

Mishpatim | Shevat 22 - 28 | February 20 - 26



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**Rabbi Aaron Lankry**

*Marah D'asra*

305-332-3311

alankry@yahoo.com

**Rabbi Daniel Coren**

*דומ"צ - מגיד שייעור*

914-645-4199

rabbidac@gmail.com

**Rabbi Nachum Scheiner**

*Executive Director*

*Rosh Kollel, Kollel Boker & Night Kollel*

845-587-3462

rabbisheiner@18forshay.com

**Sholom Ber Sternberg**

*Director of Operations*

office@18forshay.com

**Shmulie Fruchter**

*Facilities Manager*

manager@18forshay.com

**Bais Medrash Ohr Chaim**

18 Forshay Rd. Monsey NY 10952

info@18forshay.com | 845 587-3462

Shul Website: www.18forshay.com

BET Editor:

[bet@18forshay.com](mailto:bet@18forshay.com)

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Shalom Mashbaum  
saul.mashbaum@gmail.com

Aliza Estrin | Graphic Designer  
alizaestrin@gmail.com  
+972 527693588

**Shabbos Zmanim**

2025 Early Friday Mincha, 18 Main  
12:45pm and every 15 minutes until 3:00pm

|                                  |                                   |                                |                         |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>5:20pm</b><br>Candle lighting | <b>5:30pm</b><br>Mincha in tent נ | <b>5:30pm</b><br>Chabad Mincha | <b>5:38pm</b><br>Shkiya |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|

**SHABBOS SHACHRIS MINYANIM:**

|   |  |                                    |   |                                      |
|---|--|------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| <b>6:01am</b><br>Vasikin, followed by a Daf Yomi Shiur 20 ↑ | <b>8:00am</b><br>Shachris 2 18 main                | <b>9:15am</b><br>Shachris 3 Tent נ | <b>10:00am</b><br>Shachris 4 Bais Chabad 20 ↑ | <b>10:30am</b><br>Shachris 5 18 main |
| <b>2:00pm</b><br>Pirchei                                    | <b>5:20pm</b><br>Mincha followed by Shalosh Seudos | <b>5:39pm</b><br>Shkiya            | <b>6:19pm</b><br>Maariv 1                     | <b>6:24pm</b><br>Maariv 2            |

Late Maariv Motzei Shabbos Every 15 Minutes!  
7:00 pm and every 15 minutes until 9:30pm | 18 Main

**Weekday Zmanim**  
Zmanim for the week of Feb 23 - Mar 1

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    | 6:40am | 8:43am             | 9:24am   | 10:19am    | 12:09pm | 4:31pm | 5:40pm |
| Monday    | 6:38am | 8:42am             | 9:23am   | 10:18am    | 12:09pm | 4:32pm | 5:41pm |
| Tuesday   | 6:37am | 8:42am             | 9:22am   | 10:18am    | 12:09pm | 4:33pm | 5:42pm |
| Wednesday | 6:35am | 8:41am             | 9:21am   | 10:17am    | 12:09pm | 4:34pm | 5:43pm |
| Thursday  | 6:34am | 8:40am             | 9:21am   | 10:17am    | 12:09pm | 4:35pm | 5:45pm |
| Friday    | 6:32am | 8:39am             | 9:20am   | 10:16am    | 12:08pm | 4:36pm | 5:46pm |
| Shabbos   | 6:30am | 8:38am             | 9:19am   | 10:15am    | 12:08pm | 4:36pm | 5:47pm |

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Rabbi Lankry *Dear Kehila,*

## Mishpatim – The Neshama of Torah

The Medrash brings that Hashem offered the Torah to the different nations of the world, and they all refused to accept it. When He offered the Torah to the children of Eisav, they asked, "Give us an example," and Hashem said, "You shall not kill." They answered, "We can't accept the Torah. The bracha that Yaakov gave our father was 'By the sword you shall live.' Our whole life depends on murder," and they refused the Torah. Hashem had very similar conversations with the other nations of the world. Amon and Moav refused because it says in the Torah, "You shall not commit adultery," and Yishmael refused because of the commandment "You shall not steal."

The famous question is: Had Hashem told them that they needed to keep *shatnez* and they had answered, "I love Italian suits. I can't accept the Torah," we would have understood their rejection of the Torah. But murder, adultery, and stealing are part of the seven *mitzvahs* that all of mankind must keep. How can they reject the Torah for these reasons? They already had no choice but not to murder, commit adultery, and steal.

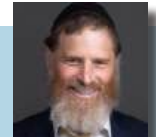
When Moshe Rabbeinu came to *Shamayim*, the *malachim* asked Hashem, "What's a human being doing among us?" There followed a great debate about whether Klal Yisroel should be given the Torah. The obvious question is that mankind had been learning Torah for a millennium. We know of the famous yeshiva of Shem and Aver. Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov had yeshivas. In Mitzrayim, the Yidden learned Torah. The *malachim* didn't seem to care then; why the whole uproar now?

The Medrash [in *Yalkut Sepurim*] tells us a story. There was a Jew who spent many years learning and reviewing *Mesechta Chagiga*, and this was the only *mesechta* he knew. When he was *niftar*, he was alone, and no one knew that he had died. A form of a woman came and stood over him and began to wail loudly, "Gather everyone together and be *maspid* him. Through that, you will be *zoche* to *Olam Haba*." She continued to wail, "He took care of me all of my life with great respect." Many people gathered, and they took care of the *niftar* and buried him with great honors. As they covered over the *aron*, they asked the woman what her name was. She answered, "My name is *Chagiga*," and she vanished.

We learn from here that Torah has its own *neshama*, and it was the *neshama* of *Meseches Chagiga* that came to accord the final honors to the one who was *mekasher* himself to it.

