

Such a feeling may be well founded if your achievements are in areas that are of true value. Many individuals, however, measure success by what others think of their achievements. If millions watch on television approvingly, or if thousands cheer in the stands of a stadium, performers or athletes – as well as their audiences – believe that acting or sports acumen is synonymous with personal greatness.

A simple way to measure the value is to evaluate who is judging. If something is esteemed by the masses, it is probably worthless in the real world. Society admires financial and athletic acumen and rarely honors spiritual achievements.

If it is respect that you crave, you should seek self-respect. Others can be fooled, but don't fool yourself. Study the words of our Sages and learn the true measures of success. Only then can you arrive at a genuine assessment of self-worth. (One Minute with Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

Expressions

“Speech is a matter of the mind. The mind develops and assigns certain words to them. Each consists of a grouping of letters, vowels and consonants. All this happens because the mind is working at a rapid pace to express the person's thoughts and combinations of sounds that will have meaning in the minds of other people.”

Speech is a gift from Hashem. It is a powerful tool that must be used carefully. The power of prayer are Expressions of love and gratitude to Hashem for the kindness He bestows upon us. (Norman D. Levy, based on Rabbi Miller's teachings with permission from Simchas Hachaim Gedola Bais Yisrael)

Just Desserts

Nissim Haim Aharonoff was very careful about *Kashrut*. He ate only cheese, vegetables, sardines and fruit while he was in the Israeli army. One Friday afternoon, the religious cook of Nissim's battalion came to him with a special surprise: a beautiful cake! “We just bought new pans for cooking and baking,” the cook explained, “and they haven't been used yet. So I made you a kosher cake while I still had the chance.”

Nissim Haim was delighted and touched by the cook's thoughtfulness. He carefully took the cake and went along to the bus stop, to wait for a bus back to his quarters. As the minutes stretched by, Nissim Haim put the cake down on a nearby stone, where it would be safe while he waited for the bus to arrive.

Just then, another soldier dashed past Nissim Haim and jostled the cake, which fell, top-down, onto the sandy ground. Nissim Haim stared, open-mouthed, as his beautiful Shabbat treat turned into a sand-covered pancake. To make matters worse, a mouse ran up and began nibbling at the cake. Nissim Haim was heartbroken.

By the time Shabbat was over, Nissim Haim had nearly forgotten the incident. He was in a cheerful frame of mind when he reported to duty on Sunday. As he walked onto the base, he noticed the cook motioning frantically to him.

“Nissim Haim, I tried and tried to get in touch with you. Please forgive me, I'm so, so sorry! I never meant to do such a thing!”

Nissim Haim was bewildered by the cook's onslaught. “What's wrong?” he asked.

“The cake, Nissim Haim! I thought those trays were brand new. But after you left, I discovered that they had been used for hamburgers and cheesecake the night before! Please forgive me, Nissim Haim. I really didn't know. I feel just terrible. I -”

“Listen,” Nissim Haim interrupted him, with a broad smile. “Let me tell you what happened to the cake.” The cook listened in astonishment to Nissim Haim's story. The two men embraced, and Nissim Haim gave his thanks to Hashem for His heavenly guidance. (Visions of Greatness V)

The Lorraine Gammal A"H Edition

לְעִילּוֹי נְשֻׁמַּת לֵאָה בֵּת בְּהִיָּה

בס"ד

Congregation Magen Abraham

479 Monmouth Road - P.O. Box 444

West Long Branch, New Jersey 07764

(732) 870-2225



SHABBAT MISHPATIM ☆ אֶשְׁפָּטֶם עַמִּי

SHABBAT SHEKALIM

שַׁבַּת שְׁקָלִים

Haftarah: Melachim II 11:17 - 12:17

FEBRUARY 21-22, 2020 27 SHEBAT 5780

Friday Minhah: **5:18 pm**

Candlelighting: **5:18 pm**

Evening Shema after: **6:16 pm**

Shaharit: **5:42, 6:40, 8:10, 9:10 am**

Morning Shema by: **8:45 am**

Shabbat Class: **4:00 pm**

Shabbat Minhah: **5:00 pm**

These times are applicable only for the Deal area.

