

## A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

# The Weight Of A Wait

ALTER RAUBVOGEL  
GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

Rabbi Yeruchem Halevi Levovitz was one of the preeminent *ba'alei mussar* in prewar Europe, and he was the *mashgiach* (spiritual leader) of the Mirrer Yeshiva until he passed away in 1936. The door to his office was always open, so that anyone who sought his guidance could easily find him. By his own admission, this caused him a lot of wasted time and made his work life disorganized. However, he knew that if he were to restrict access to his office, many students would end up waiting, potentially for hours, and possibly without even getting to speak to him. Inconveniencing or causing aggravation to another Jew was something that Reb Yeruchem just couldn't brook.

Why did he feel so strongly about this?

Don't afflict any widow or orphan. If you do afflict him, and he cries out to Me, I will hear his cry. My anger will burn, and I will kill you by the sword; then your wives will be widows, and your children will be orphans. (22:21–23)

*Mechilta*—the halachic Midrash on *Shemos*—explains that our Sages had different ways of understanding both the reach of this prohibition and the gravity of the Torah's warning.

179. "Don't afflict any widow or orphan." ... How do I know this [also] applies to [afflicting] other people? The Torah [uses the word] *t'anun* [in the plural—"don't afflict them"]. These are the words of Rabbi Yish-

mael. Rabbi Akiva [disagrees. He] says the Torah [only refers to] a widow and an orphan, who are regularly subject to abuse.

180. "If you do afflict him..."—whether it be a large or a small affliction...

[The aforementioned] Rabbi Yishmael and Rabbi Shimon (two of the famous Ten Martyrs, Sages who were executed by the Romans for teaching Torah) were on their way to be killed. Rabbi Shimon said to Rabbi Yishmael, "My master, my heart goes out—I don't know for what sin [Hashem has decreed that] I will be executed!"

Rabbi Yishmael [told him], "Did anyone ever come to you for judgment or to ask a question, whom you caused to wait while you finished a drink, tied your shoe, or put on your cloak? The Torah says [what will happen] 'if you do afflict him...'"

He replied, "You have comforted me, my master."

After [their execution], Rabbi Akiva (who disagreed with Rabbi Yishmael, and who later was himself martyred) told his students, "Prepare for trouble. If our generation were destined to experience good, no one deserved it more than [these two great men]. [Our Creator] knows


that a great calamity is going to come in our time, and He has [therefore] removed them from among us..."

The Rambam (Maimonides) rules that Rabbi Akiva was correct—the Torah only threatens to punish those who abuse widows and orphans. Almost all of the early authorities agree.

However, Rashi sides with Rabbi Yishmael. He says the mistreatment of orphans and widows is just a common example of behavior which the Torah never condones, and which Hashem promises to avenge.

Reb Yeruchem, in his personal conduct, assumed that Rashi's opinion shouldn't be ignored.

The *Mechilta*, meanwhile, does end on an optimistic note:

[Doesn't it stand to reason:] If [Hashem responds] when an individual cries out... He will certainly respond when the multitudes cry out to Him. And if G-d exercises His ability to punish—which is always [kept to a minimum]—when an individual cries out against a group, [He will certainly act with] graciousness—[something He always does with] magnanimity—when the public prays for an individual. 

## THE RABBI WAS ASKED

ADAPTED BY RABBI DOVID TZVI MEISSNER FROM ME'AH SHE'ARIM BY RABBI YITZCHOK ZILBERSTEIN

Daniel, because of his high scores in class, was chosen as the candidate for his school to participate in a worldwide Halacha Test with other top candidates from schools around the world. Daniel's father was hesitant about sending Daniel, because he was concerned about him receiving an *ayin hara* ("evil eye").

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## A PARASHA Q 4 U

RABBI DOVID SPETNER

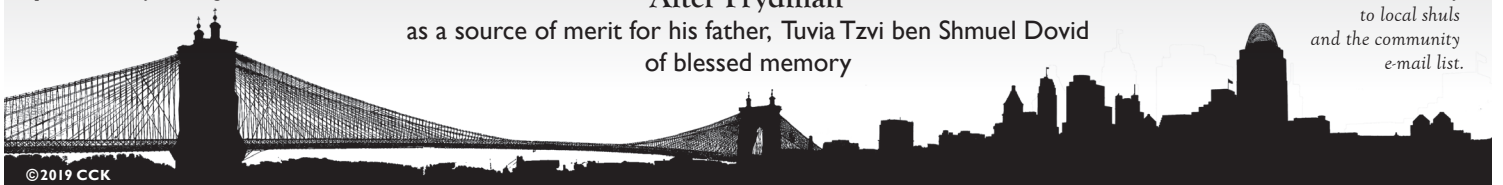
Where is *krias haTorah* mentioned in this week's *parashah*?

Bring this question to the Shabbos table and see who knows the answer! 

