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VICIOUSNESS

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God KNOWS!

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We must not visit a friend before morning prayers.
We must commence our day, first confronting the reality of God.
Seeing friends first, we succumb to an idolatrous psychological reality, not absolute Divine reality.

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LETTERS

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Who Cares if God Knows?

Inflate your price in proportion to the many years [left until fields return to original owners in the Jubilee], and in proportion to fewer years until Jubilee, lessen your price: for it is the number of harvests you are selling. Man must not extort his fellow, and you shall fear God, for I am God your Governor. (Lev. 25:16,17)

(CONT. ON NEXT PAGE)

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Rashi comments:

Here, Scripture warns against vexing others by words. One must not annoy his fellow-man, nor give him poor advice only for your own advantage. But maybe you will say, "Who knows whether I had any intention to do him evil?" Therefore Scripture says, "Fear your God"! He Who knows men's thoughts, He knows your true intent! In all cases where it is a matter of conscience, when no one knows the truth except the one who has the thought in his heart, Scripture always states: "But fear God"!

Rabbi Markowitz asked a strong question: Of what relevance is God's knowledge of man's concealed theft? Harming others is sinful, regardless of God's knowledge. The Rabbi is correct: regardless of God's knowledge, robbery and deception are both evil. What then is Rashi's lesson?

Let us consider: Lying is prohibited, yet Torah warns a judge from bias—a form of lying. Judges cannot favor a litigant and lie about his guilt. Judges must be loyal only to justice. Thus, in addition to not lying—a general theme—Torah sees fit to prohibit specific expressions, such as judges favoring litigants, even though this is a form of lying. As society needs courts, Torah identifies popular expressions of lying, in addition to the general prohibition to lie (Exod. 23:7). The necessity to prohibit many expressions of the

same crime is due to man's ability to delude himself by feeling that favoring a poor litigant with a favorable verdict is just, even when he is guilty (Rashi, Lev. 19:15). Judges may not view this as "classic" lying, as they can misconstrue their bias as a true good. Therefore, God makes violations very clear in major societal themes. Not only can one not lie, but judges can't favor litigants.

Commerce too is a major societal theme, and this includes produce and land sale. Each commodity is sold by a standard or unit. Produce is sold by weight, and land by the number of harvests remaining until the Jubilee. Here too man might succumb to instinctual drives, and although not "taking" something from another, he swindles a fellow for personal gain, using hollowed weights in produce sales, or lying about the number of yearly harvests in land sales. The crime of stealing is already known, but again, Torah sees fit to prohibit not only general sins, but also specific expressions.

Our verse above does not come to prohibit the core violation of stealing. Had this been the case, God's knowledge would be irrelevant to the crime of theft. We now understand how God's knowledge is relevant, as our verse addresses not stealing per se, but man's crookedness: he denies God sees all. Telling us to "fear God," Torah highlights the underlying unique crime identified here: feeling one can deceive others is corrected by God's knowledge of our sins. ■

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EGO & VICIOUSNESS

Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim

We recently read the following verse in the Torah portion:

Do not curse the deaf, and do not place a stumbling block before the blind. You shall fear your God, I am God (Lev. 19:14)

As Exodus 22:27 states, “You shalt not curse among thy people,” Rashi says cursing the deaf is already included and should be unnecessary here. Thus, “Do not curse the deaf” must teach something new. Rashi explains “This excludes the dead.” Cursing the “deaf” applies only to the living; cursing the dead is not prohibited.

We must now understand the nature of this prohibition: What propels one to curse the living and not the dead? It must be due to the curser’s intent to afflict the one cursed; affliction can only be felt by the living. Cursing can achieve real harm, as others can thereby hear that ridicule and mistreat the one cursed, as they believe the curser accurately assesses whom he curses. And even one who curses privately or one-on-one, does so as he imagines he has righted some wrong; he feels his speech has altered reality, harming the cursed one. This is a powerful fantasy that lies behind much Lashon Hara as King David states (below). (CONT. ON NEXT PAGE)



EGO Viciousness

In contrast, cursing man after he dies offers the curser no satisfaction, for he can not harm the dead. Therefore there is no prohibition to curse the dead.

The urge to attack another need not be justified in reality. The victim may have done little or nothing to warrant attack. Aggressiveness can be justified under the guise of religion like the Crusades, jealousy, other emotions, or for truly no cause other than one is human and possesses viciousness (Tal. Archin 15b). The fact that others do not attack the victim indicates the flaw lies in the aggressor.

