

killing you is a greater danger than the one who does not greet you bearing gifts.”

A great question was given added meaning through the vehicle of the *mashal*, parable. The people looked at the *Maggid*, expecting an answer also with a *mashal*. The *Maggid* did not let them down. “A seemingly well-to-do-farmer visited a *yeshivah* to speak with its *rosh yeshivah*,” began the *Maggid*. “I would like the *rosh yeshivah* to select his finest student for my daughter. I will, of course, treat the young man like royalty and provide for his every need.

“The *rosh yeshivah* chose one of his ‘lions,’ an erudite student whose diligence matched his ethical character, indeed, a special young man. The *shidduch* was finalized, and a date was set for the wedding. A few months later, the wedding took place amidst great pomp and joy. Wonderful boy, wonderful girl: who could ask for more? The day after the wedding, the young groom sat down to breakfast at the home of his father-in-law (as was the prevalent custom in those days) and was served a piece of course, black bread with vinegar to use as a dip (to soften the bread). The young man almost choked from the bread. After breakfast, he remained nauseous most of the day from the taste. Lunch and dinner were more of the same. After two weeks of such meals, the delicate young man looked a sad version of his former self. He had deteriorated to skin and bones, and he had no physical strength left. He literally did not have the strength to raise the dreadful slice of bread to his mouth.

“When the father-in-law took note of his prize son-in-law’s emaciated appearance, he berated him for not eating. When he saw that his rebuke fell on deaf ears, he hired two ruffians at a substantial rate per hour to stand over his son-in-law and, if necessary, force-feed him. Every time the young man gagged on the bread, they would shove it down his throat. After all, his father-in-law was paying them a pretty penny to watch over him.

“One night, the son-in-law was lucky enough to escape from the village and return to his *yeshivah*. He looked and felt like a wreck. The *rosh yeshivah* fed him and put him to bed. The next day, his father-in-law arrived with his list of complaints. When questioned why he did not feed his son-in-law, his response was, ‘I have no money. I did the best I could with whatever I have.’ When the *rosh yeshivah* heard this, he raised his voice, ‘*Mechutzaf!* What audacity you have! You claim that you have no money to feed your son-in-law, yet, you are able to spend a king’s ransom in gold to hire two ruffians to force-feed him!’”

This is what the *pasuk* teaches us: “Perhaps you think that Ammon and Moav could not afford to supply you with bread and water. Why, then, were they able to hire Bilaam to curse you?” This is a double standard if there ever was one.

Va’ani Tefillah

אתה – כי תהלתנו אתה – *Ki S’hilaseinu Atah. Since our praise is to You.*

A Jew is to view nature as Hashem’s way of concealing Himself. He cloaks His actions under the veil of natural occurrence. We understand that nothing takes place without Hashem. Therefore, as long as someone views sickness as natural and the physician as his healer and the one who warrants his gratitude, he succeeds in further concealing Hashem’s role in the world. When we view illness as Heaven-sent for our benefit (a benefit which is decided by Hashem), then the physician is merely Hashem’s agent. Thus, the One who should be thanked and praised is only Hashem. Therefore, when we state, “Since our praise is to You,” we are intimating that, if Hashem heals us, we will praise Him and proclaim His role in the world: “Hashem, if You heal us, we will, of course (out of human decency), thank the physician, but, after all is said and done, we know that You, Hashem, are our healer. We will extol Your greatness for having sent Your cure via Your agents – the physicians, medical staff and medicines.”

לזכר נשמת

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A dear friend whose contribution to Peninim’s success will always be remembered.

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Parashas Ki Seitzei

תשע"ז

פרשת כי תצא

כי יהיה לאיש בן סורר ומורה איננו שמע בקול אביו ובקול אמו
If a man will have a wayward and rebellious son, who does not hearken to the voice of his father and the voice of his mother. (21:18)

The Torah refers to the father of the wayward and rebellious son as an *ish*, a man, and then goes on to state the boy’s sin: he does not obey his father and mother. Why does the Torah refer to the *ish*/father as the boy’s progenitor, as having begotten him, but – in contrast – when it addresses his disobedience, he is considered to be son of both his father and mother? This inconsistency in and of itself might be the precursor for the boy’s degenerate behavior. Parents have a child; it is a boy! The father immediately takes charge. He has a son! It probably “slipped his mind” that children require a balanced upbringing, in which both parents are involved (or, at least, an approach that includes both paternal and maternal input). When a boy is held captive by the father who thinks he knows what is best for his son, we start the child off on a road that could lead to wayward rebelliousness. Now, when the child disobeys, it is the parents – father and mother – whom he disobeys. Perhaps if both would have had input at the onset, they might not be now standing in front of the *bais din*, court of Jewish law.

