

# PARSHAS KI SEITZEI

*by Shlomo Katz*

## Parshas Ki Seitzei If Your Enemy is Hungry

Ki Tetze

"If your enemy is hungry . . ."

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Today's Learning:

Ohalot 18:8-9

O.C. 328:38-40

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Bava Batra 8

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Shevuot 44

King Shlomo writes in Mishlei (25:21-22), "If your enemy is hungry, feed him bread; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink--for you will be `choteh' coals on his head, and Hashem will reward you." R' Yehoshua ibn Shuiv z"l (Spain; 14th century) initially rejects the popular translation of the word, "choteh," i.e., "scooping." He writes: G-d forbid that King Shlomo would suggest that one perform kindness for his enemy for the purpose of taking revenge on him. Rather, the word means, "removing." One who performs acts of kindness for his enemy "removes" burning coals-- i.e., anger-- from the enemy's heart and promotes peace. Alternatively, if the word does mean, "scooping," the intention would be that one may perform acts of kindness for his enemy so that his enemy will be

ashamed to continue hating him.

We read in our parashah (22:1), "You shall not see the ox of your brother or his sheep or goat cast off, and hide yourself from them; you shall surely return them to your brother." In Parashat Mishpatim (Shmot 23:4), this same mitzvah is worded differently: "If you encounter the ox of your enemy or his donkey wandering, you shall return it to him repeatedly." The commandment in our verse, writes R' ibn Shuiv, is of general applicability, while the commandment in Mishpatim, i.e., to return the lost animal of one's enemy, is an act "lifnim m'shurat ha'din" / beyond the letter of the law, applicable to a person who wants to conquer his yetzer hara. R' ibn Shuiv adds that the "enemy" spoken of here is a person that a righteous Jew hates because of the other's sinful deeds. Otherwise, it is forbidden to hate another Jew. [See page 3.] Even so, Hashem does not completely despise even a wicked person, and there is therefore a mitzvah to assist him, for one should not try to be "more religious" than G-d Himself. (Derashot R"Y ibn Shuiv)

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"When you will go out to war against your enemies, and Hashem, your G-d, will give him into your hands . . ." (21:10)

Why does the verse begin with a plural noun ("enemies") and then use a singular pronoun ("him")? R' Aryeh Leib Zunz z"l (Polish rabbi and prolific author; died 1833) explains:

Many commentaries explain that our verse, besides its plain meaning, alludes to man's battle with his yetzer hara. Our question may be answered in this light. Our Sages teach that when one performs a mitzvah, he creates an angel who defends him in the Heavenly court. On the other hand, if one sins, G-d forbid, he creates an angel who accuses him in the Heavenly court.

One who wants to succeed in judgment on the upcoming High Holidays needs to have more mitzvot to his credit than sins, more defending angels than prosecuting angels. And, our Sages teach that when one repents, his sins become mitzvot. Thus, his accusing angels become defending angels. Our Sages teach, also, that one should always view himself as neither righteous nor wicked, but rather half-and-half. If so, then a person who wants to succeed in judgment needs to change one prosecuting angel to a defending angel. Paraphrasing our verse, when one goes to war against all of his enemies -- the prosecuting angels who represent his sins -- he really only needs one enemy to be given into his hands in order to succeed. (Kometz Ha'minchah)

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"When you will go out to war against your enemies . . . and you will see a beautiful woman among the captives . . ." (21:10-11)

This parashah teaches us the Torah's attitude toward beauty, says R' Joseph B. Soloveitchik z"l (1903-1993). "When you will go out to war against your enemies and you will see a beautiful woman among the captives"--when you fight your enemies--Canaanites, Persians, Greeks, Romans, or

Germans--you will undoubtedly see beautiful aspects of their cultures. Therefore, you should know: You are permitted to bring home everything beautiful that you see, but don't be fooled by external beauty. This is symbolized by the Torah's demand that the captive woman change out of her foreign clothes. The Torah demands a waiting period after the captive woman is brought into the home--i.e., examine this newfound culture very carefully. Is it really something that you want in your home? (Yemei Zikaron p.125)

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"You shall not see the ox of your brother or his sheep or goat cast off and hide yourself from them; you shall surely return them to your brother . . . you may not [literally: 'You will be unable'] to hide yourself." (Devarim 21:22-23)

R' Avraham Shaag z"l (1801-1876; Hungary and Eretz Yisrael) asks why these verses repeat themselves. What is added by the last phrase, "You may not hide yourself"?

