

# YOU CAN

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

## Parshas Ki Seitzei

### You Can't Turn A Blind Eye

*These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 911, Returning A Lost Pacifier. Good Shabbos!*

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This week's parsha contains the following three pasukim: "You shall not see your brother's ox or his sheep driven away, and hide yourself from them; you shall surely bring them back to your brother. And if your brother not be near you and you don't know him, then you shall bring it home to your house and it shall be with you until your brother inquires of it, and then you will restore it to him. And so shall you do with his donkey, and so shall you do with his garment, and so shall you do with every lost thing of your brother's which he has lost; and you have found; you may not hide yourself." [Devorim 22: 1-3].

It is noteworthy about this passage that in these 3 pasukim, the word "achicha" [your brother] appears 5 times! We know that the Torah is extremely economical when it comes to choosing its words. There does appear to be some redundant use of the word "achicha". The pasukim could have easily been written without using this same word again and again and again. Obviously, the Torah is trying to tell us something by the repetitive use of this word.

I saw an interesting explanation of this in an essay by Rav Matisyahu Solomon. Rav Matisyahu Solomon bases his thought on a Medrash in Parshas Vayetzei. When Lavan chased after Yaakov Avinu and it was not at all clear whether or not his intention was to actually do battle with Yaakov, the pasuk tells us that Yaakov instructed his children: "Gather stones" [Bereishis 31:46]. However, the pasuk there uses the expression "Vayomer Yaakov el echav" (and Yaakov said to his brethren), rather than "Vayomer Yaakov el banav" (and Yaakov said to his sons), even though it is clear from the context that he was speaking to his sons!

Rashi there notes this anomaly and explains that the Torah used the word "echav" to connote that Yaakov and his children were "brothers in arms". When one is willing to risk his life for someone else

he loves, the word the Torah uses to express this relationship is "achva" [brotherhood]. The Torah was not addressing the biological relationship between Yaakov and his sons. Rather, it was addressing the emotional and strategic relationship that was coming to bear in the impending confrontation with Lavan.

The Medrash Rabbah in Vayetzei makes almost the same comment. It emphasizes that in the Holy Language (Lashon HaKodesh), words define the essence of an object. The word "achva" [brotherhood] in its essence means a comrade in arms, a kinship of emotions and of purpose. It has nothing to do with whether the person is a sibling or an offspring.

This information clarifies the redundancy of the word "achicha" in these three pasukim.

The Torah is not merely telling us in the mitzvah of returning a lost object that when one finds a watch, he returns it to his owner. The Torah is telling us is that the relationship between a Jew and his fellow Jew should be that of an "ach" -- the type of person one cares about, a person about whom one is constantly concerned with his welfare. A kinship must exist between the two of us.

Rabbeinu Yona writes regarding this mitzvah writes: "The Torah warns us to care about our brothers in the time of their trouble." Rabbeinu Yona advises regarding this mitzvah that every community should have organizations that are there to take care of the needs of the people of the town. Groups such as Bikur Cholim Societies, Jewish Family Services, etc. are thus all under the rubric of "Returning a Lost Object" (HaShavas Aveidah). If it is incumbent to take care of the person's ox, it is certainly incumbent to take care of the person himself!

Rav Matisyahu concludes his essay with a beautiful analysis of the expression "lo suchal li'hisalem" [you are not able to look away]. Normally, if the Torah was going to forbid us to ignore the lost object of one's fellow Jew, the Torah should have simply said "Do not look away" (Lo Tisalem). That is not what the Torah said.

What does the Torah mean when it says Lo Suchal L'hisalem? It means "You CAN'T walk away! You are not CAPABLE of turning a blind eye!" Why? "Because he is your brother." That is the message here. This is the relationship a person should have with his fellow Jew: Not merely you should not walk away; but you CAN'T walk away!

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