

A Taste of Text: Source based learning for Shabbat

This weekly sheet is brought to you by Rabbi Dr. Moshe Freedman of the New West End United Synagogue in conjunction with Shapell's/Darché Noam

PARSHAT KI TEITZEI

DVAR TORAH: STRAYING AND REBELLIOUS

The definition of a “straying and rebellious son,” says the Netziv (Harav Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin, זצ"ל, in Haamek Davar Devarim 21:18) appears in the continuation of the first verse of the passage. He is defined as one “who doesn’t listen to the voice of his father and to the voice of his mother.” Straying means not listening to the father’s voice and rebellious means not listening to the mother’s. How does this correspondence work?

The Netziv suggests the following: The *סורר ומורה* has forsaken two types of Torah education, his father’s and his mother’s. “שמע בני מוסר אביך ואל תטוש תורת אמך” – “Listen, son, to the discipline of your father and do not abandon the instruction of your mother” (Mishlei 1:8). The typology in this verse teaches that the father and mother make different contributions to the child’s education, *מוסר אביך* and *תורת אמך*. Says the Netziv: the father teaches the *מוסר* of Hashem’s laws, teaching the child to follow the path of Hashem’s Torah. The mother teaches *דרך ארץ* and character development. She teaches the child to be a mentch.

The father’s voice outlined the straight path of Hashem’s laws and guided the child to live by them, but the child strayed from his father’s teaching; he was *סורר*. The mother’s voice educated the child to develop into a decent person with good character, but the child rebelled against the Torah of his mother; he was *מורה*.

This explains the Midrash (Sifrei Teitzei 8) that says, “‘Straying’ from the words of the Torah and ‘rebellious’ against the words of the prophets.” Straying from the Torah means not following the Torah’s 613 mitzvot (the voice of the father), and being rebellious against the prophets means not living by their teachings about proper behavior, ethics, and values (the voice of the mother).

Whether or not the rebellious son law was ever implemented – or is even possible to implement – is a matter of Talmudic debate (see Sanhedrin 71a), but from it we learn the two essential wings of Torah education, the voice of the father and the voice of the mother, teaching Hashem’s laws and building character and personality – becoming a mentch.

The Netziv points out that when it talks of the child not listening to his parents, the Torah uses the preposition *בְּקוֹל* – *ב* – literally “in the voice” instead of the more natural *לְקוֹל* “to the voice.” The straying and rebellious son did not appreciate and internalize what was “in the voice,” what was within the words of his father’s and mother’s teachings. As both children and adults, we are supposed to look deep inside the teachings of our parents and to read between the lines of the Torah and Prophets so we can uncover and appreciate the depth of what they’re teaching us.

SOURCE GUIDE: WEIGHTS & MEASURES & THE ENEMY

The last two sections of Parshat Ki Teitzei are the prohibition against unjust weights and measures and the mitzvah to remember Amalek. Based on this surprising juxtaposition, Rabbi Bana'ah in Midrash Tanchuma (Ki Teitzei 8) warns: "If you see a generation whose measures are false, you should know that the foreign government will pick a fight with [the Jews of] that generation." Rashi condenses the Midrash as:

<p>1. Rashi on Devarim 25:17 If you lied about measures and weights be worried about incitement by the enemy, for it says, "A deceitful scale is an abomination to G-d," (Mishlei 11:1) and it is written afterwards, "When malicious sin comes, disgrace comes" (Mishlei 11:2).</p>	<p>רש"י על דברים כה:יז אם שקרת במדות ובמשקלות הוי דואג מגרוי האויב, שנאמר, "מאזני מרמה תועבת ה'", וכתוב בתריה "בא זדון ויבא קלון."</p>
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What is the internal connection between unjust weights and measures and an attack by the enemy?

A. The Haamek Davar

The Netziv is bothered by this, as well as an additional difficulty: What fraudulent weights and measures did the Jews possess in the desert that brought about the attack by Amalek? He quotes another puzzling Gemara:

<p>2. Bava Batra 88b Rabbi Levi said: The punishment for [fraudulent] measures is greater than the punishment for sexual sins.</p>	<p>בבא בתרא פח: א"ר לוי: קשה עונשן של מדות יותר מעונשן של עריות.</p>
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Why, he asks, would you even compare unjust measures with sexual sins? And why is the punishment for unjust measures more severe? To answer he presents his approach that the three great sins we are obligated to give up our lives rather than transgress – idolatry, sexual immorality, and murder – represent three main categories. **עבודה זרה**, idolatry, is the prototype of a sin based on lack of belief and trust in G-d; **גילוי עריות**, sexual immorality, represents sins of lust and desire, and **דמים שפיכות**, murder, is the category of sins motivated by bad character. Individual sins, like Shabbat transgression, might be rooted in lack of belief in G-d, but might also be a product of the (**גילוי עריות** like) desire for money driving him to earn money on Shabbat.

