

Yisro 2016

1.

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Rav Pam Zt'l (Atara L'melech pages 5-8) says that the sin of causing pain to another person is a very serious matter. This transgression is even worse when it is done on Shabbos. If we cause pain to someone else on Shabbos we are essentially causing pain to Shabbos itself. This applies to erev Shabbos and to Yom tov as well! It is incumbent upon us to be very careful not to cause any pain to anyone. **Many times we rush and become very stressed on erev Shabbos and Yuntif trying to do everything correctly and be on time, etc. However, we can't let this lead us to overlooking the prohibition and problem of harming others. During these times we need to be extra careful to avoid fights, disputes and anger.** (This important principle is similarly discussed and elaborated upon by many other sefarim. Amongst them is the Sifsei Chaim (middos and avodas Hashem chalek alef page 217). He also acknowledges and cautions us to act gingerly at these hectic, stressful and busy times. Since the unfortunate reality is that it is quiet easy to stoop to anger even over a small matter, therefore it is of the utmost importance that we should be extra cautious not to get angry at these junctures. The contrary is also true. Meaning, these times are essentially designated times that we are able and prone to tap into holy levels and overcome our anger. We must utilize these precious moments to work on our middos fully.) For example, a bachur who is very busy preparing for Shabbos and his parents ask him to do something. He replies that he can't because he is too busy getting ready. He is being mevatel (canceling) the mitzvah of kivud av v'eim, all because of one small hiddur (beautification) he wanted to fulfill. Rav Pam explains that because of this we need to strike our hearts and confess our sins on Yom Kippur itself!

All of this, says Rav Pam, is the workings of the yeitzer hara! Before Shabbos, the Satan (evil inclination) comes with a force because he knows it's a very sensitive time and that it is easy to get people to sin. He suggests a proof from the Gemara in Gittin (52) which says the Satan would come to two neighbors every erev Shabbos and cause them to fight.

**With this we can explain why the commandment of Shabbos is juxtaposed to kivud av in the aseres hadibros (Ten Commandments); to hint to us that even when we are totally involved with the mitzvah of preparing for Shabbos, we still need to be careful to fulfill the commandment of honoring our parents.** (The simple reason why these two commandments are adjacent to one another chazal explain (many places including beginning of Yevamos) is that if a parent requests from their kid to violate Shabbos the kid should disobey their parent.)

From here it's very simple to see that even when it comes to Shabbos, and preparing for Shabbos, we need to have proper behavior regarding bein adam l'chaveiro (interpersonal relationships), especially towards our parents!

We say (Shabbos zemer) **כל מקדש שביעי כראוי לו, כל שומר שבת כדת מחללו, שכרו הרבה מאד על פי פעלו.** 'Anyone who sanctifies Shabbos properly and guards it from being profaned, his reward is great according to his action.'

The Chafetz Chaim says there are two types of people who keep Shabbos. One is careful not to desecrate any of the 39 Melachos. The other person is at a higher level though, because he sanctifies Shabbos by feeling the loftiness of Shabbos and recognizing that there is something special about Shabbos. This person gets a lot of reward! These two types of people are incomparable! Each of them gets rewarded, but it's in relation to how much they put in. **Someone who actively sanctifies Shabbos by singing zemiros and going out of his way to be proactive and bask in the kedusha (holiness) of Shabbos is doing a lot more than someone who merely sits around passively and makes sure *not* to do anything bad.**

2.

### How is it possible not to get jealous?

“You shall not covet your Fellow’s house. You shall not covet your fellow’s wife, his manservant, his maidservant, his ox, his donkey, nor anything that belongs to your fellow.” (20, 14)

"לא תחמד בית רעך לא תחמד אשת רעך ועבדו ואמתו ושורו וחמרו וכל אשר לרעך."

### **How is it possible not to get jealous?**

How do we define jealousy? The Chinuch (mitzvah 38) explains that this issur (prohibition) is not transgressed until the action is performed. For example, if you want something that your friend has and you're going to pay him for it. You then pressure your friend to give you that item. Once you hand him the money for it, regardless of whether you have the item yet or not, you have transgressed this prohibition of not being jealous. The Minchas Chinuch (os alef) quotes the Rambam (Hilchos Gezala, perek alef) who quotes a pasuk in Devarim (5, 18) that says “don't *desire* etc. and don't *be jealous*...” The Minchas Chinuch identifies a discrepancy between the statements in this pasuk. The difference between not desiring and not being jealous teaches us something much deeper. Therefore, the Rambam (in his safer Hamitzvos lo sasay 265 and 266) and the Chinuch (mitzvah 416) explain that they are two different and independent mitzvos. Being jealous is urging your friend to sell you something, like we said. Conversely, **desiring something is violated as soon as you have a desire for any of your friend's objects, whether or not you acted and physically obtained that object or not.**

Why is this a problem? The Chinuch explains that any bad thought a person has causes him much difficulty. After a person sets in his mind that he wants something his friend has, he is going to do anything he can to obtain it. He will pressure his friend immensely and in some cases, would even kill his friend (chas v'shalom) to obtain it! A strong desire can lead to disastrous results.

