



L'Chaim

The Yeshiva Centre - Chabad NSW Headquarters

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Living with the Rebbe



The Torah portion of Mishpatim contains the law of the goring ox. The Torah distinguishes between two categories: the "shor tam," a bull that is not known to be a gorer, and the "shor mu'ad," a bull that has gored three times. Such an animal is considered dangerous and likely to gore again.

Everything in the Torah can be understood on many levels.

Thus not only does the law of the goring ox pertain to animals, it also applies to a person's soul. In general, the ox is symbolic of the animal soul. (According to Chasidut every Jew has two souls, a Divine soul and an animal soul.) The animal soul, by itself, is not necessarily bad. It has many positive qualities and is a powerful force that can be harnessed for good. Nonetheless, like the physical ox, it must be closely guarded to prevent it from inflicting damage.

The natural state of the animal soul is "a bull that is not known to gore." As it is created, the animal soul does not crave forbidden things, only those that are permissible and necessary to sustain life. If the animal soul falters and commits a sin, it is the exception rather than the rule, and runs contrary to its true nature. In this instance it is relatively easy to do teshuva (repent) and repair the damage.

However, if a person commits the same sin over and over again "until it seems permissible," he is considered "a bull that has gored three times." Having already been reinforced several times, his negative behavior is now second nature to him, and he is considered likely to repeat it in the future.

How does a person turn "a known gorer" back into "a bull that is not known to gore"? Simply by training it. According to Maimonides, the transformation is complete "when little children can poke [the ox] and it still doesn't gore."

The same rule applies in our service of G-d. The "repeat offender" must work hard on refining his animal soul and weakening its desires. Then, when he finds himself facing the exact same temptation, yet he remains strong and doesn't falter, his status reverts to "a bull that is not known to gore."

Of course, this not an easy thing to accomplish, so the Torah offers us another method of attack. According to Maimonides, when a "known gorer" acquires a new owner, the slate is cleaned and the animal is considered "a bull that is not known to gore." Because the new owner relates to it differently, the animal's nature also changes for the good.

In spiritual terms, any Jew who wants to undergo a similar transformation must also acquire a new "owner," immersing himself completely in the realm of holiness: learning Torah, doing good deeds and engaging in prayer. His ingrained bad habits will automatically lose their grip on him, and he will become "tam" - literally "perfect and whole."

Adapted from Likutei Sichot, vol. 36

WHY DO WE SEND OUR CHILDREN TO SCHOOL?

Why do we send our kids to school? Well, we parents all know the truth: as soon as the school bus pulls away, we ditch the business suits for bathing suits and head for the water park, careful to return home in time to change clothes before the kids return.

But why do the kids have to go to school? Is it just to memorize facts and figures in hopes of giving them a chance for success in this dog-eat-dog world?

Kids have a right to know the objective of the hours they spend in school. Sadly, often the message they get is misleading.

You may recognize the scene. A well meaning pedagogue, complete with elbow patched tweed jacket (pipes are no longer "PC"), ascends the podium and, in his best attempt to be inspirational, encourages the students to dream bigger dreams, reach for the stars, picture where you want to be in ten years from now and then chart the course to arrive there. Exotic travel metaphors and occasional swashbuckler similes are common; dramatic gesturing is optional. Dutifully, students begin to envision where they want to be (truth be told, most students envision when recess begins, but play along with me), mental pictures of vacation homes and fancy cars, the trappings of "success" dance in their mind. They get the message; if you want to get what you want, crack open the books and get down to business.

Herein lies the problem. The message boils down to this: determine what your heart wants and then apply your mind to chart the course to get it.

Bad news. This is backwards. Education must teach children how to make basic moral choices in life. The foundational three "R's" should empower them to be Righteous, Responsible and Reverent, as well as competitive in the market place. A basic tenet of Chassidic thought is that the mind can and must direct one's passions, first to understand what is virtuous, and then to compel or (preferably) convince the emotional side to get excited about it too.

