

Mishpatim
Mishnayot
 מסכת שבת

We have reached Perek Bet Mishna Gimmel in Messechet Shabbat and are now dealing with using tree fibres as wicks to light Shabbat candles with.

The Mishna states that the only thing which comes from a tree and may be used as a wick is flax.

Rashi explains that the Mishna is saying that flax burns with a sufficiently strong flame and will not tempt one to aid it in burning. However, cotton and hemp may not be used.

However, cotton and hemp are not tree products; they are from herbaceous bushes. Therefore, what is Rashi saying?

Answers the Shibbolei HaLeKet that since cotton and hemp both have hard woody stalks, they are considered as tree products.

However, Tosaphot says that since the Mishna says trees, woody bushes are not included. Also, Tosaphot says that cotton burns strongly and is

therefore definitely not what the Mishna is excluding. Rather, says Tosaphot, the Mishna is referring to strips and fibres of trees.

The Mishna continues to talk about tree products. If one used a tree product to build a roof over a corpse, the roof will not become *tameh*. The only exception to this is flax which would become *tameh*.

If there is a room with a corpse in it, anything else in the room becomes *tameh*. Normally, the roof will also become *tameh*. However, as mentioned, tree products (apart from flax) will not become *tameh*. In the Gemara it will explain that in actual fact, most materials would not become *tameh* when used as the roof with only four exceptions (including flax). However, since we have just mentioned tree products, we carry on in a similar style.

'Parasha Digest – Mishpatim'

ראשון: The Halacha of setting a Jewish slave (male or female) free after 6 years is discussed, also the punishments for murder, kidnapping and hitting one's parents are discussed.

שני: The laws of personal injury are discussed including, the killing of slaves, personal damages, injury to slaves, the violent ox, damages from falling into a pit, damage by goring and penalties for stealing.

שלישי: The following Halachot are mentioned: paying for theft, damages caused by animals, people who guard/look after other people's items (Shomrim), Halachot of borrowing, and seduction (the torah here goes from theft of items to theft of the heart). Also we are told to be sensitive to the helpless and abandoned and we are also commanded to give out interest free loans.

רביעי: The prohibitions of cursing a judge, eating meat that wasn't *schechted* and corruption in courts are discussed, among others.

חמישי: The Mitzvot of Shmittah, Shabbat, Shavuot, Succot and Pesach along with the commandment not to mix meat and milk, were given.

ששי: Hashem commands the people to respect the authority of his messengers, the Neviim and the Rabbanim. He also promises a quick journey to Eretz Canaan and a promise that Hashem will help them to conquer the land are given. Also Bnei Yisrael are warned not to make a peace treaty with them.

שביעי: Hashem relates how the 7 nations of Eretz Canaan will be conquered. The borders of Eretz Yisrael are defined. Then the Torah continues with the events that happened right after Matan Torah; Moshe built a Mizbeach and offered up a Korban. Also, Bnei Yisrael said 'Na'aseh Vehnishmah' (we will do and we will listen). Finally, Moshe is told to go up Har Sinai for 40 days and nights.



Web Address: www.hasmonean.co.uk/livingtorah/main.php
 Email us at: livingtorah@hasmonean.co.uk
 Pick up your copy of the Living Torah in school, online, at your local synagogue or by email. View all past issues at our online archives.

Editorial Team:	Eli Gaventa Avi Greenberg George Kestel Raphy Meyer Netanel Gertner
Contributor:	Netanel Gertner
Director :	Rabbi D Meyer
לעלוי נשמע ר' אליהו רחמים בן מאיר דוד ע"ה ואחיו ר' עבדאללה פרג בן מאיר דוד ע"ה	
No. 328	Parashat Mishpatim - תש"ע 5770 14th February 2010

What Is Money For?

In the part of the Parasha that discusses the way one should treat others, the monetary law mentioned explains that one must take care of the needy.

The Pasuk (22:24) says:

אם כסף תלנה את עמי את העני עמך.....

When you lend money to My people, to the poor person with you....