Moses was silent when Miriam spoke ill of him; the perfected person is unaffected by his detractors. His value system is not social; he is concerned with God alone, and God also protects him. But the curser is socially-motivated; he is intolerant of his victim's obliviousness: "But when Haman saw Mordechai in the palace gate, and Mordechai did not rise or even stir on his account, Haman was filled with rage at him" (Esther 5:9). The curser has concluded that his victim must be harmed. He seeks absolute power over the other. He can't risk attacking him bodily or materially, lest he suffer by the courts. But as he is emotionally compelled to denigrate him, he curses him instead of resolving his dispute through Torah's prescription of dialogue (Ibid. 19:17). The curser operates in a subjective state of mind, using speech to alter reality to his wishes, "By our tongues we shall prevail" (Psalms 2:5). King David says about such sinners, "May God cut off all flattering lips" (Ibid 12:4). King David ridicules the curser, for ego-driven speech is his weapon; his intent is dominating others. He does not seek dialogue or resolution, but rather, character assassination. Torah preempts such viciousness by prohibiting man from resorting to such egotistical aggression through cursing others.

King Solomon said, "A single sin destroys much goodness" (Koheles 9:18). Thus, one should take care never to resort to cursing another. Certain evil speech forfeits one's Olam Haba, afterlife.

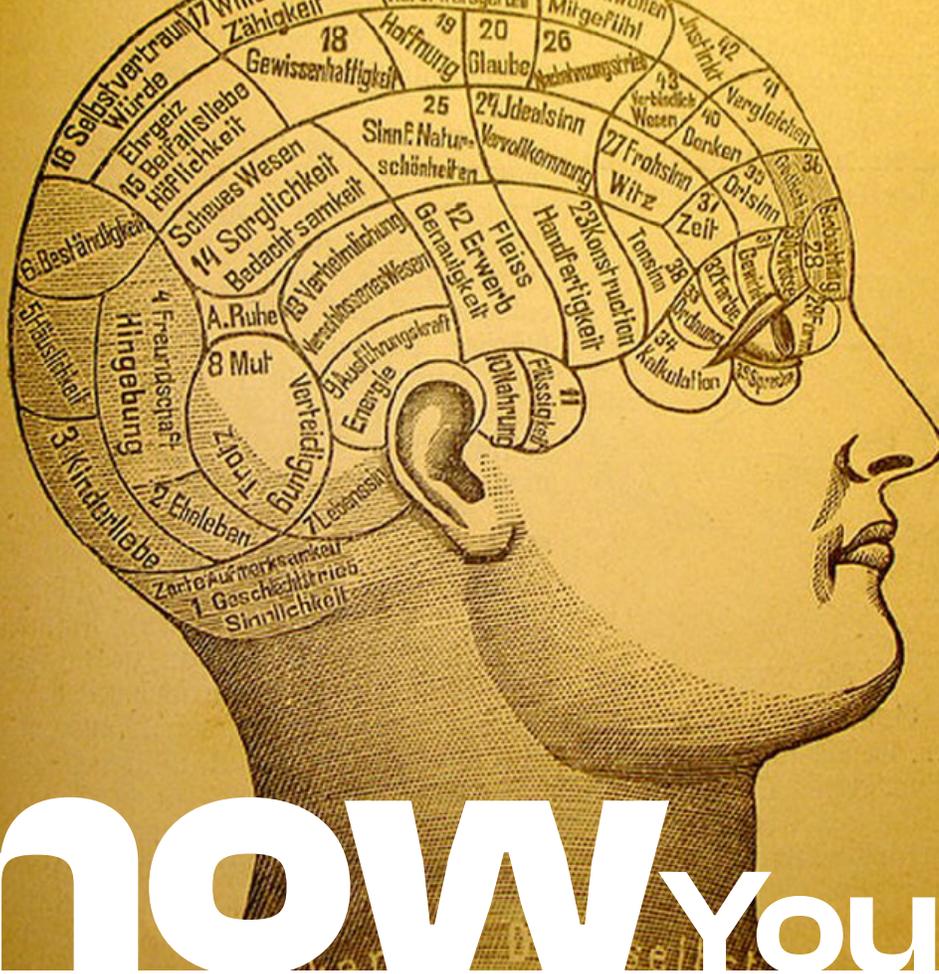
But our verse continues: "And do not place a stumbling block before the blind. You shall fear your God, I am God." God now joins in a single

verse another expression of ego and aggression. Man is vicious to others psychologically, by cursing whom he hates to satisfy his ego through destroying him. But man also seeks wealth. In his insatiable desire for money, and with egotistical disdain of innocent victims, man will misguide others with destructive advice that he alone knows to be harmful to others and beneficial to himself. Rashi comments:

[Evil] men will advise others to sell their field and buy a donkey, [secretly] endeavoring to circumvent the seller and take the field. Because in this case it is not given to human beings to know whether the intention of this man (the offender) was for the advantage or the disadvantage of the person whom he advised, and he thus might be able to evade the responsibility by saying, "I meant it for the best," Torah therefore states with reference to him, "But thou shall be afraid of thy God" Who is cognizant of your secret thoughts. Similarly in all actions where it is given only to the heart of him who does it to know the motive that prompts him and where other people have no insight into it, Torah states, "But be afraid of thy God!" (Sifra, Kedoshim, Section 2 14; Bava Metzia 58b).

Do not curse the deaf. And do not place a stumbling block before the blind. You shall fear your God, I am God (Lev. 19:14)

With this verse, God teaches us 2 ways we attack others through complete and unrestrained domination: 1) we seek psychological gratification by unilateral vilification, and 2) we express greed by misleading others to our own financial gain and to their loss. In both cases, the sinner disregards others and considerations that thwart his vicious goals, as he has concluded absolute justification in his aggression due to his ego. ■



Know Yourself

Rabbi Israel Chait Student's Transcription

The Torah Life is Most Satisfying

One living the life of Torah has the most emotionally satisfying life. There is no question in my mind is that it is so. Knowledge of Torah affects one in every sphere of one's life: family, child rearing, in innumerable ways. If one is fortunate that his children study Torah, he has a relationship with his children on an essential level. Following a Torah lifestyle, one learns how to use his mind and overcome powerful and destructive instinctual forces. In business too he is happier and more successful and fulfilled because he knows his emotions [and controls them] while most people don't. Successful business people have a good ear, a good business sense. But one who knows himself, his emotions and his moods, is a different kind of person. Torah helps a person in every sphere of his life. ■

Perfection: Internal & External Knowledge

Socrates asked, "What is perfection? Is it knowledge or something else?" This is not a simple question, as we find knowledgeable people who are crazy when it comes to practical life. Pascal was one of the greatest mathematicians, and yet his personal life was

insane and had no harmony. Thus, wisdom does not seem to provide happiness. And then we see a simple truck driver who seems happy. So, who is the happy person?

Chazal say it must be the wise man, the chocham, but his wisdom is of a certain type of knowledge. It is a type of knowledge that ties external knowledge to internal knowledge. Meaning, it is not simply knowledge of science, psychology, philosophy, or gemara [of themselves]. The chocham is a particular type of mind that incorporates knowledge of all areas and ties in to the knowledge of the self. Without knowledge of the self, one cannot have a life of knowledge, because the base from which he is working, which is instinctual, is not being dealt with. Thus, Pascal can be quite unhappy since he did not possess knowledge of his self.

Knowledge of the external world without knowledge of oneself inhibits the progress achieved by conquering one's emotions that block a person in many ways. Conversely, one can have knowledge of himself but remain ignorant of the external world, which is the mistake of psychologists. If one is psychologically healthy but ignorant of the universe, he has nothing. He is merely a healthy animal. Man must possess knowledge of both worlds. ■



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Talent On Loan From G-d

Rabbi Reuven Mann

This week's Parsha Behar, introduces us to the Mitzvah of Shmitta. This is the same concept as Shabbat except with regards not to weeks but to years. One may work his fields and use their produce in virtually any way he wants. However, on the seventh year he must let his fields lie fallow and not seek to assert ownership in any manner. The farmer thus obtains a sabbatical which he can devote to higher pursuits as he is relieved from the burdens of agricultural necessities. But what is the underlying idea behind Shmitta?

One of the fundamental tenets of Judaism is that of Creation. This means that the universe in which we find ourselves did not come into being by accident. Any thoughtful person can see that the world of nature is a product of infinite wisdom and manifests supreme order and organization. Who is responsible for bringing this universe into existence? The opening chapters of Bereishit describe the creation of the heaven and earth and all that is in it. In the words of the Psalmist; "The heavens declare the glory of G-d, and the firmament showeth His handiwork."

