

Mishpatim | Shevat 29 - Adar | 5 | February 8 - 15



קול הנערים **Rabbi Fried**

# אַרְבַּעָה אַבוֹת נְזִיקִין: הַשּׂוֹר וְהַבּוֹר וְהַמִּכָּעָה וְהַהֲבֵיעַר

The four primary categories of damage:  
the ox; the pit;  
the tooth;  
and the fire.

— Bava Kama 2a



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*Inside:*

## Break the Cycle

Rabbi Efreim Goldberg

## Why Make Berachot?

Rabbi Yissochar Frand

## Doing and Hearing

Rabbi Sholom Rosner

*and more...*



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## Shabbos Zmanim

2024 Early Friday Mincha, 18 Main  
at מנחה גדולה and every 15 minutes from 12:30pm-3:00pm

5:04pm Candle lighting	5:14pm Mincha in tent א	5:14pm Chabad Mincha	5:22pm Shkiya
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**SHABBOS SHACHRIS MINYANIM:**

6:18am Vasikin, followed by a Daf Yomi Shiur 20↑	8:00am Shachris 2 18 main	9:15am Shachris 3 Tent א	10:00am Shachris 4 Bais Chabad 20↑	10:00am Shachris 5 18 main
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2:00pm Pirchei	4:55pm Mincha followed by Shalosh Seudos	5:23pm Shkiya	6:03pm Maariv 1	6:08pm Maariv 2
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Late Maariv Motzei Shabbos Every 15 Minutes!  
6:45 pm – 9:15pm | 18 Main

## Weekday Zmanim

Zmanim for the week of Feb 10 - 16

Shacharis — 20 min. before Neitz  
Mincha & Maariv — 12 min. before Plag and more (see posted times)

	Neitz	Shma Magen Avraham	Shma Gra	Tefila Gra	Chatzos	Plag	Shkiya
Sunday	6:57am	8:52am	9:33am	10:26am	12:10am	4:19pm	5:25pm
Monday	6:56am	8:51am	9:33am	10:25am	12:10am	4:20pm	5:26pm
Tuesday	6:54am	8:51am	9:32am	10:25am	12:10pm	4:21pm	5:27pm
Wednesday	6:53am	8:50am	9:31am	10:24am	12:10pm	4:22pm	5:28pm
Thursday	6:52am	8:49am	9:31am	10:24am	12:10pm	4:23pm	5:30pm
Friday	6:51am	8:49am	9:30am	10:23am	12:10pm	4:24pm	5:31pm
Shabbos	6:49am	8:48am	9:29am	10:23am	12:10pm	4:25pm	5:32pm



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## Praying with Tears

People love telling stories about great men especially if it's about a family member of theirs. I am no different. I was fortunate enough to have had a grandfather who was a tzaddik and a real Oved Hashem. He lived most of his life in Morocco as a very successful businessman, and he was the *parnas* of the local community. He did business with the government and was familiar with many officials. One day, a high ranking government official entered his warehouse along with his family. The officer was noticeably agitated and wore a nasty scowl on his face. He roughly challenged my grandfather asking, "what animal are the Jewish people similar to?" My grandfather answered, "we are like sheep and Hashem is our shepherd." The officer shook his fists and shrieked. "No, you Jews are all wolves and you eat off other people! I am going now to the king to tell him to throw all of the Jews out of the land."

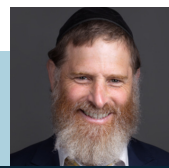
My grandfather relates how he put his hand on the mezuzah and started to cry. "Ribono shel olam, this man has very evil intentions against Am Yisrael. Chazal promises us that when all the gates of Heaven are closed, the heavenly gates of tears always remain opened. My grandfather continued to pour out his heart, tears streaming down his face as he beseeched Hashem to stop the hateful official from carrying out his evil plans. The officer arrogantly pulled out of the parking lot of my grandfather's warehouse and a semi-trailer collided head on with him, crushing him and his family in an instant. "You see," my grandfather concluded, "never underestimate the power of tears. Be careful and never make your wife cry, because if she would daven with tears you caused, you can be in real trouble." Well I tried to listen, I hope.

"Do not delay your fullness-offering or your priestly heave-offering; the first born of your sons shall you present to me" (*Shmot* 22,28). The Torah explains that when a person receives *beracha* from Hashem, he should not hold back the proper *ma'aser* or *teruma* to express his gratitude for Hashem's kindness. The same applies to a person's cattle or sheep; he has a *mitzvah* of offering the first born to show his appreciation. Additionally, when one has a first born son, he must redeem him through a Kohen.

The Shla Hakadosh translates this *pasuk* differently. He explains that the word *dimacha* means "your tears." This now means that if a person really wants something so much that it will bring them to tears in beseeching Hashem, *lo te'acher*, Hashem will heed their words without delay.

We see from the ending of this *pasuk* that this is a *segula* to have children. The *pasuk* ends "your firstborn sons you will present to Me". This means if one davens with emotion and tears, Hashem will answer his *tefillah* with an opportunity to fulfil the *mitzvah* of *pidyon haben*.

May Hashem hear all of our *tefillot*.



## Rosh Chodesh Adar Rishon

by Rabbi Daniel Coren

This coming Shabbos is a very auspicious Shabbos – Shabbos Rosh Chodesh Adar Rishon; that's a serious title. There is a debate amongst the *poskim* if the statement of *Chazal* (which is quoted in the *Mishna Berura* in *משנכנס אדר מרבין בשמחה* also applies to the first Adar. See the *Dirshu Mishna Berura* there. The majority of opinions say it only applies to the second Adar. However, the *Shevet Halevi* says that many do increase joy in the first Adar, and this seems to be the opinion of the *Chasam Sofer*. Additionally, the *Lubavitcher Rebbe zt"l* has a beautiful idea that when we have two months of Adar, the *simcha* is so much more potent, because together you have 60 days of *simcha*, and as we know, 60 represents *bitul*, meaning to nullify things. Hence a year like this, when we begin to increase joy, now we can, with Hashem's help, nullify all sadness.