There is a slight difficulty in interpreting the word - *לעמך* with you - in the context. There are explanations by the Alshich, Vilna Gaon, and Kli Yakar, among others, regarding the way money and charity are perceived.

The Alshich explains that money is not ours, it is merely deposited with us by G-d. We are given the privilege of having money in order to share it with people who are less fortunate. He explains that the Pasuk is telling us that - *כסף תלנה את עמי* - when we lend money - *את העני עמך* belongs to the poor, it just happens to be with you. This is a lesson we can certainly take aboard, that nothing is really "ours", and we should therefore take great

responsibility and care for it.

The Vilna Gaon explains that the Pasuk is alluding to a standard monetary law: loans are done before witnesses to prevent unscrupulous activity, whereas charity is done in solitude, and no-one needs to know. *כסף תלנה* When you lend money - *את עמי* - do so before My people - *את העני* - the poor however - *עמך* - do it alone. This is certainly the correct way to give charity, in secret.

The Kli Yakar explains that when a person gives charity or a charitable loan, all good deeds and benefits resultant from it are credited to the person who financed the good deeds and actions. *כסף תלנה את עמי את העני* If you lend/give money to my people or the needy - *עמך* (all the merits that result) are with you too!

We can certainly incorporate all these ideas when we give charity, that the money is not ours to begin with, that we should do it in secret, and that the merit of charity does not stop once you've given it, you still receive all resultant merits performed as a result of your kindness.

By Netanel Gertner:
<http://geshmacktorah.blogspot.com/>

The Living Torah Blog: <http://thelivingtorahweekly.blogspot.com> - extra Divrei Torah, extended articles, early access to content and interactive comment facility.
 The Living Torah Archives and Mailing List: <http://www.hasmonean.co.uk/livingtorah/main.php> - get PDF versions of the Living Torah each week and access past issues.

A Hero In Our Midst

There was once a world-renowned magician, whose illusions and tricks fooled all who saw them. His card tricks, quick hands, and nature-defying acts were second to none. While on tour in a certain area, he was scheduled to put on a short show in a small village along the way. His agent had told him it would be good publicity, as the village, whilst small, was not insignificant, and so he had agreed to the quick performance.

On the night of the show, however, he was taken aback by the warmth, friendliness and sense of community in the village. They cheered and clapped wildly at his every trick, and he was treated like a king, afforded every luxury and gift from the little town. So overwhelmed was he, that he decided to cancel the rest of the tour, in order to settle into the village and enjoy his life there. The people of the village were overjoyed with their new, celebrated resident, that they arranged a banquet in his honour. Every conversation that took place was about their famous neighbour. The magician was delighted at the honour dealt to him, and prepared to retire, leaving his magic days behind him.

Needless to say, though, the commotion and hype slowly died down, as the people got used to seeing the magician in their shops and restaurants, and while the magician still put on a few shows at events, the residents soon lost their original enthusiasm. Just several months later, the one-time worldwide star had become slightly more prestigious than the greengrocer next-door.

The magician was obviously devastated at this. Having expected to forever be the hero of this small population, he had slowly become just another individual amongst the numbers. Contacting his agent again, for the first time in almost a year, the former celebrity explained his distressing situation, and requested advice. The agent suggested that the only option was that if the magician would leave the village for a while, and then return, the people would surely be even more appreciative of him than before, once they had re-experienced what life had

been with out him. Agreeing immediately with the idea, the magician packed his bags and secretly left his village home, meeting his agent at the nearest airport. Once abroad, the magician returned to his past occupation, enthralling and riveting audiences more than ever before. He quickly rebuilt his fame and standing as the top entertainer worldwide.

Meanwhile, the villagers had soon realised his absence, and realised that they had not truly appreciated him. The mayor wrote a letter to the magician, imploring him to return, stating that his residence there had led to increased industry and infrastructure in the area as the village became more well-known. Having eagerly awaited the letter, the magician informed his agent that he was convinced that the villagers had learnt their lesson, and that he was willing to give them another chance. With his agent's best wishes, he returned to the village, where he was greeted with tremendous respect and fanfare.