Now we can understand the objection of Bnei Eisav, "Of course, we won't kill, but if we accept the Torah, that means we accept the *neshama* of the Torah, the *neshama* of you shall not murder. And that will change us, we will lose our *geshmack* to murder, and that we can't live with." The same was for Amon and Moav. "We can hold ourselves back from actual adultery. But the obsession with it we can't give up." The same for Yishmael, etc.

This was the objection of the *malachim*. Sure, people learned Torah, but Moshe Rabbeinu came to bring down the *neshama* of Torah, to intertwine the *neshama* of Torah with Klal Yisrael. This is what the *malachim* could not grasp; that something as special as Torah could become part of the *neshama* of a human being. Moshe Rabbeinu responded that, on the contrary, the Torah only discusses things related to mankind. It must be that a human being can be *mitkasher* to the *neshama* of Torah.



## Real Brotherhood

by Rabbi Daniel Coren

Last week, we discussed the proper steps of hachana for Matan Torah and Purim. The last of the three steps was *achdus*. The big question is: What does it really mean when we say *achdus*? What is required of each individual to be in a state of *achdus*? It's interesting to note that the main letters in the word *achdus* are *אח*, which is usually translated as brother. However, there is a deeper meaning. Interestingly enough, the word *אח* appears in the laws of *aveilus*. What is the context? The laws of resewing the garment that was torn when hearing about his relative or Rebbe passing away.

I think tearing *kriya* can be understood as follows. When a person tears *kriya*, he is expressing deep grief; it's as if a part of his body was torn from him; as if a limb of his own body was torn away. When the halacha discusses whether one can resew the torn garment, it is discussing whether it's possible to resew our soul internally. And, interestingly enough, the term used for resew is *לאחות*. To resew means to reconnect the part of me that is called brother, *אח*.

I think a big step that many times is skipped in our quest for *achdus* is this deep feeling for one another, feeling each other's pain. It is very challenging to reach that level, but that is the real experience of *achdus*.

A powerful example: At the end of this week's parsha, at the apex of Matan Torah, we are told about a *לבנת הספיר*, a sapphire brick of stone that Rashi explains has been in front of Hashem from the time the Jews were enslaved in Mitzrayim. Hashem was showing us how much He cared, how much He was saddened by our plight. The Gemara in Sanhedrin says this quite explicitly: *קלני מראשי קלני מזרוני*. Hashem, *kivyachol*, is saying, "When you're in pain, I'm in pain." So here, at the greatest event of all time, Matan Torah, the happiest moment in the relationship between Klal Yisrael and Hashem, the ultimate *chasuna*, Hashem is still thinking of the pain of Bnai Yisrael. That's real brotherhood, that's real *achdus*.

In *Sichos Mussar*, Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz relates another example of this concept from this week's parsha, regarding the mitzva of lending money to the poor. Reb Chaim develops the idea that when one is lending, he has to see the borrower as a beloved member of Hashem's nation, as the *pasuk* says, *אם בסף תלווה את עמי*. Hashem is saying, "They are my nation." Thus, the lender should view the loan as if he is the borrower and the poor person is the lender.

As we begin to prepare for the great days of Purim and Pesach, let's make sure we do our part to feel Klal Yisrael's pain and thus be *zoche* to *Mashiach bimheirah beyameinu*.



# Your Enemy's Donkey

*"If you see the donkey of someone you hate crouching under its burden, and you might refrain from helping him – you shall surely help him."*



Rabbi YY Jacobson

Why was it necessary to discuss the possible thought that you may not wish to help your enemy - "and you might refrain from helping him?" - rather than stating the law succinctly: "If you see the donkey of someone you hate crouching under its burden, you shall surely help him!"

The answer is simple. The Bible is making a point of acknowledging the instinct to refrain from helping one's enemy's donkey as legitimate and human. It is perfectly normal not to want to assist the person you loathe, even if his animal is suffering.

Despite this natural emotion, the Bible calls on us to challenge our instinct and assist our enemy's donkey. This perfectly human instinct of loathing an enemy need not dictate our actions.

## Acknowledgment vs. Domination

There are two significant lessons here, pertinent particularly for an age dedicated to the dissecting of one's emotional persona. For one, the Torah does not believe in denying and repressing negative emotions; to make believe that they do not exist. Simultaneous with its insistence that we assist the animal of the one we hate, the Torah makes a special point of mentioning the fact that we may harbor a feeling to desist from extending a hand to the burdened donkey of our enemy.

The fact that our emotions are not always in sync with our ideals and values does not reduce us to moral failures. Eight hundred and fifty years ago, the great medieval Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides captured this truth in his Code of Jewish Law:

*"When one person wrongs another, the latter should not suppress his resentment and remain silent... rather, he is commanded to let him know [his feelings] and ask him: 'Why did you do this to me? Why did you wrong me regarding this matter?'... The Torah warns us against hating in our hearts."*

On the other hand, the Bible informs us that not every emotion is holy. When somebody's animal is suffering, you must extend

your hand, notwithstanding your negative emotions toward the owner of the donkey.

One of the problems unique to our age is that for many of us, emotions have become the sole barometers that determine right from wrong. We have turned our emotions into deities, worshiping them as though they embodied absolute, timeless truths—a new G-d. To suggest to somebody that they might overlook an emotion, subdue a feeling, or disregard a mood is a form of heresy; our emotions have become gods, and we must obey them at all costs, even if this may be detrimental for our relationships, our marriages, our children, and our long-term visions. In the Biblical ethos, there is a critical distinction between acknowledging your emotions and allowing them to dictate your behavior.