In his Tanya (chapter 9), Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi describes the battle between the instinctual "animal soul" and the transcendent "G-dly soul." They each claim a home base: the animal soul is most comfortably positioned in the reactive heart, easily persuaded by fad and attraction, willing to follow the next whim that appears. The G-dly soul is based in the rational mind, finding purpose through rational process.

Not content to "live and let live," they each seek to conquer the body and so the battle is on. They are so single-minded they even attempt to infiltrate the opponent's home base. The animal soul is eager to commandeer the mind's cleverness to help realize its desires, while the G-dly soul seeks to harness the heart's passion for more enthusiastic service of G-d and the betterment of humanity. So how is one who's caught in the crossfire of these two combatants to determine if his impulse is G-dly or self serving? Look to the source. If it originates in the intellect that's a clue that it's a G-dly soul impulse; if the return address reads "heart," it's probably from the animal soul.

We must teach schoolchildren to pursue their studies in order to form a moral and ethical code, enabling them to make a genuine difference in the world, not just the next best mouse trap. Sharpen your mind in hopes of making it more resilient against the wiles of the animal soul.

When the administration recommends searching the hearts for "what you want" and then engage the mind to "figure out how to get it," they send the message that desire is king and intelligence its servant. G-d created humans with their head above their hearts reminding us that we must develop our emotional capacity under the tutelage of the mind to be of greater service to G-d and mankind. The school bell will ring for the final time in every student's career, and the task of translating education into living will be thrust upon them. School must equip its charges with the tools to defend against the bombardment of temptation through mind-over-heart G-dliness.

Now go out there and do some real good!

And parents hurry up and get towed off; the kids will be home any minute...

Aliyot Summery

General Overview: This week's reading, *Mishpatim*, details many laws, including laws related to slaves, personal injury, loans, usury, and property damage. The end of the portion speaks of the preparations the Israelites made before receiving the Torah at Mt. Sinai.

First Aliyah: This section discusses laws pertaining to the Israelite servant, his mandatory release after six years of service, and the procedure followed when a servant expresses his desire to remain in his master's service. The Torah continues with the laws of the Israelite maidservant, and her terms of release. Other laws contained in this section: a husband's obligations towards his wife; punishments for murder, manslaughter, kidnapping and abusing parents; and the penalties accrued by a person who injures another.

Second Aliyah: This section continues with laws of personal injury: the punishment for one who kills or injures his servant and for one who causes a woman to miscarry. The Torah then shifts its focus to a person's liabilities for damages caused by his possessions, such as an ox that gores; or his actions, such as leaving an open pit uncovered. A person who steals is liable to pay the capital plus punitive damages. The section concludes with a person's right to self-defense when facing a marauding thief.

Third Aliyah: An arsonist is liable for damages caused by fires he ignites. The Torah then details the potential liabilities of an individual who undertakes to be a guardian of another's possessions, a borrower, and a renter. More laws: the punishment for seducing a young woman, sorcery, bestiality and offering an idolatrous sacrifice; prohibitions against harassing a foreigner, widow, or orphan; the mitzvah of lending money to the poor and the prohibition against lending with interest.

Fourth Aliyah: This section, too, introduces us to many new mitzvot: the prohibitions against cursing a judge or leader, consuming meat that was not ritually slaughtered, offering a sacrifice before the animal is eight days old, perjury, and judicial corruption; the commandments to separate all agricultural tithes in their proper order, sanctify the first-born son, return a lost animal to its owner, and help unload an overburdened animal.

Fifth Aliyah: We are commanded not to lie or take a bribe. The mitzvah of the Shemitah (Sabbatical year) is introduced: six years we work and harvest the land, and on the seventh year we allow the land to rest. Similarly, on a weekly basis, six days we work and on the seventh day we – and our cattle and servants – must rest. We are forbidden to mention the name of other gods. We are commanded to celebrate the three festivals — Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot – and to make pilgrimages to the Holy Temple on these occasions. Finally, we are told not to cook meat in (its mother's) milk.