Last week, I saw a beautiful idea from the *Ksav Sofer* regarding *Yisro* who saw all that Hashem did for the Jewish People. The *Gemara* points out that *Yisro* was the first to say *ברוך השם*. Many *mefarshim* struggle to understand how it's possible that no one before *Yisro* said praises of Hashem? See *Maharsha* and others. The *Ksav Sofer* explains that there was a special insight that *Yisro* had, and it's hinted in the extra word: *כל* everything that Hashem did is good, even what seems to be bad.

Let's point out some challenging questions about the obligation to increase *simcha*.

Firstly, how exactly does one increase *simcha*? Is it with actions, words, feelings, or all three? Secondly if *simcha* is an emotion, then how can it be commanded? Thirdly, strangely enough, we don't seem to find in *Sefer Hamitzvos* a clear command to be *besimcha*. Yet we do know that *Rav Nachman zt"l* famously says *מצוה גדולה להיות בשמחה תמיד*; he certainly held it's a *mitzva*.

The most important question is: can you define *simcha*, or joy? If you can't, we're in trouble, because how would we know how to achieve *simcha* if we can't define it?

I would like the readers to think about the above questions and discuss them at the Shabbos table, and if you have good answers, please share them with me. I also will challenge you to think how this all connects to *Parshas Zachor* and leading up all the way to *Purim*, the highest point of *simcha*.

Stay tuned for the answers next week.

Good Shabbos

# Double Compensation



Rabbi YY Jacobson

This week's Torah portion, Mishpatim, which deals primarily with civil and tort law, presents the following law:

"If a man shall give money or vessels to his fellow to safeguard, and it is stolen from the house of the man, if the thief is found, he shall pay double."

Simply put, the Torah is stating here the law that a thief need not only compensate the victim for the loss; he is also given a penalty, and is obligated needs to pay double the sum which he took. Yet, a well known axiom in Jewish thought is that every single passage in the Torah contains, in addition to its literal meaning, a psychological and spiritual interpretation. The physical and concrete dimension of a mitzvah may not always be practically relevant, yet its metaphysical message remains timelessly relevant in our inner hearts and psyches. What is the psychological interpretation of the above law?

## The Human Custodian

"If a man shall give money or vessels to his fellow to safeguard," can be understood as a metaphor for the Creator of life entrusting man with "money and vessels to safeguard." G-d grants each of us a body, a mind, a soul, a family and a little fraction of His world's resources. He asks us to nurture them and protect them from a myriad of inner and outer forces that threaten to undermine them.

Yet, each of us also possesses an inner thief who schemes to steal these gifts and use them according to his own will. This "thief" represents the "destructive inclination" – *yatzer hara*, in Talmudic jargon – that exists within the human psyche and constantly seeks to control his or her body, soul, and life by abusing their identity, violating their integrity and derailing them from their appropriate course of action.

For example, when a powerful instinctive craving compels me to surrender to despair, to lose my temper, to binge, to gamble, to drink, to consume something destructive for my body or spirit, my inner "thief" – or destructive craving – has just "kidnapped" part of my soul.

Similarly, when I lie for short-term convenience, my inner "thief,"

once again, has entered and robbed my "lips" and "words," employing them for an immoral function, thereby degrading my conscience and soul. When I cheat in a business deal, my inner "thief" managed to get his hands on my business, and so forth.

## The Majesty of Returning

The Torah, in the above law, offers this piece of advice: "If a man shall give money or vessels to his fellow to safeguard, and it is stolen from the house of the man, if the thief is found, he shall pay double." Go out, suggests the Torah, and find the thief. Then you will actually receive double of what you possessed originally!

Here we are introduced to, in subtle fashion, the exquisite dynamic known in Judaism as *teshuvah*, or psychological and moral recovery. Instead of wallowing in your guilt and despair, and instead of surrendering to apathy and cynicism, you ought to identify and confront your "thief," those forces within your life that keep derailing you. Confront the pain and loneliness leading you to these thoughts and behaviors.

Then you will receive from the thief double the amount he took in the first place. What this means psychologically is that the experience of falling and rebounding will allow you to deepen your spirituality and dignity in a fashion double of what it might have been without the thievery.

By engaging in the remarkable endeavor of *teshuvah*, the sin itself is redefined as a mitzvah. Why? Because the very failure and its resulting frustration generate a profound and authentic passion and appreciation for the good and the holy. The next time your inner thief hijacks your moral life, see it as a reclamation opportunity: Reclaim your life with a double dose of light and purity.

Womens Shiur **Tuesday** 9:30am (18 Main)  
Chassidus Shiur **Monday & Thursday** 7:45am (18 Main)  
**Shabbos:** Friday Night – before Barchu (20 Upstairs)  
Morning 9:00 (20 Upstairs) | After Davening 12:00pm (20 Upstairs)

## UFARATZTA



### WITH THE PRAYERS AND BLESSINGS FOR A SHIDDUCH YOU STILL HAVE TO DO WHAT IS NEEDED BDERECH HATEVA

... You write in your letter about your sister, whom I will remember in prayer when visiting the holy resting place of my father-in-law of saintly memory, that G-d send her His blessings, particularly in connection with a suitable Shidduch. Needless to say, it is also necessary to take steps, in the natural way, to make suitable contacts, which can be done in an indirect and diplomatic way, if a direct approach might not have the desirable results, as you write...

