



Punishment and Reward

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נגע צרעת בבית ארץ אחוהכם (יד, לד)

Someone once asked an interesting *shaila* to a rav. His son had acted in a way that indicated a need for a reminder of how one must behave. So the father told his son that he will be unable to join the first part of the hockey game and should instead use that time for self-reflection and devise strategies that would preclude such behavior in the future. The father asked the rav if it would be appropriate for him to enjoy the game while his son is suffering or should he sit out the game as well. After the rav addressed the question, he told the father that he would suggest a third option. Instead of letting his son be bitter and mope, he should use that time and learn together with him. But not homework. Rather, he should learn with him in a way that is exciting and fun. He should give candies for good questions and prizes for great answers. The child will miss the game but won't be resentful afterward. For a punishment is not supposed to be retaliation or cruel. Its function is to help the child improve his ways. And what better way to do that, than to learn with the child in an enjoyable way that demonstrates how the father cares for him despite the need to discipline him?

It would be really nice to say that from that moment on the child blossomed into the most courteous, caring and model child. However I do not know who the child or father was. What could be said is that the advice the rav gave the parent has a source in this week's *Parsha*.

The *Torah* describes what could happen to a person who is hesitant to lend out his belongings or speaks disparagingly about others. One day he could be coming home and as he nears the house he will notice people standing outside gesturing towards his house and whispering. Nervous, he will enter his

house and notice the green mark of *tzara'as* on the wall. A little while later he will look on sadly as the wall is dismantled. This sadness though will be transformed when the glint of gold is revealed. Gold that was hidden many years prior by the ones who occupied this house while the Jewish people travelled the wilderness.

But why is such a person being rewarded by finding a treasure? If *Hashem* wanted to enrich the Jewish people, is there no other way than through a grievous sin?

The *Aruch HaShulchan* (דרוש ו) explains that this was to demonstrate to the Jew the nature of a punishment. Because the love which *Hashem* has for His people, when He does need to intervene, He does not do so for the sake of being cruel and harsh - rather His purpose is for us to improve our ways.

This finds expression in the *Tehilim* (116) that we sing during *hallel*. Dovid *Hamelech* bemoans his misery and then pleads to *Hashem* that it should abate: אנה יקוק מלטה נפש. But then there is a shift and Dovid *Hamelech* consoles himself. שובי נפשי למנוחיכי כי יקוק. גמל עליכי – My soul should be calm because I appreciate that any negative experience is there for גמול – reward.

Therefore, even though it is a sin that will necessitate the destruction of a person's house, *Hashem* ensures that he will discover gold so that he will recognize that this was an expression of *Hashem's* loves for him and not an act of retribution and the consequence of improving one's ways will be reward.

Choose Your Destiny

Speaking at his granddaughter's *vort*, one of the big *gedolim* of our time was not embarrassed to relate a little-known fact about his childhood. As a boy growing up in Kronik, Poland, he was sent to *cheder*. Very bright but extremely rambunctious and hyperactive, he was impossible to control, much less to teach. The rebbes tried everything they could think of to get the boy to behave and learn, but all to no avail. He ignored their pleas, disregarded their threats and ran from their punishments. Almost at the point of despair and willing to try anything, they decided to send him to speak to the chief rav of the city who was renowned for his understanding and wisdom.

The lively boy entered the rav's home and the rav immediately assessed what kind of youngster he was dealing with. The rav smiled warmly at the child many years younger than himself and unpretentiously said, "I heard from your rebbe that you are a very smart boy. I asked him to send you here to help me judge a case which has come to my court." The boy's facial expression betrayed his surprise and skepticism, but before he could respond with something like "you've got to be kidding", the rav repeated himself, elaborating extensively about the amazing things he had heard about the lad's sharp and clear mind." I really need your help in this case," the rav said almost beseechingly.

Little "Yankele" was already intrigued. "Okay, but first I need to know who the parties to the case are," he said turning serious and settling into a chair.

The rav, pleased, moved the *sefarim* that separated him and Yankele who now had his head in his hands and elbows on the table and

a focused expression on his face. The older rav leaned forward on the table towards his younger counterpart and said earnestly, "The plaintiffs are the shoes of the entire citizenry of Kronik. They are bringing their complaint against the '*Sifrei Torah!*'"

The youngster's head jerked back. But before he could verbally express what his smirk was saying silently, the rav continued. "A delegation of shoes approached me with their tale. 'Only a few months ago we were all cows being bred and grazing happily on the same farm. One day, a distinguished looking man, perhaps some kind of rabbi, visited our farmer. He was in the market for some animals to use their skins for writing a *Sefer Torah*. The farmer showed him the different cows that he was willing to sell and they discussed each one. Finally, they concluded their deal and our farmer took some of our cousins and sent them away with the Rabbi. A few days later another man, a simple shoe manufacturer came to buy some of us for his production. As before, the farmer showed him around and we were chosen, sold and herded off gruffly to his factory.'"