The Chinuch (mitzvah 416) says a person should not wonder about how it is possible for a person not to think about not wanting any of his friend's items. Do not ask ‘how can I not be jealous of my friend’? Someone who sees and desires an item that their friend has that they don't have is a fool and wicked. The Chinuch states that it's in a person's ability to refrain himself from certain thoughts and desires; we are able to distance ourselves from something that's bad

and draw close to good. The reason for this mitzvah is obvious. Distancing oneself from stealing is obvious; it's beneficial for everybody and all of society.

However, this still does not answer the question of what we are supposed to do in order not to desire someone else's item. There are three basic approaches to answer this fundamental question.

**The Ibn Ezra** (Shemos (20, 14)) is the first mehalech (approach/school of thought). He writes that many people wonder about this commandment of not being jealous. They wonder how it's possible not to desire something that you want but your friend has. He offers a great mashal to explain how it is in fact possible. It's analogous to a lowly villager who once saw the princess traveling on her way. He thought to himself this could be a good shidduch (marriage match), the princess and him. Stop. Do you think the villager would ever even have a thought that he could marry the princess? Surely not! He knows, without a doubt, that she is out of his league! He is not a fool that thinks he will be able to get the princess to marry him! He was brought up from his youth knowing that he has no chance to marry her instilled in his mind! So too, **we need to know that that which our friend has is completely off limits, no discussions.** We need to be happy with what we have. **When we truly internalize that what our friend has is completely off limits and unobtainable, just like the princess was to the poor man, we won't be jealous of anything.** We will have faith in Hashem that anything we needs will be taken care of.

An addition and elaboration of this is the following; we must be happy with our lot, as stated in the Mishna in Pirkei Avos (perik 4), who is a wealthy person? He who is happy with his lot. Meaning, not only must we be content with that which we possess, but additionally we must realize that it would be detrimental to have more than what we currently have. Many times we might incorrectly speculate and conclude that it would be much better if we possessed a certain item. In reality though, it would not behoove us to have that item. This is analogous to a seven year old desiring and dreaming to wear the fancy and expensive suit of a thirty year old. It would obviously be foolish for this seven year old to wear this fancy suit that doesn't come close to fitting him. Similarly, **we must come to the realization that the 'clothing' that we wear is the proper size. Meaning, everything that we have is exactly what we should have, and nothing more. Once we reach this proper understanding then we will obviously not come to be jealous of others.**

The second mehalech (approach/school of thought) is suggested by the **Beis Halevi** (al hatorah parshas Yisro on the pasuk of lo sachmod). He offers a different mashal. When someone desires something, they do whatever it takes to attain it. This applies to a positive desire and a negative desire. Nothing will get in the way of one who wants to learn Torah. (When there is a will, there is a way/אין לך דבר העומד בפני הרצון) Let's now relate the opposite. For example, let's say someone is on his way to perform a certain sin. The way to get to that desire is to go over a frozen lake. As he is running, he feels the ice crack and he falls through! At this time there is no way he is thinking about that desire he had at all. He is so afraid of dying that the desire completely vanished; the fear from the fall overtook his desire. Since the Torah tells us not to be jealous, one who has even a small amount of fear from sinning, then he will make sure not to desire anything. **Desires will completely fade away from those who have true Yiras (fear of) Hashem.** One who has a little bit of fear of Hashem won't sin. The only way the yeitzer hara can control us is if

we lack proper yirah. With this we can explain the pasuk in which Moshe said to the Jews “what does Hashem ask of you, but to fear Him.” The Gemara (see Berachos 33) asks: is this such a small matter, to fear Hashem? The Beis Halevi says yes! If he has even a little bit of yirah, it will protect him from sin.

Rabbi Shimshon Pincus (Tiferes Shimshon page 220) ingeniously explains the depth behind the machlokes (argument) between the Ibn Ezra and the Beis Halevi. **According to the Ibn Ezra this avoda (servitude) is an avodah out love of Hashem. The explanation of the Ibn Ezra is that Hashem said it is forbidden and one who loves Hashem much realizes that it is completely off limits because that is what Hashem said. The Beis Halevi refers to nowadays, where halivi (as if/hopefully) we should have fear of Hashem as well.**

Rabbi Avigdor HaLevi Nebentzhal Shlita offers a third mehalech (approach/school of thought). The Torah commands us, "רק השמר לך ושמר נפשך מאד פן תשכח את הדברים אשר ראו עיניך ופן יסורו מלבבך כל ימי חייד והודעתם לבניך ולבני בניך. יום אשר עמדת לפני יקוק אלהיך בחרב באמר יקוק אלי הקהל לי את Just beware, and be exceedingly careful, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest you put them out of your heart all the days of your life; and make them known to your children and your children's children, the day that you stood before Hashem your G-d at Horev." (Devarim 4:9-10)