==== Part of Rebbe's letter, Chabad.org Finding A Shidduch

**Preparing for prayer  
is as valuable as  
prayer itself.  
The sages of old used  
to concentrate their  
thoughts on God first  
– to fill their hearts  
with love – then go in  
to pray.**

~ The Kotzker Rebbe zt"l



# Which is the "Real" Adar?

~Night Kollel~ ~Kollel Boker~



by Rabbi Nachum Scheiner, Night Kollel & Morning Kollel

As we begin our double Adar, let us discuss which month is the "real" Adar, and which is considered the extra month. This question has many ramifications across the four sections of Shulchan Aruch.

In *Orach Chaim*, this is discussed in regards to when a child becomes bar mitzvah, the date for a *yartzeit*, and even the correct text for bentsching Rosh Chodesh. In *Yoreh De'ah* this is discussed in regards to someone who makes a neder. In *Even Ha'ezer* this is discussed for the proper way to write a get. And in *Choshen Mishpat*, there is a discussion as to the correct text for a *shtar*.

## Get and Neder

The *Gemara* in *Nedarim* discusses a case where someone made a neder not to drink wine until Adar. If it is a leap year, does that mean until the first Adar or the second? The *Gemara* tells us that this will depend on the *machlokes* between Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Yehuda, in regards to the correct text for writing the date in a get. According to Rabbi Meir, when the date of the divorce is in the first Adar, one must specify that it is the 1st Adar. If one just writes Adar, it is assumed to mean the 2nd Adar. According to Rabbi Yehuda, the opposite is true. When the date is in the second Adar, one must specify that it is the 2nd Adar. If one just writes Adar, it is assumed to mean the 1st Adar.

The *Gemara* continues that this will also be true for one who made a *neder*. According to Rabbi Meir, if one promises to abstain from wine until Adar, it is assumed to mean until the 2nd Adar. According to Rabbi Yehuda, it is assumed to mean until the 1st Adar.

## Halachically Speaking

How do we *pasken*? The *Rambam* (*Nedarim* 10:6) seems to follow Rabbi Meir, and rules that if one made a neder to abstain from wine until Adar, he is allowed to drink until the 2nd Adar, which means that he follows Rabbi Meir, that a nonspecific usage of the term Adar refers to the 2nd Adar. The *Tur* (O"C 428), however, follows Rabbi Yehuda, and rules that if a *shtar* has the date in the month of Adar, it is assumed to be the 1st Adar. On the other hand, if the date is in the 2nd Adar, one must write specifically that it is the 2nd Adar.

The *Mechaber*, in regards to the writing of a get (*E"H* 126:7) rules that one must be specific for both a divorce written in the 1st Adar, as well as in the 2nd Adar. The *Bach* explains that the *Mechaber* is concerned with both opinions – the opinion of the *Rambam* that a nonspecific usage of the term Adar refers to the 2nd Adar, as well as the opinion of the *Tur* that a nonspecific usage of the term Adar refers to the 1st Adar. Therefore, to be safe, one must write specifically which Adar it is.

The *Rama*, however, argues and rules that if one wrote just Adar for the 1st Adar it is a kosher *get*. On the other hand, if one wrote just Adar for the 2nd Adar it is not a kosher *get*. This is following

the opinion of the *Tur*, who rules that Adar is a reference to the 1st Adar, and if the date is in the 2nd Adar, one must write specifically that it is the 2nd Adar.

The *Chelkas Mechokek* (126:22) explains that he is not concerned with the opinion of the *Rambam*, since many *Rishonim* agree with the *Tur*, and that is enough for the *Rama* to follow the vast majority of the *Rishonim*. In addition, he adds, the *Rambam* may also agree with the *Tur* that the 1st month is considered the real Adar.

## In Conclusion

There is a *machlokes* if a nonspecific mention of Adar is referring to the 1st or 2nd Adar.

But, does that mean that they are also arguing about which is the real Adar? Not necessarily. And as we will see, there are more pieces to the puzzle.

To be continued...

## Rabbi Scheiner

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# Mussar Stories

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## Courage

CZAR NIKOLAI'S ARMY would fight during the day and drink at night. One soldier drank too much, and he was still asleep when his troop moved on. Upon awakening, he knew he had to catch up with his battalion quickly, but first, he wanted something to eat. It was Friday night. He came to a Jewish home and helped himself to the pot of steaming cholent.

He mounted his horse, placed the pot of hot cholent on the horse's mane, and set off to find his division. The hot cholent burned the horse's back, which spurred the horse to run quickly. It didn't take long before he reached his battalion, but his horse, burning from the hot pot, kept charging forward straight toward the frontlines.

The enemy soldiers saw him charging full-speed toward them, assuming he surely had a powerful weapon, as he wasn't scared to face them alone. As such, they fled in panic.

In this manner, Czar Nikolai's army won the battle without firing a single gunshot.

Reb Mendel Futerfas, *zt"l*, told this story and explained that it is the same with our battle against the *yetzer hara*. If one shows courage and *hislahavus*, the *yetzer hara* will be afraid of him and leave him alone.

Reb Yaakov Meir Shechter, *shlita*, explained the power of "courage" with an analogy: "When you are among a pack of dogs and show them you are afraid, they'll run after you. But if you show them you aren't scared, the dogs will leave you alone."

Reb Yaakov Meir explained that this is also how it is with the *yetzer hara*. If you show fear and cowardliness, the *yetzer hara* can overpower you. But if you show confidence and courage, the *yetzer hara* leaves you alone.



## It Doesn't Suit You!

A bachur from Reb Isser Zalman Meltzer's yeshiva once said an innovative Torah thought. Upon hearing it, Reb Isser Zalman requested that someone bring them *mashkeh*, and the entire yeshiva drank *l'chaim* because of their joy from this *bachur's* discovery in Torah. That *bachur* later admitted that because of the honor everyone gave him, he studied diligently for an entire half a year afterward!