Sixth Aliyah: G-d informed the Israelites that He would dispatch an angel to lead them into Canaan. This angel would not tolerate disobedience. If, however, the Israelites would hearken to the angel, and eradicate idolatry from the Promised Land, then they will be greatly rewarded. Their Canaanite enemies will fall before them and G-d "will bless your food and your drink, and will remove illness from your midst."

Seventh Aliyah: This section continues describing the blessings the Israelites will receive if they faithfully serve G-d: no miscarriages or barren women, longevity, wide spacious borders and supernatural assistance in their quest to conquer the Holy Land. G-d warns the Israelites against entering into treaties with the Canaanite natives or allowing them to remain in the land after the Israelite invasion. The Torah now relates some of the events that occurred in the days immediately prior to the giving of the Torah. Moses went up the mountain and received a message from G-d which he communicated to the people. The Israelites enthusiastically committed themselves to following all of G-d's laws. Moses transcribed the "Book of the Covenant" and read it to the people. Then, together with the Israelite firstborn, Moses offered sacrifices and sprinkled the blood on the people, bringing them into a covenant with G-d. This section concludes with G-d summoning Moses – after the giving of the Torah – to ascend the mountain where he would remain for forty days and nights, and would then be given the Tablets.

Thoughts that Count

If a man digs a pit... the owner of the pit shall make it good, and return money (kesef) to the owner (Ex. 21:34) Every person "digs a pit" with his sins into which other people fall and get hurt. The way to correct this situation and "make it good" is by "returning kesef (related to the word kisu - longing and yearning) to the owner" - with a sincere desire to return to the "Owner" of the world in repentance.

(*Likutei Sefat Emet*)

If fire breaks out and finds thorns, and shocks of corn are consumed, or the standing corn, or the field (Ex. 22:5)

It states in the Talmud: "Punishment comes to the world only on account of the wicked, yet begins with the righteous." When G-d brings punishment ("fire") into the world, it is directed primarily against the wicked ("thorns"). However, as long as righteous people exist, their merit protects everyone. Therefore, if G-d determines that punishment is absolutely necessary, the righteous are often the first to be stricken, so that their merit can no longer shield others.

(*Pardes Yosef*)

If you afflict them in any way, and they cry out to Me, I will surely hear their cry (Ex. 22:22)

It is forbidden to chastise anyone too harshly, even if one's intentions are good. Because Penina inadvertently caused pain to Chana (the mother of Samuel) in trying to influence her to pray to G-d for children, we find that she was punished. One must be very careful not to cause someone to "cry out" to G-d, for He will "surely hear their cry."

(*The Vilna Gaon*)

A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN AND SPIRITUAL LEADER



This Shabbat is "Shabbat Shekalim," when we read about the mitzva of the "half-shekel" the Jews were commanded to give as atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf. The half-shekalim were used to bring the communal offerings on behalf of the entire Jewish people. Every person had to give the same amount, "ten gera," which was the equivalent of half of "a holy shekel."

It didn't matter if a Jew was rich or poor - everyone was required to give a half-shekel, and in fact, it was forbidden to give more. For the Jewish people and G-d are one entity; without G-d, they are only half of a single whole.

According to Chasidic philosophy, the "ten gera" are an allusion to the ten powers of the soul. The mitzva teaches that our ten soul powers are only "half a shekel," and that in order to be a complete entity, one must join together with another Jew.

The half-shekels were used to conduct a census of the Jewish people. A census emphasizes the unique importance of every individual. At the same time, it also underscores the fact that every Jew's true existence is bound up with his fellow man's. It is only when a Jew fulfills the commandment to "Love your fellow man as yourself" that he can reach his own individual fulfillment and potential.

