

A Grave Sin?

The *Talmud Torah* of Kelm was founded by Rav Simcha Zissel Ziv, in order to strengthen the study of *mussar*. Its students were constantly striving to improve their *Abodat Hashem*. To this end, they worked with one another to discover their weaknesses and bolster their strong points.

The following story was told over by Rav Moshe Weinberger, Rav of *Aish Kodesh* in Woodmere, New York. When Rav Elyah Lopian learned in the *Kollel* of Kelm, he and a group of friends, all *bnei Aliyah* (men interested in growth), decided to form a unique *chaburah*. Once a week, they would get together, and each one would take a turn admitting his sins in front of the others. At the initial meeting, a *talmid hacham* of impeccable character, who was humble and refined, stood up to confess. He stood there silently, eyes closed, contemplating, uttering only a word or two. Then he said, "I can't. I'm too embarrassed," and he promptly sat down. Seeing how difficult the confession was for this *sadik*, they realized that their plan was unrealistic, and the group disbanded.

Rav Elyah approached the fellow and said to him, "I would like to know what your transgression was."

"I can't say...I'm just too embarrassed."

But Rav Elyah persisted and finally got it out of him. "One evening, while davening *ma'ariv*, I had a distracting thought," said the man. "After a long afternoon *seider* of learning, I was hungry and I thought to myself, *I hope that my wife cooks potatoes for supper*." That was the grave sin of this *yungerman*.

That was the greatness of Kelm. (Touched by Their Faith)

The Lorraine Gammal A"H Edition

לְעִילּוֹי נְשָׁמַת לֵאָה בֵּת בְּהִיָּה

בס"ד

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SHABBAT VAET'HANAN ☆ שַׁבַּת וְאֶתְחַנֵּן

Haftarah: Yeshayahu 40:1-26

JULY 31-AUGUST 1, 2020 11 AB 5780

Candlelighting: **7:54 pm**

Morning Shema by: **8:33 am**

Evening Shema after: **8:52 pm**

Shabbat ends: **8:51 pm (R"Y 9:23 pm)**

Watch for an email for full Shabbat schedule of minyanim

A Message from our Rabbi

לֹא תוֹסֵף עַל־הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מִצְוֶה אֶתְכֶם וְלֹא תִגְרַעוּ מִמֶּנּוּ

"You shall not add to what I am commanding you, not shall you diminish from it." (*Debarim* 4:2)

The commentators ask: It is understandable why it is forbidden to delete a part of a *misvah*, but why would it be forbidden to add to one?

The Dubner Maggid answered with a parable: A man borrowed utensils from his neighbor on several occasions, and when he would return them he would give back twice as much as he borrowed. If he borrowed one cup, he would return two cups; one spoon, he would return two. When the neighbor asked him why he was returning more than he borrowed, he would reply nonchalantly, "It's simple, the cup you loaned me gave birth to another cup, so I'm returning both."

The neighbor didn't press the issue, and naturally, was delighted to lend his utensils.

On one occasion the man knocked on his neighbor's door and asked to borrow his elegant silver candelabra. The neighbor was overjoyed to lend it to him, and eagerly anticipated its return accompanied by its new "offspring." However, the man never brought back the candelabra. After a few months, the neighbor went to the borrower and asked him about the candelabra. "Oh, you didn't hear about it?" the man replied innocently. "Your candelabra died."

"Died!" shouted the neighbor. "How in the world can a candelabra die?!"

"I don't understand you," said the borrower. "If utensils can give birth, why can't they die?"

The same is true with *misvot*, concluded Dubner Maggid. If people are free to add to *misvot* according to their whims, they show that they do not believe that the *misvot*

are of Divine origin, and just as they can expand upon certain *misvot*, they can diminish from or eliminate completely, other ones. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

Killer Torah

As the Torah is raised for all to see, the congregants point to it as they recite a verse from this week's perashah. "*V'zot haTorah asher sam Moshe...*" This is the Torah that Moshe presented before the children of Israel (Debarim 4:44). It would seem that this verse refers to the deep and beautiful laws that inspire the same awe as the sight of the Torah scroll unfurled in all its glory. It isn't. In fact, the words now used to announce the glory of the Torah in its entirety are placed directly after a part of the Torah we might rather have skipped. The words, "*V'zot HaTorah – this is the Torah*" are written following the laws of the cities of refuge. People convicted of negligent manslaughter or awaiting trial for that crime must stay in specially designated cities until the *Kohen Gadol* dies. The cities of refuge are strategically located and in this week's portion the Torah reviews both the entry qualifications and the terms of inhabitation. We Jews are not proud of killers, yet we obviously must deal with them. The question is, however, why are the words, "this is the Torah," which seem to personify the very essence of our code of life, placed within any proximity to laws that show our lowest point. *Rashi*, the classic medieval commentator, may be bothered by this juxtaposition. He comments that the words refer to an ensuing portion, which recounts the Sinai experience and the receiving of the Ten Commandments. *Ramban* explains that after Moshe's admonition of the people, he once again resumes discussing the laws with them. I would like to explain the location of the words with a homiletic approach.

