



Parashat Shoftim

מתוך "ליקוטי שמואל"

Editor: Sam. Eisikovits

eisikovits1@gmail.com

הגיליון מופיע באתר 'לדעת' וכן ניתן לקבלו לאימייל מדי שבוע על ידי שליחת בקשה. eisikovits1@gmail.com,

058-4852-443

אודה לכם אם תעבירו את העלון לאנשיכם או כתובות של נציג עלון. אשמח לקבל הערות מחכימות ובל"נ אשתדל להתייחס אליהם. גם רשות להדפיס / לחלק / להעתיק / לשמור. - בשעת הצורך הרשות נתונה לאמור מהדברים שבעלון אף שלא בשם אומרם. אבל הבא להדפיס וידפיס בשם אומרם. יביא גאולה לעולם. כמו כן יש אפשרות לקבל כל עלון בכל שפה כמעט שתרצו בתרגום של ווארד .

החיבור הראשון הופיע במסגרת
'מפעל ליקוטי שמואל'
"זה היום עשה ה' נגילה ונשמחה בו"

בשעה טובה ומוצלחת, בסייעתא דשמיא, רואה אור ספר חדש ומפעים

ליקוטי שמואל – חומש בראשית

לאחר שנים של עיון, איסוף, ליקוט ועריכה, יוצא לאור ספר ייחודי המאגד –סוף מעשה במחשבה תחילה את מיטב הקטעים, המאמרים, הסיפורים והמשלים שהופיעו בעלוני פרשת השבוע בשנים האחרונות. דברי חן ושכל טוב, שנבחרו בקפידה וערוכים בטוב טעם, כדי להחיות את הלב ולהאיר את השולחן

מתוכן הפרקים: רעיונות מאירי עיניים לפרשיות השבוע • משלים מעוררי מחשבה • סיפורים נוגעים ללב • פנינים להעשרה ולהעברה בשולחן שבת

מתאים ללימוד אישי, למסירת דבר תורה ולשיחה משפחתית

ערוך ומוגש בעמל רב על ידי הרה"ג שמואל אייזיקוביץ שליט"א



כעת למכירה במחיר שווה לכל נפש – כרך ראשון על חומש בראשית

60 ש"ח

בלבד



להזמנה:

<https://dash.bookpod.co.il/product/2231>

The Epiphany of Rabi Yishmael ben Elisha: How Great Are the Words of the Sages!

Parshas [Shoftim](#)

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Parshas Shoftim contains the mitzvah to appoint a king. The Torah lists some of the restrictions placed upon a Jewish monarch. Among them is that he should not own too many horses (lest he bring the nation back to Egypt). (Devarim 17:17) In those days, horses came from Mitzrayim, and the need for a large stable of horses would necessitate the establishment of a Jewish horse acquisition center in Mitzrayim, which was not in accordance with the Divine will. Additionally, the king was not permitted to marry too many wives, lest they turn his heart astray. Nor was he allowed to hoard too much gold and silver.

By Biblical law, a commoner has no restrictions regarding the number of simultaneous wives that are permitted. However, a king is limited to eighteen wives. A famous Gemara (Sanhedrin 21b)

teaches that Shlomo felt that these laws applied to all other Jewish monarchs, but not to him. He reasoned (regarding his multiplicity of wives), “I will be able to exceed the limit and not be led astray.” As the Navi says, Shlomo did in fact exceed the limit — he had a thousand wives. But despite his feeling that he could exceed the limit and not worry about being led astray, his wives did turn his heart astray. (Melachim I 11:1-4)

The obvious question is — how could this happen to Shlomo HaMelech, the wisest of all men? Shlomo was the smartest man who ever walked the face of the earth, even smarter than Moshe Rabbeinu! He was not a Navi on the level of Moshe Rabbeinu, but in terms of *chochma*, he had no match! We would think that he would be smart enough to figure this out and think to himself, “No. I am not going to do something that the Torah forbade.” Where did he go wrong? How did he make this mistake?