Another story that brings out this exact point: After suffering the *tzaros* of WWII, a Chassidische *bachur* strayed off the path of Yiddishkeit to the point that he was planning to marry a non-Jewish woman, *r"l*. Many people tried to persuade him with logical arguments not to commit this grave sin, but he ignored their *mussar*.

With his sweet voice, Reb Gad'l Eizner, *zt"l*, addressed him by telling him simply: פאר א חסידישע בחור פאסט'ס נישט — "It's unfit for a *chassidische bachur*." With just that, he turned him around, and the wedding was called off.

Why did Reb Eizner's rebuke work? Because it was laced with "honor." He had honored the *bachur* with the title of "*chassidische bachur*," of which he felt privileged to carry, and that ultimately prevented him from the sin.

בס"ד



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of our lives are all  
coming from Him.

-Sefer Ani Maamin



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## How Many Birds Remain on the Roof?

“אם כסף תלוה את עמי את העני עמך לא תהיה לו כנשה, לא תשימו  
עליו נשך” 22:24

“When you lend money to My people, to the poor person who is with you, do not act toward him as a creditor, do not lay interest upon him.” The Torah tells us that one is to lend money to his fellow Jew, but is not to treat him as a debtor, and not to charge him interest. The Torah seems to be telling us two distinct rules here: not to treat the one you loaned money to as a debtor, and not to charge him interest. Why are these said in the same *posuk*?

*Moshol*: A father asked his wise son a question. There are ten birds that landed on our roof. A hunter came and shot at the birds, killing four of them. The father asked the son – “How many birds remain on the roof?” The son replied, “Four.” The father explained to his son that he calculated incorrectly, for if there were ten birds at the start, and four are dead, that means that six remain. The son responded that he did not err in his calculations, for there was certainly a lot of noise and commotion when the four birds were killed. Without a doubt, the six live birds were frightened from the noise, and flew away. That means that there are only four birds remaining on the roof, the four dead ones. The father responded to his son that in fact his answer had been correct.

The same is with *tzedakah*, where one gives away from his own money. At first thought, it appears to the person as if that money is “dead,” for it is no longer in his storehouse. He assumes he will never have any benefit from that money, for it is lost from him. Whereas the money he still has left in the bank, he believes to be his, to have use from it and enjoy it. The exact opposite is true. As the young child stated, the person will only have benefit from the four dead birds, for they will not flee and he will be able to eat them, while the other six will fly away, and he will have no benefit from them. “אם כסף תלוה את עמי” – This refers to money which one performs *gemilas chessed* with it, “את העני עמך” – the person will always have that *zechus* with him in *olam habah* that will not flee. (עוד יוסף חי)

While one is allowed to test Hakodosh Boruch Hu on giving *ma’aser*, and one can expect reward in this world, that is not the goal. One is not to act as a creditor, and one is not to charge interest for that demonstrates that he sees it as his money. The only money that is his, is money used for *mitzvos* and to further his *avodas Hashem*. It is that money which he will always be able to count on in *olam habah*. One is to perform these *mitzvos l’shem shomayim*. The goal is to reach the ideal – to give *tzedakah* and perform *cheded*, for that is the *rotzon Hashem*. One should continue to perform *mitzvos*, and *ma’asim tovim*, all for the sake of Hashem, and not for any ulterior motives. May we be *zoche* to have the opportunity to perform these *mitzvos*, and perform them *l’shem shomayim*.

## The Ultimate Healer

With today’s technological advances, new medications, and advanced medical research, we can be fooled into thinking that we are the sole masters of our fate. Hashem is in the equation, yes but certainly not completely.

However, every once in a while, we get a wakeup call. We hear a story or experience a miracle recovery ourselves – and then the equation changes. In Vienna in the early 1900’s, there lived a *chassid* with a simple unwavering faith in his Rebbe, R. Yisroel Chortkover. This *chassid*, a tailor, had a customer who was very ill and could not seem to get better despite the fortunes of money he spent on the best doctors in Europe. No one could even tell him what his diagnosis was!

The *chassid* had pity on his wealthy customer, who was an “enlightened” non-observant Jew. “Please go to my Rebbe”, he said. “He is known as a miracle worker. As a last resort, the wealthy man decided to go together with his friend the *chassid* to the miracle-working Rebbe. They journeyed far, but eventually entered the Rebbe’s chambers in Galicia.

After speaking for a little while, the Rebbe suggested the name of a local doctor to visit. The wealthy man listened, but soon after arriving at the doctor, he couldn’t help but notice that the doctor the Rebbe recommended was far from a distinguished healer – he was quite the simple physician.

Refusing to complete the appointment, the wealthy man headed back to his friend the *chassid* and complained. “Your miracle Rabbi recommended that I visit this clearly inferior doctor. I

cannot! The *chassid* pleaded with him to head back to the doctor and follow his directive. The Rebbe was definitely to be trusted. The man’s situation was deteriorating day by day, so he had very little to lose.

The simple doctor prescribed a few medicines, the patient complied and, lo and behold – the wealthy man was cured. Heading back to his friend, the wealthy man was baffled. “How had the best doctors of Europe failed, while this simple doctor healed me? I must talk once again to this Rebbe!”

R. Yisroel Chortkover, smiled softly and answered the miraculously-healed patient who returned to him. “The Torah says *‘rapoh yerapeh* – the doctor will heal. Our Rabbi’s say ‘From here we see that doctors are given permission to heal.’”

With that, the Rebbe once again blessed the man, and bid him well. The gabbai waited until the Rebbe was alone to ask him exactly what he meant by this. The holy Chortkover said, “*Meekahn*, from here, from this house, the doctor was given permission to heal. Remember, it is not the doctor who heals, but the prayers we pray. Baruch Hashem, I *davened*, and Hashem listened. From these prayers, *meekahn*, from right here, the salvation started. Hashem is the ultimate healer, our prayers the great catalyst.”