This is one of the reasons Rabbi Shneur Zalman, founder of Chabad Chasidic philosophy, placed the declaration, "Behold, I accept upon myself the fulfillment of the mitzva, 'Love your fellow man as yourself,'" at the very beginning of the prayer book. Indeed, this principle should be the foundation of all our daily activities. When Moshiach comes, the communal sacrifices will again be purchased from the half-shekels we will give. Yet even now we can still perform a service representative of the half-shekel - giving to tzedaka (charity). When we recognize the fundamental unity we share with others, it prompts us to increase our donations to tzedaka and give generously. May all our efforts hasten the rebuilding of the Holy Temple

Pinchus Feldman

Rabbi Pinchus Feldman OAM

Smile its Friday! The US has made a new weapon that destroys people but keeps the building standing... It's called the stock market! What's the difference between a guy who lost everything in Las Vegas and an investment banker? ... A tie... President Bush was asked about the credit crunch. He said it was his favourite candy bar

Icy Goodness

By: Naomi Zirkind

It is nighttime. Roads are slippery due to freezing rain earlier in the day. I have a choice of two ways to drive home from work. The short way involves driving on some narrow, steep roads. The long way though is mainly highway driving.

On the long route, I can count on the roads being clear, but it is a much longer drive. After some contemplation, I decide to go the short way, figuring that since the morning, the roads have probably been cleared. Actually, the narrow, steep road is not bad. The trip is going fine, and I'm on the home stretch, less than five minutes from home. Suddenly, I see that the road in front of me is blocked, and a police car is there to ensure that nobody goes through.

Now where do I go? I turn off onto a side street and park. I look at a map to figure out directions how to get home. The map shows that I should keep going straight and take the second left... The street I'm on is dark and narrow. The street signs are small posts in the ground, and the street names are barely visible. I start driving, and see a street on the left. Thinking that maybe I missed the first left and this is the second one, I turn left. Wrong turn - this was actually the first left. I turn around on the very narrow, dark, slippery road and continue further. At the next left, I turn, but soon see a "Dead End" sign. This must not be the street I need. Again, I have to turn around, but this road is really narrow

and icy. It's getting frustrating as I inch back and forth, trying to turn around. I'm lost on a dark, narrow, icy road.

Then a thought occurs to me: this situation seems so awful, I just can't see any good in it. And yet, it is explained in Chasidic philosophy (Tanya) that everything G-d does for us is good. Sometimes we can appreciate the good in it. But sometimes the good is from the so-called "hidden world," the levels at which G-d's thoughts are entirely beyond our comprehension, so that we cannot perceive any good at all with our human intellect. So, I muster up my mantra for these situations. And I say to myself emphatically, "Wow, this event is so spectacular! This is just so good; its goodness is on such a high level that I cannot comprehend it!" After I say this to myself a few times, I feel calmer, and continue on the difficult drive home. A little while later I arrive safely home.

The next day, my husband tells me that he heard on the radio that a wire had fallen on the road, and that is why the road was blocked. I was amazed that a major New York radio station would tell about a fallen wire on a minor road in our small city of

Morristown New Jersey But I

was not so amazed, because Chasidic philosophy explains that if one truly believes that a seemingly unpleasant event is really good, then G-d soon reveals to the person what the goodness is.

Now I could see how fortunate I was in not driving by that fallen wire. Driving on the dark, narrow, icy road really was spectacular.

This story really illustrates the effectiveness of having a positive attitude. G-d shows us the goodness when we are ready to recognize that it is there. However, I don't need to wait until I am in a big mess to say that G-d's ways are spectacular. Truly everything G-d does, even the seemingly small kindness of awakening each day, is good. Realizing this makes a person constantly happy. And it transforms every event from "icy goodness," something that seems cold, hard, and dangerous, into "I see goodness!" - We can actually perceive the kindness with our own eyes.

In the merit of our attempting to see the good in everything, may G-d transform the exile into the kindness that we can see and enjoy - the true and complete redemption. Amen.

