

THE CONSEQUENCES OF ANGER

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Today's Learning:
Kil'ayim 5:6-7
Orach Chaim 92:6-8
Daf Yomi: Sukkah 30
Yerushalmi Shekalim 16

The last part of our parashah tells the story of the blasphemer. The Torah relates that this individual fought with another Jew and ended up cursing G-d. Not knowing the punishment for that sin, Bnei Yisrael placed the blasphemer in custody and sought instructions from Hashem.

In response, Hashem informed Bnei Yisrael that one who blasphemes incurs the death penalty. He also taught them the punishments for killing another person, killing an animal, injuring another person, and hitting one's parent. R' Eliezer Ashkenazi z"l (1513-1585; rabbi in Egypt, Italy and Poland) asks: Why did Hashem teach these laws at this time?

Also, not only are these laws seemingly unrelated to the story, it would seem to have been unnecessary for the Torah to tell us about the fight in which this person was involved just before he

blasphemed. Why are we given this information?

R' Ashkenazi explains: The Torah wishes to teach us the danger of becoming angry, and to warn us that particularly when a person is angry, he must consider the consequences of his actions. What started as a fight between two Jews ended with one combatant losing control of himself, cursing G-d, and incurring the death penalty. One who does not control his anger will kill an animal one day and may kill a person the next day. Or, he may intend to slap another person lightly and end up injuring him. An angry person may even go so far as to strike his parent. This is what the Torah warns us to avoid. (Ma'asei Hashem)

"But an ox or a sheep or goat, you may not slaughter it [literally: 'him'] and its offspring on the same day."

(22:28)

The halachah is that if one slaughters a female animal and its offspring on the same day, he is liable for the punishment of makkot/lashes. However, if one slaughters a male animal and its offspring on the same day, he is not liable for lashes. According to Rashi, it is even permitted.

How can the law regarding a female animal be more stringent than the law regarding a male animal, considering that the above verse uses the masculine "him and his offspring" rather than "her and her offspring"? R' Yochanan Luria z"l (died 1577) explains that notwithstanding the language, the above interpretation is the only one possible. The reason for this is as follows:

The halachah is that when one is in doubt regarding the application of a Torah law, he must act stringently. [For example, if one does not remember whether he has recited krias shema or birkat hamazon, he must recite them (again).] Therefore, were it prohibited to slaughter a male animal and its offspring on the same day, it would be virtually impossible to ever slaughter a male animal, for it is usually not known who an animal's father is, and maybe an offspring of this father has already been slaughtered today. Yet, the Torah explicitly permits slaughtering male animals (e.g., as certain sacrifices). This forces us to conclude that despite using a masculine form, the Torah actually meant to refer to females. (Meshivat Nefesh)

"Speak to Bnei Yisrael and say to them, 'Hashem's appointed festivals that you designate as holy convocations - these are My appointed festivals'."

(23:2)

R' Shmuel Yehuda Katzenellenbogen z"l (also known as R' Yehuda Mintz; 1521-1597; Italy) writes: One of the oldest and most widespread Jewish practices is to make the holy Torah the center of all of our joys. Whereas others devote their holidays to food, drink and frivolity, we, the people of Hashem, have our Torah in our hearts, and, on our holidays, we devote the better part of the day to

expounding upon the Torah.

This is the meaning of the above verse: If you designate the festivals as holy convocations, then they will be My appointed festivals. If you sanctify yourselves on the holidays and devote yourselves to Torah study, then they will be G-d's festivals. If not, the prophet Yishayah has already said (1:14), "Your new moons and festivals, My soul hated."

R' Katzenellenbogen continues: This applies not only to festivals but also to weddings and even to social gatherings. Thus we read in Pirkei Avot (chapter 3), "If three people eat at one table and do not exchange divrei Torah, it is as if they have eaten from sacrifices to idolatry." (Derashot Mahari Mintz No. 4)

Pirkei Avot

Rabbi Yishmael the son of Rabbi Yos, said: "One who studies Torah in order to teach is given the means to study and to teach. One who studies in order to practice is given the means to study and to teach, to observe and to practice." (Chapter 4, mishnah 6)

R' Menachem Nachum Friedman z"l (the heir-apparent to his uncle, the "Stefanesti Rebbe," at the time of his own death in 1933) observes that there are manuscripts which have a different version of this mishnah. They state: "One who studies Torah in order to teach is not given the means to study and to teach." This alternative version appears to be more correct, R' Friedman writes, for the person that the mishnah describes is in fact a rasha.