Yankele was by now captivated by the whole scenario, and listened intently as the rav continued. "The delegation explained that the bitter feelings, so pervasive in the shoe community, stemmed from an acute sense of inequality and unfairness. It did not seem equitable and just to them, that despite the fact that all the cows had been raised together only a short time before, the ones who went to become *Torah* scrolls were living far more respectable and even luxurious lifestyles than their cousins, the shoes..."

To be continued...

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Questions from the H.I.T. HOTLINE

I had already accepted *Shabbos* and noticed that the light to my oven was on. It was well before *Shekiya* and I wanted to know whether it would have been permitted for me to ask my seven year old son who had not yet accepted *Shabbos* to turn off the light.

The *Mechilta* derives from the *Pasuk* לא תעשה כל מלאכה אתה ובנך ונתך that a person is prohibited from having his child perform *melacha* for him on *Shabbos*. Rav Moshe Shternbauch (*Teshuvos V'Hanhagos* III, 83) explains that this restriction applies during the time of *Tosefes Shabbos* as well. He writes that even when the child did not yet accept *Shabbos* and it is well before *shekiya*, a parent may not ask the child to engage in *melacha* for him. For this could be compared to having an animal located in a place where it is not *Shabbos* do *melacha* for its owner who is living somewhere where it is *Shabbos*. According to Rav Shternbauch this is forbidden as the prohibition of *מחמר* is to benefit from *melacha* which a person's animal performs during *Shabbos* – even though it is not *Shabbos* where the animal is. Rav Shternbauch concludes

that this is why it is forbidden to have the child turn off the oven light. The *Mekor Chaim* (263, 17) and *Yalkut Yosef (Shabbos* II pg.242) forbid this as well.

However, the *Shevet Halevi* (VI, 38) disagrees with the understanding of the *Teshuvos V'Hanhagos* and writes that the *mitzva* של שבתת בנו is not comparable to *מחמר*, working one's animal on *Shabbos*. The obligation is not to disturb the child's "resting" on *Shabbos*. And if it is not *Shabbos* for the child it would be permitted to have him turn off the oven light for a parent providing that this is done well before *shekiya*. This is also the position of Rav Asher Weiss.

The *minhag* is to be lenient. However, it is inappropriate for a child to do *melacha* once the father arrives home from *Shul*.

I borrowed money from a friend and cannot recall how much I borrowed. May I add extra money to be sure that my friend is fully paid or would this be a question of *ribbis*?

A person may add extra money to be sure that he has paid in full since his intention is not to pay *ribbis*. But rather to avoid any possibility of still owing money.

To have your question answered call

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In this week's Parsha we are taught about the procedure that a *Metzora* must undergo to purify himself. This procedure involves two birds. Here are some interesting facts about birds.

- Ostrich eyes are the largest of any animal that lives on land. Approximately the size of a billiard ball, their eyes are actually bigger than their brains.
- Underwater, the penguin's black and white colouring acts as camouflage. Their black backs blend in with the darker ocean water below and they're difficult to spot from above. While their white chests help them blend in with the lighter, brighter surface of the water, so that they're near-invisible from below.
- Edible-nest swiftlets, build nests almost exclusively from their hardened saliva. These nests are considered a delicacy in some countries and are frequently used to make bird's nest soup. Despite having little flavor and no real nutritional value, this is one of the most expensive foods in the world.

RIDDLE



After eating meat a person may not eat dairy food right away. There is a certain food that after whose consumption, a person may not eat meat or dairy. What is that food?

Please send in your answers to yrothbart@halachainstitute.com. Any correct answer that is received by Tuesday will be entered into a raffle to win a \$10 gift certificate to Miriam's Judaica.

LAST WEEK'S RIDDLE: When can a *bris* be performed on *Shabbos* even when the child was not born on *Shabbos*?

ANSWER: According to the *Taz* (*Orach Chayim* 600, 2) if a child was born on Friday and was not yet given a *bris* until everyone accepted *Shabbos*, the *bris* may be performed at that time. Another possible scenario would be when a child crossed the date line before the eighth day and the child's eighth day falls out on *Shabbos* (see *Sefer Ta'arich Yisrael* who discusses this).

Thank you to all those who sent in an answer to last week's riddle.

WINNER OF LAST WEEK'S PRIZE: Y. Davis

Under the leadership of the Rabbonim of H.I.T.
Rabbi Yacov Felder, Chairman

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