Similarly, we can ask about an incident mentioned in the Gemara (Shabbos 12b). The Gemara forbids reading on Shabbos by candlelight (lest someone forget that it is Shabbos and tilt the candle or attempt to fix a flickering wick, which would be forbidden on Shabbos). The Gemara relates that a certain Tanna, Rabi Yishmael ben Elisha, thought to himself, “I can read by candlelight without being in violation of any Shabbos prohibition.” He basically fell into the same trap as Shlomo HaMelech. He felt that his level of *yiras shamayim* was such that he would not come to accidental *chilul Shabbos*. In fact, it is brought down in Shulchan Aruch that a person **is** permitted to daven (pray) from a *Machzor* on Yom Kippur by candlelight “because the fear of Yom Kippur is upon him.” Rabbi Yishmael held that “my regular Shabbos is like everyone else’s Yom Kippur.”

The Gemara relates that there came a time when Rabi Yishmael ben Elisha was reading by candlelight on a Friday night and almost came to tip the candle towards himself. At the last second, he caught himself and remarked “How great are the words of the *chachomim* (sages), who legislated that a person must not read (on Shabbos) by candle light.”

We can ask two questions here: (1) Why did Rabi Yishmael ben Elisha make the same mistake that Shlomo made? (2) Why did it take this incident to cause him to recognize “How great are the words of the *chachomim*”?

Rav Elya Baruch Finkel (one of the Roshei Yeshiva in the Mir, Yerushalayim) cites a very important principle regarding this from Rav Aharon Kotler, zt”l:

As we have said many times, there are certain immutable laws of nature that cannot be changed. Just like there are certain laws of nature and physics, there are also certain laws of metaphysics or spirituality. The laws of physics are such that if someone throws something up, it is going to come down. This is due to the “Law of Gravity.” No matter how fast or how powerfully something is thrown upward, eventually it is going to come down. A person cannot change the laws of physics.

The same is true regarding the laws of spirituality: Once the Torah writes something, it becomes an immutable law of spirituality. Given the fact that the Torah wrote: “He shall not take too many wives, lest they cause his heart to stray...” that became a reality such that just as no one can deny or break the law of gravity, this law cannot be broken either!

This was the mistake of Shlomo haMelech. Certainly, he knew that this prohibition was recorded in the Torah, but despite all his great wisdom, he did not recognize the power of something being recorded in the Torah. Rav Aharon Kotler references the

Kabbalistic teaching (in the Zohar on Parshas Terumah) that the Almighty “looked into the Torah and created the world”. This teaching implies that the world and the Torah were not two **independent** creations, but rather, the Torah **preceded** the world and in fact was the **blueprint** for the creation of the world. If the Torah says that a king having too many wives will lead his heart astray, that becomes the reality. That is how *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* created his world. Just like the sun rises in the East and sets in the West, this too is a **reality** of creation. This is what Shlomo haMelech failed to realize.

The Chazon Ish writes in his *Emunah u'Bitachon* that when the Torah writes that a bribe will blind the eyes of the wise, it becomes a law of spiritual nature. No one can claim that he is so honest that a bribe will not affect him. Baloney! You take money? You are bought!

There is a famous incident involving Rav Chaim Soloveitchik. Every once in a while, the Russian Government would try to introduce secular studies into the Volozhin Yeshiva. Every time a Russian official would come in and try to investigate how much Russian culture was being studied in the Yeshiva, the administration would resort to the time-honored tradition of bribing the government official. That is the way life worked in Russia. (I am not suggesting that you try doing this with the Baltimore County police if you get pulled over for speeding, but in Czarist Russia, that is how it worked!)

There was a new minister of education who had a reputation for refusing all bribes. This fellow was straight as an arrow. He could not be bought! The Yeshiva administration was in a panic. “This fellow will come and see we are not teaching Russian subjects. He does not take any bribes. What is going to be?” Reb Chaim said, “Don’t worry. I will take care of this minister.”