The inner workings of the world are mostly hidden to us, but every once and a while, if we merit it – we get a glimpse of the truth.

Written by R’ Avrohom Hillel Reich based on a lesson and story by Harav Ben Tziyon Sneh Shlita



RABBI BEN ZION SNEH

# A Jewish Bondsman

If you buy a Jewish bondsman. (21:2)

The Torah begins *Parashas Mishpatim* presenting the many *mitzvos* that cover the gamut from social/welfare relationships to the appropriate manner of service to Hashem, including the laws of the *eved Ivri*, Jewish bondsman. One would think a number of other mitzvos would also serve as an appropriate opening to *Parashas Mishpatim*. The various commentators address this question by offering explanations for what seems to be an anomaly, but we know that no anomalies exist in the Torah. Everything is sorted out and presented by Heavenly design.

Horav Yosef Shalom Eliyashiv, zt"l, comments that the very foundation of the laws concerning the *eved Ivri* beg elucidation. In any civilized country in which laws play a dominant role, the punishment not only fits the crime (to some extent), but it is also meant to serve as a powerful deterrent from repeating the same offense. One who steals pays not only what he stole, but is subject to incarceration for a hefty period of time – often on the word of only one witness. At times, a judge may rule against a thief, even if the evidence is circumstantial. If the punishment would not be stringent, the world would capitulate to lawlessness.

Our Torah's laws are considerably different. The thief pays only after his act of stealing has been verified by two witnesses. If he confesses to his misdeed prior to the arrival of the witnesses, his fine (*keifel*, double, principal plus fine) is nullified. If he does not have the funds to repay the victim, he is sold into servitude, where incidentally, he is treated like a king. The owner must outfit him, feed him and provide for his every need. The glaring question is: How will such "punishment" serve as a deterrent? On the contrary, an unscrupulous person might take advantage of the laws, steal and take a six-year hiatus, compliments of the Torah's judicial system! Rav Eliyashiv derives from here a lesson concerning the Torah's profundity and penetrating understanding of the human psyche. Punishment does not deter sin. As long as a person is treated like a *ganiv*, thief, he will continue acting his role. People do bad things because they lack self-esteem. They look in the mirror and see a crook – so they act the part. The Torah wants the thief to know that he is a valuable member of Klal Yisrael. He is a child of the Patriarchs, not unlike any other Jew. If he views himself in a positive light – he will act positively. He sees himself as someone who could aspire to be a contributing member of Klal Yisrael. The classic example that teaches *middos tovos*, positive character traits, is the *eved Ivri*. Thus, it serves as the preface to *Parashas Mishpatim*, which ushers in the social justice laws.

Horav Yechezkel Abramsky, zt"l, treated his *ozeres*, maid, like royalty. If he sensed that she was working too hard, he would suggest that she rest a bit – even though this would cost him more money. (She was paid by the hour.) Unquestionably, this woman developed a greater respect for *frum*, observant Jews.

– Hebrew Academy of Cleveland



## The Oral Law

Rabbi Berel Wein

The Torah presents us with great moral principles and a profoundly unique value system. These are meant to propel us through life and make us feel that we are members of a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Yet, we are all aware that perhaps the most difficult challenge in life is translating our core beliefs and high moral aspirations into practical daily behavior.

In a world where there would be no desire for undue riches or the accumulation of vast property, it would be simple to understand that one should not steal, cheat, or covet. In the practical world that we live in, there exists the desire for acquisition of wealth and goods, power and influence, fame, and fortune, all built within our basic DNA structure.

Stealing, cheating, and coveting all require no specific legal definition to be of value in the practical world. And because of this element of human nature, there exist all the great moral values that are represented in the Ten Commandments, which should define our lives.

All sorts of questions arise as to what the true definition of theft is. How does advertising and persuasive sales techniques fit into the moral world that we are trying to construct and live in, and does this describe theft? What about stealing to be able to survive? And countless other questions that undoubtedly arise when we approach the problem of defining behavior that we wish to accompany our lofty moral goals.

All the laws that appear in this week's Torah reading are discussed at length (and width) with precise analysis in the tradition of the Oral Law that governs Jewish life. It is in those large volumes of scholarly research and opinion that the practical flesh and sinews of Jewish law are draped upon the skeleton of the moral world that we hope to attain.

We live in a world where mistakes happen, whether they be the products of negligence or pure happenstance. How are we to judge liability and responsibility in that massive gray area where most human behavior finds itself? The Oral Law is a continuing process that deals not only with an ox that gores a cow, but also teaches us how to deal with issues in air travel and even ventures into space. Without a clear definition of the original value system upon which the moral code of Judaism is based, human behavior can be seen as merely a collection of good intentions and human platitudes.

The study of the Oral Law, beginning with the books of the Talmud and continuing through the latest works of Jewish legal scholarship of today, become the necessary foundation to creating a just and moral society that we all endeavor to live in.

I have always maintained that when we proclaim ourselves to be the people of the book, that book is not necessarily the Bible itself, but, rather, it is the Talmud, which makes the Bible alive, practical, relevant, and trustworthy throughout all generations.

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# Break the Cycle Rabbi Efreim Goldberg



Parshas Mishpatim presents the basic principles of the Torah's civil code. After the dramatic event of Ma'amad Har Sinai, Hashem now transmitted the detailed laws that we are to

observe. This series of laws begins with the halacha of the עבד עברי – the Jewish servant. Right at the opening of this *parsha*, the Torah commands that if a person purchases a servant, he must release him after six years of work. At first glance, this seems like a very peculiar choice of a topic with which to begin this series of laws. Bnei Yisrael were only weeks away from *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. For centuries, they endured the pain and degradation of slavery, and were only very recently freed from that torment. Is the requirement to free an עבד עברי the most important law that they needed to hear at this moment?

