

Suddenly, that defenceless creature with underdeveloped wings is in constant risk of being swallowed whole. Eventually she longs for the nurturing nest.

R Eibshitz explains that people's lusts take on the same fate and in the above case; "The half that he doesn't have is more-dear to him than the half that he does have."

Thus even though he has achieved 50% of his ambition, nevertheless in his eyes it is less than 50%. Now that he has achieved it, he turns to the 50% he has not achieved and gives greater value to that. A person who constantly pursues wealth will never truly feel fulfilled. Even when achieving his desired wealth,

the lure for more will always provide a greater pull.

Our Parasha teaches that a thief who is caught must pay double the amount he has stolen. The Torah seems adamant to stamp out this vile sin, but why punish him by enforcing double payment?

The Kli Yakar (21:12) explains that the thief personifies lust. He is always chasing after money and wealth. He wasn't satisfied with what he had, he craved to double his money – therefore as a punishment (Mida Kneget Mida – like for like) he is obliged to pay double.

This is also hinted via the word used for money – Mamon. The word Mamon is spelt with the letters Mem, Vav, Nun.

When you spell these letters out they all begin and end with the same letter.

Thus one who steals Mamon (made up of double letters and implying never ending lust,) pays double.

In the times of Noach when Hashem decided to destroy the world, one of the determining factors was their rampant theft. The epicentre of this sin lies in the haughtiness of the individual, placing his interest and lust above that of society.

Money might make the world go around, but we shouldn't make it the focus of our world.

■ Shabbat Shalom

RABBI SHIMSHON SILKIN - DIRECTOR OF CHAZON UK



INTEGRITY

Much has been made lately about the importance of honesty and integrity in business and everyday life especially during times of economic hardship when people are sometimes driven to "beg, borrow or steal". A recent study showed that as many as 24% of married couples do not entirely trust each other particularly with regards to spending money. This week's Parsha addresses the significance of honesty so strongly that an individual who is caught committing theft is sold by the Beis Din into slavery (Shemos 21:2; 22:2, see Rashi). This remarkable and highly unusual punishment is indicative of the thief's attitude. As the Gemara explains, a thief acts with blatant abandon behaving as though the "Supreme Eye is not watching" as the Posuk (Yeshaya 29:15) says: 'Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from Hashem, and their works are in the dark, and they say, who sees us? And who knows us?' (Bava Kamma 79b). This criminal who sought to deny a superior authority is now thrust into an environment where he is subject to constant scrutiny under a strict mandate.

Interestingly the relationship between the crime of infidelity and the punishment of slavery can

also be explained along the lines of the concept of "awareness". The commentaries all offer profound insight into the connection between the end of the Aseres haDibros and the opening of the chapter of civil law. The Ramban explains it to be a natural follow on from "lo sachmod, you shall not covet", because the basis of all common decency is the respect one must feel display towards another's space and property (Ramban to Shemos 21:1, see Sforno ad loc). The Ibn Ezra takes it one step further. Remarking on the amazement "many people" display towards the mitzvah of lo sachmod because of the near-impossibility of controlling an emotion such as jealousy, he connects the prohibition to the very first of the ten commandments: I am Hashem your G-d. In his famous analogy, the Ibn Ezra compares the envy a person may feel toward his neighbour to the desire a peasant may feel to marry the king's daughter. Both are illogical because they are effectively out of reach. Someone who lives with a clear and real awareness of Divine providence will never be envious of another person's success because that is clearly a product of Hashem's design.

This idea can help us further associate Parshas Mishpotim and its description of servitude with its predecessor Yisro and its conveyance of this concept of awareness. A slave is constantly cognizant of a watchful eye, he can never quite fully relax – that's what it means to be an Eved. In his previous criminal life the Eved lost this sense of mindfulness, he thought he was alone. His penalty therefore is to be thrust into a constant state of cognizance which, it is hoped,

will translate into an awareness of the true Master of the universe, as the Gemara quotes on the Posuk "Avodai Heim – they are my servants – velo avodim la'avodim – not servants of servants" (Bava Metzia 10a).