Shabbat Ends: **6:19 pm (R"Y 6:51 pm)**

Sunday Minhah: **5:25 pm**

Rosh Hodesh Adar will be celebrated on Tuesday & Wednesday, Feb. 25 & 26.

A Message from our Rabbi

וְאֵלֶּה הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר תִּשִּׂים לִפְנֵיהֶם

“These are the judgments that you shall place before them” (Shemot 21:1)

From time to time we hear of and bear witness to Jewish tragedies, individual and collective, and no one can remain unmoved by such misfortunes. If Yitro grieved when he learned of the suffering of the Egyptians, surely we should be even more affected by the anguish of *klal Yisrael* wherever and whenever it occurs.

Unfortunately these incidents also tend to put our faith under some strain, and therefore it is to the Torah that we should turn for comfort, strength and encouragement, which will help us weather the assault on our trust in the Almighty.

Rabbi Pinchos Roberts explains our *perashah* in a way that sheds light on our subject. The *perashah* details many of the laws governing the social life of the Jewish nation. But it begins in an unexpected manner. Instead of commencing with kind individuals in acts of kindness such as lending money, giving charity, etc., the *perashah* opens with the law of a thief who is sold to repay his evil activities. The obvious question is, why begin our social code with a robber and an act of crime?

Rabbi Simha Zissel of Kelm suggested the following answer. If a father has a large family and all his children behave well except for one son who is wayward and dishonest, the father will concern himself only with that child. He will worry day and night how to correct his son's habits, whereas the other children will have to take a back seat.

Hashem acts towards us in the same way. We are His children, and therefore if one Jew becomes corrupt and steals, G-d's first and foremost consideration is for that child, to help him make amends. With that in mind, he is not incarcerated in prison where other criminals will corrupt him even more. Instead, the *Bet Din* is instructed to find him a good home where he will be treated well, shown respect and taught the ways of the Torah first hand.

This remarkable degree of compassion by Hashem towards His children, and even wayward ones, must be borne in mind at all times, and especially when we hear of tragedies. We cannot possibly fathom the infinite Divine wisdom with our finite logic and comprehend these calamities, but they are easier to bear if we realize how much Hashem cares for every one of His children. Accordingly, whatever He does must be ultimately for our own good. That knowledge will help us accept all His Heavenly decrees, and they become that much easier to endure.

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Reuven Semah

Law and Order

“And these are the judgments...” (*Shemot* 21:1)

”וְאֵלֶּה הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים”

The laws in the Torah described as “judgments” are civil laws, which every society must have in order to avoid anarchy. Yet the Torah emphasizes that *its* civil laws are of Divine origin, like the laws governing the Sabbath and festivals. As *Rashi* says, “Just as the earlier [words] were from Sinai, these also are from Sinai.”

The world cannot tell us what is right, appropriate, and good — even in the area of civil laws. This is true both of the laws themselves, and in how they are observed. Secular civil laws are things we are forced to do... unless we feel certain we won't get caught. All Torah laws, by contrast, should be ones we are anxious to observe in meticulous detail.

The Torah tells us that even in our daily affairs, there is a Divine standard. We shouldn't learn how to act, how we should conduct ourselves, from watching society around us. We shouldn't mimic those whom others admire, whether that means politicians, the wealthy, sports “heroes” or entertainers (none of whom, it must be said, have distinguished themselves as role models).

Who, then, should we emulate? The answer is obvious: the scholars who have absorbed the teachings of the Torah. In the *Talmud*, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai says that one who has learned Torah and *Talmud*, yet has not served a scholar, is still an ignorant person! Torah is about a different approach to life, and not simply an intellectual exercise. Learning how a holy person conducts his daily affairs is a lesson in Torah.

