



CREATING THE SETTING TO ADDRESS THE OBJECTIVE

YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Ki Seitzei

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

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1. An Amonite or Moabite who convert to Judaism are considered illegitimate Jews.
2. They didn't extend bread & water when you left Egypt.
3. And they commissioned Bilaam to curse you.
4. Ramban: The claim against them is they are indebted to the descendants of Avraham, who saved the life of Lot, their antecedent.
5. Avraham rescued Lot from the 4 mightiest kings and from Sodom.
6. Had they the capacity to be appreciative, they would have offered their hospitality.
7. Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh: Although Moav sold bread and water to the Jewish people, they had given to them gratis without payment.
8. It was a ploy to draw the Jews into the clutches of The Moabite women.
9. Midrash: An example of liability is when one does not do an act of kindness with someone who is not in need of kindness.
10. Amon & Moav became illegitimate when they did not offer their bread and water to the Jews in the desert.
11. The Jewish People were fully self sufficient at that time; they had Manna and wellspring.
12. If Amon and Moav had felt indebted to the Jews for their existence they would have not used the sale of the water and bread as a ploy to ensnare them.

Initiative As Catalyst

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1. Midrash: One mitzvah engenders another.
2. Rav Chaim of Volozhon: Performing a mitzvah in the spirit of Purity engenders one to do another.
3. Multiple positive and negative commandments are juxtaposed in the portion of Ki Seitzei.
4. Example: Seeing a mother bird nesting on her chicks or eggs, one must send off the mother before taking the chicks or eggs.
5. This is followed with a mitzvah of putting a parapet on one's roof when building a house.
6. Next: The negative commandment not to plant wheat near a vineyard.
7. Next: The negative commandment not to plow with an ox and donkey together.
8. Next: The positive commandment of putting fringes on a four-cornered garment.
9. Midrash: When one mitzvah engenders another, G-d provides the financial to create the context for the mitzvah.
10. Gemara: All is predestined except for fear of Heaven.
11. Free choice is the area for which man is allotted to dictate.
12. One's choice will determine the degree of capital that G-d will provide.
13. Gemara: One's material allocation is set from Rosh Hashana to the next Rosh Hashana.
14. G-d includes in that allocation the material means to be able to execute the mitzvah.

