

Kol Mevasser

PARASHA MISHPATIM

26 Shevat 5768

February 2, 2008

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Mishpatim: Returning Lost Objects

Rabbi Ralph Tawil

Although returning lost objects is a basic Jewish value, it is not often stressed in our society, where the "finders keepers" attitude prevails. People are often offered rewards for returning lost objects, as if doing that is something special and out of the ordinary. Rather, the Torah value is that it is a misvah, or commandment, to return the lost object regardless of whether there is a reward or not.

Texts

The misvah to return lost objects is found in two places in the Torah—once in our perasha and once in Parashat Ki Tesse.

Now when you encounter your enemy's ox or his donkey straying, return it, return it to him.

Exodus 23:4

*You are not to see the ox of your brother or his sheep wandering away and hide yourself from them; you are to return, yes, return them to your brother. Now if your brother not be near to you or you do not know him, you are to bring it into the midst of your house, it is to be there with you until your brother makes-inquiry about it, then you are to return it to him. Thus you are to do with his donkey, thus you are to do with anything lost of your brother, this is lost by him, and you find it: you are not allowed to hide yourself. **Deuteronomy 22:1-3***

Discussion

Why should we do the misvah at all? Although we do every misvah because Hashem commanded it, we should think about the reason God commanded it and what particular attachment we have to any misvah. In the case of returning lost objects, we should try to empathize with the feelings of the person who lost the object.

Some questions to consider include these. Have you ever lost something that was important to you? How did you feel when it was lost? How did you feel when it was found? What kind of community, country or nation is created that is founded upon this basic value of returning property to those who lost it? Our goal is to create a caring concerned society, a society whose inhabitants would not think of cheating or thieving.

Why does the Torah emphasize that it is the *enemy's* animals that should be returned? Perhaps the emphasis is added because if it were our friend's object, we would definitely return it. Better yet, we have to overcome our enmity and treat each other as brothers by returning lost property. Since it is with the enemy that the temptation to ignore is greater, the Torah goes out of its way to say even if the owner of the animal is our enemy we must still help the animal.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Tuesday Nights at 7:30 pm

Conversations with R. Ovadia

In the Kahal Joseph Library

Wednesday, February 6th at, 7:30 pm

Israeli Songs with Edna Ovadia

at the home of Rabbi & Mrs. Ovadia

Shabbat Day, February 23rd

Family Shabbat Program

Sunday, March 2nd

Los Angeles Premiere:

Got no Jeep and My Camel Died

A Documentary about Yair Dalal

A joint program with the SEC

Sunday, March 16th

Purim Baking with Yvette Dabby
for KJ Mishloah Manot Gift Baskets

Stop the Rockets!

Iran-backed terrorists have shot more than 4,000 rockets towards Israel since Israel gave up all of Gaza in hopes of peace. The rockets must stop. Send a letter to your newspaper editor & government leaders today. Here is a sample of what you might include:

Dear Editor,

Israel is being attacked daily by Iran-backed terrorists in Gaza and we need your help to make sure that our leaders and reporters don't ignore the threat.

In a recent 4 day period, Iran-backed Hamas fired more than 220 Qassam rockets towards Israeli children.

Since the disengagement from Gaza in the summer of 2005:

- *Iran-backed Hamas took control of Gaza and continues to vow to destroy Israel.*
- *Over 4,000 rockets have been fired towards Israeli women and children in Sderot, Ashkelon and other Gaza-border cities.*
- *74% of children in Sderot aged 7-12 suffer from post-traumatic anxiety.*

Iran-backed Hamas has created a humanitarian crisis in the Gaza strip by using its financial resources and its electricity to fire rockets on Israeli women and children instead of helping its population.

The world needs to know about this and support Israel's right to take measured actions to defend itself in the face of such terrorist attacks.

Thank you for your help with this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Please contact your local papers and leaders today. Write letters to them in support of Israeli citizens' right to live free of attacks.

PARASHA & HAFTARA
Mishpatim Hertz p. 306, Haftara Hertz p. 323

Mazal Tov
Dalia & Robert Nemzer
on the birth of your
baby daughter
Mayah

Mazal Tov
Dahlia & Elan Carr
on the birth of your
baby daughter
Hannah Eliora

PRAYER SCHEDULE **SHABBAT MISHPATIM**

25 Shevat / Friday, February 1st

Shabbat Candlelighting 5:05 pm

Minhah & Arvith.....10 minutes after candlelighting

Friday Night Dinner 6:00 pm

26 Shevat / Shabbat, February 2nd

Shaharith8:30 am

Minhah & Arvith..... 4:30 pm

Motzei Shabbat 6:03 pm

27 Shevat / Sunday, February 3rd

Shaharith7:30 am

Talmud Torah10:00 am

Monday through Thursday

Shaharith6:30 am

Talmud Torah, Tue/Thu 4:00 pm

SHABBAT TERUMAH

2 Adar I / Friday, February 8th

Shabbat Candlelighting 5:12 pm

Minhah & Arvith.....10 minutes after candlelighting

Refuah Shlemah

Please include the following people in your prayers for health and wellbeing

Khayah Noa bat Sara
Matilda Louisa
Victor ben Pauline
Haim ben Mordechai
Shaul Chai Gavriel ben Sara
Shamuel Eliyahu ben Hannah

To add or remove names e-mail dafna@kahaljoseph.org.