Rav Yosef Sorotzkin, in *Meged Yosef*, explains that to the contrary – precisely because of Bnei Yisrael's recent experience as slaves, the mandatory release of an עבד עברי is the first law they needed to be told. Any therapist who deals with abuse victims will affirm that suffering abuse as a child drastically increases the chances of becoming an abuser himself. Children who were raised by abusive parents are more likely than others to grow to become abusive parents. Rationally,

we would have assumed that those who experienced firsthand the horrors and pain of abuse would be less likely to inflict this suffering on others. But reality has taught us that this is not the case. People who suffered mistreatment feel the need to mistreat others.

Somebody told me about how he was raised in a very poor family, and then started working in a business where he was treated very insensitively. He eventually worked his way up, to the point where he bought the business. Those who had been in charge now work for him. He gleefully and proudly told me how he is now treating them the way they treated him.

But this is not how it should be. The command of עבד עברי, Rav Sorotzkin writes, teaches us that we must break the cycle of violence, abuse and mistreatment. If we were treated badly, we are still able, and expected, to break the cycle, to be better than those who were unkind to us. Bnei Yisrael's experiences as slaves do not entitle us to enslave others. In fact, the Torah requires that if a master has only one bed or one pillow, he must give it to his servant instead of keeping it for himself. If we were treated cruelly, we should treat others kindly. We can, and must, break the cycle.

## TACHANUN AND A WIFE'S CHESED By Rabbi David Bibi

### RAV BIDERMAN TELLS THE FOLLOWING STORY:

A Kotzker chassid once came to the Rebbe of Radoshitz zt'l and told him that his mazal fell, & he didn't have parnassah anymore. The Radoshitzer asked, "Do you say tachanun?" Ashamed, he admitted that for many years he didn't say tachanun. "How many tachanuns are you missing? When did you begin skipping tachanun." The man replied that he was still a young bachur when he began being lenient with tachanun. They made a calculation and realized that he was missing thousands of tachanuns. The Rebbe told him, "From now on, be cautious to say tachanun. Additionally, you must say all those tachanuns that you missed. If you will do so, your mazal will come back. But if you miss even just one tachanun that you owe, you won't get your yeshuah." The man followed the Rebbe's advice. It took a few weeks, but he said all the tachanuns that he "owed," and he was careful to say tachanun in the tefillos. His mazal improved, and he became wealthy.

### ANOTHER STORY FROM RAV ZILBERSTEIN

Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein tells a wonderful story of a woman who built her home in the proper fashion. In Volozhin There lived a Jew named rabbi Isaac who aside from having illustrious ancestors, was also very wealthy and a leader of the community. He would travel on business to various Jewish communities & always bring his wife back a gift from his travels when he returned home.

Once his wife asked him to bring back a set of the Talmud, a very & expensive rare commodity at that time. Rabbi Isaac made the effort to fulfill her request & although it was difficult was able to obtain a full set of shas for her. His wife then established a lending library of sorts in her house & any scholar living in town or visiting town who needed to look up something would be able to come to their home and borrow it. When the scholar would finish with that volume, he would return it and take another one in its stead.

Once the Shaagat Aryeh, Reb Aryeh Leib came to their home and asked to borrow a certain mesechta. When this woman saw that this outstanding scholar came to her home to borrow a gemarah, she told him that he should not exert himself to come to her home, rather that whenever he completed a volume she would send one of her servants to him with the next volume for him to continue his learning. This arrangement was duly implemented and continued until the rabbi had borrowed almost all of her volumes of the Talmud she had. When he left the city, he blessed the couple that Hashem should give her two sons. One who would teach the talmud to the entire Jewish people and the other who would be proficient in all of shas. This blessing was for filled; this woman's two sons were none other than Rabbi Chaim Volozhiner and his brother Rabbi Zalmaleh.



# Doing and Hearing

Rabbi Sholom Rosner

In this week's parsha we find the famous words attributed to Am Yisrael of "*na'aseh v'nishma*" (we shall do and we shall hear). We are applauded for having had faith and accepting God's commands even before hearing them. Yet, modern man may question such a response. It seems like we blindly accepted our religion. An intellectual would first seek to comprehend before he commits himself to practice. It is clear that Judaism welcomes and encourages the in-depth study of Torah and the pursuit of wisdom. We spend our days trying to grasp every single halacha. The Talmud is full of questions and discourse in order to derive a true understanding of every aspect of the Torah.

If so, then how do we justify this seemingly cursory response of *na'aseh v'nishma* which is at the foundation of our religion? Rabbi Norman Lamm, in his book *Derashot Ledorot*, offers three explanations

First, *na'aseh v'nishma* is the natural way to live Judaism. The word Halacha means "the way". This is the way of our life. And life is lived before it is comprehended. For example, before making Aliyah, one can hire a tutor and try to teach their child the rules of the Hebrew language, its grammar and syntax. Yet, it is not until they are thrown into a classroom where only Hebrew is spoken that they begin to imitate, practice and master the language. Similarly, just by studying Judaism one would not truly appreciate the experience of a Shabbos or Seder. It is the practice of these laws and customs that turn on *ba'ale teshuva* more than the study of its philosophy and its commandments.

Second, when you love someone you perform acts on their behalf even if you do not fully comprehend the reason for their request. Love is the willingness to do what the beloved asks of us, simply because he or she has requested it. That is sufficient. In Judaism, one of the greatest ideals is the love between God and man. To fulfill His commandments, then to seek to understand them.