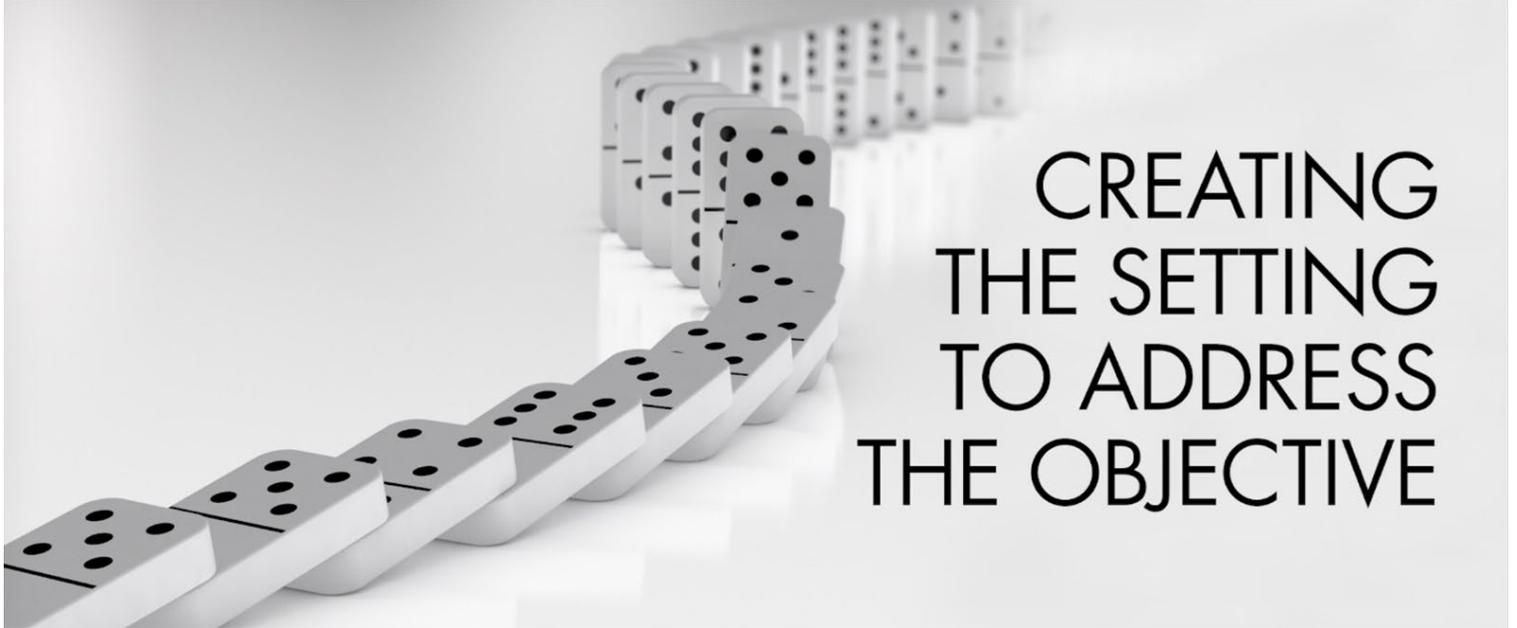
Is Liability Attributed to G-d's Agent

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1. There is a *mitzvah* to make a parapet on one's rooftop.
2. If one falls to his death due to a lack of an enclosure, there is liability to the homeowner.
3. The text of the verse: the one who falls that will fall.
4. Sifri: The one who was destined to fall (die) will fall.
5. There is a negative reflection on the homeowner because he was used as the medium to implement the death of this individual.
6. There is a dictum in Chazal, G-d brings detriment through those who are culpable.
7. Why is the homeowner any less than the executioner of the Court who has no liability for being the agent to take one's life?
8. Ramban: If the Bondage in Egypt was preordained by G-d at the covenant between the parts, why were the Egyptians held accountable?
9. He explains if the Egyptians had instituted the Bondage, as G-d's agent there would be no liability.
10. The bondage was precipitated by the Egyptians due to their insecurity and hate for the Jews.
11. The executioner as the agent of the Court is functioning as G-d's agent, there is no negative side.
12. There is a degree of culpability to the homeowner despite the fate of the one who falls because it is due to his irresponsibility for not providing the parapet.

Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Ki Seitzei



CREATING THE SETTING TO ADDRESS THE OBJECTIVE

How Does One Live The Akeidah Every Moment of His Life?

Torah: “If a man will have a wayward and rebellious son, who does not hearken to the voice of his father and the voice of his mother, and they discipline him, but he does not hearken to them, then his father and mother shall grasp him and take him out to the elders of his city and the gate of his place. They shall say to the elders of his city, “This son of ours is wayward and rebellious; he does not hearken to our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.” All the men of his city shall pelt him with stones and he shall die.”

Talmud in Tractate Sanhedrin: The only way a child can be classified as the “rebellious” child is if he steals from his parents to buy meat and wine to satisfy his desire. If his parents should become aware of this behavior, they take him to the Court (*Bais Din*) and subject him to lashes. If he becomes a repeat offender, they take him to the Court and declare “our son has

become a glutton and a drunkard.” The Court then condemns him to die by stoning. Although the child has only stolen (which does not carry the penalty of death), he nevertheless is put to death because “It is better that he should be put to death at this point of his transgression rather than later when his addiction to gluttony would cause him to commit murder to support his habit.”

Torah: The rebellious son “does not hearken to the voice of his father and the voice of his mother”.