Theft is usually motivated by a (**גילוי עריות** like) money-lust. But, says the Netziv, someone who supplements his income with unjust weights and measures is a different type of thief:

<p>3. Haamek Davar on Devarim 25:17 But making false weights is not the way of one who lusts after money. Rather, he has a lack of trust in Hashem who supports and sustains through special Providence according to the person's actions. This is in the category of idolatry. Therefore they said that the sin of unjust weights – even though it is only a sub-category of idolatry and he is still far away from actual apostasy – is more severe than sexual immorality, which is the main iniquity of the lust category. This is because the lack of trust and belief makes it difficult to repent and it also touches on G-d's honor.</p>	<p>העמק דבר על דברים כה:יז אבל העושה משקלות שקר אינו מדרך התאוה אלא חסרון אמונה בה' הזן ומפרנס בהשגחה פרטית לפי מעשיו והרי זה מגדר עבודה זרה. על כן אמרו דעון משקלות אף על גב שאינו אלא ענף מ עבודה זרה ועדיין רחוק מראש הכפירה מכל מקום הוא חמור מגילוי עריות שהוא ראש פרעות התאוה. באשר חסרון אמונה קשה לתשובה וגם נוגע לכבודו יתברך שמו.</p>
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This lack of trust in G-d – similar to that of someone who doesn't have enough trust that G-d will provide for him so he supplements his income with false weights and measures, and doesn't take G-d's Presence serious enough to avoid untruthful behavior – preceded Amalek's attack. Immediately before the Torah tells of the Amalek attack it speaks of Masah and Merivah, where Israel asked: "Is G-d in my midst or not?" (Shemot 17:8). That brought on the attack.

B. Shem Mishmuel

The Shem Mishmuel (Harav Shmuel Bornstein, זצ"ל, the Sochotchover Rebbe, in an essay on Ki Teitzei 5683) takes a very different direction. I. He prefaces his comments by quoting his father, Harav Avraham, זצ"ל, of Sochotchov. The entire nation was impressed by Shlomo Hamelech's wisdom, we see in the Tanach (Melachim I 3:28) because they saw his ability to do **משפט**, to judge between litigants.

There is more wisdom involved in judging between litigants than there is in differentiating between what is prohibited and what is permitted. The difference between what is permitted and prohibited is clear-cut, because permitted things are from the world of holiness and prohibited ones from the opposite, the "Other Side." But judging between two litigants involves the subtle wisdom of knowing which of two people a particular object within the world of holiness (not something prohibited) should go to.

II. There is a parallel distinction in personal decision making:

<p>4. Shem Mishmuel Ki Teitzei 5683 Similarly, a person must learn how to differentiate between what is prohibited and what is permitted. But that is not as great as sanctifying one's self through limiting himself within that which is permitted. This demands the level and balance of judgment, to pursue the true intent of the Torah.</p>	<p>שם משמואל כי תצא תרפג והנה לעומת זה באדם להפריש לעצמו בין איסור לבין ההיתר איננו כל כך רבותא כמו לקדש עצמו במותר לו, אף שהכל היתר, לזה צריך פלס ומאזני משפט להיות רודף אחר כוונת התורה.</p>
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III. In this lies the greatness of the mitzvah of just weights and measures:

<p>5. Shem Mishmuel Ki Teitzei 5683 One could say that implementing the mitzvah of just weights has the ability to give a person the power to measure his steps and run after the intention of the Torah. For one who measures is referred to as a judge, as Rashi says (Vayikra 19:35) ... The flip side of this is that if one falsifies in measures and weights he will not have the ability to judge justly in his own life.</p>	<p>שם משמואל כי תצא תרפג ויש לומר שמצות צדק משקולות בפועל היא מסוגלת להיות בכחו לפלס מעגל דרכיו לרדוף אחר כוונת התורה, כי המודד נקרא דיין כברש"י (ויקרא י"ט ל"ה) ... ומולן שלהיפוך אם שיקר במדות ומשקולות שוב אין בכחו לשפוט משפט צדק לעצמו.</p>
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The Shem Mishmuel contrasts two aspects of Torah wisdom: the first – knowing what is permissible and prohibited and the second – knowing which things to avoid among those that are permissible (and how much). This second type of wisdom is more subtle because it involves trying to figure out G-d's intention and asking, 'What does He really want me to do right now?'

