

INSIGHTS

Into The Weekly Parsha

בס"ד

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This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of R' Nosson Meir ben R' Yosef Yehoshua, Rabbi Nussie Zemel. "May his Neshama have an Aliya!"

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27 SHEVAT

Based on the Torah of our Rosh HaYeshiva HaRav Yochanan Zweig

PARSHAS MISHPATIM

Letting Go...

If you see the donkey of one whom you hate collapsed under its burden, shall you refrain from helping him? You shall surely help him to lift it up (23:5).

Rashi (ad loc) explains that the word "azov" (which usually means to leave alone) here means to help. However, both Targum Onkelos and Targum Yonason (ad loc) translate the *possuk* literally; you must leave the hatred you have for him and help him.

This requires a deeper understanding for the Gemara (*Pesachim* 113b) asks; "since when is it permissible to hate

another Jew? Does it not say (*Vayikra* 19:17): 'You shall not hate your brother in your heart?'" The Talmud explains that the Torah

refers to a person who one has no personal hatred against but who persists in transgressing the Torah commandments, although he has been told not to do so. It is a *mitzvah* to hate him as it says (*Tehillim* 97:10): "Those who love Hashem hate evil." So if it is a *mitzvah* to hate him, why does this situation call for you to leave the hatred and help him? Clearly you could help pick up his donkey without addressing how you feel about him, but why must you abandon the hatred?

The Torah is telling us that even though it is a *mitzvah* to hate one

who knowingly transgresses the Torah it is still a *mitzvah* to help him. But according to the Targumim the Torah is teaching us a remarkable lesson on how we must help others. When someone is in a difficult situation there are two issues; the actual situation that needs to be rectified and the emotional distress of being in that difficulty. The Torah is

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teaching us that we must resolve BOTH issues. In other words, when helping another we must also show that we care about him/her as a person. Therefore, we must put the hatred out of our hearts in order to address the victim's emotional pain as well.

According to Rashi, one must answer it differently because he never says that you have to abandon the hate. Rashi holds that the hatred mandated by the *possuk* in *Tehillim* in such a situation is not hatred of the evildoer, rather it is of his evil ways. In other words, you never hate him personally. Therefore when helping him you can always show that you care about him because the hatred is never about him personally.



In this week's *parsha* we have the prohibition against charging another Jew interest: "When you lend money to any of my people... you shall not lay upon him interest" (22:24). Rashi (ad loc) comments that the *possuk* uses the word "im," which would mean "if you lend money." Rashi goes on to say that this is one of only three places where "im" doesn't mean "if," it means "when" because it is an obligation to lend money to those in need.

Why would the Torah use a word that could be accidentally misunderstood? Why doesn't the Torah just use a word that explicitly means "when"? Additionally, what is the reason for the prohibition against lending money with interest? A person can rent his car or his home; why is he prohibited from renting his money?

The Pleasure of Torah Life and Living

And these are the laws which you shall set before them (21:1).

Rashi (ad loc) comments; Hashem told Moshe, "Do not think that it is enough to teach them (all the laws) chapter and verse two or three times until it is organized in their (mind) and that you do not have to bother to explain them and make them understand what they mean. Rather, you must teach them the reasons for the *mitzvos* as well. This is why the verse says, 'you shall set before them' – it must be placed before them like a set table from which one is ready to eat."

Hashem seems to be concerned that Moshe would feel that the most important thing to teach the Jewish people is what they have to do and how to do it. If Moshe feels that he has a limited amount of time to teach people with a limited capacity to learn he may decide not spend the extra time explaining the reasons behind the *mitzvos* but rather focus on ensuring the people know what to physically do. Hashem therefore tells

him it isn't enough to just do the *mitzvos*, the people must understand the reasons as well. Why is this true and what does the analogy to a set table from which one could readily eat mean?

The Torah is presenting one of the most important underlying principles of Judaism. There are two purposes in eating: nutrition and pleasure. When Hashem tells Moshe to give it to them as a set table he is referring to the presentation of the *mitzvos*. Food presentation speaks not to the nutritional aspect but rather to the pleasurable aspect. People will pay substantially more at a fancy restaurant where the presentation and ambiance adds to the pleasure of the experience. Though Moshe is looking at the *mitzvos* as a way to fortify the people, Hashem is telling Moshe that it isn't enough to just do the *mitzvos*; the people are also meant to enjoy them. The laws are to

be presented in such a way that we should have pleasure from them and have a desire to do them.

The lesson is that the Torah must be transformative; it isn't enough to give charity, one must become a charitable person. A charitable person feels good and derives pleasure from helping others. It isn't enough to keep Shabbos, one must connect to the spirit of Shabbos and take pleasure in everything it has to offer. One can only accomplish this by understanding the reasons for the *mitzvos*. When one begins to understand that everything Hashem asks from us is really for our own good, one comes to the realization that all these laws are given to us in order to provide us with the best possible life. In this way we begin to anticipate the experience of every *mitzvah* and only then do we begin to scratch the surface of all the good Hashem has created for us in this world.

Did You Know...

In this week's *parsha* we have a rather unusual verse prescribing justice for an injured party: "An eye for an eye" (21:24). Upon simple reading, the Torah seems to advocate vengeance and barbarism as punishment for damaging another person. Rashi cites the Talmud's (*Baba Kama* 84a) explanation of the verse: One who blinds someone else's eye pays the damaged person money in proportion to the damage done. How do the sages see this interpretation in the words of the verse?

The Ibn Ezra explains that based on

simple logic that the Torah cannot be advocating what the literal meaning of the verse implies. It is simply not possible to damage another person's eye as punishment and be assured of causing the precise amount of damage that was inflicted on the original victim. Because of the impossibility of this literal meaning, Rabbi Hirsch translates the word "*tachat*" in this verse not as "an eye for an eye" as translated above, rather "an eye in place of an eye," as it often means throughout the Torah. An example of this is "a son rules in place of his father" not "for" his father. Thus the compensation payment is intended to fill the void of the missing

eye, whereas poking out someone else's eye would only offer the damaged revenge. Still, it is not clear how are sages deduce from the verse that it is money which shall replace the gauged eye.

The Vilna Gaon, explains the hint to money in the verse: The word "*ayin* - eye" is spelled with the three Hebrew letters *ayin*, *yud*, and *nun*. The word "*tachat*" most literally means "under," and therefore alludes to the three Hebrew letters respectively following each of the aforementioned letters in the Hebrew alphabet: *peh*, *kaf*, and *samech*, which spell "*kesef*," the Hebrew word for money.



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