## How to Treat Your Inner Children

In Kabbalistic literature, our faculties of cognition are commonly referred to as "parents," while our faculties of emotions are described as "children." The significance of this metaphor is vital: The relationship between the mind and the heart, it suggests, must reflect a healthy relationship between parents and children. When your child begins to holler, you must acknowledge their predicament and examine the cause of their outburst. Yet, you cannot run to call the ambulance based on the screams of a child alone without examining the situation on your own first.

A clear distinction must be made between de-legitimizing your child's tears, which is cruel, and allowing these tears to dictate your home and life, which would result in chaos.

A similar relationship must exist between the mind and the heart. Emotions, instincts, moods, and feelings are 'children.' They are cute, spontaneous, vibrant, immature, and wild. Sometimes, they are out to something very real and serious; other times, they exaggerate or distort reality. We ought not de-legitimize, suppress, or deny them. We must be keenly aware of their existence within us. Just like with children, we must attempt to educate and refine them, but we must not worship them and allow them the exclusive right to define our lives.

Womens Shiur **Tuesday** 9:30am (18 Main)  
Chassidus Shiur **Monday & Thursday** 7:45am (18 Main)  
**Shabbos:** Friday Night – before Barchu (20 Upstairs)  
Morning 8:40 (20 Upstairs) | After Davening 12:00pm (20 Upstairs)  
*Please Note: Rabbi Jacobson's Shabbos morning shiur will now begin at 8:40 am, followed by the Minyan at 10:00 am.*

## Yahrzeit of the Rebbe's wife --

### *Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka*

Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson was born on 25 Adar, 5661 (1901) and was named Chaya Mushka after her great grandmother, the wife of the Tzemach Tzedek. As a young teenager, World War I forced her family to flee from Lubavitch for Rostov, where in 1920, her father Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson became the sixth Rebbe of Lubavitch.

In 1950, the Frierdiker Rebbe was nistalek and in the year that followed, the Ramash was reluctant to accept the nesius. It was only through the Rebbetzin's encouragement that he accepted upon himself the leadership of the Lubavitch movement, which the Rebbetzin's father himself had been totally dedicated.

Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka passed away on 22 Shvat 5748 (1988) and was buried next to her mother and grandmother and near her father in the Old Montefiore Cemetery in Queens, NY.

## UFARATZTA



## Just Saying Tehillim

Just saying *Tehillim*, even without kavana and at a quick pace, as many do on Shabbos Mevarchim, nevertheless has a tremendous effect.

==== The Rebbe. From the weekly Farbrengen #809



## Three Components of the Mitzvah of Kibud Av Va'eim

~Night Kollel~ ~Kollel Boker~



by Rabbi Nachum Scheiner, Night Kollel & Morning Kollel

In regard to the proper performance of the *mitzvah* of *kibud av va'eim*, the *Chayei Adam* (67:3) gives us a new perspective, which can help a person perform this important *mitzvah*, even when it seems so hard. He points out that there are actually three distinct components to the *mitzvah* of *kibud av va'eim*: action, speech, and a proper mindset.

In general, there are many different types of *mitzvos*. Some are done with action, such as sitting in a *sukkah*, blowing *shofar*, and putting on *tefillin*. There are some *mitzvos* that are done with speech, such as reciting *Krias Shema* and davening. Then, there are *mitzvos* that are performed with one's mind, such as belief in Hashem and love and fear of Hashem.

In regards to the *mitzvah* of *kibud av va'eim*, the *Chayei Adam* maintains that all three are involved. It is not sufficient for one to merely do perfunctory acts of serving one's parents or even talking to them properly without having feelings of respect. Rather, one must honor them in his heart and envision them as important and prestigious people. Only with that mindset will one properly honor his parents.

This understanding of the *mitzvah* is based on the words of *Sefer Chareidim*, which splits up the performance of all *mitzvos* based on many different body parts, including actions, speech, and one's mind. It points out that the first step to proper performance of this *mitzvah* is by honoring one's parents in one's heart. Once a person has this mindset, he will definitely honor his parents in action and speech. The *Sefer Chareidim* adds that the main part of the *mitzvah* is actually honoring them in one's heart, and performing this *mitzvah* with one's speech and actions is considered a subdivision of the *mitzvah*.

### Kavod and Morah

There are actually two separate *mitzvos*. The *mitzvah* of *kavod* – found in the *Aseres Hadibros*, both in *Parshas Yisro* and in *Parshas Va'eschanan* – is to show them honor and respect, e.g., by standing up for them and taking care of their needs. There is also a *mitzvah* of *morah*, which is written in *Parshas Kedoshim*, showing reverence and esteem, e.g., not calling them by their first name or sitting in their place. One who fails to keep these rules has failed to observe this *mitzvah* of *morah*.

When it comes to honor, the Torah mentions one's father first, but in regards to *morah*, one's mother is mentioned first. Since a person naturally feels closer to a mother and will show her honor, the Torah stresses honoring one's father. Conversely, reverence and esteem are something that children tend to have more for their father, so the Torah stresses the importance of revering one's mother.

### Love for One's Parents

The *Chayei Adam* adds another interesting element of the *mitzvah*: love for parents, even more than love for a fellow Jew. He bases this on the *Zohar*, which compares love of one's parents to love of Hashem.

Similarly, the *Shita Mekubetzes* (*Bechoros* 6a) quotes the Rosh, who points out that there is a *mitzvah* to love one's parents. He bases this on the famous statement of the Gemara that Rabbi Akiva learned to include more from the word "את." However, he got stuck when he reached the *pasuk* in *Parshas Eikev*, "את – ה' אליך תירא – You shall fear Hashem." Whom else should one fear like Hashem?

