

A DVAR TORAH

by Rabbi Label Lam

When you come into the vineyard of your fellow, you may eat grapes as you desire, to your fill, but you may not put into your vessel. (Devarim 23:25)

It sounds on the surface like anyone can wander onto a field and help himself to fruit. The sages tell us that we are talking here about a laborer. There is a special Mitzvah for the owner of the field to generously permit those working in the vineyard to fill up on the produce of the field. However there is a counter-balancing obligation on the part of the laborer not to take advantage of the goodness of the owner by taking overmuch. They are granted a limited license.

The Sefer HaChinuch asks why we need an extra Mitzvah here to prevent the employee from helping himself to too many goodies of the field. We already have another Mitzvah which implores us not to steal. What is the necessity of having in place a separate Mitzvah to prevent abuse in this situation?

At a formal dinner with hundreds of gathered guests the master of ceremonies hushed the crowd to introduce the long awaited after-dinner - keynote speaker. "In Israel on an extremely hot day a fellow was walking along a dusty path on the countryside. He was growing extremely thirsty and hungry as the sun beat relentlessly on his head. Then lo and behold there was before him a beautiful orange grove like an oasis with ripe luscious oranges beckoning to be eaten. The only small problem was that there was a wire fence between him and those tempting trees. He easily pried open a space in the fence, approached the nearest tree, and helped himself to a few dozen delicious oranges. Now that he had eaten his full and his appetite had abated, he grew weary. Finding himself in the full shade of the tree he had been eating from, he drew up his knees and fell into a deep and restful slumber.

Strolling through his orchard that hot day, the owner of the field espied the gentleman soundly sleeping beneath one of his trees. He noticed the fence had been pried open and surrounding the man were mounds of orange peels- accusing evidence. The owner grew angry as he approached. He raised his stick and started to run toward the sleeping man shouting all the while, "Lo Signov- Thou shall not steal!"

The sleeping fellow was startled by the sound of the man running angrily toward him and shouting, "Lo Signov". He reminded himself of how hot and dehydrated he had been on that dusty road and how happy he was to find the orchard and how delicious and satisfying those oranges had been and

that he had been afforded shade and a place to rest and now with this fellow rapidly approaching shouting angrily, Lo Signov!" He wondered, "After all that unexpected goodness, what could be better now than- a Dvar Torah?!"

The Sefer HaChinuch writes that "if you are going to ask, "What do we need this prohibition for? Is it not already included in the prohibition of theft? The answer is that the worker might be tempted to imagine that there is no violation here with his taking produce while in the field at the time of harvesting, because the way of the owner is not to be so exacting about the matter like when something is already in his house. Therefore it from His kindlinesses, blessed is He, to add an extra Torah caution in an area where temptation is prevalent."

In the persona of The Creator the Talmud states, "I created the negative inclination and I created Torah as its antidote!" (Kiddushin 30B) Therefore, nothing in the universe will shake a man from his slumber and arrest an untoward thought about to born into regrettable action like **a Dvar Torah!**
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