

R' Gershon Henoch's voice took on a serious note. "If the *Torah* cautions us to prevent anguish to a mule, we certainly must not cause anguish to people. As the local rabbi, you must see to it that the poor are invited to partake in this feast." Chastised, the rabbi promptly had the host allow the poor to participate.

TORAH GEMS

וראית בשביה אשת יפת תואר וחשקת בה וכי' (כא-יא)

Rashi quotes the *gemara* (כא) to explain this *parsha*: "*The Torah is referring here to the Yetzer Hara - evil inclination, for if the Holy One Blessed Be He would not permit her (to become a concubine), he would eventually marry her in a prohibited manner.*" Does this mean that in every situation where one may falter and allow himself to commit a transgression, the *Torah* gives him the "permission" to uproot the "prohibition"?

In response to a query by a group of zionists in the early stages of the State of Israel, as to why it would be so terrible to enforce a law whereby women would be required to serve in the Israeli army, **R' Tzvi Pesach Frank ZT"L** chose his words carefully: "As we know, the *Torah* declares that before going out to war, a proclamation is issued in the Jewish camp warning anyone who is *"afraid and soft-hearted"* to return to his home - he is not needed for war. *Chazal* tell us that this is referring to soldiers who are "afraid" of the sins they have committed, and "soft-hearted" from fear of unworthiness. Yet, although we are obviously discussing soldiers of the highest moral caliber, the *Torah* still deems it necessary to elaborate on the issue of captured concubines, and the fact that if the soldiers are not permitted to have them, they will transgress with them in an immoral manner.

"We see from here that the winds of war and the spirit of boisterous exuberance during and after battle is one that leads even righteous and G-d-fearing men to sin and immorality. Thus, an exception is made just for them. How much more so if our young women are to be thrown into such a hedonistic environment, replete with battle-crazed

soldiers, could we expect nothing less than disaster?

כי תקצר קצירך בשדה ושכחת עמר בשדה לא תשוב לקחתו למען יברכך ה' אלקיך בכל מעשה ידך וגוי

Rashi comments that if a *calek* of produce fell from one's hand and a poor person found it and was able to support himself from that amount, the one who dropped it is blessed through it. The analogy to the *Torah* is quite difficult to comprehend; the *Torah* is describing a case where the person knows that he has forgotten a sheaf and deliberately leaves it for the poor. In that case, he is duly rewarded for his good deed. However, when one loses something and is not conscious of his loss, nor did he have any intention to leave his fruit for the poor, why is he rewarded and even blessed - when it is found by a needy individual?

In actuality, says **R' Moshe Feinstein ZT"L**, the comparison is a very good one. The *posuk* states *"You shall not go back to take it."* As soon as one forgets his dropped sheaf of fruit, it automatically becomes forbidden to him to reclaim at a later point. But for not transgressing this "law" he does not merit extra blessings, just as elsewhere one is not entitled to extra blessings for not stealing. Thus, it is only after the poor have acquired the produce that the one who dropped it receives his added reward, even though he is no longer the owner and it is only the *Torah* that allows the destitute to acquire it.

It is clear from the *mitzvah* of *leket*, that in all situations, whenever the poor and needy benefit through one's actions - however indirect or inadvertent - that person is entitled to special blessings and rewards.

כל אלה הדברים הם זמניים, ואם יצבור לא ידע מי לעשות את רצונו יתברך ולקיים את מצותיו. "ולא אוספם. ולא למטרה זו עשה הקב"ה לאדם עור כנגד, אלא לענינים נצחיים אשר הם רכושו האמיתי של האדם ואין חלק לזרים אתו. ולפי"ז יש לחבין המקרא. "כי תבנה בית חדש" - ממדריגתו של עבודת ה' אמנם לא כן מהקטן הנצחי, ראה היטב שיהיה ביתך בית נאמן בישראל, "ועשית מעקה לגגך" - כל מגומתך תהיה להקוף גדר וסייג שעל ידי שהאדם יעסוק בהם תמיד לא יפרד ולא ינתק ל"גגך" שהיא גימטריא כ"ו כחשבון שם הוי' ב"ה, כדי לעולמי עד.

מעשה אבות.... סימן לבנים

לא תחרוש בשור ובחמור יחדו וגוי' (יט-יה)

The story is told about a wealthy individual who was known to do things in "a grand way." When he made a party, it was the social event not to be missed, and to be one of the proud few who managed to receive an invitation was considered an achievement of the highest standard. However, not everybody was happy about this. Many of the poor people and working-class individuals were seen to be grumbling about the social order in their small town. Who does he think he is, they would ask aloud. *Hashem* granted him his wealth; does that make him better than anyone else? This issue became a source of indignation and consternation among the townsfolk.

A while later, this fellow made a huge, lavish wedding party for one of his children. He invited a number of his exclusive friends, including the rabbi of the town. The *Radziner Rebbe, R' Gershon Henoch ZT"L of Radzin*, happened to be in town at the time and it didn't take very long before he recognized that there was a problem there. He actually saw several of the poor people who were grumbling. He inquired as to the source of their soreness and they told him: A wealthy citizen was making a lavish wedding party and the poor were not allowed to participate.

R' Gershon Henoch decided to do something about it. He went to the wedding, uninvited, and was refused entry. Obviously, he was taken for one of the poor people who were barred from the wedding. He told the guard, "Listen, I am not even interested in the wedding. But as I understand it, the Town Rabbi is here and I have an urgent question for him." At first, the guard continued to refuse entry but R' Gershon Henoch insisted that he has a *shailah* - halachic query, that can't wait. Finally, he was permitted to enter and taken to the rabbi.

"Rabbi," R' Gershon Henoch said, "I have a question that requires your knowledge. Why does the *Torah* forbid plowing with an ox and a mule together?"

The rabbi was taken aback. "This was what couldn't wait until after the festivities?" he responded incredulously. "Yes, I must know the answer to this question right now," countered the *Radziner*.

The rabbi stroked his beard and appeared wise. "We do not question why the *Torah* says something. We accept it as a *decree*," the rabbi answered. Everyone nodded in agreement.

"Yet, sometimes we can understand," R' Gershon Henoch broke in. "You see, an ox chews its cud, but a mule does not. If the mule sees the ox chewing, it will think the ox is being fed, while it is not getting any food. This will cause the mule anguish and thus, the *Torah* orders us to ensure that another living creature should not be made to suffer." The rabbi smiled pleasantly and gave his rabbinic assention.