How did Rabbi Akiva make it through *Parshas Va'eschanan*, where it says "ואהבת את ה'" – "You shall love Hashem"? Whom else should one love like Hashem? This must be a reference, says the Rosh, to loving one's parents like loving Hashem, just as their honor is akin to the honor of Hashem.

However, the Rambam seems to disagree. In a letter of encouragement to a convert who complained that he was not being treated properly, he underscores the prestige and place of prominence a convert has in the Jewish nation. He points out that besides the general *mitzvah* of loving every Jew, we only find a specific command of showing love to specific people in regard to a convert. Even in regard to parents, we only find a command to honor them, not to love them. It seems that the Rambam was not of the opinion that there is a requirement to love one's parents. One could suggest, however, that the Rambam just meant to say that there is no clear-cut command in the Torah to love one's parents.

### In Summary

There are three distinct components to the *mitzvah* of *kibud av va'eim*: action, speech, and a proper mindset. The *mitzvah* of *kibud av va'eim* includes honor, reverence, and – according to some – love.

#### Rabbi Scheiner

**KOLLEL BOKER | 7:00-8:00am**  
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 Currently: מסכת מועד קטן  
 • Friday - Shuirim Beinyonei Dyoma and relevant topics

**NIGHT KOLLEL | 8:15-9:45pm**  
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## When A High Becomes a Low

Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein

Based on the Ha'amek Davar, Shemos 24:11

To the great men of the Bnei Yisrael, He did not stretch out His hand. They gazed upon G-d, and they ate and drank.

“Hand” here means power or strength. The power that the *pasuk* speaks of is the strength to endure one of the most intense experiences known to man.

We sometimes make the unconscious mistake of thinking of the material world and its experiences as real, concrete, and substantive. Spirituality, we think, is ethereal. We associate it with dreamy clouds. We see it as vapor-like and airy. In truth, however, an actual spiritual episode can be crushing and suffocating to a person not prepared to deal with its overwhelming power.

If a person is fortunate enough to be treated to authentic visions of Divinity, two consequences can follow along. The first is that HKBH grants him not only the experience but a Divine influence that gives him clarity and understanding. Through it, he can decipher and process the encounter, not just experience it. He also gives the person the ability to withstand the power of that experience, which might otherwise overwhelm him. Instead, he is helped to become a vehicle for the *Shechinah*.

When a person endures such an episode and gains the insight and enlightenment that flows from it, he feels incredible joy – the high of basking in the light of the King.

The “great people” of our *pasuk*, on the other hand, pushed beyond the limits set for them. They contemplated more than was appropriate for them, more than they were allowed to comprehend. Hashem therefore did not “stretch out His hand” to support them or give them the insight to comprehend what they beheld. Without that special support, they should have been grievously injured by the experience. In fact, they would have been, had it not been for the merit of that special day. They were, nonetheless, punished. Even though they experienced what they did, they did not emerge with great insight or enlightenment. They were not sated by the encounter but were left with a spiritual void. There was still room within them to eat and drink, unlike others who experienced revelatory visions, whose thoughts would not and could not turn to mundane affairs like dining.

Alternatively, the effect of a strong dose of Divine presence upon an unprepared person can be devastating. It can even be fatal. In this case, HKBH did not want to spoil the joyousness of the occasion, and their punishment was suspended. The experience did leave its mark, however. It weakened and exhausted them to the point that they required food and drink to restore their equilibrium.

In any event, they had to settle for snack food rather than the unique spiritual experience that they had tried to achieve by pushing the envelope.

## Treatment of Widows and Orphans

Determines One's Reward and Punishment

Rabbi Yissachar Frand



The *parsha* contains the Biblical prohibition against mistreating orphans and widows. G-d threatens us, “If you make an orphan or a widow feel bad, watch out! I hear their cries, and I will take revenge against you.” [Shemos 22: 21-23]

The Rambam writes in *Hilchos De'os* Chapter 6, “A person must take heed of orphans and widows. Even though one does not get lashes for this offense (because there is no specific action involved), it is (nonetheless) a severe offense because its punishment is spelled out in the Torah. ‘My anger will lash out against you... by sword.’ Hashem made a special covenant with widows and orphans that whenever they cry out as a result of oppression, their cries will be answered.”

There are a number of incidents documented from the life of the Chofetz Chaim that seem out of character for him. When the Chofetz Chaim saw that someone was not kind to an orphan or a widow, he would say, “Wait and see — this person will be punished!” This is surprising. The Chofetz Chaim was not the vindictive type. We do not find that the Chofetz Chaim made statements such as, “This fellow spoke *lashon hara* (gossip), watch it — he will be punished.” He never said, “This person desecrated the Sabbath — watch it, he will get it.” Such things are not our business. They are the domain of Hashem. But regarding someone who did an injustice to an orphan or a widow, the Chofetz Chaim would say, “Wait and see — he is going to get it.”

There was an unfortunate practice in Russia that children would be seized and drafted into the czarist army. Their enlistment was not for 4 years or for 8 years, but for 30 years. Any children that wound up in the Russian army, if they lived to tell the tale, invariably emerged as broken people. This was a living death sentence.

Unfortunately, the practice was that when the czar's officers would come looking for children, people would arrange for other children to be taken to fill the quota. Particularly, orphans were taken. There was no one to bribe the authorities; the quota had to be met; so who was taken? The orphans.

There was a wealthy Jewish butcher whose son was supposed to be inducted into the army. He bribed an officer to take an orphan rather than his son. When the Chofetz Chaim heard this story, he said, “Wait and see. This man will receive punishment and pay the price.” Thirty years later, that butcher's son came down with cholera and died. The *Chevra Kaddisha* refused to touch him because of the contagious disease. That same butcher had to dig a grave and bury his son with his own hands.