It's not that hard to see the difference. A child raised on “these found items are his [to keep], but these must be announced [in order to return them]” gains a different perspective than one taught “finders keepers, losers weepers!”

My wife heard from a teacher who, after decades of experience in public schools, started teaching in the primary school my boys attended. She told of an incident that made her realize she was in a “different” school (her word).

She awarded a boy a can of soda as a prize at the end of class. He stopped to put the can in his locker on his way to his next class, and she asked him if he would prefer that she hold the soda for him, so that no one would take it in the meantime.

“No one would take my soda,” said the boy. “That would be stealing!”

What is obvious to children is not always equally obvious to adults. Our minds learn to make excuses, and we are influenced by what we read and hear, by what others have done. This is why it is so important to learn from the standards of the Torah, and

the practices of scholars. “Even” in daily affairs, we should aim for a higher standard! (Rabbi Yaakov Menken)

Honesty is the Torah Policy

The *pasuk* states in this week's *perashah*, “From a matter of falsehood distance yourself.” [*Shemot* 23:7] This is the Torah's admonition about being truthful and honest. The commentaries point out that this is the only *midah* [character trait] from which the Torah specifically instructs us to distance ourselves (*Tirchak*). We are commanded to stay as far away as possible from *sheker* [falsehood]. Do not skirt the truth; run away from *sheker*.

It is well known that if Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky exemplified one particular *midah*, it was his pursuit of truth (*derishat ha'Emet*). I once read in a biography that as someone whose name was Yaakov, he took it upon himself to excel in the attribute of pursuing truth in all his dealings as we know the Patriarch Ya'akov typified the characteristic of truth (*Titen Emet l'Ya'akov* [*Micha* 7:20]).

A fellow came to Rav Yaakov and asked him the following question: He wished to take off from his job on the day of Purim. Although Purim is only a Rabbinic holiday and strictly speaking work is not prohibited, he wanted to celebrate the day as it should be celebrated, not to come home late in the afternoon and run through perfunctory fulfillment of the day's rituals.

Under normal circumstances, his employer allowed employees to take a personal leave day but his company at that time was exceedingly busy and they had made a temporary policy that they were not allowing personal leave days during this busy period. So, he went to Rav Yaakov and asked if he might be able to take it as a sick day. He felt that he had a couple of justifications for requesting such an absence on those grounds. First of all, Purim follows *Ta'anit Esther* which is a fast day which leaves a person a bit weak and fatigued. Second of all, Purim is a time which, due to all the drinking and feasting done on that day, leaves nobody feeling very good, certainly not by later in the day.

This is bending the truth somewhat because he was not really sick and strictly speaking, sick days are reserved for people who are really sick. How did Rav Yaakov answer this question? Did he tell him to take off the day and observe Purim as a Jew should observe it and bend the truth, or otherwise?

Rav Yaakov instructed him that Purim is a Rabbinic holiday and “You shall distance yourself from falsehood” is a Biblical command. It is a no brainer. Go to work and fulfill the obligations of Purim before or after work to the best of your ability. Work on Purim rather than say something that is not true.

This is honesty. This is fulfillment of “*M'Dvar Sheker Tirchak*.” Certainly, when it is an out and out falsehood, when it is clearly bending the truth, we indeed need to distance ourselves. Rabbi Yissocher Frand)

Applause

The family surrounded the infant, proudly watching the cute little person perform. When the baby clapped her hands, all the adults clapped in glee. When the little one waved her arms and smiled, her relatives laughed approvingly. The positive, upbeat reaction of the adults brought a smile to the infant's face.

Even at an early age, people seek the consent and approval of others.

One of a human being's strongest drives is the need for honor and respect. The word for honor in the Holy Tongue, *kavod*, comes from the same root as *kaved* – heavy. Self-respect means that you feel you are a person of substance – a heavyweight!