
THE WEISS EDITION

שופטים

Shoftim



A Little Remorse, A Lot of Merit

Planting Smart

Love what You Learn

Equipped for Life

Light points

FROM THE TEACHINGS OF
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE ON THE
WEEKLY TORAH PORTION



Lightpoints

לזכרון ולעילוי נשמת

הרה"ח הרה"ת הרה"ג ישעיהו זושא

ב"ר אברהם דוד ע"ה ווילהעלם

נלב"ע ביום ד' שבט התשפ"ב

תנצב"ה



שפטים

Shoftim

כח: 20:8

מִי הָאִישׁ הַיָּרֵא וְהַיָּדָאֵלֶּה וְיָשָׁב לְבֵיתוֹ
וְלֹא יִמַּס אֶת לִבֵּב אָחִיו כְּלִבּוֹ

“Is there anyone [here] who is fearful and fainthearted?

*Let him go and return to his house, lest he cause his
brothers’ hearts to melt like his heart.”*

A Little Remorse, A Lot of Merit

Just before a Jewish army goes out to battle, the leaders announce that anyone who is afraid should return home, lest their anxiety spread to their fellow fighters.

The Sages of the Talmud¹ debate the nature of the “fearful and fainthearted” addressed here. Some interpret this as reference to those who fear because of their sins —i.e., they recognize their shortcomings in Torah observance, and fear they are thus unworthy of G-d’s protection during battle. According to this opinion, all who were simply fearful of the

1. Sotah 44a.

battle presumably returned home earlier, when the Kohen addressed the soldiers, saying: “Let your hearts not be faint; you shall not be afraid, and you shall not be alarmed...”²

Rabbi Akiva, however, insists that this final announcement addresses those “who cannot stand in the closed ranks of battle and look upon a drawn sword.” As the battle draws nearer, even those who felt confident earlier might now be overcome with fear, and are encouraged (again) to return home.

Rabbi Akiva’s rejection of the alternative explanation indicates that those who “fear because of their sins” can in fact still go to war with confidence, and therefore do not pose any risk to the army’s morale.

What was Rabbi Akiva’s reasoning?

The Talmud states elsewhere³ that out of his immense love for his fellow Jews, Rabbi Akiva always sought angles from which the Jewish people would be judged favorably and meritoriously. Now, a person who “fears because of his sins” recognizes that his conduct was objectionable, believes that G-d can and will hold him accountable, and hopes to be spared that Divine retribution. Thus, even if he lacks the inner strength to actually implement change in his behavior, he still regrets the sinful ways that brought him to this point, and in Rabbi Akiva’s view, this “contemplation of repentance” alone makes him worthy! Rabbi Akiva therefore held that he can go off to battle with confidence, assured of Divine protection and deliverance.

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 9, pp. 128–129

2. Devarim 20:3

3. Sanhedrin 110b.

 כ"ט | 20:19

כִּי הָאָדָם עֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה

Is then man the tree of the field...?

Planting Smart

According to its simple meaning, this verse rhetorically questions the logic of wantonly destroying a fruit tree when you are waging war against a city's inhabitants: "Is man the tree of the field, such that the tree too is your enemy?" The Talmud,⁴ however, interprets this verse as a matter of fact: indeed, man is like the tree of the field.

This comparison teaches us an important lesson regarding the significance of how we educate our children in their formative years, which can be compared to caring for a tree in its earliest stages. An injury in a fully grown tree is not ideal, but it is unlikely to significantly impact the tree's future. A developed tree is strong enough to recover from the damage, and can continue to grow healthily and fruitfully. In a seed or young sapling, however, even the smallest scratch can be devastating, and possibly ruin the prospects of the tree ever growing straight and tall.

The same is true of our children: compromised standards are undesirable even for adults, but compromise in the education of children can be absolutely devastating! In order to nurture and raise a generation of Jews who are spiritually fit, we must ensure that our children receive a healthy and

4. Taanis 7a.

undiluted Jewish education, especially during their early, formative years.

—*Likkutei Sichos, vol. 1, p. 82; Igros Kodesh, vol. 2, p. 82*

 20:19 | כ"ט

בִּי הָאָדָם עֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה

Is then man the tree of the field...?

Love what You Learn

The Talmud⁵ interprets this verse not as a question, but as a matter of fact: indeed, man is like the tree of the field. Particularly, according to the Talmud, the man compared to a fruit tree is a *talmid chacham*—a Torah scholar.

The Talmud's association of fruit trees with Torah scholarship—and not with, for example, excellence in fulfillment of the mitzvos—highlights the unique nature of man's relationship with G-d through Torah study in contrast with other aspects of Divine Service.