In truth, every Jew carries the title "Eved" which is the ultimate accolade bestowed upon the greatest of people, none less than Moshe himself (see Devorim 34:5). The Shulchan Aruch opens up with the concept of subservience to Hashem's avdus: "He should galvanise himself like a lion to rise in the morning to the service of his Creator" (OC 1:1) which the Rema (ad loc.) relates to the Posuk "Shivisi Hashem lenegdi somid" (Tehillim 16) – I am constantly aware of Hashem's presence.

The Eved was sold for his lack of integrity. Integrity is dependent on a sense of responsibility. And responsibility is dependent on awareness. This is the lesson learned by the thief the hard way. We however have multiple opportunities to improve our own "shivisi Hashem" through far more positive experiences. Today's society does not lend itself to mindfulness, it is not conducive to awareness – it is too noisy. But special occasions, such as when we are engaged in tefilla (prayer), afford us the opportunity to leave all the noise behind and devote ourselves – if only for a moment – to the ultimate service.

■ Shabbat Shalom

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OUR CHACHAMIM

RABBI YOSHI BEN HALAFTA

Rabbi Yossi ben Halafta lived during a dark time of our history, an era of persecution and danger. He was one of the four disciples whom Rabbi Yehudah ben Bava ordained at the risk of his life (Sanhedrin 13b). It was the time of the cruel decrees of Emperor Hadrian, who after the fall of Betar tried by all means possible to destroy Judaism at its very foundation: He prohibited the study of Torah study, the ordination (smicha) of Torah instructors, the recital of Shema, circumcision, etc. It was also the era in which nascent Christianity tried to become popular among our ranks.

Persecution subsided after the death of Emperor Hadrian, but these cruel decrees were still not revoked.

Rabbi Yossi was one of the best-known teachers of the Mishnah. His name is cited hundreds of times in Halachic discussions. According to an ancient tradition, he was the descendant of the famous Jehonadab son of Rehab (see II Kings 10:15), who himself was a descendant of Jethro. Rabbi Yossi thus descended from the Rachabites, who were cited by the prophet Jeremiah for their loyalty to Hashem and tradition. He was a descendant of this illustrious family, and in the Mishnah he calls upon us to honor the Torah.

"The one who honors Torah is honored by men." Rabbi Yossi lived in the Galilee, in the town of Sepphoris. According to a

passage in the Jerusalem Talmud, the inhabitants of that town "were hard-hearted and scarcely honored the teachers of Torah" (Taanith 3-4). On the other hand they were very sensitive, like most Galileans, to their honor. It was thus in this setting, the one in which Rabbi Yossi lived, that the words of the Sage cited in the Mishnah found particular resonance and brought those who had previously been indifferent to Torah close to it. "The one who honors Torah is honored by men." Rabbi Yossi made use, as it were, of their ambitions – of their need to feel honored – by putting these ambitions into the service of Torah. And this lesson, of course, is valid for all ages.

The honor due to Torah is a great thing. Sometimes Rabbi Yossi made an appeal to the feelings of the believer, and sometimes he appealed to his intelligence and reasoning. In all cases, this effort to honor Torah will drive the believer to better honor and respect Hashem Himself. This honor is due first to the Sefer Torah, to holy books in general. Yet it does not only consist of treating them with respect. To study sacred texts – to get close to them – this is completely our way, and it is a way that should always be replete with respect. Rabbi Yossi teaches us, therefore, that one who honors Torah, by showing respect both to books and to those who instruct it, will be honored by men. ■



HALACHOT

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

BORER- IS A SINK DRAIN STRAINER PERMISSIBLE ON SHABBAT EVEN THOUGH IT MAY BE SEPARATING AND SELECTING OUT FOODS

The question was asked in regards to the laws of Borer, which is the prohibition of selecting on Shabbat. In most households, a small strainer is found at the drain in the kitchen sink, and its purpose is to separate out food particles in order to prevent the food particles from clogging the drain. So there is a question that we need to address in regards to Shabbat and sink strainers. Is it considered a transgression in the laws of Borer when spilling out vegetable soup or other liquidy items into the sink? The strainer is separating the food particles from the liquid. Seemingly this is a transgression because a Keli (vessel) is being used to select, and using a vessel to select is forbidden on Shabbat from the Torah.