Ohr HaChaim: The *Torah* could have simply said, “the rebellious son does not hearken to his voice” (referring to the father). Why does the *Torah* state “the voice of his father and the voice of his mother”?

Ohr HaChaim based on the *Zohar:* The father and mother mentioned in the verse are not referring to his parents but rather to *Hashem*, his father in heaven, and mother, the *Chachamim* (the Rabbis).

Initially the child did not heed the words of his parents because they did not discipline him properly.

Shlomo HaMelech (King Solomon) in *Mishlei* (*Proverbs*): “Spare the rod and spoil the child,” – he will ultimately become unreceptive to heeding the words of *Hashem* and the *Chachamim*. This is proven by the fact that although he received lashes, he nevertheless repeated his gluttonous behavior. This indicates that he is beyond the point of rehabilitation.

Torah: Therefore, it is better for him to die in an “innocent state (less guilty) than later in a liable state as a result of his advanced addiction.”

Gemara in Tractate *Sanhedrin*: The case of the “rebellious son” never actually happened and would never come to exist in the future because it is virtually impossible to meet all of the criteria that are necessary to be classified as a rebellious son. If the case of the “rebellious son” is a law that has no relevance to be implemented, then why does the *Torah* present it at all? The purpose of presenting this case is for the sake of studying it and receiving reward for its study.

Rabbeinu Bachya: If the purpose of this portion is for the sake of pure study, then why is it necessary for the *Torah* to present the case of the “rebellious son” and all of its details? One could have studied any portion and received reward for its study.

Rabbeinu Bachya citing *Rashbah* (*Rabbeinu Shlomo Ben Aderes*): There is a special lesson to be learned from this case. It is unheard of that parents should take their own child (when he committed a crime) to the Court to be put to death (especially when it is not a capital crime). A parent usually tries to put the behavior of his own child in the most favorable light and to dismiss his unruly behavior to something other than it really is. However, the *Torah* tells us that in this instance they suppress their conflict of interest (as parents) and recognize what needs to be done. The Will of *Hashem* is the overriding factor.

Rashbah: The case of the “the rebellious son” is the equivalent of the *Akeidas Yitzchak* (The Binding of Isaac). We know from the *Akeidas Yitzchak* that although *Avraham Avinu* (Abraham Our Patriarch) loved his only son *Yitzchak* (who was destined to be the Patriarch) more than anything in the world, he nevertheless obeyed the Commandment of *Hashem* to

bring him as an offering. As difficult as it was, *Avraham* subordinated his love for his son in favor of his love for *Hashem* and without hesitation he attended selflessly to his obligation.

Similarly, the lesson to be learned from the case of the “rebellious son” is that every Jew’s love for *Hashem* should be so great that he should be willing to sacrifice his own son, as *Avraham* was willing to do. This is the meaning of “delve into it and receive reward” for studying the case. Through its study we will understand to what degree he must love *Hashem*, just as we learn from *Akeidas Yitzchak*.

Shema: You must love *Hashem* “with all your soul – *B’Chol Nafshecha*”.

Gemara in Tractate *Berachos*: A Jew’s love for *Hashem* must be so great that even if his life is at stake he must forfeit it for *Hashem*.

Commentators: Included in the words “*B’Chol Nafshecha* – all your soul” one must suppress all of his desires for the sake of *Hashem*.

Gemara in Tractate *Berachos*: During the time of drought, before *Rebbe Yehudah* would pray for rain, it would start raining as soon as he removed one of his shoes in preparation for prayer. Although the generation of *Rebbe Yehudah* was not proficient in all the six sections of the *Talmud*, nevertheless, when he would take the initiative to prepare for prayer, it was sufficient to cause it to rain.

Gemara: Why was this generation so unique that they merited rain with such a minimal amount of initiative while other generations, who were seemingly greater (because they were proficient in all the sections of the *Talmud*), did not merit rain despite their initiatives and efforts?

