

THE DOUBLE LANGUAGE: TZEDEK TZEDEK TIRDOF

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape #514, Can a Ger be a Rosh Yeshiva? Good Shabbos!

The Double Language: Tzedek Tzedek Tirdof

At the beginning of the parsha, the Torah teaches us regarding how scrupulous judges must be in upholding the laws. The Torah expresses a redundancy in the commandment: "Righteousness, righteousness you shall pursue so that you will live and take possession of the land that Hashem, your G-d, gives you." [Devorim 16:20]. All the commentaries are bothered by this redundancy of "Tzedek Tzedek tirdof".

Rav Elya Meir Bloch gives an interesting insight that we have mentioned many times, but is worth repeating. Rav Elya Meir interprets that "the pursuit OF righteousness must also be pursued WITH righteousness". We are not merely being taught to run AFTER justice. We are told to run AFTER justice WITH justice.

Many times we pursue that which is righteous and fair. Our goal is to ensure that what is right prevails. We are often tempted to let the ends justify the means. We may overlook the fact that we have to step on a few laws here and there as long as in the end "righteousness will prevail".

We know unfortunately how many times throughout history the pursuit of justice was carried on with unjust ways. This has caused terrible destruction. The message of our pasuk [verse] is that we may not overlook unscrupulous methods to achieve lofty goals. Righteousness must be pursued WITH righteousness. Achieving Tzedek in any other way is not Tzedek.

The Double Torah: Mishneh Torah

In connection with the Jewish King, we are taught: "And it shall be that when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself two copies of this Torah (Mishneh Torah) in a scroll, from before the Kohanim, the Levites" [Devorim 17:18].

Rashi interprets the phrase Mishneh Torah as referring to two Torah scrolls - one which he places in his treasury and one that enters and goes forth with him. Rav Elya Meir Bloch states that the reason why a king needs two Torah scrolls is because a monarch must always be sensitive to what his generation can accept.

We would never suggest that Torah should be corrupted and halacha should be compromised to be palatable to the lowest common denominator in society. But it is important to know that sometimes a particular generation may not be able to accept all of Torah all at once. The king must be aware that he cannot overload the people with a burden that surpasses their spiritual capabilities at that moment.

Rav Elya Meir Bloch cites a pasuk from Prophets that suggests this same idea: "My L-rd, Hashem/Elokim, has granted me a tongue for teaching, to understand the need of the times in conveying matters to those who thirst (for knowledge)" [Yeshaya 50:4]. The prophet or king or Jewish leader must realize that there are certain situations when he must strengthen the people and he might need to do it in a way in which he does not do it all at once. The masses do not always operate at the level at which it will be productive to demand the maximum of them in every instance.

The king must have a special Torah that goes out with him and comes in with him. This must be the scroll he uses when he preaches to the nation. This is the scroll that teaches him what should be said and what should not be said. But then the king needs also a pristine Torah scroll that never leaves the ivory tower of his treasury house. This is the "master copy" that he must always look back at as a reference point. He must always have in mind the "gold standard" of Torah in his treasury house, despite the fact that he may be preaching from a different Torah scroll when he goes out amidst the masses.

The real perception of Torah must be the king's reference point that can never be totally pushed aside.

There was a recent wire service report concerning 'The Kilogram' in Paris. 'The Kilogram' in Paris is a calibrated weight by which all other kilograms in the entire world are measured. It is kept in triple layered glass casing to ensure that it is in no way influenced by the elements. Unfortunately, scientists are afraid that this standard kilogram has been losing some mass over the years. This - at least theoretically - has ramifications for all types of commerce throughout the world! The pure kilogram standard must never become corrupted!

The Sefer Torah of the Jewish King that remained in his treasure house is our pristine standard by which all other Sefrei Torah in the world - including the Sefer Torah that goes out and in with him -- are measured.

No Double Standard In Evaluating The Worth Of A Jewish Life

This past summer, I came across a volume entitled *Toras Chaim* containing incidents and stories from the life of Rav Chaim Soloveitchik. I found therein the following dramatic story:

In the year 1905 when Rav Chaim was the Rav in Brisk, there was a young Jewish Bundist. In that period of history there were many different philosophies and movements that were swirling around. Bundism was one of them. This fellow was a heretic who rejected everything relating to Judaism. He used to go out of his way to light up a cigarette on Shabbos whenever he would see Rav Chaim pass him in the street.