Reb Chaim went to the office of this minister of education in the middle of July wearing a fur coat and a fur hat as if it was the middle of January. The minister looked at him as if he was crazy. He asked, "Why are you dressed like that?" Reb Chaim responded, "My mother came to me in a dream last night and told me that tomorrow the temperature is going to drop 100 degrees and it will be 10 degrees below zero!" The minister looked at him and said, "With all due respect to your late mother, I assure you this is not going to happen in the middle of July." Rav Chaim insisted, "My mother told me. That is the way it is going to be!"

The minister was incredulous and became even more incredulous when Reb Chaim told him "I am willing to put money on it!" He simply could not resist when Reb Chaim told him "I am willing to bet you 100 rubles that tomorrow the temperature will drop 100 degrees and it is going to be 10 degrees below zero!" The minister gladly took the bet. Reb Chaim came back the next day. It was still 90 degrees outside, and Reb Chaim gave the minister the 100 rubles.

Reb Chaim then returned to the Yeshiva and confidently told the rest of the administration, "The minister of education is in my pocket!" Reb Chaim understood that once a person takes money, he becomes blinded, just as the Torah decrees. Once the Torah states that a person's attitude changes towards any person from whom he takes money, that becomes an immutable law of spiritual nature that impacts even the most honest person in the world!

Rav Baruch Finkel cites these incidents to explain the Gemara in Shabbos with Rabi Yishmael ben Elisha.

The *chachomim* said "A person should not read on Shabbos by candlelight lest he (unthinkingly) tip the candle towards himself."

Rabi Yishmael thought “this does not apply to me!” He thought that Shabbos by him was like Yom Kippur by everyone else! In the end he almost moved the wick. At that moment, he proclaimed, “How great are the words of the *chachomim*...” In other words, I already knew that when the **Torah** states a prohibition (such as that a king should not take too many wives **lest** they cause his heart to stray, or that a judge should not take a bribe **lest** his eyes be blinded), it creates an immutable spiritual reality. But I did not realize that this even applies to **rabbinic prohibitions** – that the words of the *chachomim* also create such a reality. However I never realized that a decree of the Sages (such as we don’t read by candle light on Shabbos **lest** you tip the wick) could also change reality! Now I realize that even the Rabbis have the power by their decrees to change spiritual reality and guarantee that one who violates their decrees will transgress the sin they were warning against.

Rav Yisrael Salanter’s Observation Sheds Light on the Ibn Ezra’s Novel Interpretation

The following insight from later in the parsha also comes from Rav Eliyahu Baruch Finkel.

By the laws of “*Eglah Arufah*” (the decapitated calf), the Torah records the declaration of the Beis Din who proclaim: “*Kaper l’amcha Yisrael asher padeesa.*” (Atone for Your nation Israel that you redeemed) What exactly is the nuance of the expression “*asher padeesa*”? The simple understanding is that the expression refers to all of Klal Yisrael in all generations. The Ribono shel Olam took us out of Mitzrayim (*m’beis avadim padeesanu*...) therefore we (in all generations) are the nation of the Almighty, whom He has redeemed!

The Ibn Ezra interprets differently. He says that *Kaper l'amcha Yisrael asher padeesa* is **not** referring to Jews in general. It is referring specifically to that generation of Jews who were redeemed from Mitzrayim. The Beis Din proclaims: Grant atonement **now** to that generation of Jews that You took out from Mitzrayim **then**!

However, this *pasuk* is referring to a time that was hundreds of years after *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. What does the Ibn Ezra mean? Why do Klal *Yisrael* who came out of *Mitzrayim* need atonement for the finding of a dead body in the time of the *Shoftim* or in the time of the *Melachim*? What did they do?

Rav Finkel cites a very famous incident involving Rav Yisrael Salanter. There was once a poor shoemaker in Vilna. As fate would have it, the fellow made the right investments and he turned into a very wealthy individual. After his change in fortune, he made a wedding for his son and chose to make it at the fanciest wedding hall in all of Vilna.