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## GREAT ACTS OF ORDINARY PEOPLE

RAV YOSEF CHAIM SONNENFELD WAS WALKING down the streets of Jerusalem one afternoon when he saw a girl, Raizel, crying in front of a school. Stopping to find what the problem was, Raizel told him that it was the first day of school and while all the other children were picked up from school by their parents, her mother was gravely ill and her father was busy attending to her and could not pick her up from school. Rav Sonnenfeld walked Raizel home. When they reached Raizel's home, Rav Sonnenfeld walked in and gave the family a blessing that their mother should recover and walk Raizel down to the *chuppah*.

Their mother soon recovered, but when Raizel reached marriageable age no boy seemed good enough. Name after name was mentioned and she was not interested. Her younger siblings all began to get married one after another until she was left as the only one unmarried in the family. Finally, when Raizel was already in her 30s she agreed to date a boy to whom she was suggested and soon was engaged. Rav Sonnenfeld's blessing came to full fruition when her mother, after many years of waiting for her picky daughter, walked her down to the *chuppah*. Then, inexplicably, their mother's health began to fail and this time she did not recover. Following the custom of Jerusalem, all the children approached their mother's body to ask forgiveness for any possible wrongdoing before the body was lowered into the grave. When Raizel approached her mother she said, "I know dear mother that I caused you much aggravation by being very particular in finding my match. I'm sorry mother, but I want you to know I was waiting for all of my siblings to be married first. I wanted you to be able to walk all of your children to the *chuppah* and not only me." 🥂

## GLIMPSES OF THE KOLLEL

## Leil Shishi Program

The exciting "Leil Shishi" program provides meaningful learning for boys in 7th and 8th grades complemented by great refreshments. Rabbi Moshe Fuchs directs this popular weekly learning venue and keeps the boys engaged with in-depth study of topics of Jewish law. We appreciate funding assistance that Rabbi Fuchs secured from the Cincinnati Jewish Teen Collective.



## THE RABBI WAS ASKED

CONTINUED

Also, he was concerned that this will cause Daniel to become conceited and arrogant. Similarly, it is known that when Rav Moshe Feinstein was young, his father, Rav Dovid Feinstein, would be upset when other important rabbis stood up in the young Rav Moshe's presence, for he feared that their actions would cause his son arrogance.

Q Are the father's concerns valid?

A Indeed, *ayin hara* is a very serious matter, as seen in many places in the Talmud (see *Bava Metzia* 107b; *ibid* 84b; *Berachos* 31b with Rashi's commentary).

However, if this test engenders jealousy that will promote more learning and Torah knowledge, then it's all worthwhile, for "Torah learning equals all," especially the Torah learning of young children. Many great Torah personalities in the past generation have been personally involved in similar tests.

*Pele Yoetz* says that prayer produces good results for everything, for Hashem is All-Merciful, listening to everyone's prayers, saving the Jewish People from *ayin hara*. One should not withhold himself from performing a good deed out of concern for *ayin hara*,

for one who does a mitzvah will see no harm, because the mitzvah will protect him. The Talmud (*Berachos* 55a) states that one who fears *ayin hara* shall say "I am from the offspring of Yosef, to whom *ayin hara* has no effect." This is beneficial to say every day.

One should, though, take precautions to protect himself from *ayin hara*. Some examples are:

1. The early commentators say that one who has a "good eye," judges everyone favorably, and focuses on his friends' positive attributes will not be subject to *ayin hara*, for Hashem repays measure for measure, and since he has a "good eye," he will not be affected by any form of "bad eye."
2. *Birchas Kohanim*, the Priestly Blessing, has some form of protective effect against curses and *ayin hara*.
3. One should pray the prayers counteracting *ayin hara* from the depths of his heart, along with the eleven verses that begin and end with the letter *Nun*.
4. Train one's children while they are still young not to benefit or derive pleasure from honor. 🥂

## BEYOND ELLIS ISLAND

### THE TRAILBLAZERS, TRIALS, & TRIUMPHS OF AMERICAN JEWRY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

In Europe, the community leadership oversaw, among other things, the permissions to slaughter and sell meat. This structure allowed community leaders and Rabbonim to direct all matters concerning *shechitah*. Jewish life in America was missing this oversight, as there was no central community authority and *shochtim* were hired directly by slaughter houses. This created a situation where *shochtim* were often made to fill other jobs beyond slaughtering and checking animals. One example that caused Rabbonim consternation was that it became common practice for the *shochtim* to be pressed into plucking feathers from chickens. Indeed, unpopular *shochtim* were referred to by the epithet, "chicken flicker." This practice concerned Rabbonim because the physical labor of plucking feathers tired the hands of *shochtim* and compromised their hands' steadiness when checking their knives to ensure a proper *shechitah*. 🥂

SOURCE: Schwartz, Rabbi Gedalia Dov, *Shaarei Gedulah*, pp.110-113, Chicago Rabbinical Council, 2007.

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