This question was addressed by Rabbi Moshe HaLevi in his book 'Menuhat A'Hava', and it is also brought down in the book 'Shemirat Shabbat Kilchita' written by Rabbi Yehoshua Neuwirth. Both agree that it is permissible to have the strainer in the drain of the sink, and it is not a transgression of Borer. They explain that one is not selecting good from bad or bad from good in this case, and therefore Borer does not apply. A person is really discarding all the contents of the food, both liquid and solids, and as such it is all considered bad (Pisoleit). The strainer is separating the contents in order to prevent clogging in the pipes, but that is not a violation of Borer. The laws of Borer only apply when selecting good content from bad, or bad from good. In this case, all is bad, hence the laws of Borer are not applicable.

Halacha Lema'ase, the use of a sink drain strainer is not a transgression of the laws of Borer. ■

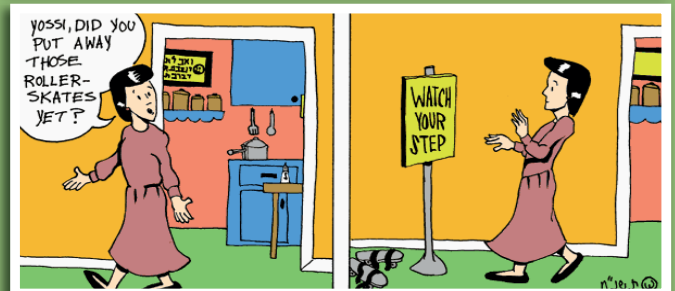
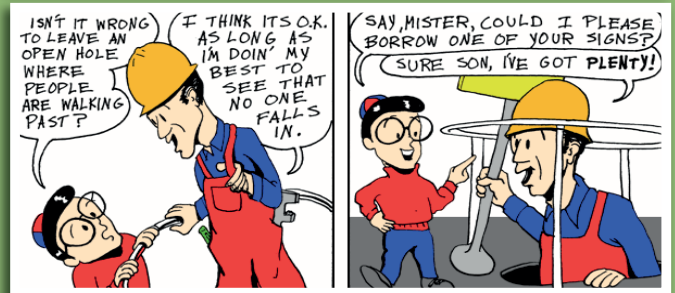
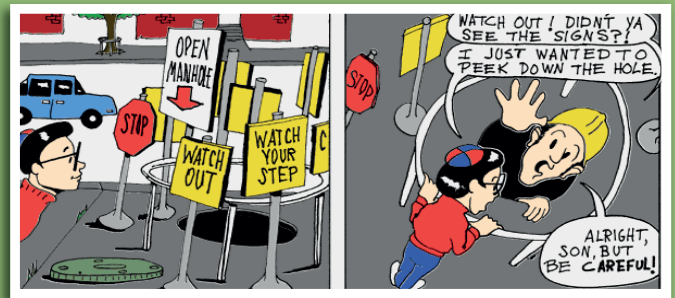


TEST YOURSELF - Q&A

- 1 Why is lending money at interest called "biting"?
- 2 Non-kosher meat, "treifa," is preferentially fed to dogs. Why?
- 3 Which verse forbids listening to slander?
- 4 What constitutes a majority-ruling in a capital case?
- 5 How is Shavuot referred to in this week's Parsha?

Answer
 1 22:24 - Interest is like a snake bite. Just as the poison is not noticed at first but soon overwhelms the person, so too interest is barely noticeable until it accumulates to an overwhelming sum. 2 22:30 - As "reward" for their silence during the plague of the first born. 3 23:1 - Targum Onkelos translates "Don't bear a false report" as "Don't receive a false report." 4 23:2 - A simple majority is needed for an acquittal. A majority of two is needed for a ruling of guilt. 5 23:16 - Chag Hakatzir - Festival of Reaping.

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