The generation of *Rebbe Yehudah* gave their lives to sanctify the Name of *Hashem*. It relates an example of this where *Rebbe Yehudah* had taken action to correct a serious breach in modesty at the expense of his own reputation. He negated his sense of self to sanctify the Name of *Hashem*. If one is willing to forgo his own glory and compromise his acceptance in a community for the sake of *Hashem*’s Glory, then *Hashem* considers this as the sacrifice of all of one’s being – “*B’Chol Nafshecha*”.

The lesson of the “rebellious son” teaches us to what degree one’s love of *Hashem* must supercede all conflicts of interest. If one does sacrifice his own ideals and tendencies in order to serve *Hashem*, then by doing so, He will respond to our prayers as if we were giving up our own lives to sanctify His Name.

The Power of Choice

Torah: If a man is attracted to a non-Jewish woman in battle, he is permitted to convert her and take her as a wife. Some Commentators say that prior to returning from battle he is permitted to cohabit with her. The question is why does the *Torah* permit this? Additionally, how is the woman’s conversion valid since it comes about through duress?

Rashi citing *Chazal*: The *Torah* is dealing with the Evil Inclination of man and if it would not permit this relationship in battle, the man would succumb to his temptation and transgress. Therefore it is better that the man have the relationship in a permitted state rather in a forbidden state. How do we understand this?

Firstly, it is difficult to understand that the *Torah* is discussing a person who is a *tzaddik*, on an advanced spiritual level, who is engaged in battle. Even so, *Chazal* tell us that if the *Torah* would not permit this type of relationship with the non-Jewish woman, he would transgress. If the man is truly a *tzaddik*, then why can’t he resist the temptation? Why is it inevitable that he will transgress?

When one is in battle he is totally preoccupied with his own survival and self- preservation. His sense of security does not exist. When a man loses the focus of his responsibility to himself as a Jew, he loses control over his spiritual destiny. Therefore, even the *tzaddik* could not control his lust under these circumstances. Thus the *Torah* permits it because the man’s freedom of choice has been lost. The *Torah* is citing the case of being attracted to a woman in battle to teach us that this is the only exception in which one is in a state of non-control. In all other circumstances, despite what one believes, he is in a position to take control of himself and is therefore held liable if he does not.

Gemara in Tractate *Kesubos*: “*Chananiya*, *Meshael*, and *Azarya*, if they would have been beaten they would have bowed to the idol.” *Nebuchadnezer* (the Babylonian Emperor who destroyed the *Bais*

HaMikdash (the temple)), constructed an image of himself as an idol and all of his subjects had to bow to his image. These three individuals were the only subjects who would not bow, although defying the order was punishable by death. They were thrown into a fiery kiln and miraculously came out alive.

Commentators: How is it possible to say that such outstanding devout individuals would have bowed to the idol if they would have been beaten?

Chasam Sofer z’tl: The *Gemara* states, “if they would have been tortured they would have bowed.” However they were not tortured but cast into the fiery kiln. Since *Chananiya*, *Meshael*, and *Azarya*, would have not been able to withstand the pain of torture, they were not put into that situation. *Hashem* only puts a person in a situation to be tested if he has the capacity to withstand that test.

However, if the test is too difficult to overcome, then the test is not a test. When one finds himself in a tenuous situation, such as confronted with temptation, one must understand that he has the ability to take control of himself and not succumb. Being confronted with this situation is only an indication that he has the ability to deal with it.

Once, a person said to the *Chazon Ish z’tl* that it would have been easier to observe the laws of the *Torah* had we been born in earlier generations because we had many more *Torah* Sages. The *Chazon Ish* responded to him by saying that the reason why *Hashem* caused us to be born during this generation (and not any other) is because we have the capacity to observe the *Torah* laws despite not having a special spiritual environment.

