

Points to Ponder  
Ki Tze Tze 5777

**If a person will have a rebellious son (21:18)** – The Talmud notes that the Ben Sorer U'Moreh is punished because of the way he will end up in the end – not based on his current crimes. How does this make sense in light of that which we find in regard to Yishmael who was judged Ba'asher Hu Shom – where he was? **The Kotzker Rebbe** suggests that the words Al Shem Sofo refers not to his end but rather the end of his title – “U'Moreh” that he will teach others to follow in his footsteps. It is crucial to create opportunities to rehabilitate the future of anyone needing the help but we cannot allow that to come at the expense of others.

**And you shall hang him on a tree (21:22)** – Why do we hang the person on a tree? And why man and not a woman? The Talmud (Sanhedrin 38) that this is a reference to Adam HaRishon who denied Hashem at the time of Avaira. The author of **the Eitz Yosef** on the Ein Yaakov points out that it was the Tree (Eitz HaDaas) that led him to the sin. Returning him there – albeit temporarily – is a reminder of the source of the sin. The **Hegyonah Shel Torah** adds that this is not a punishment but rather a symbol.

**Send the mother away and the children you shall take for yourself so that it will be good for you and you shall have a long life (22:7)** – The rationale for this Mitzva is mystifying. Why is the reward here connected to longevity? **Rabbi Dr. Reuven Bulka Shlita** noted that the other time we find the same reward is in connection to honoring one's parents. He noted that at least homiletically this is not haphazard. It is only through our appreciating the sources of our existence and behaving respectfully towards those sources that we can have a happy life, a life which will be blessed in quantity and in quality. Preservation of our physical life source brings with it the promise of continual food supply and hence a long life; preservation of our spiritual life source brings with it the promise of a life of tranquility and blessedness, a longevity in which each day is profoundly valued .

**The girl because she did not cry out (22:24)** – Why is the Naarah HaMiOrasa stoned in the same way as the alleged attacker simply because she did not “cry out?” **Sfas Emes** notes that the implication of the actions here are that the relations were consensual. We often claim that we are not to blame for our sins since it was the Yetzer HaRa's coercion that caused us to sin. Sfas Emes says we do not have such a right to that claim. If we were indeed coerced, we should have cried out – davened to Hashem to help us fight off the Yetzer HaRa.

**Because they didn't greet you with bread and water when you left Mitzrayim and they hired Bilaam to curse you (23:5)** – These seemingly disparate reasons for excluding Moabite converts need reconciliation. How are the two reasons related? **Rav Eliezer Gordon ztl. (as cited by Rav Elchonon Wasserman ztl.)** explained that hiring Bilaam is an antithesis to an argument that they did not believe in miracles and thus did not believe respect was due to the Jewish nation. Once they hired Bilaam – they showed that they believed in Hashem and His power and just did not want to respect the Jewish nation. The Telshe Rosh Yeshiva added that the same is true of secularists. They cannot argue that they do not believe in anything. They believe in a lot but are not sure in what to believe . Thus, without Torah, one remains blind and baffled.

**You must not ill-treat him. (23:17)**- The Torah concludes this passage with the phrase, "Lo Tonennu" (translated above "do not ill-treat him"), meaning that you should not verbally abuse this person. This comes in addition to the prohibition against verbal abuse of any Jew (Vayikra 25:17), and the special

prohibition against verbal abuse of a stranger in the land (Vayikra 19:33). Thus, this verse adds a new prohibition - mocking a slave who has come to the land of Israel. **Rav Aharon Lichtenstein ztl.** pointed out that with regard to the general prohibition against verbal abuse, the rabbis take a very harsh approach, comparing verbal abuse in the form of humiliation to spilling blood (Bava Metzia 58b). Furthermore, the more sensitive and emotionally vulnerable the person abused, the more severe is the violation. It is for this reason that there is an additional prohibition against abusing a stranger, and yet another in our case. If you say something bad about a person who has "thick skin," he will just go on as if nothing has occurred. But if you speak about someone who is very sensitive, you can destroy his whole world. Thus, in terms of the damage caused, it is more severe to mock someone who is sensitive. Correspondingly, it is also a more severe violation on the part of the person abusing if the victim is affected by what he says. The moral turpitude displayed is of a much higher order. People often tend to mock those who are weak. The Torah goes out of its way to emphasize how problematic this is, providing an additional prohibition against abusing the stranger, and yet another against abusing the slave who has fled to the land of Israel. The Torah teaches us that we need to go out of our way to help such people, doing whatever we can to enable them to thrive. The attention paid to the escaped slave teaches us to have this special sensitivity, raising our already high moral standard for those in need.

**When a man finds a wife (24:1)** – The Talmud (Berachos 8a) seizes on the word Matza noting that at Jewish weddings they used to dance asking Motza or Matza. The former (Motzai) being quite dangerous (U'Motzai Anee Mar MiMaves) while the latter (Matza) being of the style "Matza Isha Matza Tov" being positive. **Rav Pinkus Ztl.** notes that when one constantly reviews his or her match to see if s/he is "a good fit", the experience is Mar Mimaves. Hashem engaged the Jewish people differently: He noted "matza Chein BaMidbar" he found what he was looking for, even without all the adornments he expected and never looked back.

**Remember that which Hashem did to Miriam (24:9)** – What is the point of remembering the sin of Miriam? The Chofetz Chaim noted that the issue is one of Lashon Hara even when unintentional. **Rav Schachter Shlita quoted Rav Kook ztl.** who noted that Lashon Hara is not one of the mainstays of the faith so how could it be a reference to one of the 6 Zechiros? Rav Kook answered that belief in Nevuas Moshe as the supreme Novi IS one of the main Ikkarei Emunah and that became apparent at the time of the sin of Miriam. We need to remember the lesson of Adon HaNeviim learned here. If that is the case, then everyone who violates a Mitzva should be Chiyav Misa? **Rav Schachter quoted Rav Soloveitchik ztl.** that this is the case when Moshe is speaking in form of a Novi – that the Toras Nevuah is a Horaas Shaah. If it is a Din L'Doros it is worse – but it has a set definition of punishment.

**Haftora – For this is like the waters of Noach to me** – By referring to the Mabul as Mei Noach, it sounds as if the Navi blames Noach for a role in its coming? **HaRav Shimon Schwab ztl.** explains that Noach was held somewhat culpable since he had the opportunity to Daven for the people of his generation and did not do so. Perhaps this is why some judge Noach derisively – for not seizing on the chance to Daven on behalf of his people.