There was another wealthy Jew in Vilna who could not stomach the fact that this one-time pauper was now marrying off his son in such a lavish setting. "This shoemaker, suddenly thinks he is 'one of us' and can make a *chassanah* in this hall!" As the father of the groom was walking his son down to the *chuppah*, this other wealthy Jew took off his shoe and showed it to the father and asked, "How much does it cost to repair the sole of this shoe?" In other words, he was trying to tell him, "You are still nothing more than a simple shoemaker."

When Rav Yisrael Salanter heard about this incident he commented, "What a *hashchasa* of *midos*!" (disgusting example of basic human behavior). He noted that such a *hashchasa* of *midos* did not just start yesterday. This rot existed for maybe hundreds of years. As is the case with decay, rot grows

over time. Perhaps it started out in Vilna generations ago that someone breached a minor matter of etiquette, a small lack of "*dikdook b'midos*," that has now evolved and metastasized into this horrible event.

Rav Yisrael Salanter said that the *gedolim* and the leaders of the community three hundred years earlier who saw that original infraction of proper etiquette and did not object, are now being held accountable for not objecting **then** when someone did something which was not 100% correct. Therefore, **they** need atonement **now**!

That is what the Ibn Ezra means. Someone was murdered and it is not known who smote him. This could now be hundreds of years post *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. But the generation of the exodus did not correct something that they should have corrected at that time. Therefore, says the Ibn Ezra, this is what the *pasuk* means: Atone for your nation Israel ***asher padeesa (whom you redeemed)*** – meaning the generation of the Wilderness! They need a *kappara* because if this can happen that a person is murdered hundreds of years later, it is because something went wrong way back then, and they were responsible.

Such things don't happen overnight. They grow as a malignancy, and their source must be traced to many generations before the actual despicable event.

The Measure of A Person Is His Sense of Gratitude

Parshas [Shoftim](#)

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Rav Pam explains that many of the problems in our society indeed stem from the lack of appreciation of one's obligation for Hakaras

HaTov. Husbands take the kindnesses that wives do for them for granted and wives take for granted the things that husbands do for them. Everybody has expectations of the other party in a marriage because “that’s their job!” “Why should they get ‘Extra credit’ for merely doing their job?” If each spouse would see the things done for them as a favor which needs to be recognized, marriages would be far happier and far more stable. The same is true in employer-employee relationships and in virtually all other relationships as well!

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

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

Although this was all unintentional, the person who organized the minyan outside stormed into the hall and started yelling at Rav Bengas and heaping insults upon him. Rav Kook, well-

known for his great Ahavas Yisrael for every Jew, nevertheless went to the person who was berating Rav Bengas and slapped him across his face for embarrassing a Talmid Chochom.

The slapped person got so furious at Rav Kook that he decided to take him to the secular court for assaulting him. A whole commotion developed. A number of people asked Rav Kook to just apologize so that the matter would not go any further. Rav Kook refused. He said if this was just for my honor, I could apologize, but this involves the honor of Rav Bengas who was shamed. I am not sorry I slapped him. I had to stand up for the honor of a Talmud Chochom. Let this person take me to court!

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

Years later, Rav Kook came to America and he was approached by the person who he had slapped years earlier in the Latvian seacoast town. He told Rav Kook "I cannot thank the Rabbi enough. I owe you a great debt of gratitude." He then took out a gold watch and gave it to Rav Kook. He explained that after Rav Kook slapped him, his life became miserable in Europe. As a result of that tumultuous incident, he became notoriously known as the Jew who yelled at Rav Benges and the Jew who was slapped by Rav Kook. He had no choice but to leave Europe and go to America where no one knew him. In America, he became a millionaire! He felt his good fortune was all the result of the slap of Rav Kook and wanted to show Hakaras HaTov to him. Sometimes we should feel gratitude even for a slap in the face! Likewise, the Amoraim felt a super sensitivity for gratitude even for trivial matters. The same is true of righteous Jews in every generation.

