

THE ARTSCROLL SHABBOS NEWSLETTER

WEEKLY INSPIRATION AND INSIGHT ADAPTED FROM CLASSIC ARTSCROLL TITLES

THIS WEEK'S NEWSLETTER IS DEDICATED ANONYMOUSLY AS A ZECHUS FOR THE PITTSBURGER REBBE, RAV MORDECHAI YISSOCHOR BER BEN ROCHEL

פרשת כי תצא
ט' אלול תש"פ

5780

AUGUST 29, 2020

ISSUE #6

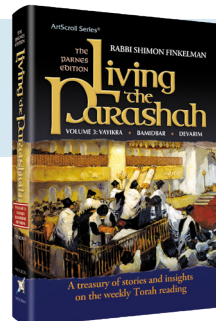
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PARASHAH

A SIGN OF GREATNESS

Living the Parashah
by Rabbi Shimon Finkelman



אַרְבָּעִים יִכְנוּ לֹא יוֹסִיף

Forty shall he strike him, he shall not add (25:3).

Chazal derive that this verse should be understood as if it were connected to the last word of the previous verse, בְּמִסְפָּר, and thus be read as בְּמִסְפָּר אַרְבָּעִים - *with a count that leads to forty*. This teaches that the number of lashes that the court administers to one who transgressed a negative commandment is 39, not 40, as the plain reading of the verse would indicate (Makkos 22a).

Once, two Torah giants, the Ostrovtze Rebbe and the great *rav* of Vilna, Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzensky, met.

Rav Chaim Ozer said, "I would very much like to hear a *chiddush* (original Torah thought) from the *rebbe*."

The *rebbe* replied, "The *rav* wants to hear a *chiddush* from me? Why, the *rav* is a *gavra rabbah* (great personality)!"

Rav Chaim Ozer smiled and replied, "And what makes me a *gavra rabbah*?"

The *rebbe* responded by citing a famous Talmudic passage:

Rava said: How foolish are some people who stand up in respect for a sefer Torah but do not stand up in respect for a great Torah personality. For in the sefer Torah it is written that [the sinner should receive] 40 lashes. And the rabbis came along and subtracted 1. (ibid. 22b).

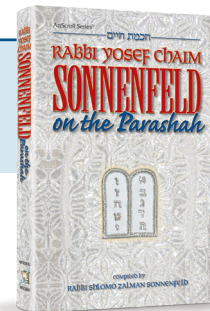
The Ostrovtze asked: Why did Rava cite the law of 39 lashes as an indication of the greatness of Chazal? Why not cite a similar teaching that although regarding *Sefiras Ha'Omer* the Torah states, "You shall count 50 days," in fact, the *mitzvah* is to count the 49 days leading to the *yom tov* of *Shavuot* (which is on day 50)?

The answer, explained the *rebbe*, is as follows: What is so remarkable about the first teaching is that by reducing the number of lashes by one, it reduces the pain and suffering of the sinner. To reduce the pain and suf-

TO REDUCE THE PAIN AND SUFFERING OF ANY JEW IS SOMETHING VERY GREAT INDEED.

fering of any Jew — even a sinner — and even if the reduction is very small, is something very great indeed.

The *rebbe* told Rav Chaim Ozer: "I am well aware of how much effort the *rav* expends to alleviate the suffering of widows, orphans, and others in difficult situations. Surely, for this alone, the *rav* is worthy of being called a 'gavra rabbah.'" 📖



...כִּי יִקְרָא קוֹן-צִפּוֹר לְפָנֶיךָ בַּדֶּרֶךְ... שְׁלַח תְּשַׁלַּח אֶת-הָאֵם

If you encounter a bird's nest on the road...you shall not take the mother with the young. You shall surely send away the mother and take the young for yourself (22:6-7).

What is the rationale behind this *mitzvah*? If it is to spare pain to the mother bird, it would make more sense to forbid taking the young altogether. Surely the mother will be anguished when she returns to the nest after a few moments and finds her chicks missing!

The real reason for the Torah's commandment, explained Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, is to impart an important ethical lesson: It is forbidden to take advantage of a mother bird's instinctive love for her children in order to catch her more easily. Under normal conditions, a bird flies away as soon as

a predator — including a human — approaches. However, if she has eggs or chicks in her nest, her survival instinct is overridden by her motherly love, and she prefers remaining in the nest in defense of her young to flying away to her own safety. It is this motherly instinct that we are commanded to respect, and not to use it to our advantage by making an “easy catch” of the devoted mother bird.

The reward for obeying this command is “so that it will be good for you, and you will prolong your days,” for when someone shows benevolence and mercy towards

other creatures, Hashem does the same for him.

A support for this explanation of the *mitzvah* may be found in the words of the Rambam (*Hilchos Shechitah* 13:7): “If a person sent away the mother, but she came back, and after this he took her, this is permitted.” The Torah forbids catching a mother bird only when she is incapable of flying away because of her young, over whom she hovers to prevent them from being taken.