Was the Chofetz Chaim being vindictive? No, the Chofetz Chaim was being a believer. When G-d promises, “I will hear his cry,” that becomes a part of belief in Torah — to believe that the oppressor will receive his punishment.

I heard recently that Reb Chaim Ozer, the Rav in Vilna, said, “For years, I thought that my “ticket” to the World to Come would be the *Achiezer* (his classic multi-volume collection of thousands of responsa). However, I now (towards the end of his life) believe that my “ticket” to the World to Come will be that I was responsible for the sustenance of widows and orphans throughout Europe.” Hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of rubles passed through his hands. He supported yeshivos and the impoverished; widows and orphans. That, he believed, was his crowning glory to take to the next world, despite his monumental contribution to the annals of Torah literature.

## Hashem Is Sitting Among Them

21:1 “ואלה המשפטים אשר תשים לפניהם”

“And these are the ordinances that you shall place before them.” Rashi says that in the word “ואלה” – “And these” – the conjunction “and” teaches us that there is a connection between the *mishpatim*, the rules of civil and tort law, and the previous *parshah*, which had the *Aseres Hadibros* and the *mizbe’ach*. Just as those commandments were given at Har Sinai, so were these. From the words “אשר תשים לפניהם,” Rashi learns that the rulings must be placed only in front of Jewish judges and never in front of a gentile court. This rule applies even if the gentiles follow Jewish law. Going in front of a gentile court is a desecration of the Name of Hashem and is tantamount to a public declaration that their system of justice is superior to that of the Torah. If the gentiles are in fact following Jewish law, why is it a desecration of the Name of Hashem?

*Tehillim* 82:1 “אלקים נצב בעדת אל-” – “G-d stands in the Divine assembly.” *Brachos* 6a – If there are three who are sitting and toiling in Torah, the *shechina* dwells between them. When there are three judges who are Jews, *yarei Shamayim*, the *shechina* is with them when they are passing judgment. The judgment is really from Hakodosh Boruch Hu, Who is sitting among them. The *shechina* does not sit amongst secular judges, so even if they are following the rules of the Torah, their judgment is coming from themselves and not from Hashem. (אמרי שפר)

The *malachim* wanted the Torah to stay in *Shamayim*, and they advanced the argument of *bar metzra*. They are up in *Shamayim* near the Torah, they are closer, and, therefore, should have

priority to it before Klal Yisroel. Chazal say that one who judges an honest judgment becomes a partner with the Ribbono Shel Olam in the Creation of the World. There is no rule of *bar metzra* when there are two partners and one gives something to another. When Klal Yisroel pass honest judgment, they become partners with Hakodosh Boruch Hu, and, therefore, the *malachim* have no rights to the Torah. It is because of honest judgment that Klal Yisroel is *zoche* to the Torah over the *malachim*. (פני דוד)

*Tehillim* 147:19,20 “לא עשה לא עשה” – “He relates His words to Yaakov, His statutes and judgments to Yisroel. He did not do so for any other nation, such judgments they do not know.” The judgment of Klal Yisroel comes from the Torah, which is timeless. The judgment from the other nations of the world is the way they perceive justice to be, depending on the generation and their environment. Even if at a certain time it conforms to the laws of the Torah, it is still false, for the rules are based on that current situation. “אשר תשים לפניהם” – The judgment needs to be one that the rules came “לפניהם,” before the judges. (באר משה)

There is judgment for all of our actions in this world. When there is a Jewish court, Hakodosh Boruch Hu Himself resides there and “leads the judges” to the correct judgment. The rules of the Torah are absolute and not dependent upon time or society. The same way one accepts a judgment regarding what he is permitted or not permitted to do, one must also accept judgment pertaining to financial matters. May we be *zoche* to realize that it is all from Hashem, and that itself is a *zechus*.

### What's Really Important

Chofetz Chaim is quick to point out, a strange thing happens at the beginning of this week's *parshah*. A Jew steals something and, because he cannot pay his victim back, we force him to sell himself into slavery. He becomes a slave and needs to work six years for his master, who promptly gives him a *non-Jewish woman to be his wife*. He has children with her, and when the seventh year arrives, he can express his desire to leave. But he must leave his children and new “wife” with his master.

No less a person than the saintly Chofetz Chaim asks, What's going on here? Think about it, he answers. The Torah is trying very hard to teach us a lesson. In the pecking order of *issur*, of wrongdoing, on a cosmic level—stealing is a sin to be reckoned with, more so than marrying a non-Jew and having children with her. Wake up, he cries.

The Talmud says, “Rubam b’gezel”—if we were to do a statistical poll of the type of *aveirah* that is most prevalent amongst our people—and it's hard for me to get these words out—we would find that *gezel*, stealing, is by far the biggest transgression in our portfolio. We, for some reason, do not take this *issur* seriously.

Rabbi Sneh relates a story he had with a close *talmid* of his recently. Unfortunately, this boy was very sick and confined to a hospital bed, r”l. His friends brought CDs to him and stayed by his bedside until he made a recovery. Then one day, to everyone's pain and disappointment, he was *niftar*.

After the *levaya*, his sister came into Yeshiva crying to Rabbi

RABBI BEN ZION SNEH



Sneh. “Every night my brother comes to me in a dream. I cannot go on like this. He mumbles something about a CD. Every single night since we buried him.”

One day, one of his friends decided to go back to the room in the hospital where their classmate stayed. Acting on a hunch he had, he looked between the metal bars of the hospital bed—and there it was. A brand-new CD! He had neglected to return it to its owner. After that incident, the *bochur's neshama* was at rest, and the nightly visits stopped!