That is, the Torah doesn't want us to think of Ma'amad Har Sinai as a one-time event that occurred thousands of years ago. We are commanded to live Ma'amad Har Sinai every moment of our lives. This is also how we are expected to pass Torah on to the future generations – with fright, fear, trembling, and dread ( ובזיע וברתת וביראה באימה ), as it was when we received the Torah at Har Sinai. (See Kesubos 22a.) In practice, this is a very difficult thing to accomplish, but this is how the Torah wants a Jew to live, with all the emotion and intensity of Ma'amad Har Sinai. (See Kli Yakar in parshas Emor) Imagine how it was. Imagine being in the midst of Matan Torah, with the thunder and shofar, and the entire mountain shaking. You see Heaven and Earth meet, and the Voice of Hashem speaking through Moshe Rabbeinu. Suddenly, someone taps you on the shoulder and asks, “Shimon has such a nice house. Wouldn't you like to have it for yourself?” What would you say? “What!?! Who's thinking of houses?” Why is this? Because at Matan Torah, “דברו יצאה נפשי. —My soul went out when He spoke” (Shir HaShirim 8:2). Every Jewish soul broke away from the shackles of the material world and clung to spirituality alone. In such as state, the Ibn Ezra's question doesn't even start. **If we live with the constant memory of Ma'amad Har Sinai, we won't think about getting what our friends have. It isn't possible to covet someone's house when we live with the emotion of Ma'amad Har Sinai.**

We don't even have to go all the way back to Ma'amad Har Sinai. The Rema's first comment in the Shulchan Aruch begins, 'שויתי ה' לנגדי תמיד (תהילים טז, ח), הוא כלל גדול בתורה ובמעלות הצדיקים, אשר הולכים לפני האלהים, כי אין ישיבת האדם ותנועותיו ועסקיו והוא לבדו בביתו, כישיבתו ותנועותיו ועסקיו והוא לפני מלך גדול, ולא דבורו והרחבת פיו כרצונו והוא עם אנשי ביתו וקרוביו, כדבורו במושב המלך. כל שכן כשישים האדם אל לבו שהמלך הגדול הקדוש ברוך הוא, אשר מלא כל הארץ כבודו, עומד עליו ורואה במעשיו, כמו שנאמר "אם יסתר איש במסתרים ואני לא אראנו נאם ה'" (ירמיה כג, כד), מיד יגיע אליו היראה וההכנעה בפחד השי"ת "I set Hashem before me always," is an important principle in Torah and in the exaltedness of the righteous... and that a Jew should set it upon his heart that the great King, HaKadosh Baruch Hu, Whose glory fills all the earth, stands over him and sees what he does." Even this feeling is enough to keep a person's heart from coveting what

doesn't belong to him. Of course, it is not easy to get to this level and to live each moment with the feeling (not just the knowledge) that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is "standing over him and sees what he does." However, just considering these words of the Rema (based on the Rambam, Moreh Nevuchim, 3:52) is enough to realize that the Torah isn't asking too much from us not to covet. **When we feel that we are in Hashem's presence, there is no room to desire anything but kirvas (coming close to) Hashem.**

However, despite the fact that we just discussed the importance of distancing ourselves from jealousy and desire, there is, nevertheless, a very important scenario in which **desire and jealousy are allowed and even encouraged**. The Gemara in Bava Basra (21) says that **jealousy of scholars increases knowledge** (קנאת סופרים תרבה חכמה). When we look at a talmid chacham and say 'I want to be like him', that is excellent! You are using jealousy to propel you to reach higher levels. The Maharsha points out that the Gemara specifically stated 'soferim/סופרים' as opposed to stating chacham. Someone who became a talmid chacham won't, necessarily, be jealous of his friend. The reason for this is the wisdom and caliber of the talmid chacham is already so advanced and seasoned that being jealous of others' wisdom would almost never occur. However, 'a sofer/סופר' hasn't yet reached the level of a chacham yet and will most likely possess at least some jealousy. If someone is not included in the category of a talmid chacham yet, then he needs to have this jealousy of others who are on a greater level than he.

The Orchos Tzaddikim elaborates on this (perek 14). Someone who is careful to not be jealous of others will receive great reward. Most sins that one publically transgresses, he will be embarrassed of. The reason for this is that he will be embarrassed in front of other people. However, since desires are only in the heart, where no one can see, he therefore won't worry of being embarrassed in front of people.

There is one type of jealousy that is great though. Jealousy of those who have yiras shamayim (fear of heaven) as is stated in Mishlay (23, 17) "Let your heart not envy sinners, rather those who revere Hashem all the day." **We should be jealous of those who perform any mitzvah whatsoever and it should bring us to want to perform that mitzvah as well.** Even when we see a rasha (wicked person) who has even one good midah (characteristic trait), we should get jealous of that too! He says this is the reason why we need to give kavod (respect) to a yirei Shamayim and talmiday chachamim. We have to help them in any way we can. When we honor a chacham, or a Rabbi, then others will see that honor and get jealous. They will think and conclude that if we get serious and diligent with our learning, then we will be given honor as well. Seeing that this person receive so much honor, will bring them to want to be like him and receive the honor that they desire so they will strive to be great people! As the Gemara in Pesachim (50b) says: one should always learn and perform mitzvos, even if it is for the wrong reason, because this will ultimately lead him to doing them for the right reasons!!!

**See** also Vayikra 2014

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