By demonstrating compassion for others, we will merit for Hashem to show compassion to us. 📖

CHINUCH CORNER

THE BAAL MUSSAF

From the bestselling biography of Rabbi Dovid Trenk, *Just Love Them*, by Rabbi Yisroel Besser

On the last *Shabbos* of each summer, the “*minhag*” at Camp Munk is to sell *kibbudim*. On Friday night, the *aliyos* and *tefillos* of *Shabbos* day are auctioned off for *tzedakah*, and the boys enjoy buying different *kibbudim* for friends.

The auctioneer was always Rabbi Dovid Trenk, jumping and singing and laughing as he presided over the bidding. From his perch on top of a bench, Rabbi Trenk caught something, a smile and hint of mockery in the face of the boy who had purchased *Mussaf* for the next morning. In an instant, Rabbi Trenk realized that the boy was buying it for a different staff member, a quieter, somewhat awkward young man. Rabbi Trenk understood that the purchaser wasn't doing it to make the would-be hon-

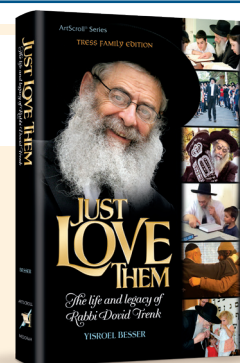
oree look good — but the opposite. The young man had bought the *kibbud* fairly, though, and Rabbi Trenk needed to find a way to spare the feelings of the second boy.

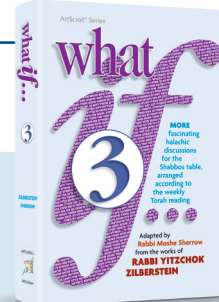
As he continued selling the *kibbudim*, his voice reaching the far corners of the dining room and his smile never waning, he developed an idea. Once the *kibbudim* in the main *shul* have been sold, the custom is to sell the *kibbudim* in the early *minyan*, in the smaller *shul* — a much less exciting process. Many of the staff and campers left, and Rabbi Trenk continued auctioning off the various honors. *Mussaf* went up for auction and was quickly purchased — by Rabbi Trenk himself. Later, he called over the quiet, shy staff member and said, “I want you to daven *Mussaf* for the *amud* at my

minyan, in the first *minyan*. It's good for you to have experience and it's a very small crowd, so there's no reason to be nervous.”

The purchaser at the second *minyan* had to find another *baal tefillah*, as his intended “honoree” had already davened earlier.

Others might have missed what was going on behind the scenes altogether, and even had they picked up on it, they might have been at a loss in addressing the matter. Rabbi Trenk, though, was always tuned in and innovative, protecting one neshamah at a time. Can we train ourselves to do the same? 📖





וְהָשִׁבְתּוּ לוֹ - *And you shall return it to him (22:2).*

Q. The drama began on a *Motza'ei Shabbos* at a crowded bus stop in Bnei Brak. The Goldsteins had spent a wonderful *Shabbos* with Mrs. Goldstein's parents and were now waiting with their six children for the bus home to Elad. Many buses to other destinations stopped to pick up passengers, and in all of the activity, nobody noticed when little Nosson Goldstein, all of 3 years old, mistook another lady for his mother and followed her onto a bus headed for Netivot!

Nosson took a seat in the back of the bus and settled in for the trip. It was only 15 minutes later that he noticed that his family was not on the bus. By that time, the bus was already zooming down an intercity highway and Nosson felt very alone. He started to wail in such a way that the entire bus was shaken. No one on the bus knew who the child was or to whom he could be returned. Needless to say, they could not calm him down, either.

One *bachur* had an idea. His parents lived next to the bus stop in Bnei Brak, so he called them to ask if they could run down to check there if anyone had lost a small child. Sure enough, the *bachur's* phone rang after a minute and his father reported that pandemonium reigned at the bus stop, as they were desperately looking for a missing 3-year-old.

Both problems were solved at once! The Goldsteins knew where their child was, and the passengers on the bus knew where the child had to be returned.

Now the question became whether the parents had to chase down the bus to recover their son or if the bus should turn around and retrace its route in order to return the child to his parents. In addition, if the bus does have to return to its point of departure, do the Goldsteins have to compensate the bus company and the passengers for any losses they incurred by being delayed in the process of returning their lost child?

A. The *Chazon Ish* (*Sefer Pe'er Hador* 4, p. 217) told Rav Dov Yoffe that when one finds a lost item, it is sufficient to inform the owner that his property is in the possession of the one who found it, and one does not have to deliver the item to the owner's home. However, that may only apply when it is equally difficult for either of them to travel to each other. If only the finder has a car, his *mitzvah* would include delivering the item as well, but he may stipulate that he wants to be paid for his travel expenses.

In this case, it would certainly be easier for the bus to turn around than for the parents to give chase in a taxi. This is especially true when the child is panicked; it might even develop into a case of *piku'ach nefesh*. One may even perform *melachah* on *Shabbos* to save a child in panic, lest the child die of fear (*Orach Chaim* 328:13; *Mishnah Berurah* §38). All the passengers are obligated to assist the driver in this *mitzvah* of saving/returning the child, and therefore the bus should turn around and bring Nosson back to his parents.