IV. This quality of being able to pursue the **intent** of the Torah, not just its laws, is uniquely Jewish (witness Bilam's hanging on to G-d's word that permitted him to join the Moabite party coaxing him to curse the Jewish People while he ignored G-d's intent that he should not go). When Jews preserve this quality they are protected from their enemies, but, in Rashi's words: "If you lied about measures and weights be worried about incitement by the enemy."

C. Vayikach Ovadyahu

Harav Ovadyah Hadayah, זצ"ל (1889-1969, world-renowned Yerushalmi halachic authority and kabbalist, born in Aleppo, Syria), in Vayikach Ovadyahu, addresses our two questions: I. Why is keeping unjust weights and measures such a terrible sin? and II. Where do we find that it brought on the attack by Amalek?

Rashi and the Midrash, says Harav Hadayah, refer not just to the sin of unjust weights and measures, but what is at the root of the sin. Someone with a deep connection to others, someone who loves and feels united with others, does not cheat them by falsifying his weights and measures and trying to make a few extra pennies out of every transaction! The Jews were in a place called Refidim before the war with Amalek. The name רפידיים has the same letters as פרידים, separated. Even though the Jews, before the attack, were not doing business with unjust weights and measures, they were not unified (as they were later at Mt. Sinai). This brought on the attack. We see the same phenomenon before the destruction of the Temple: "Yerushalayim was not destroyed until there were no longer people within it who could be trusted" (Shabbat 119b).

In summary: Having precisely honest weights and measures involves truthfulness and integrity, but it also involves trust in G-d (the Netziv) and love and unity (Rav Hadayah), and is a metaphor for making subtle distinctions so we can judge for ourselves what G-d really wants us to do (Shem Mishmuel).

SO MANY MITZVOT BY RABBI YITZCHAK HIRSHFELD

Parshat Ki Teitzei is filled with mitzvot. According to the count of the Sefer Hachinuch it includes 27 מצוות עשה, positive commandments, and 47 מצוות לא תעשה, negative commandments. It therefore behooves us to consider during this week of Ki Teitzei, the reason for the multitude of mitzvot in the Torah.

The Mishnah at the end of Masechet Makkot (Makkot 3:16) addresses this issue:

"רבי חנניא בן עקשיא אומר רצה הקדוש ברוך הוא לזכות את ישראל לפיכך הרבה להם תורה ומצוות."

"Rabbi Chananya son of Akashya said: Hashem wished to bring merit upon Yisrael, and therefore gave them much Torah and many mitzvot."

The Rambam in his Commentary on the Mishnah comments: It is known that one gains access to eternal life, היי עולם הבא, only through the performance of mitzvot. Mortal physicality is transformed into immortal life through utilizing these worldly opportunities as commanded by Hashem and the Torah. Then the Rambam adds that the performance of even one mitzvah, one time, in a perfected manner, with purity of heart and focused attention, is sufficient to attain his immortality.

That's why we have so many mitzvot, so many opportunities. During the course of our lifetime we are bound to get one mitzvah right. Of course, the Rambam is speaking minimally. One mitzvah perfectly done can give eternal life. Every mitzvah we do, and every level of kavannah and purity we instill in our mitzvah acts, will enhance that eternal life in ways that we cannot begin to even imagine.

Torah and mitzvot are Hashem's gift to us. Our gift to Him is to seize these opportunities, appreciate them, their value, and their potential, and rejoice in our good fortune. היי עולם נטע בתוכנו, the seeds of eternal life are planted within us.

Dedicated in memory of
Anne Samson, ז"ל

*This publication is compiled by the staff and Rabbonim at **Shapells/Yeshivat Darché Noam** for men and **Midreshet Rachel v'Chaya Seminary** for women in Jerusalem. Find out more about the **married couples' programme** and the **Pathways Israel** and **Pathways Plus** programmes offered at www.darchenoam.org +972-2-651-1178, 5 Beit Hakerem Street, Jerusalem.*

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