He explains: Even a person who was born with negative character traits can acquire good traits in their place. This is done by behaving in a way which is contrary to one's natural tendencies. For example, if one is disposed to hate another person, one can conquer those feelings by going out of his way to do kindness for that person.

Chazal learn from the phrase, "You shall surely return them to your brother," that you must return a lost object even if its owner has already lost it, and you have already returned it, 100 times. If you perform this act of kindness repeatedly, says R' Shaag, "You will be unable to hide yourself"; it will become natural to do a kindness for the person that you once hated.

R' Shaag adds: Particularly in this month of Elul, when the shofar is blown to awaken us to return to Hashem, we must remove the hatred of others from our hearts, stop lording over others, eradicate lashon hara, and cease other infractions that we commit against our fellow men. Maybe, just maybe, by the time Yom Kippur has passed, the good behavior that we adopted during Elul will have become second nature. (Derashot Ha'Rash Vol. I, No. 25)

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"Do not observe your brother's donkey or his ox falling and turn yourself away -- you shall surely help it up." (22:4)

In Parashat Mishpatim, the same mitzvah is given, but there the Torah refers to the animal of "your enemy." Why this difference?

With regard to the verse in Mishpatim the Gemara asks: How does one have an enemy? Is it then permitted to hate another Jew? The Gemara explains that "your enemy" refers to one whom you have witnessed sinning. If he refuses to repent, you are obligated to hate him.

However, writes R' Meir Simcha Hakohen z"l (rabbi of Dvinsk; died 1926), that was only before the sin

of the Golden Calf, which is described in the Torah after Parashat Mishpatim. Before that sin, all Jews were on such an exalted level that they were able to hate someone merely because he had sinned. But today, who can make such a claim?! Rather, we are all brothers. (Meshech Chochmah)

R' Yaakov Yosef Hakohen of Polnoye z"l (student of the Ba'al Shem Tov; died 1785) interprets this homiletically: "Do not observe your brother's donkey or his ox falling"--it is better not to see your brother in a state of spiritual decline (becoming like a donkey or an ox). "Turn yourself away."

But if you do see, "You shall surely help [him] up." (Toldot Yaakov Yosef)

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### This Week in History, Halachah, and Minhag

8 Elul: This date was observed as a fast day in Worms (Vermiza), Germany in commemoration of the pogrom that occurred at the time of the Black Death in 5109 (1349). (Luach Davar B'ito p.1302)

Shabbat Parashat Ki Tetze: One who did not fulfil the obligation to hear Parashat Zachor when it was read on the Shabbat before Purim may fulfill that mitzvah this week, since the verses of Parashat Zachor (Devarim 25:17-19) are found in this week's parashah.

9 Elul: This date is the birthday and yahrzeit of Dan, son of Yaakov and Leah. (Seder Ha'dorot)

On this date in 5027 (1267), R' Moshe ben Nachman z"l (Ramban; 1194- 1270) arrived in Yerushalayim. He remained in Yerushalayim until after Yom Kippur and then traveled to Chevron to pray at the graves of the Patriarchs and to prepare a grave for himself there (Letter to his son Nachman, printed in Kitvei Ha'Ramban I p.367). Ramban eventually settled in Akko (Acre), and his burial place is unknown.

Today is the yahrzeit of R' Tzaddok Hakohen Rabinowitz z"l (1823- 1900; chassidic rebbe in Lublin). The writings of "Reb Tzaddok," as he is popularly known, are noted for their depth and they have gained widespread popularity even outside chassidic circles.

13 Elul: Today is the 100th yahrzeit of R' Yosef Chaim of Baghdad z"l, one of the most influential Sephardic halachic authorities of recent centuries. He left dozens of written works covering all areas of Torah, the best known of which include Ben Ish Chai, which contains practical halachot arranged according to the parashah, and Ben Yehoyada, a commentary on the aggadeta sections of the Talmud.

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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 **[Torah.org](https://torah.org)** start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

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