In the *Sifre (Vzot Haberacha)*, there a midrash that describes how Hashem offered all the other nations the Torah, and their reflexive reaction was, "What is written in it? Is it good for us? Is it something we will be able to observe? Let us hear it and then we'll decide. Hashem told them some of the prohibitions, like "do not steal," "do not commit adultery," and "do not murder." Why did Hashem choose not to tell them about some of the positive mitzvos that would have been more attractive, like "love your neighbor" and "honor your parents"? Perhaps, once the nations had the nerve to even ask what was in the Torah, Hashem responded in a way that would cause them to reject the offer. If they truly "loved" God, they should have accepted his offer, without any inquiry.

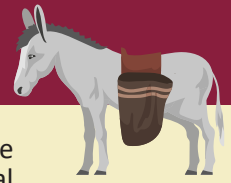
Third, *na'aseh v'nishma* entails the act of discipline and self-restraint, without which religion has no spiritual and existential grounding. There is an idea of commitment and that I am not in charge. I have to shape my life to adhere to what He wants. Each of us has many excuses for not davening with a minyan or attending a shiur. We have so many things clamoring for our attention. Our work, social media, telephones, computers etc. We ought to put aside all rationalizations and distractions and say firmly, once and for all, "*na'aseh v'nishma!*"

The code of our conduct, based on *na'aseh v'nishma*, is attributed to the angels. As we recite in our morning *tefillah* – "*kulam ahuvim*" (element of love); "*kulam berurim*" (natural and straightforward); "*Kulam giborim*" (disciplined; – as in Avos 4:1– who is mighty, he who restrains his instincts).

Despite its challenges to man's intellectual pretension and its strangeness in the modern autonomous culture, *na'aseh v'nishma* is a necessary precursor to becoming a true *oved Hashem*.

# Our Greatest Enemy

Rabbi Abramoff



In *Parshas Mishpatim*, we learn about the *mitzvos* of helping load someone's animal (*te'inah*) and unloading it (*p'rikah*). Although unloading is a bigger *mitzvah* because then the animal is in discomfort, if the owner of the animal that needs loading is a person's enemy, then helping him comes first. We can understand this with a story.

David and Shimmy learned together to be plastic surgeons. In their first year of practice, David took a job in a private clinic in a wealthy, frum neighborhood. His most common procedure was permanent makeup. Shimmy, on the other hand, found a position in the hospital in a rough neighborhood, and found himself patching together some of "New York's finest" (NYPD) on a regular basis. "Shimmy," David would say when they would meet at *avos ubonim* on *motzei Shabbos*, "I get paid twenty times more than you for just removing a pimple! Why are you working so hard in order to get paid less?!" But Shimmy would always say, "I want the experience. In your neighborhood, you never need to replace a blown out face." Can you guess who, after a few years, ended up being the more successful surgeon?

Chazal teach us that *lakuf es yitzro adif*, meaning that it's better to help load one's enemy's animal because then he is conquering his *yetzer horah*. Even if the *mitzvah* of *t'inah* itself is not as valuable as the *mitzvah* of *p'rikah*, at the end of the day, helping a person's enemy will strengthen him and perfect him much more. Sort of like being a doctor in a rough neighborhood! Let's keep an eye out for all the opportunities we can find to conquer our greatest enemy – the *yetzer horah!*

## SHMIRAS HALASHON

A well-known speaker is coming to your town and your friend invites you to come along to hear him. You've heard this speaker several times before and, although his material is interesting, you prefer a more dynamic speaking style. Can you tell your friend why you don't want to go to the lecture?

### THE DILEMMA

Criticizing the speaker is *loshon hora*. Your comments imply that he isn't effective, and may result in people deciding against going to hear him. This is clearly derogatory information that does the subject harm – the definition of *loshon hora*. The case might be different, however, if the inquirer is in charge of hiring a speaker for an event.

Reviewed by Rabbi Moshe Mordechai Lowy, *shlita*. For discussion only; pls consult a rav. From Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation's Shabbos Menu info@powerofspeech.org.



# WHY MAKE BERACHOT?

Rabbi Yissochar Frand

*"You shall worship Hashem, your G-d, and He shall bless your bread and your water... (Shmos 23:25)*

The Torah teaches that upon entering Eretz Yisroel, we are commanded to destroy all vestiges of idolatry and show complete allegiance to the Almighty. Doing so insures that He will bless our bread and water. The Talmud states that we should not read the word in the verse as "u'veirach" – "and He will bless" (your bread, etc.), rather as "u'vareich" – "and you shall bless" (prior to partaking of your bread and water). This, continues the Talmud, is a Scriptural allusion to the requirement to make a blessing before eating or drinking. In an earlier section in the same Tractate, the Talmud records that no Scriptural source is necessary for the obligation to make a blessing, for it is obvious that prior to receiving benefit from Hashem's world we must ask permission in the form of a blessing. How do we reconcile these two sections of the Talmud?

As a rule, when the Sages offer an alternative reading for a word in the Torah, it is not to contradict the original interpretation, rather to shed light upon it. How does changing the meaning from "He will bless" to "you shall bless" accomplish this goal?

The Talmud states that a person who does not make a blessing prior to partaking from this world steals from his father and mother. His father, explains the Talmud, is Hashem, and his mother is the Assembly of Israel. What is the notion of stealing from the Assembly of Israel?

According to some commentaries the root of the word "beracha" – "blessing" is "berech" – "knee", for when reciting a blessing, we are figuratively kneeling before Hashem, submitting ourselves to Him as the Creator of the world; we ask His permission prior to benefiting from that which is His. The Rashba offers another interpretation for "beracha", saying that it stems from the word "beraicha" – "pool" or "source"; an object can only be blessed when it is connected to the source from which all abundance emanates, i.e. Hashem.

When reciting a blessing, we are asking for permission to benefit from Hashem's world, as well as being cognizant of the fact that by benefiting, we are causing the depletion of some of the world's resources. We therefore appeal to the source of all blessing to restore this lost resource, ensuring that others may benefit from it as well. Reciting a blessing over an item that we are about to consume connects it back to its source, so that the blessing of abundance can be bestowed upon it, enabling this resource's replenishment.

