

GREAT FOR SHARING  
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!

# בשבת



אור ישראל

Living Life Deeper

PARSHAS  
SHOFTIM

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT  
RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS  
RABBI AVICHAI BENSOUSSAN

## KILLER CONSEQUENCES

**A**t the end of *Parshas Shoftim*, we encounter the laws of *eglah arufah*. This procedure is carried out when a person's body is discovered and the perpetrator is nowhere to be found. As part of the procedure, the elders from the closest city must bring a calf to a river, and on the riverbank declare that they were not the murderers.<sup>1</sup>

The Gemara<sup>2</sup> asks that it would be ridiculous to assume that these elders were indeed the criminals, why must they declare their innocence? The Gemara explains that of course there is no need for the elders to proclaim their innocence from the deed; rather, they are proclaiming that they did nothing at all to even possibly contribute to the death of this man. They declare that they provided food and escort for all travelers. Food, so that no traveler would go hungry, be forced to attack another for their food, and either end up killing, or being killed, and an escort for their protection.

The implication of the Gemara is straightforward, yet shocking. Had the elders not provided food for those passing through, they would indeed be considered an accomplice to the crime, to the point where they must state that they were not the murderers! Providing food for all travelers is indeed an admirable undertaking, but allowing one to leave a city without lunch is akin to murder?

The lesson is clear — one must be aware of the consequences of their actions, even if the ramifications are farfetched. If there is a possibility of a terrible crime because of my action, or inaction, the Torah requires that I rethink my path, and adjust accordingly. Obviously, we cannot be held accountable for things that are impossible to foresee, but that does not mean we can be blind to the results of our behavior.

Hashem has given us a great imagination and it serves us well in many areas. By taking a moment to use our intellect and insight to understand possible outcomes, we will be doing ourselves an enormous favor, avoiding possible ill-will or worse, and serving Hashem without even lifting a finger.

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### Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

The beauty of this trait is that it doesn't take any special skill or talent, and is innate to all of us. Every person, of every level of intelligence and maturity, thinks about the consequences of their actions. Some of us think about the long-term ramifications, while some only think about the immediate result. But we all know that our actions cause results, otherwise we wouldn't do anything at all!

The trick is to take that moment where we make a decision to do something, and expand on it. Instead of simply deciding to get a drink, think for just another moment or two — is there anyone else here who would like a drink? Am I taking the last of whatever is available?

A deeper thought process is to weigh our gains and losses. Yes, I may gain in the short term, but perhaps I am losing in the long term, or vice-versa. If I 'borrow' my brother's favorite toy, I may gain by being able to play with it now, but boy will he be angry with me later!

And of course, thinking about the spiritual ramifications of our deeds will certainly keep us focused on *avodas Hashem*.

1 *Devarim* 21:1-9

2 *Sotah* 38b

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**Salt is a flavor enhancer only when mixed in with the food, not when dumped on top. This is the role of Mussar: to allow one's Torah study to positively influence his soul, instead of remaining external and detached.**

- R' Sholom Schwadron zt"l, *Kol Dodi Dofeik*, pg. 178

# SEARCHING FOR MITZVOS

Yosef\* and Chaim walked out of *shul* together Shabbos afternoon. “What did I tell you!” Yosef exclaimed. “He always gets *hagbah*. I don’t know how he does it!”

Chaim smiled and nodded in agreement. “It’s like some special power. If it’s not *hagbah*, it’s *gelilah*, and sometimes it’s an *aliyah*. Maybe the *gabbai* just likes him?”

Yosef shook his head. “No, I’ve seen Benjy pull this off at other *shuls* also. We once went to a *Bar Mitzvah* together, and he received *pesicha* at *mincha*. There’s something else going on...”

Just then Benjy walked by on his way home. “Benjy!” Yosef called out, running to catch him. “Have a moment?”

Benjy turned to see his two friends Yosef and Chaim heading his way. “Sure, what’s up?”

“We decided to start calling you *Mr. Hagbah*. It seems that you have the inside scoop, or *gabbais* around the world love you! How do you always get something in *shul*?”

Benjy’s smile turned into a chuckle. “Oh, so you want to know my secrets now, do you?”

Chaim nodded. “Yup, that’s just about right.”

“Sure, I’ll tell you. It’s really no secret at all, just something I learned over time. Very often, especially by *mincha* on Shabbos, and especially for something that is not an *aliyah*, the *gabbai* doesn’t have a particular person that he wants to give a *kibbud*. He’ll take anybody available. So what do I do? I make myself available! I get a seat near the *bimah*, and I make eye contact when I see the *gabbai* looking around for someone. And more often than not, they’ll see me and offer me something to do, *hagbah*, *gelilah*, and so on.”

“That’s it? Wow!” Chaim said thoughtfully. “Not much of a super power once you explain it, I guess all it takes is just some thinking ahead.”

**“Not much of a super power once you explain it, I guess all it takes is just some thinking ahead.”**

*\*Based on a true story, names have been changed.*

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Had the Sages at the time of the destruction of the second *Beis Hamikdash* had the proper amount of foresight, the *Beis Hamikdash* would not have been destroyed.<sup>1</sup>
- One who employs the art of foresight will never come to sin.<sup>2</sup>
- One can study under the greatest teachers of all time, but true wisdom comes from understanding the consequences of our actions.<sup>3</sup>

1 *Gittin* 55b-57a, *Rashi* 55b s.v. מִפְּחַד

2 *Rabbeinu Yonah* on *Avos* 2:9 s.v. ר' שְׁמַעוֹן אֹמֵר

3 *Maharsha*, *Chidushei Aggados* on *Tamid* 32a, s.v. אִיל אִיזְהוּ חָכָם