He explains: The second part of the mishnah refers to a person who studies Torah with the intention of implementing what he has learned. The first part of the mishnah, then, must be referring to a person who does not plan to practice what he learns. This is nothing short of evil, and therefore the mishnah states that Hashem will ensure that this person does not have the opportunity to teach others.

Judaism does not permit man to separate theory and practice. Thus, when one of the sages of the mishnah, the teacher of the great Rabbi Meir, became a heretic, he was expelled from the bet midrash and is forever known by the appellation "Acher"/"The Other One," instead of by his own name. This is also what Hillel meant when, in the famous story of the convert who wanted to learn the entire Torah while standing on one foot, he said, "That which is hateful to you, do not do to others - this is the entire Torah and the rest is commentary." (Peirush Mahn)

R' Yom Tov Lipman Heller z"l (16th century) accepts the standard reading ("is given the means"), and writes: Of course, the first part of the mishnah does not refer to someone who intends to teach the Torah, but not to observe it. About such a person it is written (Tehilim 50:16): "But to the wicked, G-d said, 'What business do you have discussing My decrees?'"

Rather, the first part of the mishnah speaks of someone whose primary motivation is to teach Torah in order to be honored or in order to earn a living. The mishnah teaches that such a person will be assisted from Heaven even though his motives are not pure. This person will not, however, be assisted to observe the laws.

In contrast, the second part of the mishnah teaches that a person whose motivation is pure - he studies Torah in order to observe its laws - will be aided in all aspects of his relationship to the Torah, teaching and mitzvah observance included. (Tosfot Yom Tov)

Letters from Our Sages

This week's letter was written in 1936 by R' Yitzchak Isaac Halevi Herzog z"l, then Chief Rabbi of Ireland. Shortly afterward, the author became Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Palestine, and he served as Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Israel until his death in 1959.

For centuries, the identity and origin of techelet - the blue dye that the Torah says should be applied to tzitzit - had been lost, but in 1887, R' Gershon Henoch Leiner z"l (the "Radzhiner Rebbe") claimed to have rediscovered it. He said that the source of techelet was the common cuttlefish (*sepia officinalis*). A great deal of scholarly debate followed, and R' Herzog himself wrote many articles on the subject, even devoting his Ph.D. thesis to the subject.

The following letter appears in R' Herzog's *She'eilot U'teshuvot Be'dinei Orach Chaim*, no. 11.

To the editors of [the journal] *Ha'hed*: Peace and blessings!

For various reasons, I have ceased [writing] the series of articles on "Techelet in Yisrael" which were so well received in their time. I may resume them, G-d willing, in the near future. In the interim, however, I feel obligated to publicize the following words:

Regarding the opinion of first-rate scientific experts that it is impossible to derive the Radzhiner techelet from the colored excretion of the *sepia officinalis*, I presumed that the true sage [the Radzhiner Rebbe], in his awesome wisdom must have devised a chemical process which brings out the blue color of that black fluid. I assumed that the author of "The Process for Making the Radzhiner Techelet," which is in my possession, must have omitted that step, and therefore the scientists could not reproduce it.

This is what I assumed then. However, now, the Rebbe's nephew, R' Yerucham Leiner who lives in London, researched the matter and learned that the techelet is made to this day [1936] exactly as stated in that process. It is made openly, and nothing is hidden. It turns out, therefore, that those scientific "experts," although they stated with certainty that it is impossible, actually had conducted no experiments and were only speculating. This is an interesting outcome, and one can apply this lesson to many other situations. "Give [a hint] to the wise man and he will become wiser" [Mishlei 9:9].

Marcia Goodman and family on the yahrzeit of father and grandfather Yehuda Zvi ben Shlomo Halevi a"h

Drs. Jerry & Barbara Belsh of Edison, NJ in honor of the bar mitzvah of their son Sammy (Shmuel Dovid)

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The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ("lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah"), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at Project Genesis start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the Hamaayan page. Text archives from 1990 through the present may be retrieved from <http://www.acoast.com/~sehc/hamaayan/>. Donations to HaMaayan are tax-deductible.