Failing to recite a blessing results in two wrongdoings: We are stealing from our Father by taking that which is His without permission, and we are also stealing from our mother, i.e. society, for we are depleting the world of a resource without ensuring its replenishment. It is concerning the first notion, the requirement to request permission prior to partaking from Hashem's world, that the Talmud comments that no scriptural source is necessary.

However, the requirement to ask Hashem to restore the depleted resource is not an idea that we would have derived had it been left to our own intellectual capacities. Therefore, for this second notion a scriptural source is presented. The verse states "He will bless you (with abundance)" but it can be read "you shall bless". There is no contradiction between the two, for both ideas coalesce. For us to receive Hashem's blessing of abundance we are required to bless our food. By connecting our food to the source of blessing, the blessings of abundance will be bestowed upon us.

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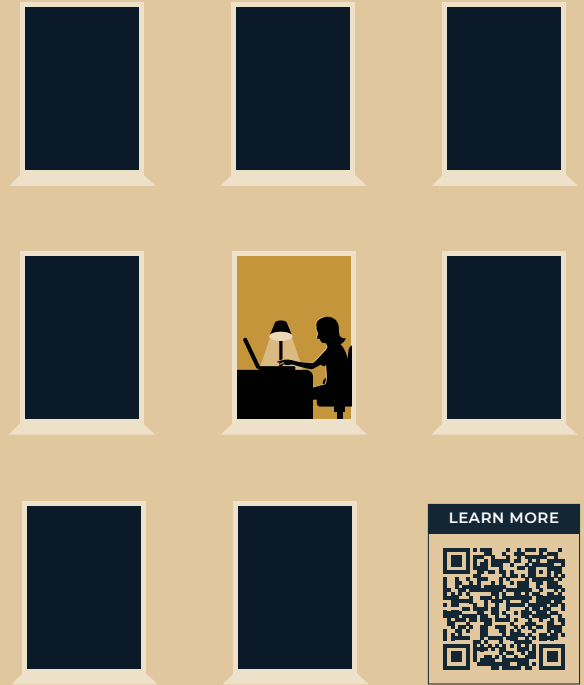
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# JOKES

## Luggage

A porter loaded down with suitcases followed the couple to the airline check-in counter.

As they approached the line, the husband glanced at the pile of luggage and said to the wife, "Why didn't you bring the piano, too?"

"Are you trying to be funny?" she replied.

"No, I really wish you had," he sighed. "I left the tickets on it."

## Bag boy

At the checkout counter, the bag boy asks, "Paper or plastic?"

Customer: "I don't care, you pick one."

Bag boy: "I can't."

Customer: "Why not?"

Bag boy: "'Cause, baggers can't be choosers!"

## Kids Are Funny

10 yo: "I just read that you have fingertips, but not toe tips, yet you can tiptoe, but not tipfinger."

Me: "It's 6 am."

My 4-year-old just gave me the last apple slice, then announced loudly, "If you eat the last apple, you put the bowl in the sink."

7 yo: "Can we have candy for dinner?"

Mom: "Why would that ever be OK?"

7 yo: "Because you're tired and don't feel like cooking."

Someone's been watching me more closely than she should.

Dad: "Did you brush your

teeth?"

8 yo: "I don't need to."

Dad: "Why not?"

8 yo: "Yesterday, I brushed them twice."

11 yo: "I should get my allowance from when I was away from camp."

Mom: \*raises an eyebrow\*

11 yo: "What, so now you won't support paid leave?"

I told my daughters they get to split the inheritance when we pass away. My ten-year-old asked, "Will you leave me more if I'm your lawyer?"

She's clearly ready for a legal career.

## My Newspaper Was Different

A customer walked into my clothing shop and asked to see the pants that were advertised in the paper that day. "We don't have an ad in the paper today," I told her. He insisted I was wrong, so I got a copy of the paper, and we went through it, eventually landing on an ad for pants from another local store. Exasperated, the customer glared at me and said, "In my newspaper, the ad was for this store!"

## Some Assembly Required

A man bought a new gadget -- unassembled, of course -- and after reading and rereading the assembly

instructions still couldn't figure out how it went together. Finally, he sought the help of an old handyman working in the backyard. The old fellow picked up the pieces, studied them, and then began assembling the gadget. In just a few minutes he has it all put together.

"That's amazing," said the man. "And you did it without even looking at the instructions!"

The handyman replied, "Fact is, I can't read, and when a fellow can't read he's got to think."

## Babysitter

My wife and I had the best babysitter. She would wash, dry, and put away the dishes; clean the house; and even help with the laundry after putting our kids into bed.

Once, we were getting ready to go out for the evening, and my wife was embarrassed because she had left the dirty laundry pile up.

Before we left, she threw all our dirty clothes into the dryer so the babysitter wouldn't see it.

You can imagine our surprise when we returned to find all our dirty clothes folded neatly in the laundry room!



My one regret in life is that I am not someone else.

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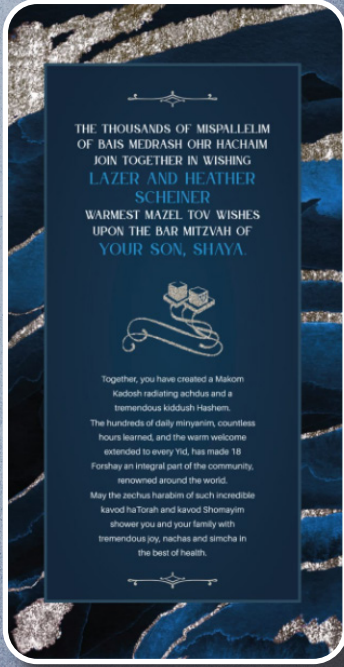
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