The great gap between man and the animals is due to the fact that Hashem endowed him with the Tzelem Elokim (divine image) which enables him to decipher the secrets of nature and utilize them to "create" technological wonders. Of greater significance it allows man to obtain a knowledge of G-d and to emulate His ways of justice and compassion. Thus the recognition that Hashem is our Creator who has fashioned us according to His Will and charged us to live a moral life is of vital importance to man.

That is why we are prohibited from tattooing our bodies. The only sign we must place on our skin is that of circumcision which defines us as being members of Hashem's Covenant. Any other markings negate this primary one. We have no permission to put a defining mark on something which does not belong to us. We must always remember that whatever capabilities we enjoy should be viewed as "Talent on loan from G-d."

The number seven has great significance in Jewish life (though no one should look at it in a magical or "lucky" way) for it is intimately associated with the doctrine of creation. The seventh day, year and Shmitta cycle all testify to Hashem's dominion over the world and man's need to respond to this by

relinquishing his ownership and control.

That is because man's desire to step beyond his moral boundaries and assume a position he is unsuited for is very great. The wicked, those who fall into the category of Amalek, view themselves as the "masters of the universe". The Nazis believed they could uproot all ethics and remake the world in their perverted image. At bottom was their ambition to "destroy" G-d and anoint themselves as the world's rulers with the full power to decide "who will live and who will die".

This was the intent of the wicked Titus who entered the holy of holies with a harlot and performed vile acts there. He slashed the Parochet (curtain that divides the holy from the holy of holies) and Hashem caused blood to spurt from it causing Titus to believe that he had actually "slain" Hashem. Titus understood what the Holy Temple stood for and he sought to destroy it.

The Beit Hamikdash is Hashem's "dwelling place" on earth. Though the edifice is not built up at present the Temple Mount on which it is located is under Israeli control. We are not permitted to abandon this site to those who desecrate it's holiness. The Jewish People must assert our right to visit the Har Habayit and pray there and not be deterred by the threats of those who deny any historical association between the Jews and the Holy Temple.

We must not give in to those seek to replace us as G-d's Chosen People and in fact maintain that we have no right to live in any part of Eretz Yisrael. And we should not be overly concerned about world opinion. We must do that which is right in the sight of Hashem with the full confidence that if we courageously do His Will He will never abandon us. Shabbat shalom.

All those who wish to donate to our Yeshiva and Kollel or want additional information on the Har Habayit click on our link www.harhabayit.org ■

NOTE: One should not ascend the Temple Mount without proper Rabbinical instruction:

- 1) You should be informed of the various routes that are available according to the different Rabbinical opinions.
- 2) You must immerse in a Kosher Mikvah that meets the standards to be kosher med'oraisa.
- 3) You must receive instructions for the proper preparations for the Mikvah (Chafifah)



A Teacher's Dream

My dream is to continue Torah study and educate others in Torah psychology and Torah philosophy. When recently asked what inspires me to live even when the going gets tough, I replied that it is my clarity on the insignificance of what most people value, namely, wealth, success, and fame. When we can abandon these trivial matters and realize that true happiness is attained through how God designed us to be happy—enjoying wisdom in nature and Torah, the company of like-minded friends, a simple shelter, a modest meal, and meaningful conversation—things never get tough. Difficulty is a product of poor values, like those never satisfied with their success, even though they eat every day and have a roof. Many poor people enjoyed their lives as nothing prevented their pursuit of wisdom. The Rabbis learned when poor and when ill. If people pondered their mortality without morbidity, and appreciated it is God's plan that we are here temporarily, and then progress to a better life afterwards, people would not amass monies they could never spend, build mansions that endure for 100s of years, they would forgive more readily, never argue, and they would enjoy each sunrise, every breeze, and turning a stranger into a friend. Recognizing all others equally as God's will, fulfills us and them.