Alternatively, *ish* means man. The father was too busy with his life – spiritual or mundane – to act very fatherly. As far as the son growing up was concerned, the man who sat at the head of the table issuing directives to his mother and the entire family was an *ish*, a man. He did not know him as a father. When a child misses fatherly love, he will find ways to gain attention, not necessarily in a loving manner. This is what could happen when a child seeks love and does not receive it. Children do not do well with an *ish* – a male figure. They want a father who cares.

Chazal (*Talmud Sanhedrin* 71a) teach that such a rebellious son never existed and never will. There are so many conditions required by the Torah for a boy to be designated as a *ben sorer u’moreh* – conditions that are, for the most part, improbable. The boy’s father and mother must have the same voice, look exactly alike and be the same height. While on the one hand, the exegesis is such that the criteria may be viewed homiletically, thereby implying that there must be collaboration and consistency between the parents. Both parents should be of the same voice: conveying the same message; look like one another: consistent behavior between parents – internally and externally – should reign in the home. They should be of the same height, with neither one lording over the other. There should be respect between parents whereby their son sees

them as one. Why, then, does the Torah cite a case which is so *halachically* unusual that it never existed? The *Talmud* explains that the Torah relates these laws for the express purpose of availing us reward for studying (applying) the educational principles derived from these *pesukim*. Nonetheless, Rabbi Yonasan says, “I once saw a rebellious son who was executed, and I sat on his grave.”

Another example of a case that neither was, nor ever will be, is the *ir ha’nidachas*, an entire city whose inhabitants worship idols. In order to qualify for the ultimate punishment, it is incumbent that this city not have a single door that does not have a *mezuzah*. Even by today’s standards, the most assimilated Jew has some kind of *mezuzah*, even if it is *pasul*, invalid. People might do whatever they want inside their houses, but they have *mezuzos* on their front doors to declare their identities. Once again, the purpose of citing the laws of *ir ha’nidachas* is to teach important principals concerning the scourge of *avodah zarah*, idol worship. Regarding the *ir ha’nidachas*, however, Rabbi Yonasan also commented, “I saw such a city, and I sat on its rubble.” Our question is now two-fold: How is it that Rabbi Yonasan can attest to two events which others claim could never have occurred?

In “Rav Schwab on Chumash,” *Rav Shimon Schwab, zl*, quotes *Chazal* (*Sanhedrin* 37b), who teach that, since the destruction of the *Bais Hamikdash*, the *batei din*, Jewish Courts, no longer have the power to execute one whose sin warrants capital punishment. Hashem knows – and does not ignore – the individual’s culpability, seeing to it that the “execution” is carried out “naturally.” This means, if, for example, a person commits a sin whose punishment is *sekillah*, stoning, he will die due to a fall from a high place, i.e. a roof, or trampled by animals; someone whose sin warrants the punishment of death by fire will die from a snake bite, or fall into a conflagration. One who deserves to die by the sword will either be handed over to a gentile government or attacked (and killed) by bandits or thieves. One who warrants death by strangulation might either drown or suffocate. (This certainly does not imply that anyone who succumbs to any of the above or similar deaths has committed a sin which warrants one of the *arba missos bais din*, four types of judicially mandated executions.)

We derive from here that the judicial system as it was in force during the tenure of the *Bais Hamikdash* has ceased to exist; even though we no longer can impose the various forms of death penalty, this does not mean that the offender goes free. He must remember that the individual in question has sinned against Hashem, Who neither forgets, nor is bound by a human court of law. The sinner will receive his due – in due time. Thus, since the *ben sorer u’moreh* and *ir ha’nidachas* who committed the sins do not fit the judicial criteria for the death penalty, they will receive their due punishment from Hashem. It is not as if there never has

been a *ben sorer u'moreh*, or a city that had completely turned away from Hashem. Indeed, Rabbi Yonasan contended that they have existed.