Unfortunately, we don't always appreciate Hashem's presence, guidance and help in our lives. We grow used to the fact that He's there, and slowly begin to ignore Him, even sometimes openly defying him.

Hashem's only option is to temporarily remove Himself from us, in the hope that we will soon realise our mistakes and invite him back with honour, respect and gratitude. We will often feel wronged and abandoned by this, even though it is our own actions that caused it.

Once we return to Hashem, pure of heart, ready to really appreciate His presence and help, He does not keep us waiting long. He rushes back, determined to give us a second chance, and we gratefully receive Him, praising Him for his kindness and salvation. However, the situation repeats itself. Once the thanks and gratitude have died down, we again ignore Him, inciting His anger even more than originally. The question we have to ask ourselves, is why do we let this happen time and time again?

Thought of the Week

'Big people are just little people who grew' – R' Moshe Feinstein

We often believe that the Gedolim have always been that way, that they were destined for greatness from birth. We mistakenly allow ourselves to think that we are different, that our circumstances are incomparable, preventing us from emulating them. How wrong we are! What makes the Gedolim great is the fact that they began just like us, but believed that they could be different – better - and acted. They chose to improve themselves, to rise up from the depths of society, and they did. We can not allow ourselves to believe that we can't improve, because we can, it just requires action that we lazily try to avoid.

Sticks and Stones May Break My Bones...

“ומכה אביו ואמו מות יומת”

One who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. (21:15)

“ומקלל אביו ואמו מות יומת”

One who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death (21:17)

Rashi tells us that one who strikes their father *or* mother receives the death penalty of strangulation whereas one who curses their father *or* mother receives the death penalty of stoning. The Ramban in his commentary writes that cursing one's parents is even more grievous a sin than striking them.

Shlomo Hamelech wrote that:

“דברי נרגן כמתלהמים”

“הם ירדו חרדי בטן”

(Mishlei - 18:8)

There are two different interpretations of this Pasuk:

1) The Malbim:

“The words of a grumbler are like blows, and they go down into the very vitals of the stomach”

The grumbler constantly complains that Hashem created him for a miserable life; evil prevails over good and wishes that he had never been born. He says that Hashem abandoned him to a chance fate. His words are like blows, as though Hashem were always striking him down. The truth is, however, that the clouts and blows are all within, from his own perverse vision of things. He forever broods and fumes, imagining that others have everything he lacks. Hashem made man upright and whole, but he distorts his life with his perceptions.

2) Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch

“The words of a contentious person are like self-justification; and they penetrate into the innermost recesses”

The *nifal* tense for the habitually irascible man, נרגן,

designates him as being possessed by a passion for quarrelling. His agitation carries him away to irresponsible utterances. His words seem to be מתלהמים (from להם, related to לחם - warfare), they sound like justification, like defence. However instead of fending off the insult, instead of confining himself to refuting unjustified aggression, he offends his adversary with insults which penetrate into the depths of his being. Instead of protecting himself, he destroys the other.

In Rav Twerski's book *The Shame Borne in Silence*, He points out the gravity of verbal abuse between spouses. Sometimes a spouse will say that he/she was provoked by the partner, and the abusive words were in self-defence. R'Hirsch rebuts this argument of self-defence: 'Instead of protecting himself, he destroys the other.'

The Vilna Gaon, in his commentary on Mishlei, states that insulting words may be more harmful than physical blows. A physical blow only affects the body whereas the insult penetrates to the soul, physical injuries may heal but the wounds inflicted by a harsh word are not forgotten quickly and do not heal.

Injuring another person, whether physically or emotionally, is a Biblical prohibition. There is no exception if the other person is one's spouse or relative. To the contrary, Halacha requires that husband and wife be most respectful to each other. Lack of respectful communication, especially in the family, is a form of abuse. Because 'familiarity breeds contempt,' we should be especially cautious to be respectful to those with whom we are familiar.

Shabbat Shalom

Riddle for the Week

If I say innocent, he will be killed, if I say guilty he will get off free. How can this be?

(Answer in next week's Living Torah)

Answer To Last Week's Riddle:

Q: I use lots of names, and the left over one comes at the beginning. Who am I?

A: Yitro