The greatest minds found wisdom far surpasses all sensual pleasures, as it occupies the mind and absorbs all our energies...what we refer to as "satisfaction." It is only the activities that are short-lived that frustrate us. As man has tremendous energies, his activities must allow for all that energy to be expended, and study is the only activity allowing this, without ever frustrating our energy's flow. But eating, sex, striving for success and applause, and all other activities offer only brief satisfaction. After satisfying some of these desires, additional indulgence produces pain. And other desires never attained, like a promotion. And even if promoted, the high dies quickly. But learning offers unyielding attainment. That is why God created man with a mind, a faculty that never tires, as thought is not stressful. He gave us a mind as He wishes man to engage it to arrive at a pleasurable existence. This all resides in the intellect. And when a teacher imbues a student with new ideas enabling the student to gain insight into himself and life, to appreciate what provides happiness, and to appreciate the One who created this possibility, we as teachers gain another dimension of gratification, in the emotional sphere. The excitement of my personal discoveries, and the delight in witnessing a student's discovery, is a dream come true. ■



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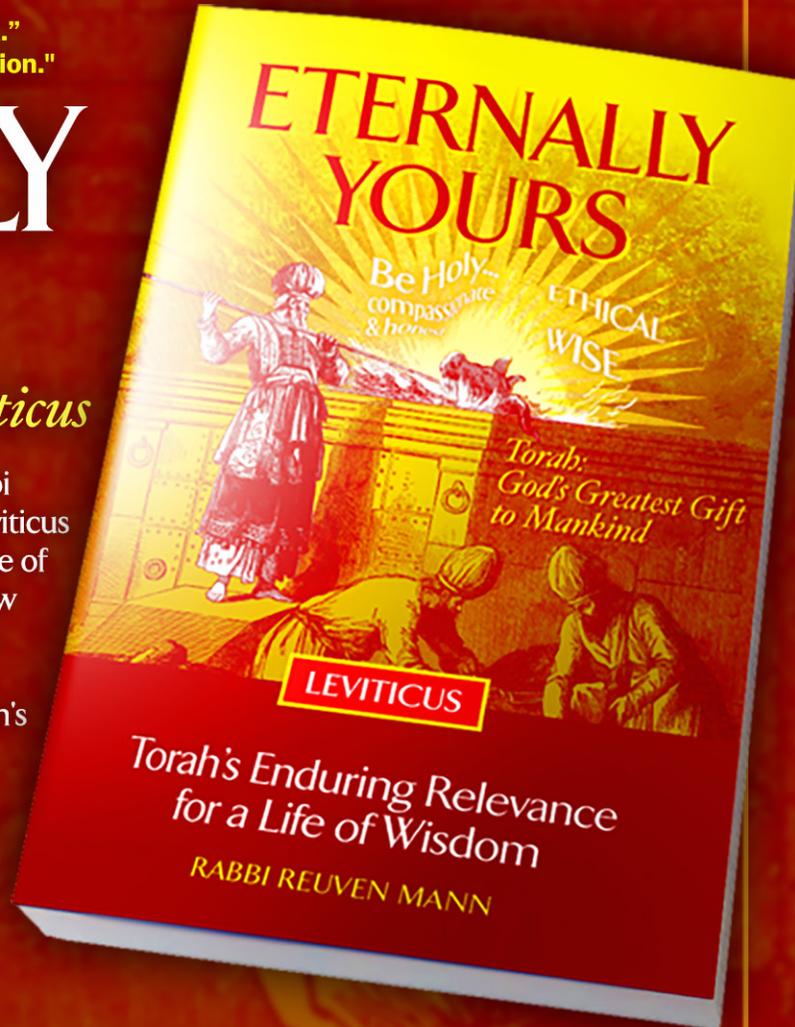
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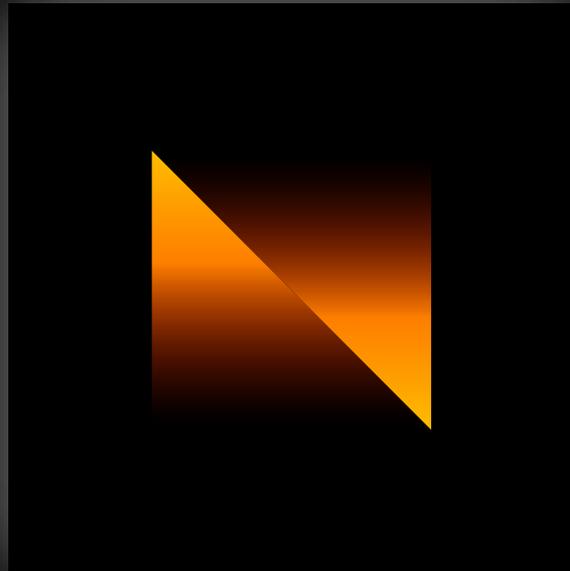
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