In Memoriam

These anniversaries occur from Shabbat, the 26th of Shevat (Feb. 2, 2008) to Shabbat, the 3rd of Adar I (Feb. 9th, 2008). It is customary to light a memorial candle in the evening and donate tzedakah. Family members are encouraged to attend services in honor of loved ones. *Entries with an asterisk lack contact names, to add information please call 310-474-0559.*

Shabbat / 26 Shevat

Mozelle bat Simha
Moshe Hai ben David Shlomo
Avraham ben Haim

Sunday / 27 Shevat

Nathan ben Israel

Monday / 28 Shevat

Haviva bat Masooda
Nassim ben Sarah Khatoun
Moshe Hai ben David

Tuesday / 29 Shevat

Rahma Duke bat Salha Khatoun
Georgia Jiji
Mordehai Hayim ben Moshe Sassoon

Wednesday / 30 Shevat

Nagi ben Murad Avraham
Shaul ben David Cohen
Haim ben Yisrael

Thursday / 1 Adar I

Yosef ben Eliyahu

Friday / 2 Adar I

Abraham ben Meneshe Aslan
Aharon ben Yosef
Yoseph Faraj ben Yoseph Haim

Shabbat / 3 Adar I

Yoseph ben Abraham
Farang Jahanbani
Herschel Tzvi Sarne
Abraham Shalom ben Shaul Sopher

Thank You

*Nicole and Abe Mathalon
for your generosity in supporting
our adult education lecture series
“Orthodox, Conservative, and the
Sephardic Alternative”*

Kiddush

*is sponsored by
Naomi Ellenhorn Davis
in honor of her son
Amiad Davis’s
Bar Mitzvah*

Mazal Tov

*Avi Davis &
Naomi Ellenhorn Davis
on the Bar Mitzvah
of your son
Amiad Davis*

One's Loss is Another's Gain?

Miriam, who was studying Torah at a Jerusalem seminary, was about to be married. She invited her sister, Judy, who was studying meditation and "eastern spirituality" in an Indian ashram. After Miriam's insistence, Judy came to Jerusalem for the wedding.

After even more cajoling, Judy attended one of Miriam's classes. They happened to be studying the myriad details of the laws of returning lost objects. What constitutes a "sign?" When does the object have to be returned? And similar issues. After the Torah class, Judy was very critical. "Miriam, you call this trivial nonsense religion? You have no sense of true spirituality. I am going back to my guru in India."

After a short while Judy was walking with her Guru when they came upon a wallet containing all kinds of identifying documents along with \$1500 dollars cash. The guru pocketed the cash and tossed away the wallet. "What are you doing?" Judy exclaimed, "We could probably find that man if we tried!"

The guru said that the money was a gift from the cosmos and that if he would not take it he would be denying the cosmic gift. Guru finds guru keeps. Judy persisted, "but it is not right. The man who lost the money no doubt is in great distress. We should try to find him and return his money." Soon after Judy decided to go back to Jerusalem and study more Torah. Judy is living in Jerusalem today and still studying Torah.

The moral of the story—The details are necessary in order to create the greater spirituality.

When Goats are Like Chickens

R. Pinhas said: One time a man passed by the door of Hanina son of Dosa and forgot some chickens there. R. Hanina's wife found them. He said to her: "Do not eat the eggs."

The rabbi and his wife had many eggs and soon many more chickens, until the chickens started to be annoying. They sold the chickens and bought some goats with the money.

Some time later the man who had lost the chickens passed by R. Hanina's door again. He said to his friend I once left some chickens right here. R. Hanina heard him and said: "Do you have any identifying sign on the chickens?" "Yes I do," said the man. He told the rabbi the sign and R. Hanina gave him the goats.

The moral of the story—One must be very faithful in caring for the lost object. Always thinking of the best interest of the owner.

Gently Used Toys Wanted!

Our children's program is seeking gently used toys, in good condition for kids ages 5 to 14 years old.

If you have toys to donate please e-mail ilansaig@yahoo.com or dafna@kahaljoseph.org.

Thank you in advance for your generosity and support.

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What about if the lost object is that of non-Jew? R. Yoshiah said that "your enemy" refers to the non-Jew who is an idol worshipper. Yet, the Halacha found in the Rambam and *Shulhan Arukh* is that one should not return the lost object of a non-Jew, if they are wicked. The Meiri posits that the prohibition of returning a lost object to a non-Jew only applied to idol worshippers and not to people who have religion and laws similar to ours. One should return the non-Jew's lost object when because would entail "sanctifying the name of God" such that people would praise Israel and see Israel as trustworthy. If not returning the object would cause "hhillul Hashem" (profaning God's name), it must be returned.

Shabbat Shalom