The Chofetz Chaim was a Kohen and could not attend funerals. A woman who had once donated a window to his Yeshiva in Radin died. (This was a simple window – not a fancy stained glass window.) Even though the Chofetz Chaim could not enter the cemetery and despite his old age, he walked a long distance behind the casket to the cemetery to accompany the body to burial, as Hakaras HaTov for the donation of the window. If only we would recognize the obligation to recognize favors – however small – the world would be a far better place!

Leadership Tests

Written by Julian Alper

Moshe instructs the *Bnei Yisrael* that when they arrive in Israel, they should appoint a king over them, but the king must be (Devarim 17:15)

one whom Hashem, your G-d, chooses

Suppose you were the chairman of the selection committee appointing a Chief Executive for a major commercial enterprise. How would you ensure that you select the best candidate, a leader capable of galvanizing all employees and improving the company's profitability? You would probably advertise the post and select the best candidates for a shortlist for interviews and further tests. Or you might employ a head-hunter to draw up a suitable list of potential top-rate leaders. Once you have your shortlist you might look at the past history of the candidates and set some sort of test for them to see how they will perform in challenging situations. A really tough test should show you who the best candidates are.

When Hashem chose leaders to lead *Bnei Yisrael*, you would imagine he would set really tough tests – perhaps like the *Akeidah* test he gave Avraham. Well, surprisingly, we'll see that Hashem didn't set difficult tests when he chose Moshe to lead *Bnei Yisrael* or when he chose David to be the King of

Israel. Just the opposite, in fact, He set very simple tests. We read in the parasha of Shemot, that Moshe tended Yitro's sheep (Shemot 3:1):

Moshe was tending the flocks of Yitro, his father-in-law, the chief of Midian, and he led the flocks into the wilderness, and he came to the mountain of G-d, to Chorev.

On this *pasuk* the Midrash (Shemot Rabbah 2:3) makes an interesting observation – Hashem doesn't give greatness to a person before testing him with a small matter. If he passes the small test, then He will raise him to greatness. Hashem tested two of Israel's great leaders in this way. He tested David with flocks of sheep, and he led them into the desert so that they wouldn't steal from other people's fields. Similarly, Moshe was tested with sheep, and he also took them to the desert so they wouldn't steal.

Whereas we would set tough tests, Hashem set simple tests. Why did Hashem do this? Why didn't he set difficult tests to examine the real potential of Moshe and David?

Rav Dessler writes^[1] that you don't learn as much about a person's true character by setting a major test. For a major test a man will make major efforts to achieve well. He'll push himself – perhaps so that everyone will know what he has accomplished, or perhaps so that he himself will know what he is capable of doing. Afterwards, he may settle back down into his usual mode of operation. Hashem wanted to know how Moshe and David would perform with a straightforward, mundane task. There would be no glory attached to passing the test – no heroics, no superstar status – just a quiet, modest achievement. If David and Moshe could pass the simple test, Hashem knew that they would pay attention to the basic needs of the people whenever they were needed – he wouldn't just be selecting a leader for wars. Likewise, in the world of nature, Hashem has programmed His creatures in such a way that the strongest, most powerful individuals aren't necessarily the 'kings'. Take bees, for instance. The queen bee is the bee best able to nurture her colony. She doesn't gather nectar or build the hive like the worker bees do – but by reproducing, and regulating the hive's behaviour, she ensures the whole colony functions well.

None of us can be kings or queens, and not all of us can be leaders, nevertheless, we can all achieve much each day by setting ourselves small tests and achieving little things – Hashem will recognise our achievements however small.

[1] Rav Dessler in Strive for Truth on the Parasha – Shemot.

Getting Your Bearings

Written by Rabbi Daniel Leeman

“Do not deviate right or left from the commandment so that you live long”

[1]. We of course understand the importance of not deviating from the commandments, but what is added by the words “right or left”?