Nowadays, more than ever, we are a nation of small businesspeople. Amazon is the new 47th Street, the new diamond district. Our youth are proprietors, this time, online. If we, as employees, do not take our commitment to our employers seriously and spend hours of time on our cellphones during work time, we are stealing from our employers. Coming late, not working seriously, partying too much at night, etc., comes with a high price tag in *shomayim*.

On the flip side, we who are “bosses” have an obligation to those who work for us. We must pay on time. We must keep our word meticulously to our employees. We must treat those who devote their lives to our business with respect—there are no excuses! *Mishpatim* for our generation, for every generation.

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

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## Parshat Mishpatim: Setting the Table

Rabbi Eli Mansour



In *Parshat Mishpatim*, G-d presents many of the fundamental rules governing the Torah's system of civil law. G-d introduces this section by instructing Moshe, "These are the statutes which you shall place before them." Rashi explains: "The Almighty said to Moshe:

Do not think to yourself, 'I will teach them the chapter and the law twice or three times until it is properly arranged in their mouths, and I will not go through the trouble of explaining to them the reasons and explanations of the matter.' It therefore says, 'That you shall place before them' – like a table that is set and ready for people to eat."

Rashi explains that when G-d instructs Moshe to "place" the laws before Bnei Yisrael, He means that Moshe must not simply state the law but also provide the background explanation, "like a set table" ("*Ke'shulhan Ha'aruch*"). How are we to understand this comparison between teaching Torah and a "set table"?

Rav Haim Vital, in his *Sha'ar Ha'kedusha* (1:2), writes that all people are made from four basic elements – fire, water, air, and earth – and all negative qualities in people stem from an imbalance caused by these elements. Arrogance is the result of excessive fire, as fire rises and thus represents feelings of superiority and self-absorption. This also includes outgrowths of arrogance, such as anger and the pursuit of fame. The desire for forbidden pleasures stems from the water, which is what produces food and is thus the symbol of indulgence. Sins of speech are the product of abundant air, and earth, which is stationary, represents depression, which leads to lethargy and inactivity.

The experience of bringing a sacrifice upon the altar in the Bet Ha'mikdash served to correct these imbalances and restore proper equilibrium to the spirit. Fire was constantly burned on the altar; salt, which is taken from the water, was poured on all the sacrifices; the penitent sinner confessed over his sacrifices using his faculty of speech; and the altar was constructed on the site from which G-d took earth for creating Adam. Thus, the process of offering a sacrifice incorporated all four elements, and it thus served to rectify the deficiencies in the soul affecting all four areas of human conduct.

The Gemara, in *Masechet Berachot* 55, comments that after the Temple's destruction, a person's table brings atonement in place of the altar. This is why Jewish tradition requires conducting oneself with respect and decorum during a meal, as the experience of sitting by the table is seen as a religious act whereby we earn atonement.

Rav Haim Vital relates that his great mentor, the Arizal, always ensured to eat his meals at a table that had four legs. The reason, perhaps, is that the four legs of the table signify the four elements of the soul that require correction. As the table is meant to replace the altar in bringing us atonement by helping us refine our souls, it must have four legs to signify the four elements. Torah wisdom also consists of four categories, known by the acrostic "*Pardes*" – *peshat*, *remez*, *derash*, and *sod*. These are the four different areas of Torah knowledge, and they, like the four legs of the table, correspond to the four elements of the soul. By studying all four areas, we can repair the imperfections of the various parts of our being, thus bringing ourselves ever closer to spiritual perfection.

And thus, when a teacher teaches Torah, this must be the ultimate goal – to incorporate all four areas of "*Pardes*" in order to help his students refine and perfect all four areas of their souls. This might be Rashi's intent in comparing the instruction of Torah to a "set table."

Significantly, Rashi compares teaching Torah not to the food on the table but, rather, to the table itself. Torah must be arranged before the student as a four-legged table, including elements from all four areas of Torah, for the purpose of refining all four elements of the students' souls. This is the desired effect of our study – not merely the acquisition of precious wisdom for life, but also the cleansing of our souls so they can become purer and more perfect.

Rabbi Nathan Tzvi  
Finkel zt"l  
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In memory of  
Rabbi Nathan Tzvi Finkel  
zt"l,  
the Alter of Slobodka,  
on his yahrzeit,  
29 Shvat.



The *gaon* Rabbi Nathan Tzvi Finkel zt"l was born in the tiny Lithuanian town of Rasei in the year 5609. From his youth, he was known as an *illui* (genius), a child prodigy. As he grew older, he was among those close to the *gaon* Rabbi Simcha Zissel Ziv of Kelm, the disciple of Rabbi Israel Salanter (the founder of the Mussar movement). Although Rabbi Simcha Zissel Ziv appointed Rabbi Nathan Tzvi as the director of the Kelm Talmud Torah, he did not rest upon his laurels. In fact, he began establishing numerous yeshivot throughout Poland and Lithuania. In 5637, Rabbi Nathan Tzvi helped establish the famous Telshe Yeshiva, while at the same time, he set up the Kovno Kollel. It was there that remarkable *avreichim* perfected themselves and where the *Mussar* movement produced *tzaddikim*.

Rabbi Nathan Tzvi went on to establish the Slabodka Yeshiva, the crown jewel of yeshivot. It was to the Slabodka Yeshiva, which Rabbi Nathan Tzvi saw as his great goal in life, that he sent famous *gaonim* to teach. Nevertheless, he did not neglect other yeshivot, for he cared for his students as a father for his children.

When the First World War began, Rabbi Nathan Tzvi was forced to leave Slabodka, traveling with his students to Minsk and from there to Kremenchuk. In 5684, a portion of his yeshiva students left for Hebron, where the yeshiva continued under the direction of his son-in-law, Rabbi Moshe Mordechai Epstein. It remained there until 5689, when Arabs committed the infamous Hebron massacre. Because Rabbi Nathan Tzvi was so concerned for his students, he became known as the Alter ("elder," i.e., father) of Slabodka.