Apparently, Rabbi Yonasan had chanced upon the rubble of what once had been a Jewish city. Upon investigation, he discovered that the residents of that city had all worshipped idols. Perhaps one of the homes still had a *mezuzah* on its door, precluding this city's falling under the criteria for establishing it as an *ir ha'nidachas*. Although *Bais din* did not have the authority to destroy it according to the full letter of the law, Hashem certainly did.

Likewise, Rabbi Yonasan once came upon the grave of a thirteen year old boy who, he soon found out, had lived a life of abandon, gluttony and rebelliousness. The courts could not declare him to be a *ben sorer u'moreh*, because his case did not fit all of the conditions required for this designation. Hashem did His part, administering the death penalty in a manner such that no one was the wiser. Rabbi Yonasan was acutely aware of the truth. These were no ordinary deaths. These were Heavenly-mandated executions. When *bais din* is unable, due to halachic stricture, to carry out the execution, Hashem steps in.

Sin is a tragedy. The Torah has punitive measures in place: for disciplinary purposes, and in order to teach that no sin will go unrequited. Life is about taking responsibility. If you sin, you pay. We might think that, if the punitive response is not immediately forthcoming, we "got away with it"; we eluded the hangman's noose. Rabbi Yonasan teaches us differently. Everybody pays.

Rav Meir Schwab adds a frightening story to his father's *dvar* Torah. It was during the late 1950's that *Rav* Schwab, as the *Rav* of a Baltimore congregation, was also responsible for the *hashgachah*, supervision of the city's kosher meat. During a visit to a local butcher shop, he pointed out a correction (that should be performed concerning the *traiboring*, deveining, removing the prohibited veins from the meat). The butcher took strong issue with *Rav* Schwab's meddling into his business. He became furious and raised a meat cleaver in a threatening manner to insinuate what might happen if... *Rav* Schwab took the hint. He quickly retreated, understanding that he was not welcome in the establishment.

Rav Schwab soon moved to New York to accept his position with *Khal Adas Yeshurun*. A short while later, he was informed that the butcher who had threatened him had fallen down a flight of stairs, broken his neck and died. This is a frightening story in its own right. It was *Rav* Schwab who, upon hearing the sad news, put it into perspective when he entered the incident into his diary. He wrote: *Binfol oyvicha al tismach*, "When your enemy falls, do not rejoice." G-d forbid that I should rejoice over this tragedy, but one must take note and learn from all occurrences."

here that, when the *yetzer hora*, evil inclination, reigns over a person, or, rather, if the *yetzer hora* becomes part of this person, his ability to hear, listen, to accept, becomes so impeded that he is unable to listen. He does not just "not listen"; he is unable to listen. He becomes hearing-impaired.

The *yetzer hora* stands guard over a person's ability to listen, thus impairing him, impeding his ability to change, to repent, to alter his nefarious ways and activities. This grants us a new outlook, a deeper understanding of those who – regardless of the number of times we reach out to them to refrain from sin – continue to ignore us. Why? Are their hearts made of stone? Are they hearing-impaired? Are they blind to the disaster they are courting? Yes! Once the *yetzer hora* has overwhelmed them, they are unable to think, see or do anything. They have become so enslaved to the *yetzer hora* that nothing penetrates their physical world. They might hear sound, but the message it conveys is unintelligible.

Perhaps this is why the Torah underscores *Yisro's* ability to "hear" *vayishma* *Yisro*, "And *Yisro* heard" (everything that had happened to the emerging Jewish nation when they left Egypt). Was he the only one who knew what had taken place? The whole world was aware of what happened to the Egyptians: the Jewish People's exodus and the eventual drowning of the entire Egyptian army. What makes *Yisro* different? He heard the message – they heard nothing but the sounds. Their *yetzer hora* blocked the message from entering into their hearts, from imbuing their lives with faith in Hashem. The maidservant at the Red Sea saw such an unprecedented Revelation that her experience was even greater than that of the *Navi* *Yechezkel*. Yet, as the venerable *Horav* *Chaim Shmuelevitz*, *zl*, would say, *Zi iz altz gebliben a shifcha*. "Nonetheless, she still remained a maidservant." She saw; she heard – but did not change. Why? Her *yetzer hora* prevented the message from being processed. Thus, she remained a *shifcha*.