As far as paying for the trip, the Goldsteins would have to pay only for the actual cost of the trip, but not anything more than expenses. They do not have to re-

BY THAT TIME, THE BUS WAS ALREADY ZOOMING DOWN AN INTERCITY HIGHWAY AND NOSSON FELT VERY ALONE.

imburse the passengers, because one does not have to pay someone for having done the *mitzvah* of *hashavas aveidah*, and all the passengers have that status. Even if they suffered monetary losses in addition to or due to the delay, that is merely *grama* (causation). The parents would not have to pay them unless they can be considered negligent for not having watched their child with more attention, in which case they would have an obligation to pay *b'dinei Shamayim* (from Heaven).

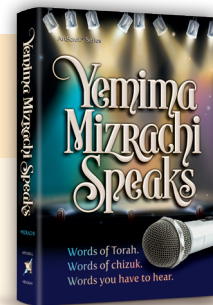
However, one could debate whether the child is really considered a "lost item." A child is not his parents' property. Perhaps, returning the child is just an act of kindness, for which one would be allowed to charge for his time.

The truth is that even if the child is not considered "lost property," the *mitzvah* of *hashavas aveidah* remains. The *Gemara* in *Bava Kamma* (81b) states that if someone sees his friend lost in a vineyard, he may enter the vineyard and break twigs along the way in order to mark a path for his safe return and help his friend find his way back out. The *Gemara* learns from the wording of the *pasuk* commanding the *mitzvah* of *hashavas aveidah* that one has a *mitzvah* to return his friend to himself by putting him in the right place if he is lost. Accordingly, even if there

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DANGER: JEALOUSY!

Yemima Mizrachi Speaks by Rebbetzin Yemima Mizrachi



The Izhbitzer Rebbe says that sometimes a person's entire fortune may be withheld because of the jealousy he or she feels toward those who were already blessed.

How hard it is to stand at your younger sister's *chupah* and pray on her behalf! How very, very hard. But battle the jealousy in your heart. You must, says the *rebbe* of Izhbitz. You must!

A jealous woman, he says, is like a woman who wants to enter a house. She knocks on the roof and she knocks on the walls, but she doesn't knock on the door. Sometimes, we're so busy with what others have that we lose focus on knocking on the door that will generate our own blessings. Instead of envisioning how good and beautiful the life of your friend or sister or neighbor is, instead of knocking on her door and prying it open in your creative mind, you can knock on the gates of Heav-

en. That's where your focus should be. It's so hard not to feel jealous, and it's so easy to fall into the trap when you're in pain.

In general, I consider myself a person who is gracious to others. I was sure that this was my strength, until I learned that it isn't. After my young son, Yosef Chai, passed away due to heart disease, I was happy for every mother whose child left the Intensive Care Unit alive. Still, I couldn't rid myself of the thought: *Why couldn't my child come out of here alive? Why didn't he merit a refuah she-leimah?*

So what can we do? We all want the best of everything, don't we?

If you're waiting for your salvation, know that jealousy is the last barrier you must break before the light enters your life. And you can battle it by starting with one word: *todah*. Every time you thank, the jealousy in your heart downsizes one

tiny bit. The more you keep saying it, the smaller and smaller it will become. This is a promise from Rav Chaim Palagi. It is your secret pass to your *yeshuah*. The more you focus on the gifts you have, the less you'll think about what's missing. Often, a blockage does not allow the birth you're waiting for, be it the birth of a child, the birth of a *shidduch*, or the birth of hope.

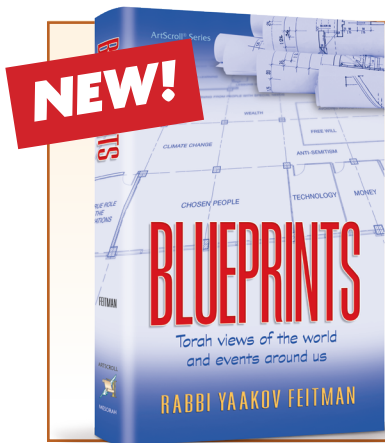
What can you do to merit the "toldah"? Accustom yourself "l'todah," to thank. (*Toldah*, "children," and *l'todah*, "to thank," have the same Hebrew letters.) Even if it seems to you that your prayers haven't been answered, the positivity this practice will engender in your heart and home will make your life rich and beautiful. And with a grateful heart, you will see salvation everywhere you turn.

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is no *mitzvah* of *hashavas aveidah* in giving the child back to the parents, there is a *mitzvah* of *hashavas aveidah* in helping Nosson return to his proper place. That, of course, would be to his parents' open arms.

In summary, since it is easier for the bus driver to return to Bnei Brak than for Nosson's parents to come after the bus, and since all the passengers on the bus are equally responsible for returning the lost child, that is how they should proceed. Nos-

son's parents would at most have to reimburse the driver for the expenses involved in the extra journey, but perhaps the *mitzvah* is not to return the parents' child, but the child to his home, in which case the parents would not have to pay.



The Mystique of Rav Hutner – Through the Eyes of a Close Talmid

*See a fascinating interview with
Rabbi Yaakov Feitman
at artscroll.com/insideartscroll*