May the memory of the *tzaddik* be blessed.

# The Written and 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 was 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 the 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 do 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 the 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 for 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.

## Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation

### Marital Conversations

Mrs. Atlas cannot wait for her husband to come home from work. As soon as he walks through the door, she exclaims: "You'll never believe what I overheard today!"

"I was in the supermarket, and the store was quite empty and unusually quiet. That's how I was able to stand in aisle 3 and overhear a conversation between Mrs. Eigelman and Mrs. Dillman in aisle 2. They were discussing the upcoming shul elections. I couldn't believe my ears! Mrs. Dillman said that her husband is not voting for you because he was unhappy with how you chaired the finance committee this past year — isn't that a *chutzpah*? You were the first chairman to ever get the shul's finances in order!"

Mrs. Atlas has spoken *rechilus* to her husband. Just as husband and wife are not permitted to speak *lashon hara* to one another, so, too, they cannot speak *rechilus*.

The Chofetz Chaim adds an important insight:

When we think into this matter well, we discover that aside from the actual sin, when a husband believes *rechilus* that was told to him by his wife, he brings many difficult problems upon himself. For when his wife sees that he happily accepts her [sinful] words, she will frequently come to him with such reports. This will lead to his becoming angry, depressed, and involved in arguments.

Therefore, a G-d-fearing person will tell his wife not to relate such matters to him.

However, there are situations where a wife is permitted to share with her husband what would normally be considered *lashon hara*. The great *tzaddik* and *posek* Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *zt"l* crystallized this idea in the following way:

For a marriage to function properly, a husband and wife must share their feelings. If a woman is disturbed by something involving her dealings with others, and she feels that she must unburden herself, her husband should not thrust her aside by saying, "No, it's *lashon hara*." If the problem is too difficult for her to bear alone, he must share her packet of *tzaros* and help her overcome them.

Of course, their purpose [in discussing such matters] must be to reach a solution to the problem and to alleviate her pain — not to gossip or degrade a fellow Jew. Even while "letting off steam," husband and wife must be careful to abide by the laws of *lashon hara* [and not say that which is unnecessary or express negative opinions about certain people].

An example of the above is where a woman is being mistreated by her employer, and she needs to speak to her husband about it. However, in our example involving the shul elections, there is no reason why Mrs. Atlas had to tell her husband of the conversation that she overheard in the supermarket. To the contrary, as the Chofetz Chaim points out, she is actually hurting her husband by repeating such information to him. He will become angry and aggravated (assuming he transgresses the sin of believing *rechilus*) and will not be able to change the situation for the better.

A good wife should do her best to uproot such a conversation from her mind and act as if she never heard it.

#### **IN A NUTSHELL**

**Relatives cannot speak *rechilus* to one another, except in a situation where they are suffering emotional pain and need to unburden themselves.**

# 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. Bnai 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 Bnai 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 oneself. Children who were raised by abusive parents are more likely than others to grow up 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. Bnai 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.

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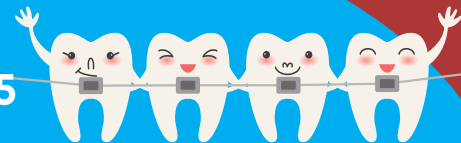
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In this week's *haftorah*, the *navi* admonishes the Jewish people about dealing with an *eved ivri* properly and, in doing so, he says, (Yirmiya 34:13) בְּהֵאמֵר הַשֵּׁם, אֱלֹקֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: אָנֹכִי, בְּרַתִּי בְרִית אֶת-אַבוֹתֶיכֶם, בְּיוֹם הוֹצֵאִי אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם, מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים לְאֹמֶר. "When I took the Jewish people out of Egypt, on that day, I said to them, הֲשִׁבַע נְשָׁבָעִים תִּשְׁלַחוּ אִישׁ אֶת-אָחִיו הָעֶבֶרִי, אֲשֶׁר-יָמָּכָר לָךְ. You have to release the *eved ivri*." What is going on here? This week's *parsha* is not the day they left Mitzrayim; this week's *parsha* follows *Mattan Torah*. It is at least 50 days after the leaving of Mitzrayim. How could the *haftorah* say I taught you this on the day you left Mitzrayim?

The *baalei mussar* ask the following: Why does *Mishpatim* start with *eved ivri*? There are many more practical *mitzvos* in the *parsha*; why start with *avadim*?

The answer is that the Torah is teaching us that if you go through an experience, and you see how terrible something is, you have to be extra careful in your own life to be *zahir* in that *middah*. If you suffered from a warped *middah*, you have to be careful not to make mistakes with that very same *middah* yourself. When Klal Yisrael left *Mitzrayim*, HKB"Y said, "You are walking out of being *avadim*; be careful. Don't mistreat your *avadim*. Once you felt the mistreatment of

others, you have to be super sensitive not to be the one who mistreats other people." That is what the *navi* means.

The *navi* says "On the day I took you out of Mitzrayim." Actually, it doesn't say on the day that I took you out of Mitzrayim; it says on the day that I took you out (מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם,) from being slaves. On that day, I told you to treat your *avadim* right. It doesn't mean that there was a *nevuah* through Moshe on that day, but it means that once a person walks out of a certain experience, he himself has to be extra careful to learn from that. If he is a victim of something, he must not be a person who victimizes others.

Sometimes, this is very challenging. But it is an important lesson for a person to know that their experiences have to teach them what to be extra careful about in the future. So, if you experienced mistreatment, you should take it to heart. You should understand that the suffering you endured is real, and you should not, G-d forbid, make someone else suffer from that very same thing.