I have always wondered about this phenomenon. I have given classes to the most wonderful groups of Jews. They are kind, honest, virtuous, and wholly good. They never miss a class, despite the weather and the infirmity of advanced age. Can I say that my message has penetrated their psyches? Perhaps, but they still have neither made their homes kosher, nor decided to observe *Shabbos*. Are they deaf? Have I lost my ability to reach people? No – on both counts. The *yetzer hora* is working overtime and does not permit my message from getting across. One day, I hope the *yetzer hora* will be caught off guard, and then...

כי קבור תקברנו ביום ההוא

Rather, you shall surely bury him on that day. (21:23)

The prohibition against keeping a body unburied overnight applies even to one who has died of natural causes. The *Talmud Yerushalmi Moed Kattan* (2:4) states that one is not permitted to disinter the bones of a corpse unless it is for the purpose of reintering them in a family plot. This prohibition is applicable, even if it means moving the bones to a cemetery that is more dignified than the original place where the body had been buried. Also, a person/*neshamah* would rather be buried in close proximity to family (*Meshech Chochmah*). The *Meshech Chochmah* seems to say that same-day burial is requisite even if one is only moving bones, since he cites the above *pasuk* (concerning same-day burial) in connection with the *Yerushalmi. Tikbirenu bayom ha'hu*, "Bury him on that day"

has been a mandate of *Chevra Kaddisha*, Jewish Burial Society, from earliest times. One who is involved in dealing with *meisim*, the dead, is cognizant of -- and sensitive to -- this demand. The earthly container must be returned to its earthly source soon after the *neshamah* takes leave of it. The following story cited by *Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita*, was related to him by *Rav* David Shmidel, the director of *Asra Kaddisha*, an organization in *Eretz Yisrael* committed to preserving ancient gravesites.

The gentiles destroyed the Jewish cemetery in the city of Grodno, Russia. All of the bones remaining from the decomposed bodies were collected in a container. Apparently, they were not prepared to bury the remains of the Jews. *Rav* Shmidel did not wait; he immediately phoned Russia, and, after being pushed from one bureaucrat to another, was finally able to obtain a release of the bones to have them removed for burial in the Jewish cemetery. He asked one of his trusted aides to fly to Russia immediately, retrieve the bones, and, on that very same day, have them buried in the Jewish cemetery, in order to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *ki kevor tikbirenu ba'yom ha'hu*.

Rav Shmidel's agent flew to Russia, and, upon landing, hired a car and driver to take him to the executive in charge of cemeteries. As is common in Russia, no one was "available"; the earliest time the executive was to be expected was in two weeks! The agent was no fool: "I will wait right here for two weeks. I brought enough food to sustain me for two weeks." The Russians realized that this man was no pushover. They immediately made some "calls," and the director appeared! The agent asked the gentile driver to help bury the bones. "I will pay you double if you will help," the man pleaded. "Have you lost your mind? Do you realize how large of a hole we will have to dig in order to bury all of these bones? And you expect to finish by sunset? Impossible! Perhaps if you had fifty men, it might be feasible. Otherwise, you are dreaming!"

The agent from *Eretz Yisrael* looked at the truckload of bones and realized that, indeed, it would take fifty men working all day to complete the burial before *shkiah*, sunset. The agent was a deeply religious man. He looked up at the sky and cried out, "Hashem, I have done all that I can do. I resolutely did everything within my power to see to it that these bones should be gathered and made available for immediate burial in *kever Yisrael*, Jewish grave. I am only a human being, however, one person. It is impossible for me alone to do the work of fifty able-bodied men. Therefore, Hashem, I say that I have done mine. It is now, Hashem, for You to do the rest."