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Moshiach

m a t t e r s

It states in the Zohar: "During exile the Jewish people are like a bride standing in a butchers' market. Because of her Bridegroom's great love for her, its foul odor does not deter Him from visiting her where she is; indeed, in His imagination she is standing in a bazaar of perfumers." This relationship refers to the time of exile. But the time has now come that there should be an end to the exile, and we have to get ready for the Redemption. And surely it is obvious that we cannot accompany G-d to the chupa wearing the same "garments" (i.e., our thoughts, speech and actions) that were good enough for the butchers' market...

It Happened Once

When the stranger entered the little shul (synagogue), the regulars were curious -who was he and why had he come to their town. But he was in a great hurry and so, he was relieved to see a quorum of men already assembled, ready to begin the morning prayers. There was no rabbi there, and not wanting to wait, the stranger ascended the lectern. The "regulars" were surprised and offended that this unknown man presumed to lead the prayers. After all, who was this fellow, who didn't even have the courtesy to wait a few minutes for the rabbi or the president of the congregation?

The stranger had already begun the morning service when the president arrived. Seeing a stranger at the lectern, he rushed up to him and said, "What a chutzpa (audacity)! Who do you think you are to begin the prayers before the rabbi or I have arrived!" And he continued berating the man in this fashion.

The stranger, however, just kept silent. But his refusal to respond infuriated the president even more and he blurted out, "Don't you see who's speaking to you?"

Finally the stranger replied in a quiet voice, "You also do not see to whom you are speaking."

No sooner had those words been uttered than everything went dark before the president's eyes. He rushed to a doctor, then to a specialist - to several specialists - but no one could find a cause for his sudden blindness. He tried every treatment that was suggested to him, but nothing proved a cure.

Then, it dawned upon him: when had his blindness begun? After he had angry words with the stranger in the shul. Undoubtedly he had offended a hidden tzadik (righteous person) with his words, and this was the consequence of his anger.

In despair, he decided to travel to the Baal Shem Tov. He had heard about this great tzadik; maybe he could help.

"Rebbe, I have heard that you can perform miracles. I have been blind since I angered a certain hidden tzadik. My problem is that I don't know who he is or where I can find him."

The Baal Shem Tov replied, "The man is my disciple, Reb Yaakov Koppel, and you sinned against him with your angry speech. Go to him and beg his forgiveness. If he forgives you, your blindness will be cured."

The man indeed traveled to Reb Yaakov, who accepted his

apology. His sight returned as quickly as it had vanished.

The morning prayers had just ended. The Baal Shem Tov, who was an esteemed visitor in the town, was about to wash his hands before partaking of a meal, when a distraught woman approached him. She had waited throughout the whole service and could contain herself no longer.

"Rebbe! My husband has been missing for a very long time. I have done everything I can think of to try to find him, but I have no idea where he went. What will happen to me? Please, Rebbe, help me find him," the woman wept.

The Baal Shem Tov stood there, his washing cup poised to pour water on his hands in preparation for the blessing on bread, but instead of continuing, he stopped and responded to the woman.

"You will find your husband in the city of M."

Infused with new hope, the woman departed. But the rabbi of the city, who had heard a great deal about the Baal Shem Tov, had been watching the exchange. Now he had what seemed to him to be a serious question of Jewish law.

"I beg your pardon," began the rabbi, "I was watching your exchange with the woman, and it seems to me that you were saying words of prophecy to her. If that was true, I think you were required to have washed your hands before speaking."

The Baal Shem Tov responded to the rabbi with a question: "If you saw chickens suddenly fluttering about your table set with expensive glassware, what would your reaction be? I think you would automatically reach out to chase them away."

The rabbi acquiesced, but he clearly was not following the Baal Shem Tov's logic.

"I did what came naturally to me," the Baal Shem Tov continued. "I saw standing before me a woman who was in utter despair almost to the breaking point. I knew where her husband was. Do you imagine that I should have continued washing my hands while she stood suffering before my eyes?"



Candle Lighting Times Friday 30th January 2009

City	In	Out
Sydney	7:26pm	8:21pm
Brisbane	6:11pm	7:04pm
Surfers Par	6:10pm	7:03pm
Melbourne	7:56pm	8:53pm

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