The fellow was also an anarchist. He took a picture of Czar Nicholas and shot a bullet through the picture. Czarist Russia did not know from the ACLU or from the idea of freedom of expression. The young man was arrested, brought to the local governor and was sentenced to execution for anarchy and sedition. The arrest took place right before Rosh HaShannah and the execution was scheduled to take place on Erev Succoth.

The governor of the area let it be known that if the Jews would ransom this anarchist for 5000 rubles, the charge would be dropped.

Rav Chaim gathered the people of Brisk and told them they were obligated to raise the money to save this Jewish boy. The members of the community were aghast. They told their Rabbi that it states explicitly in the Torah in Parshas Shoftim exactly the opposite of what he is advising them to do. They quoted him the pasuk "And you shall eradicate the evil from your midst" [Devorim 17:7]. What could be a bigger fulfillment of this Biblical command, they asked, then letting this Bundist be killed?

Rav Chaim told them that they misinterpreted the pasuk. The context of the pasuk is crucial. Immediately prior to this sentence we read "By the word of two witnesses or three witnesses shall the condemned person be put to death; he shall not be put to death by the word of a single witness" [17:6]. The Torah requires process. There must be testimony by witnesses. There must be deliberation and ruling by a Jewish court. Only then are we commanded to eradicate the evil from our midst.

To take the words "eradicate evil from your midst" as a *carte blanche* to say that we can get rid of every undesirable character in the city is an incorrect application of Torah law. He insisted that the community raise the money to free the young man.

This happened right before Rosh HaShannah. The community did not raise the money. Erev Yom Kippur came. As is the universal custom, on Erev Yom Kippur the community davens Mincha early and then goes home for the meal before the fast (*seudah hamafsekes*).

After Mincha on Erev Yom Kippur, Rav Chaim announced that the Gabbai was instructed not to open the shul for Kol Nidre until the full amount of the ransom was raised. Furthermore, no one would be allowed into shul on all of Yom Kippur until the money was raised. The saving of Jewish life - even

the life of a Bundist - is important enough to violate Yom Kippur, Rav Chaim ruled.

The community had no choice. They went and raised the money, presented the funds to the governor and freed the individual one half hour before sunset on Erev Yom Kippur. Rav Chaim and the other people involved in this effort did not have time to have their seudah hamafsekes that year. They went straight from the governor's office to Kol Nidre.

This is a significant story. It teaches us the importance of every single soul in Israel. It does not matter if he is a Bundist or a Communist, whether he is Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform. A Jew is a Jew. The Brisker dynasty are known for their zealotry (Kanaus), but nevertheless their biggest zealotry was for the Rabbinic teaching that "whoever saves a single Jewish soul is as if he saved the whole world" [Bava Basra 11a].

Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, Washington DavidATwerskyd@aol.com Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.org

This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion (#514). The corresponding halachic portion for this tape is: The Mitzvah of Escorting Guests. The other halachic portions for Parshas Shoftim from the Commuter Chavrusah Series are:

1. Tape # 019 - Copying Cassette Tapes
2. Tape # 109 - Hasogas G'vul: Infringing on Another's Livelihood
3. Tape # 155 - Ba'al Tashchis: Cutting Down That Troublesome Tree
4. Tape # 202 - Melech v'lo Malkah: A Jewish Queen?
5. Tape # 249 - May A Daughter Say Kaddish?
6. Tape # 338 - Relying on a Goral
7. Tape # 383 - Circumstantial Evidence
8. Tape # 426 - The Mitzvah of Escorting Guests
9. Tape # 470 May a Convict Escape?
10. Tape # 514 Can a Ger Be a Rosh Yeshiva?
11. Tape # 558 Competition Among Teachers
12. Tape # 602 Saying Kaddish for 12 Months
13. Tape # 646 Cutting Branches of Fruit Trees
14. Tape # 690 The Grandson and Kaddish
15. Tape # 734 Making a Bracha on a New House

Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information

Text Copyright © 2004 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and **Torah.org**.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, Washington.

Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Yerushalayim.