No sooner had he finished his short, sincere prayer than a Jew approached him looking for a certain Jewish grave. *Rav* Shmidel's agent asked, "Who are you and from where are you?" "My name is Chaim K., and I am with a group of *Chassidim* who have come to pray at a certain grave." "How many are you?" asked the agent. "I have fifty *bachurim*, young *yeshivah* students, on the bus." When the agent heard this, he knew that Hashem had answered his prayers. He walked over to the bus, alighted the stairs, and said to the *bachurim*, "My friends, let me tell you a story."

When the *bachurim* heard the story, they immediately removed their jackets, rolled up their sleeves, and began to dig. By sundown that night, they had succeeded in burying all of the bones that had been waiting to reach *kever Yisrael*. The agent returned to *Eretz Yisrael* filled with emotion and awe. His sincere devotion to a *mitzvah*, together with his emotional plea to Hashem from the inner recesses of his heart, brought about the fulfillment of the *mitzvah* of *kevor tikbienu ba'yom ha'hu*. His joy, however, was still incomplete, as he

walked through the door of his apartment and noticed his oldest daughter, who, at the age of thirty-one, was past her prime for marriage: "*Ribbono shel Olam*, You were so good to me when I needed to have the bones of those Jews buried that day. Yet, my joy is incomplete as long as I see my daughter's sad face. She (we) has (have) gone through so much. Please put an end to our waiting and allow her to find her designated match." Two months later, his joy was complete when his daughter became engaged.

Was it a miracle, or, as a Torah scholar observed: "When one performs *chesed* with the dead, Hashem rewards him with the merit to establish a *bayis*, house, family"?

לֹא יָבוֹא עֲמוּנֵי וּמוֹאבֵי בַקְהֵל ד' . . .
עַל דְּבַר אֲשֶׁר לֹא קָדְמוּ אֹתְכֶם בְּלֶחֶם
וּבְמִים . . . וְאֲשֶׁר שָׂכַר עֲלֵיךְ אֶת בְּלַעַם
An Amomite or Moabite shall not enter the congregation of Hashem... because of the fact that they did not greet you with bread and water... and because he hired against you Bilaam. (23:4,5)

Two reasons are given as to why we may not accept converts from the nations of Ammon and Moav: A) They did not come forward to greet us with bread and water as we journeyed through the wilderness following 210 years of slavery; B) They hired Bilaam, the evil pagan prophet, to curse us. These are two good reasons, which are clearly quite different from one another. The first reason criticizes their lack of etiquette, of human decency. The second reason excoriates them for attempting to destroy one another. They are so distant from one another that they hardly belong in the same *pasuk*.

The *Maggid, zl*, of Dubno was not only a brilliant Torah scholar, but he was also a prolific speaker who captivated his audiences with his incredible knowledge and ability to employ the power of the *meshal*, parable, story, to explain the most difficult passages. He once said that, with regard to any *pasuk* that was presented to him, he was able to ask a question by using a *meshal*, and offer a lucid explanation, also using a *meshal*. The people had difficulty believing this to be true, so they decided to test him. They selected the above *pasuk*, prohibiting an Amoni or Moavi from marrying into the Jewish people, as grounds for the test.

The *Maggid* thought for a moment and began to relate the following story: "A wealthy man arranged for a *shidduch*, matrimonial match, for his daughter. Since the boy lived quite a distance from the *kallah*, bride, it was decided to celebrate the *tannaim*, engagement, in a hall approximately midway between them. The plan was for the girl's mother to arrive later with the delicacies for the celebration. While the father was sitting in conversation with his future son-in-law and family, his own son, who had left with the mother, came running in to the room, disheveled and dirty, "Oy, oy! On our way here we had an accident. The wagon turned over, and all of the food, the fish, the meat and all of the desserts were ruined. The bottles of wine and liquor are smashed and, furthermore, our mother was killed!" Obviously, this boy's mind was seriously challenged, in that he placed greater significance over the lost food and drink than over the tragic death of his mother.

"This same idea applies with regard to our *pasuk*," continued the *maggid*. "First, the Torah recounts Ammon and Moav's lack of decency and then later adds the fact that they hired Bilaam to curse them. Obviously, someone who is bent on