You have to learn that when you are taken advantage of, you must understand never to take advantage of someone else.

## Action and Faith Rabbi Jonathan Sacks



The two words we read towards the end of our parsha – *na'aseh ve'nishma*, "We will do and we will hear" – are among the most famous words in the Torah. They are what our ancestors said when they accepted the covenant at Sinai. They are the opposite in spirit from the many other stories of the people's complaints, sins, and rebellions during the wilderness years.

Let us examine what the words *na'aseh ve'nishma* actually mean. *Na'aseh* is straightforward. It means "We will do." It is about action, behavior, and deed. But *nishma* is not so clear. It could mean "We will hear." But it could also mean "We will obey." Or it could mean "We will understand." These multiple options suggest that there is more than one way to decode the phrase *na'aseh ve'nishma*. The Rabbis offered the following interpretations:

[1] The view of the Talmud (Shabbat 88a) and Rashi is that it means "We will do, and then we will hear." This suggests that the people accepted the covenant even before they heard what was in it. They said "We will do" before they knew what it was that God wanted them to do, which showed their total faith in God.

[2] Rashbam suggests it means "We will do [what we have already been commanded until now], and we will obey [all future commands]." The Israelites' statement looked both back and forward. The people understood that they were on a spiritual as well as a physical journey, and they might not know all the details of the laws at once. *Nishma* here means not "to hear" but "to hearken, to obey, to respond faithfully in deed."

[3] "We will obediently do" (Sforno). According to this view, the words *na'aseh* and *nishma* are a "hendiadys," that is, a single idea expressed by two words. The Israelites were saying that they would do what God asked of them, not because they were looking to benefit but simply because they wanted to do His will. He had saved them from slavery and led and fed them through the wilderness, and they wanted to show their complete loyalty to Him as their redeemer and lawgiver.

[4] "We will do and we will understand" (Isaac Arama in Akeidat Yitzchak). The word *nishma* can have the sense of "understanding." According to this explanation, when the Israelites put 'doing' before 'understanding,' they were giving expression to a profound philosophical truth. There are certain things we can only understand by doing. We only understand leadership by leading. We only understand music by listening. Reading books about these things is not enough. So it is with faith. We can only truly understand Judaism through living by its commands. You cannot comprehend a faith from the outside. Doing leads to understanding.

Staying with this interpretation, we may be able to hear another important idea here. If you look carefully at the book of Shemot, Chapters 19 and 24, you will see that the Israelites accepted the covenant three times. But the three verses in which these acceptances took place are significantly different:

1. The people all responded together, "We will do [na'aseh] everything the Lord has said." (Shemot 19:8)
2. When Moses went and told the people all the Lord's words and laws, they responded with one voice, "Everything the Lord has said we will do [na'aseh]." (Shemot 24:3)
3. Then [Moses] took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do and hear [na'aseh ve'nishma] everything the Lord has said." (Shemot 24:7)

Only the third of these contains the entire phrase *na'aseh ve'nishma*. And only the third has no statement about the people's unanimity. Notice how the first two emphasize that the people were as one: the people "responded together" and "responded with one voice."

This suggests that when it comes to action (*na'aseh*), we must be united. However, there can be more than one path to understanding our faith (*nishma*).

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# JOKES

## *A Day At The Zoo*

A Chelmer lady was driving about two hours from San Diego when she spotted a man frantically waving her down. His truck had broken down.

As she pulled over, the man hurried up to her car. "Are you heading to San Diego?" he asked.

"Sure," she said. "Do you need a lift?"

"Not for me—I'll be stuck here fixing my truck for the next three hours. But I have two chimpanzees in the back that need to get to the San Diego Zoo. They're already stressed, and I don't want them waiting all day. Could you take them for me? I'll give you \$100 for the trouble."

"I'd be happy to!" said the Chelmer.

So, the two chimpanzees were carefully buckled into the back seat, and off she went.

Five hours later, as the truck driver finally made it into San Diego, he nearly crashed his truck in shock—there was the Chelmer lady, happily strolling down the street, holding hands with the two chimps! A big crowd was watching, laughing at the bizarre sight.

The driver slammed on his brakes, jumped out, and ran over to her. "What are you doing?! I gave you \$100 to take them to the zoo!"

"I know!" said the Chelmer. "But we had money left over—so now we're going to SeaWorld!"

## *Joking Sides*

A Chelmer was out for a walk when he came to a river. On the opposite bank, he spotted another Chelmer.

"Yoo-hoo!" he called out. "How do I get to the other side?"

The second Chelmer looked up the river, then down the river, and finally shouted back—

"But you are on the other side!"

## *Space Travel*

A Russian, an American, and a Chelmer were talking one day.

The Russian boasted, "We were the first in space!"

The American smirked, "Big deal. We were the first on the moon!"

The Chelmer waved a hand dismissively. "So what? We're going to be the first on the sun!"

The Russian and American exchanged looks and shook their heads.

"You can't land on the sun, you fool!" said the Russian. "You'll burn up!"

The Chelmer rolled his eyes. "Do you think we're stupid? We're going at night!"

## *Dessert*

A professional dietitian was giving a lecture to a group of people trying to lose weight.

"The food we eat is terrible for our health, even years down the road," she warned. "Sugary drinks eat away at our stomach lining, processed foods are loaded with chemicals, meat is full of preservatives, and even our water has germs! And I haven't even started on fatty foods yet."

She paused, then asked, "Can anyone tell me which type of dessert causes the most trouble and suffering for years after you eat it?"

The room fell silent—until an 80-year-old man in the back stood up and said:

"A wedding cake..."



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