congregation Etz Chaim of Livingston  
Congregation Israel of Springfield  
Congregation Ohr Torah  
Congregation Sons of Israel of Cherry Hill  
Kehilat Keshet  
Ma Tov Day Camp  
Ohav Emeth  
Pal Foundation  
Shomrei Torah of Fair Lawn  
Synagogue of the Suburban Torah Center  
Yavneh Academy  
National Council of Young Israel  
Young Israel of Teaneck

## NEW YORK

Beis Community  
Congregation Anshei Shalom  
Congregation B'nai Tzedek  
Congregation Bais Tefilah of Woodmere  
Congregation Beth Sholom  
Ramaz  
Ma'ayanot Yeshiva High School for Girls  
MTA – Yeshiva University High School for Boys  
Young Israel of Merrick  
Congregation Beth Torah  
Congregation Etz Chaim of Kew Gardens Hills  
Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun  
Congregation Ohav Zedek  
Great Neck Synagogue  
Iranian Jewish Center/Beth Hadassah Synagogue  
Irving Place Minyan

Jewish Center of Atlantic Beach

Kehilath Jershurun  
Kingsway Jewish Center  
Lincoln Square Synagogue  
Merkaz Yisrael of Marine Park  
North Shore Hebrew Academy  
Young Israel of Merrick  
NYC Department of Correction  
OU-JLIC at Binghamton University  
OU-JLIC at Cornell University  
Queens Jewish Center  
Stars of Israel Academy  
The Jewish Center  
The Riverdale Minyan  
Vaad of Chevra Kadisha  
West Side Institutional Synagogue  
Yeshiva University High School for Girls  
Young Israel of Hillcrest  
Young Israel of Jamaica Estates  
Young Israel of Lawrence-Cedarhurst  
Young Israel of New Rochelle  
Young Israel of North Woodmere  
Young Israel of Oceanside  
Young Israel of Scarsdale  
Young Israel of Woodmere

## OHIO

Beachwood Kehilla  
Congregation Sha'arei Torah  
Congregation Torat Emet  
Green Road Synagogue  
Fuchs Mizrachi School  
Heights Jewish Center

## PENNSYLVANIA

Shaare Torah Congregation

## SOUTH CAROLINA

Brith Sholom Beth Israel  
Congregation Dor Tikvah

## TENNESSEE

Baron Hirsch Congregation

## TEXAS

Mayerland Minyan Synagogue  
Robert M. Beren Academy  
United Orthodox Synagogues of Houston

## VIRGINIA

Keneseth Beth Israel

## WASHINGTON

Bikur Cholim-Machzikay Hadath  
Northwest Yeshiva High School  
Sephardic Bikur Holim Congregation

## URUGUAY

Comunidad Yavne Uruguay

## VENEZUELA

CARACAS  
Ashkenazi Kehilla  
Mizrachi Venezuela



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