In the early 1900s a Rabbi who lived in the tenements on the Manhattan's Lower East Side had to attend a City function at which a notoriously anti-Semitic Episcopalian Minister was also present.

The Minister turned to the Rabbi and with a sinister smile remarked "What a coincidence! It was just last night that I dreamt I was in Jewish heaven."

"Jewish heaven?" inquired the Rabbi. "What is it like in Jewish heaven?"

"Oh!" replied the priest. "In Jewish heaven the streets were filled with Jews. Children, their faces dirty, shirts untucked, and clothes unpressed were playing in the dirt. Women were haggling with fish-vendors as Jewish beggars tried to interrupt, asking for handouts. The clotheslines stretched across the roads with the dripping wash mixing with the dust below to add more mud to the existing mess on the ground. And of course," he added with a sinister laugh, "Rabbis were running back and forth with large *Talmudic* volumes tucked under their arms!"

The Rabbi pursed his lips and then replied, "That is truly amazing. You see I dreamt last night that I was in Episcopalian heaven."

"Really?" the Minister asked "What is it like in Episcopalian heaven?"

"It is magnificent. The streets shine as if they have recently been washed. The homes are exquisitely lined up in perfect symmetry, each with a small garden that has beautiful flowers and a perfectly manicured lawn. The homes were freshly painted and they sparkled in the sunlight!"

The Minister beamed. "And what about the people? Tell me about the people!"

The Rabbi smiled, looked the Minister right in the eye, and tersely stated, "There were no people."

By placing the words "This is the Torah that Moshe presented" directly after the laws of the cities of refuge, the Torah sends a message that it does not shirk or evade guiding us through every aspect of life. Whether the Torah is commanding the laws of

priestly blessings or sharing the Passover story or rehabilitating a man who accidentally killed, it is an equal part of Torah and must be proudly proclaimed as such. We don't ignore our misfortunes nor hide them as if they do not exist. The laws of thieves and murderers are as part of the Torah as the perpetrators are part of society. We don't hide the unfortunate and wrongdoers from our existence. They exist in society and in the Torah that deals with their needs and laws. And when it deals with them the Torah proudly proclaims that this, too, is the Torah that Moshe placed before the Children of Israel. (Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky)

Happy Endings

The *Gemara* (*Pesachim* 56a) relates: Before our Patriarch Ya'akov passed on, he wanted to reveal to his children the "*Ketz Ha'yamin*" (literally, "the End of Days," usually understood as a reference to the time of the ultimate redemption). Suddenly, he sensed that the *Shechinah* had departed from him. He asked: "Perhaps someone among my children is unworthy, as Abraham had Yishmael and my father Yitzhak had Esav?" His sons answered, "Hear, Yisrael our father, Hashem is our *Elokim*, Hashem is *Ehad* / the One and Only." Hearing this, Ya'akov responded: "*Baruch Shem* / "Blessed is the Name of His glorious kingdom for all eternity."

R' Chaim Friedlander z"l (*Mashgiah Ruhani* of the Ponovezh Yeshiva) explains: Yaakov did not try to reveal the date when *Mashiah* would come. Rather, he tried to reveal how all of our suffering throughout the millennia will bring about the redemption and thus glorify Hashem's Name. Heaven did not permit him to do so, however, for knowing those details would negate our free will. It would not be a challenge for us to believe in G-d and to perform *misvot* in difficult circumstances if we could see the "happy ending" to every situation. "*Baruch Shem*" is a declaration of Hashem's presence in our world. Ya'akov could see that presence and so can the angels. For the time being, we cannot. (Rabbi Shlomo Katz)

Fashionably Late

Some people pride themselves on arriving at a meeting or social function within the parameters of what is called "fashionably late." Pride and ego are obviously involved. "If I demonstrate that I can arrive when I want to arrive rather than at the appointed or invitation time, then I show others that I am the one who is vital to the success of the event or the meeting."

People who keep others waiting are not demonstrating stature; they are acting selfishly. Rude behavior sometimes stems from a lack of consideration for another's time. The tardy individual is actually saying, "Your time is not as important as mine."

A great Rabbi held communal prayers daily in his home. Some days only the minimum ten men came to complete the *minyan*. One day, exactly ten men were present, but one of them had a problem. He approached the sage with his query.

I have agreed to meet someone at 4:30 p.m. If I stay here to maintain the *minyan*, then I will be late by perhaps ten or fifteen minutes. What should I do? Should I stay or leave?"

The Rabbi answered without hesitation. "You must leave at once. If you are not where you said you would be when you said you would be there, that is *sheker* (lying). Not only that, but you are also causing mental stress to another – which is also forbidden. Don't delay on our behalf. Go to your meeting."

When you are taking your sweet time while someone is expecting your imminent arrival, change gears and pick up the pace. It only takes a spurt to change from being fashionably late to politely prompt. (One Minute With Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)