A lady, Rivka, was involved in a serious road accident and had to have an emergency operation as her blood began to clot, which was thankfully successful.

Shortly after she recovered though, she fell and was rushed to hospital.

Again she was told that she needed an emergency operation. She was diagnosed with a high blood pressure in her head. The doctor instructed the nurses to notify him immediately if there was any increase.

“Perhaps it was just because of fear?” Rivka and her husband expressed to each other. They had left their children alone and, being that her condition was stable albeit serious, Rivka persuaded her husband to go home to look after the children.

The hospital shifts switched and after being briefed, the new doctor wanted to operate immediately. As he began getting ready, Rivka summoned the doctor who complied begrudgingly.

For some reason she requested that the doctor first check her file. The doctor complied. A few minutes later the doctor looked at Rivka. “Which side are you experiencing pressure?” he asked.

“The right side” she replied.

“The x-ray was accidentally printed the wrong way around”, he cried out incredulously, “I nearly operated on the wrong side!”

It was later discovered that at that exact moment – in the middle of a major ruckus at home – Rivka’s husband broke himself away and had donated money to charity.

She saved herself from an unnecessary operation and just as well: because when they finally operated on the correct side they discovered that the situation was much worse than they had imagined and that they operated just in time!

We are living in a topsy-turvy world. Only when we are connected to spirituality can we see from the correct perspective. [2]

Sometimes the consequences are more significant than others, namely differentiating between right and left!

Now we can also understand why in addition to receiving reward for the commandments, there is an additional reward of long life for not deviating from them: If a person follows the commandments without deviation, he is by definition connecting himself to the world to come, the world of truth, where he will eventually tit-for-tat receive the ultimate of long life – eternal reward!

Shoftim: Always Wanted

Written by Rabbi Aryeh Dachs

Shoftim: Always Wanted[ii](#)

In 2013 I heard an interview on National Public Radio with a man named Mike Williams. Mr. Williams was the inventor of the first intraoral camera, a small camera dentists use to get a better view inside a patient’s mouth. He sold his company and made a lot of money. He then made a few bad money

management decisions and subsequently lost all his money. He ended up homeless on the streets of Sacramento. There was one part of that interview that struck me. He describes the awful experience being on the streets and tells the interviewer, “I found out that I was really nothing, and that was very hard for me to grasp, the fact that nobody wanted me around... That I was something nobody wanted to see or could even be involved in. And that crushed me.”^[ii]

I realized then how lucky I am to be part of my Jewish community. There are a plethora of Jewish people and Jewish organizations that are missionized to ensure that a Jew knows he is valued. His brethren will help him. A Jew can be assured that there are many people that value him merely because he is a Jew.

At the end of *Parshas Shoftim* we are introduced to the law of *Eglarufah*- where a Jewish man is found murdered between two cities. The Torah instructs the elders of the closer city, the wise Torah scholars, to proclaim at the scene of the murder, “Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see [this crime].” The Mishna (*Sota 9:6*) poses the obvious question: why must the elders profess their innocence? Why would we ever think they are guilty of this brutal act? The Mishna explains that although they did not physically murder the man, they may still be responsible. They must profess that as the leadership of their town they did not allow this wayfarer to leave their city unfed, nor did they allow this man to leave their city without being escorted out, *levaya*.

R’ Yom Tov Lipmann Heller (1579 – 1654) known by the name of his commentary on the Mishna, *Tosfos Yom Tov* explains how the elders could be responsible for his murder because they did not feed him. A hungry man can be driven to crime, which may cause him to be killed. Or a hungry man is weak; if he was well-fed, perhaps he could have defended himself from his assailants. Professing that their city escorted him out is more difficult to explain. Why would neglecting to escort the man out implicate the elders in his murder? The *Tosfos Yom Tov* teaches, when we escort someone out, we show that we care. When we part ways with someone we love, we linger. If the wayfarer was not escorted out of the city, his murderer might see him

alone and reckon that his victim is a lonely man, without loved ones. He is an easy target, no one would notice or care if he was killed.

