



Volume II Issue #19
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Parshas Ki Saytzai, 14 Elul, 5782
September 10, 2022

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On the Parsha

This week's Parsha discusses the concept of an Aishes Yefas To'ar – taking a captive woman. The Torah says, "...and you will take [her] **for yourself** as a wife." (Devarim 21:11) Rashi explains that the Torah is addressing the Yetzer Hara. If the Torah did not provide a permissible manner of taking a captive woman, then some soldiers would take a captive woman in a manner that was not permissible.

The bolded word "lecha" – for yourself, in the above referenced Posuk appears to be superfluous. Who else would one be taking a wife for if not for yourself?

Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim Luntschitz (1550-1619), the author of the Kli Yakar commentary, explains that the word "lecha" teaches us that the taker of the captive woman is (seemingly) advantageous "lecha" only for him. However, it is not advantageous to his future descendants. His progeny will end up rebellious – addicted to luxuries and theft and be placed on the path that ends with becoming a murderer.

Why is the Torah informing us of this? Clearly, the captor of the woman has deceived himself into believing that he is entirely in the right. With this skewed perspective, would the Torah's implied admonition of "good for yourself, but not for your progeny" really work?

Yes, this admonition can work. It is true that this person has chosen an incorrect course of action. However, what keeps him on this course of action, are rationalizations and self-deceptions.

The Torah is teaching us a powerful method to combat these self-deceptions. The way to do so is indirectly. If the Torah would directly say that taking a captive woman is not in his best interest, then his defense mechanisms would engage and he would not be able to hear the Torah's message. Therefore, the Torah takes a non-threatening, indirect approach by placing a word in a Posuk that doesn't belong there. "Hmm, why is the extra word "lecha" there?" the person thinks. He becomes intellectually curious

without feeling threatened. Therefore, his self-deceptive rationalizations do not engage and the Torah is then able to slip in the message: "This will be bad for your children! Don't do it!"

Giving Mussar indirectly is a powerful tool. When used the right way, it can circumvent our self-deception mechanisms and become a powerful way for us to see the truth and improve our character.

Chizuk - Inspiration

Rav Yisroel Salanter, the founder of the Mussar movement gave Shiurim in Yeshivas throughout Russia. At the start of the Mussar movement, there were those that erroneously thought that Mussar was only for those who could not handle the depth and profundity of deep Talmudic study. Through the deep and profound Talmudic Shiurim that Rav Salanter would give throughout Russia, while at the same time promoting his deep commitment to learning Mussar, he sought to dispel that notion and promote its study.

When a visiting Gadol such as Rav Salanter would come to visit a Yeshiva to give a Shiur, a list was posted on the Yeshiva door of the Mareh Mekomos – sources and commentaries, that would be discussed during the Shiur. Often, the list would include twenty or more Mareh Mekomos from the Talmud, the Rishonim and the Achronim.

In one town, after the list of Mareh Mekomos was posted for Rav Salanter's Shiur, a prankster decided to completely change the list. The list now included unrelated, random sources and commentaries. When Rav Salanter was about to give his Shiur, he looked at the list of posted Mareh Mekomos and realized what had happened. With little time to spare before his Shiur was to begin, Rav Salanter took ten minutes to rework his Shiur. Due to his great scholarship and brilliance, Rav Salanter was able to effortlessly link the seemingly random Mareh Mekomos and proceeded to deliver a Masterful Talmudic lecture.

His prime student, Rav Yitzchok Blazer, writes in his Sefer, the Kochvei Ohr, that Rav Salanter did not actually use the full ten minutes he had to formulate his reworked Talmudic Shiur. Rav Salanter's lightning-fast mind, coupled with his mastery of the entire Talmud, enabled him to reformulate his Shiur in two minutes. He used the remaining eight minutes to be honest with himself and to examine and work on his motivations. He wanted to make sure that when giving his masterful reworked Shiur, that he was motivated by only the truest and most proper of intentions - to promote the study of Mussar and not to show off his Talmudic skills. He worked on himself for those remaining eight minutes to ensure that it was not the Yetzer Hara motivating him to show off, but rather a true and deep desire to promote the study of Mussar.

Halacha – Jewish Law

In late 1998, Peter Thiel and Max Levchin founded a company called, "PayPal." (It was originally called Confinity). PayPal is a way to send money securely over the internet. There are two ways of sending money through PayPal: sending money through the Friends & Family channel (F&F) or sending money through the Goods & Services channel (G&S).

F&F is intended for sending money to pay back a friend or to give a relative a gift. PayPal does not charge a fee when money is sent through this channel. However, PayPal does not offer protections or guarantees if something should go awry (e.g. a scam) when money is sent through this channel.

G&S is intended for commerce and purchases, and money sent this way is subject to PayPal fees which are currently 2.99% of the transaction. With G&S, if you never received what you bought or upon arrival, the item was not as the seller described, PayPal provides certain buyer protections to allow for a refund.

PayPal makes its money in two ways. PayPal collects fees as outlined above and PayPal also collects interest on money left in PayPal accounts as all the money held in PayPal accounts is placed into interest bearing bank accounts.

To avoid paying PayPal fees, is it permitted for a business to take payment for a purchase through the F&F channel?

Can the term "friend" be defined as any person that you trust and include a trusted business customer?

The question was posed to Rav Yisroel Dovid Harfenes, one of the leading Poskim in the United States. [Each person however, should make his or own inquiries to both Paypal and to one's Rav or Poseik or call the Sefas Tamim Foundation's Emes Halacha Hotline – 718-200-5462]. Rav Harfenes responded that one must ask PayPal if they truly do not care if a business uses F&F instead of G&S. If they do care then it would be a problem. When the question was posed to PayPal however, they did not respond.

When Rav Harfenes was told this, he responded that it would seem from their lack of a response that it does not matter to them, and therefore there would be no prohibition for a business to utilize the F&F channel.

Mussar – Introspection

This week we continue with Chapter Two of our translation of the Chofetz Chaim's Sefer entitled, "Sefas Tamim."

"Another explanation of the Midrash is that, until the time of Noach, there was a period of Divine forbearance regarding the violations of robbery to the point where the robbery multiplied through lies and deceit much more than other sins. Evil people observed that money gained through theft and robbery remained in their hands for hundreds of years and even in the hands of their descendants for many generations. Therefore, man "freed" himself of this sin all of his days and the entire earth was filled with robbery. However, from the generation of the flood onwards, Hashem Blessed be He, conducted Himself in a new manner regarding the world – that whatever is gained through deceit and through lies, Damage will come and take away. As the Pasuk says (Yirmiyahu 17:11), 'Like a partridge bird hatching what she did not conceive, so it is he who gathers riches unjustly; in the middle of his life it will leave him and in the end he will be proved a fool.' The masses will see this and fear it. Moreover, that money which comes to him through lies and deceit will also eat up his "kosher" money so to speak – that which he has already amassed. As it says in Meseches Derech Eretz Zuta (Chapter 3), 'If you have taken that which is not yours, that which is yours they shall take away from you.'"