Hashem would not put us in generation that we would not be able to meet the challenge. If a person would not have the power of choice then there would not be reward and punishment. *Hashem* only presents us with situations in which we have the ability to choose. However, if through our own choice we put ourselves in precarious situations, there is no guarantee that we have the ability to succeed. This is because we (and not *Hashem*) put ourselves in that situation.

What is the Meaning of Chesed?

Torah: It is forbidden for the Moabites and the Amonites to marry into the Jewish people even if they were to

convert (this prohibition only applies to the male and not the female). The reason for this prohibition is because, “they did not greet you (in the desert) with bread and water on the road when you were leaving Egypt...” Since the Moabites and Amonites did not demonstrate the attribute of *chesed* (kindness), they are condemned forever and therefore cannot marry into the Jewish people.

Midrash in Vayeira: For every act of *chesed* performed by *Avraham* when he hosted the three wayfarers (who were in fact angels), the Jewish people merited great gifts in the desert. In the merit of *Avraham* offering the shade of his tree, *Hashem* rewarded the Jews with the Clouds of Glory, which protected them for forty years in the desert. In the merit of *Avraham* offering his bread, the Jews merited the *Mann* (Manna) for forty years. In the merit of offering his water, the Jews merited the wellspring of *Miriam*, which followed us through the desert for forty-years.

Midrash: Although *Avraham* performed *chesed* with individuals who were not in need of *chesed* (because they were angels), we merited endless blessing. If someone performs *chesed* for one who is truly in need, then how much more so will he be deserving of reward for his act. In the desert the Jewish people were not in need of bread and water from the Amonites or Moabites. They had the *Mann* and the wellspring of *Miriam*. Nevertheless, the Amonites and Moabites are castigated forever because they did not offer their bread and water to the Jews.

Midrash: If we see that *chesed* is denied to one who does not need it, the repercussions of such behavior are severe. If *chesed* is denied to someone who is truly in need, the consequences of that behavior are much more serious. How do we understand *Hashem's* claim against the Amonites and Moabites for withholding their bread and water from the Jewish people? The fact is that they truly were not in need of the bread or water. If this is so then what is the basis of the condemnation of these two peoples?

Offering one's bread and water to another individual is not only in a context that the other person has nothing to eat. It is a means of showing one's hospitality to the other individual. Hospitality goes beyond giving someone food and drink – it is an acknowledgement of the existence of another individual.

When a Jew does an act of *chesed* for another it is a recognition of the existence and importance of the other person. Thus, the fact that the Moabites and Amonites withheld their bread and water from the Jews was an indication that their understanding of *chesed* was limited to only providing for one's physical needs. Their concept was deficient compared to the caliber of *Avraham's chesed*. Therefore people of such limited understanding are not permitted to marry into the Jewish people because they will undermine the inborn characteristic of *chesed*, which is unique to every Jew.

Torah: One must give charity in accordance with a person's needs – “*Dai Machsoro* (according to what the poor man lacks).”

Gemara in Tractate Kesubos: If a person was wealthy at one point and subsequently falls on hard times and is in need of charity, he must be given sufficient support to accommodate all of his needs. If, at one time, the wealthy person had runners who would go before him to honor him, the community is obligated to underwrite the cost of these runners. Charity goes beyond the physical needs of the individual.

The *Torah* demands that a person's individualized needs are provided for. We are told by the *Torah* that if a corpse is found outside of a community and it was determined that the victim (who was murdered) had come from this community, its elders must bring a calf to a valley and break its neck. They must declare at that time, “We are not responsible for this individual's death. We provided him food, drink, and we escorted him out of the community (*levaya*).”

Gemara in Tractate Sotah: Why must the elders of the community (who were *tzaddikim* and *Torah* Sages) disclaim responsibility for the person's death? Why would we think that they were at all involved? The elders proclaim that their community not only provided food and drink but even escorted the person out of the city (*levaya*) to indicate that their hospitality and *chesed* extended beyond the physical needs of the person to give him a sense of value. If a Jew gives his fellow a sense of self-esteem and value, then he is able to weather every storm.