The leaders of the city, the elders, must not only care for the physical needs of every wanderer that enters, they are also obligated to make it abundantly clear that the wandering man is loved, and although he is a poor stranger, he is a part of the community. The *mitzva* of *levaya* still applies^[iii]. I'd argue that the message behind *levaya* resonates even stronger. We are all obligated to ensure that every Jew we encounter is shown the proper dignity and respect; our communities are responsible to make it abundantly clear that no Jew is unwanted and cast aside.

^[i] Inspired by a talk given by R' Daniel Kalish Shlita

^[ii] <https://www.npr.org/transcripts/170407141>

^[iii] Sefer Ahavas Chesed (3:2)

Humor

1 – Leventhal the lawyer and Cohen the doctor meet in synagogue on Shabbos.

“Leventhal, you don’t know how lucky you are. Every time I come here to pray, people hound me with their medical problems. This one has stomach trouble. That one has back pain. Everybody wants free advice. But you? Nobody bothers you with legal questions. How do you do it?”

“Nothing to it. Any time somebody asks me for legal advice, I send them a bill on Monday.”

Cohen loves the idea. Come Monday, he’s sitting in his office writing up a bunch of bills when there’s a knock on his door.

It's the mailman, with a bill from Leventhal.

- 2– *A non-Jewish judge once approached the famous Chassidic Rebbe, Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua Heschel of Apt (1748–1825), with the following challenge: In our secular court system, someone who has a monetary claim against his neighbor brings the claim to the court, and the presiding judge sets a date for the case to be heard by the court. In the meantime, the judge can take the time to look into the case and prepare for the trial. The two parties then hire lawyers to represent them in court. At the trial, the lawyers defend their respective claims, and the court renders its decision. After the trial has ended, there is always the possibility of appealing the court's decision to a higher court. However, in your Jewish court system, both parties come straight to the local Rabbi and present their claims, and the Rabbi almost always renders his decision on the spot. What kind of justice system is that? The Rebbe responded with a parable: A wolf was chasing after a lamb and finally overtook it. It was just about to devour the lamb when along came a lion and tore the lamb out of the wolf's grip. The wolf said, "Hey, that's my lamb! You can't steal it from me!" So they both agreed to present their claims in front of the wise fox. The fox decided that they should split the lamb in half, giving the lion and the wolf equal pieces. They both agreed with the fox's decision, and they asked the fox to split it for them fairly. The fox split the lamb in two, but then he realized that one side was bigger, so he bit off from that side to make it equal. He then realized that now the other side*

was bigger, so he bit off a little from that side. Before he knew it, there was no more lamb left! So it is with your court system – explained the Apter Rav to the judge. The judges and lawyers spend so much time preparing for the trial, and then the trial itself drags on forever, plus the case then gets appealed to a higher court, so that by the time the case is finished and all the lawyers and court fees get paid, there is no money left for the litigants! Our Jewish courts aim to decide cases in a timely fashion so that the parties involved will not lose out.

- 3– *A group of dinner guests were blaming all of America's troubles on lawyers when a woman said, "They aren't all so bad. Why, last year a lawyer gave me \$1000." "I don't believe it," the host responded. "It's true, I swear it," said the woman. "I had a complicated personal injury case and what with the lawyer's fee, the cost of expert witnesses, the expense of the appeal and so on, my bill was \$41,000. When the judgment only amounted to \$40,000, my lawyer simply forgave the difference."*
- 4– *A lawyer was on vacation in a small farming town. While walking through the streets on a quiet Sunday morning, he came upon a large crowd gathered by the side of the road. Going by instinct, the lawyer figured that there was some sort of auto collision. He was eager to get to the injured parties but couldn't get near the car. Being a clever sort, he started shouting loudly, "Let me through! Let me through! I am the son*

of the victim." The crowd made way for him. Lying in front of the car was a donkey.