



From the desk of
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עיר התורה שקרובה אליך

Office of the Rabbinate of Elad, Rosh HaAyin and Herzelia

Religious Court of Elad * Batei Hora'ah * Religious Services * Marriage Licensing * Kashrut * Mikvaot * Eiruvim

TORAT

Parashat Mishpatim

HAMELECH

Return to Owner

We are taught in this week's *parashah* to return a lost article. The Torah singles out an animal which strayed and lost its way. Baal HaTurim points out that the word for straying, "*to'eh*," can be found elsewhere in *Tanach* referring to a person who has strayed from the wise path. We can conclude from here that if we are obligated to return a straying animal to its owner, how much more so must we do our utmost to bring back straying souls to our Father in Heaven.

Brotherhood

The Torah is teaching us a timeless lesson. The Jewish People are one unit, like one body. When a person's toe hurts, that can affect the whole body. So too, when a Jew is in pain anywhere, that can affect all of us.

We are all responsible for each other. We must do what we can to help our brethren reconnect to their roots. This can only be accomplished with warmth and brotherhood. Screaming and attacking will not do the job.

Unfortunately, in our times, too often, difference of opinions engenders feelings of animosity. In order to combat this, each individual has to work on his own personal *Ahavat Yisroel*. Almost all irreligious Jews today can be classified as "*tinok shenishbah*" – they did not merit a religious upbringing, so they simply do not know better. Therefore, they will not be held accountable for their misdeeds. Our only key to success is the promotion of peace.

Through the Grapevine

In Hullin 92a, Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish teaches that *Klal Yisrael* are compared to a grapevine. The strong branches are the supporters of Torah. The grape clusters represent the Torah scholars. The leaves represent the simple folk who work in the field and orchards; plowing, planting and reaping what the Torah scholars eat. The thin twirly twigs represent the empty ones, void of Torah and *mitzvot*. Rashi comments that these twigs are basically useless. Rabbeinu Gershon explains that the reference is not to twigs but to small hard grapes which will never ripen.

A Rav was once asked to say a *hesped* (eulogy) for one of those people who fit into this category of "empty ones of Israel." At first, he was reluctant to eulogize. He did not have anything complimentary to say. Then he remembered the Gemara, how all parts of the vine have a role to play. So he came and quoted the Gemara which equates Israel to a vine. Then he asked, "What praise can be said of those who did not accomplish much in the realm of Torah and *mitzvot*? Well, there is one sin which the *Bnei Torah* have a hard time with, which the unlearned keep well. What is that? The prohibition banning the mere thinking of Torah thoughts in unclean surroundings. Great Torah scholars have difficulty with that. But the unlearned observe it meticulously. So we all need each other. Each one has a role to play."



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Same Boat

The Chid"ra (Rabbi Chayim Yosef Dovid Azulay) comments: Everyone is meant to say the entire *Viduy* (confession) on Yom Kippur, even someone who knows that he did not commit a certain sin enumerated there.

Rabbi Moshe Hagiz explains this with the well-known parable. A group of people boarded a ship. Each was shown to his personal cabin. The ship embarked on its voyage and loud noises were heard from inside one cabin. The crew came to see what was happening. One man had a drill and began drilling the wall of his cabin. The crew screamed at him to stop.

He asked, puzzled, "What do you want from me?! I am drilling in my own cabin! What is it your business?!"

They yelled back, "You have a right to sleep and spend time in your cabin. But if you drill a hole, we all go down! You have no right to do that!"

So, too, we are all responsible for one another, physically and spiritually. One man's sins affect the entire nation. Therefore we all must recite the *viduy* confession, for if we did not commit these sins, someone else did.

Why Are You So Happy?

Once on Simchat Torah, an unlearned man was dancing enthusiastically. A *dayan* asked him, "What are you so happy about?"

The man answered, "Two weeks ago, on Yom Kippur, I confessed to having taken bribes. What bribes? I'm not a judge! That's your issue.

Nonetheless, I said *viduy* because we're all responsible for each other. So too, on Simhat Torah. You learn, but we're all in this together. All Jews are one. I confess for your sins, and I'm ecstatic at your learning!"

Keeping Shabbos

One day, Rabbi Yisroel Salanter walked into his *Kollel* in Kovno and banged the *stender*. He then delivered a fiery *drasha* on the importance of observing Shabbat. After he finished, some of his students asked why that *drasha* was given just then.

Reb Yisrael responded that he had just heard of *Chillul Shabbat* in a distant town.

The students asked, "What does that have to do with us?"

Reb Yisrael said, "Plenty. If we would be more careful with our Shabbos observance, so would they!"

Far-Reaching Effects

Reb Chayim Soloveitchik of Brisk was learning with his *talmidim*. An onlooker was amazed at his Torah genius. He commented, "If only you would go and learn in Paris or Berlin, you could make a major impact on the community there."

Reb Chayim responded, "We can learn right here and it also affects Jews everywhere for the good."

United As One

In Kiev, Russia, 1912, a Jew named Bailus was charged with a serious offense. Jews all over were



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doing what they could do try to disprove the false charges. The prosecution tried to “prove” that Jews have no problem spilling gentile blood because the Jews view the gentiles as subhuman. They brought as “proof” the Talmudic dictum which states, “You (Jews) are called ‘Adam’ (man) whereas nations of the world are not called ‘man.’

In an effort to cool down the rising anti-Semitism, Reb Meir Shapiro of Lublin explained as follows: The word “Adam” means “one man.” Many gentiles are many people. Only Jews have this degree of unity that, as dispersed as we are, we share common goals and aspirations, feelings and hopes. The best proof of this is this very court case. If a gentile would be on trial, who would bat an eyelid? Only his closest family and friends. But here is one Jew on trial and Jews the world over are frantically concerned!

No Break-ins

In Moed Katan 25b, the story is told that when Rabbi Elyashiv passed away [Note: this is a Talmudic Sage, not to be confused with Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, the Great Torah Scholar who passed away a few years ago.] there were seventy burglaries in his hometown. Rashi explains that these thieves had always been around, but for as long as Rabbi Elyashiv was alive, his merit protected his community.

Once again, we see that the merit of one individual can protect an entire community.

Overflowing Cup

The Maggid of Dubna once asked the Vilna Gaon how to go about influencing others for the better. The Vilna Gaon is said to have answered with a parable: Fill your own cup until it is overflowing. All excess liquid will spill over into those vessels in its proximity.

So too, the best way to effectively impact others is to fortify yourself. Be a person who is strong in *emunah* and dedication to Torah study and Torah ideals. Automatically, that will provide fortification to those around you.

Bring ‘em Back Home

In truth, there are many levels of influencing others for good. There certainly is what to be said for *kiruv* organizations, lectures, seminars and one-on-one discussions. But we also cannot negate the positive spiritual impact created by each Jew strengthening his own personal observance.

Step One is to care, not to write off any Jew. To care for his soul, to hope and pray that he will return to his roots. If you really care about him, then you will not throw stones or scream at him. You will speak to him nicely and show him by example that the Torah way is what brings a person true happiness and a genuine sense of fulfillment and purpose.

May we merit to be among those who bring lost souls back home to their Father in Heaven.

Fondly,
Mordechai Malka