However if a Jew is only provided for to satisfy his physical needs, then he is being treated no better than an animal whose needs are only physical. Therefore

the standard of *chesed* of a Jew goes beyond the physical and encompasses the totality of the person. This was the failure of the Ammonites and Moabites.

How do we Guarantee our Existence?

Torah: A Jew has an obligation to return a lost article to his fellow. This Positive Commandment applies to any lost article whether it is animate or an inanimate. “You shall not see the ox of your brother or his sheep or goat cast off, and hide yourself from them; you shall surely return them to your brother.”

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: This verse is not only referring to the obligation of returning lost items, but also the return of Jews. *Tzaddikim* are referred to as “brothers” because of their spiritual level. The “ox and the sheep” which are mentioned in the verse refer to Klal Yisroel. Thus, the verse is telling us that the *tzaddikim* have the responsibility of bringing back Klal Yisroel to the proper path and returning them to *Hashem*, their Father in Heaven.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: We are currently in the last great exile, which has extended over many centuries and it is uncertain when it will end. As a result of this lengthy exile many Jews have strayed from the path of *Torah* and have become alienated from their Judaism. Therefore the *Torah* states that a Jew has an obligation to “gather-in his brothers into his house and instruct him how to lead a proper life and walk the path in which light will dwell with him.”

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: The “house” is the Bais HaMidrash (House of *Torah* Study), and teaching him the “way of life...” is referring to the study of *Torah*. It is through the study of *Torah* that a Jew will bring light and clarity into his life and he will not stray from the path. The light of *Torah* will protect the Jew from being attacked by the enemy who will approach him with false philosophies and perspectives. One is obligated to continue to bring his fellow Jew into the study halls to be close to *Hashem* until this exile comes to its conclusion or until the person returns his soul to *Hashem*.

Torah: *Yaakov Avinu* fled from the house of his father (*Yitzchak*) because of his brother *Esav*. He was separated from his father for over twenty years and when he was returning he was attacked by an angel, whom *Chazal* tells us was the archangel of *Esav*. *Yaakov* was pure and steeped in *Torah*, *Esav* was the antithesis.

Reb Elchanan Wasserman zt”l: Why did the archangel of *Esav* only attack *Yaakov*? Why did he not attack *Avraham*, who introduced *chesed* (kindness) and monotheism into the world? Why did he not attack *Yitzchak* who introduced *Avodah* (the Service of *Hashem* through prayer) to the world? The archangel did not attack *Avraham* was because *satan* understood that *chesed* alone was not sufficient to keep the Jews attached to *Hashem*. *Satan* understood that regardless of how many hospitals or charity organizations the Jewish people would establish, it would only be a matter of time before the Jews would assimilate.

The reason why *satan* did not attack *Yitzchak* (who introduced prayer to the service of *Hashem*) was because he understood that prayer alone would not be able to sustain the Jewish people. Despite the number of synagogues that Jews would build, he knew that the Jews would eventually assimilate and abandon their Judaism. The reason why the *satan* attacked *Yaakov* was because he was the person who represented *Torah*. As it is stated in the *Torah*, “He was the man who dwelled in the tent” – meaning the tent of *Torah*.

The *Torah* gives clarity and guarantees the perpetuation of Judaism. *Satan* understood that if he could eliminate *Yaakov* he would eliminate *Torah* and thus guarantee the demise of the Jewish people. Therefore in order to return one’s brother to the path of life, he must be returned to the study hall, the Bais HaMidrash to study *Torah*. It is the only way that he will be able to gain the proper perspective and clarity to become attached to *Hashem*. Prayer and acts of kindness alone are not sufficient to sustain one’s Judaism.

Chazal: The only way to combat *satan* is to see him for what he is and that is only accomplished through the study of *Torah*.



Yad Avraham Institute