A central component of mitzvah observance is sacrifice: surrendering your personal interests in order to obey G-d's commands and fulfill His expectations.

The objective of Torah study, however, is to absorb G-d's wisdom with your mind. Although the ultimate form of Torah study is when a person studies with no sense of ego or self-importance, surrender of self is not the objective of the studying itself. Rather, the goal of Torah study is to grasp G-d's wisdom with your own understanding, making it a part of your own identity.

Given this emphasis on the individual, as opposed to the surrender of self that characterizes mitzvah observance, we can understand why the Talmud states, "One should always

5. Taanis 7a.

study the area of Torah which his heart desires.”⁶ Since the objective of Torah study is not to deny your identity, but to make the Torah a part of it, you must consider your personal preferences when choosing which area of Torah to study, so that it will be personally gratifying and enjoyable!

The Talmud therefore compares a Torah scholar to a fruit tree. What sets fruit apart from grain or any other produce? Whereas grain primarily provides sustenance, fruit is also a source of pleasure. By specifically comparing Torah scholars to fruit trees, the Talmud is emphasizing that, more so than in other aspects of religious observance, you must study the Torah not only as a duty, but also as a passion.

—*Toras Menachem, Sefer Hamaamarim*
Melukat, vol. 2, pp. 412–415

6. Avodah Zarah 19a.

21:7 | כ:א

וְעָנוּ וְאָמְרוּ יָדֵינוּ לֹא שָׁפְכוּ אֶת הַדָּם הַזֶּה וְעֵינֵינוּ לֹא רָאוּ

They shall announce and say, “Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see...”

Equipped for Life

If a person is found murdered outside of a city, and the killer is unknown, the Torah mandates a process known as *eglah arufah* to atone on behalf of the city’s inhabitants for the occurrence of this murder. The purpose of this much-publicized ritual, led by the city’s elders, is to make the public aware of the tragic incident, in order to prevent, or decrease the likelihood of, such occurrences in the future. In addition, by making the public aware of the crime, the likelihood of finding the murderer increases.⁷

As part of the process, the elders and judges make a disclaimer that “our hands did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see.” As the Talmud explains, this means, “We did not see him and knowingly let him depart without food or escort,”⁸ implying that had they known this person was setting off on a precarious journey, the elders themselves would have ensured that he was well equipped for the road.

“You who cleave to Hashem, your G-d, are alive,” says the Torah.⁹ Accordingly, the law of the corpse found outside the city also alludes to someone who has died a spiritual death—i.e., he does not cleave to G-d and His Torah. It follows that if

7. See Sefer Hachinuch, Mitzvos 530–531.

8. Sotah 45b.

9. Devarim 4:4.

the Torah expects the elders to save all who pass through their town from risk of mortal danger, certainly they are required to save them from any threat of spiritual death!

How must they do so?

Before any Jewish boy or girl sets off on their life's journey, the leaders of the community must ensure that they are "accompanied" and well stocked with "provisions" for the way. The "elders" must see to it that every Jewish child in their community begins their journey equipped with an education in Torah study (Torah is compared to food),¹⁰ and trained in mitzvah observance (mitzvos are compared to clothing).¹¹ By doing so, the community ensures the child's survival in the face of any spiritual dangers he or she may encounter along life's path.

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 30, p. 223

10. See Tehillim 40:9.

11. See Rashi, Bereishis 3:7.

לזכות
ליבא בת **רבקה**
לרגל יום ההולדת
לשנת הצלחה בגשמיות וברוחניות

ולזכות
הנערה **בתשבע** תחי'
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ועול מצוות בלבב שלם,
ותצליח בקיום המצוות מתוך יראת שמים טהורה
לנח"ר הורי' וכל משפחתה שיחיו

לעילוי נשמות

הרה"ח הרה"ת ר' **משה** ב"ר **דובער** ע"ה **לברטוב**
נלב"ע ביום ה' אלול ה'תשס"ה

ולעילוי נשמות אביו הרה"ת **דובער** ב"ר **שאל** הי"ד **לברטוב**
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בהפצת היהדות ברוסיה הסובייטית נלב"ע ביום ז' אלול ה'תש"ט

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ולעילוי נשמות

מרת **ברכה** בת ר' **אהרן הלוי** ע"ה **לברטוב**
נפטרה כ"ה תשרי ה'תשפ"ה

תנצב"ה

לזכות

הת' **מענדל** שי' **גערליצקי**

לרגל הכנסו לעול המצוות בשעטו"מ
ביום כ"ז מנחם אב ה'תשפ"ו

יה"ר שיגדל להיות חסיד, ירא שמים ולמדן
לנח"ר הוריו וכל משפחתו שיחיו



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