



WHO GETS THE CREDIT?

A person influenced someone else to do a good deed.
 Who gets the credit?
 The influencer or the actor?

TEACHER'S MANUAL



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Published and Copyright 2024 by
Shluchim Office International
816 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn,
NY 11213
718.221.0500

5784 - 2024

Founded in 2008 in memory of Rabbi Gabi and Rivky Holtzberg OB"Y
Shluchim of the Rebbe to Mumbai India

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The commandment of returning a lost item (Source 1): If two people are grasping a garment, one says, "I found it," and the other says, "I found it," both must make an oath and divide it (Source 2). The purpose of the oath is to verify their claims. The swearing is done in a way that highlights the severity of a false oath, often leading the guilty party to confess the truth. (Source 3)

B. "Two People Grasping" on a Soul Level.....4

The Rebbe explains the Mishnah in terms of the human soul:

"Garment" refers to a mitzvah that a person fulfills and the reward they receive for it. **"Two people grasping the garment"** represents two individuals claiming credit for a particular mitzvah.

(The Torah and mitzvot are compared to food and clothing respectively. Just as food is absorbed by the body, so too is Torah absorbed by the mind of the learner (Source 4). Mitzvot are likened to garments that do not merge with the person.)

C. "Each Says It Is Entirely Mine"8

Human nature tends to be influenced by societal norms. Maimonides therefore cautions that one should live in a community that promotes positive values (Sources 6 and 7). Accordingly, part of the credit for an upstanding person's conduct goes to their teachers.

For this reason, our sages said, "A person should always live near their teacher," as everyone requires positive influence. As the Talmud recounts, even King Solomon only married Pharaoh's daughter after his teacher, Shimi, was killed. Had Shimi been alive, Solomon would not have done so. (Source 8)

"Each says it is entirely mine" – two people claim credit for the mitzvah: the person who performed it and the educator who guided them towards that path in life.

The Mishnah rules: "**This one shall swear... and that one shall swear... and they shall divide it.**"

The simple purpose of an oath is that when there is suspicion that someone is lying, the two parties are made to swear by G-d's name. Since they will fear swearing falsely, they will admit the truth, thereby avoiding any lie. This practice can also be used personally, where a person may take an oath to fulfill a particular mitzvah (Source 9), using the solemnity of the oath to awaken internal strength that helps them uphold their commitment.

In our case, the teacher's oath serves to clarify that their guidance came from the heart, out of love, not out of hatred or with harshness that could have distanced the student. As we see in the case of the prophet Elisha and Gehazi, severe punishment caused Gehazi to be distanced forever. (Source 10)

Likewise, the person who performed the mitzvah must swear that they did so from the heart, not merely out of habit or lip service. Otherwise, the Torah and mitzvot would not have their proper effect.

When the litigants swear that both the guidance and the performance of the mitzvah were done with a true and loving heart, the ruling is that they divide it—both deserve credit.

Introduction

A short while after the Rebbe's passing on the third of Tammuz, his secretaries entered his office and, trembling, peeked inside the drawers of his desk.

In one drawer, they found a treasure: three one-hundred-page notebooks, inscribed with the Rebbe's holy handwriting. In small and cramped lines, the Rebbe's pen filled pages upon pages with his original insights and explanations on the Talmud, Kabbalah, Jewish law, customs, stories, allegory, ethics, and lessons in Divine service. These notebooks were written by the Rebbe before he assumed leadership of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement, between 1928 to 1950. From that point on, they lay secreted away in the Rebbe's drawer.

These were difficult years when the world in general, and Europe in particular, was in turmoil. The Rebbe was often displaced, moving from city to city across Europe, living at avarious times in Berlin, Riga, Warsaw, Otwock, Drozdnik, Paris, Marienbad, Vichy, and Nice, until finally arriving in Brooklyn, N.Y. Despite these severe challenges—lacking peace of mind due to dangers and persecutions, and suffering from a shortage of books—the Rebbe continued writing, adding page after page to his collection of notebooks.

Although written in a concise and terse style, it didn't take long for many to recognize the sheer genius and profundity within these extraordinary notebooks. A team of distinguished Torah scholars was assembled for the sacred task of publishing them. This vast treasure trove was released gradually, in weekly pamphlets, each containing one short entry. Alongside the Rebbe's words, clarifications, references, and notes were added to assist the reader. Eventually, these were compiled and published as part of the Reshimot ("Notes") series.

In those days, immediately following the Rebbe's passing, everyone was devastated and overwhelmed by the immense loss, engulfed in a sense of orphanhood. Yet, through the darkness, a great light emerged. Every week, a new pamphlet of the Rebbe's notebooks would be released, eagerly received by Chassidim around the world, bringing them inspiration and encouragement. Thousands of Chassidim devoted themselves to studying these Torah insights, reviving their spirits.

*

In this lesson, we will study an entry on the Talmudic discussion regarding two people claiming ownership of an object. This is a Torah essay written by the Rebbe which he intended to publish for Torah scholars, as he mentioned in its introduction (though it was never actually published). In this essay, we see the Rebbe's innovative and unique approach—connecting all aspects of the Torah: the simple meaning and deeper hints, the homiletical

and the mystical, law and lore, demonstrating how they are all intertwined and unified.

Furthermore, in every topic—whether it's a portion from the Torah or a complex discussion in the Talmud or a difficult passage from Maimonides—there are always lessons and practical guidance to be found for a person's service to G-d.

השיעור לפרשת כי תצא

מרשימת "שנים אוחזין בטלית
סוגיא דריש מסכת בבא מציעא"

A. The Law of Finding a Lost Item

In this week's Torah reading we read the laws of finding - and returning - lost objects:

Source 1 Deuteronomy 22:1-3

Student's
pg. 1

You shall not see your brother's ox or sheep straying, and ignore them. You shall return them to your brother.

If your brother is not near you, or if you do not know him, you shall bring it into your house, and it shall be with you until your brother seeks it out, whereupon you shall return it to him.

So shall you do with his donkey, and so shall you do with his garment, and so shall you do with any lost article of your brother which he has lost and you have found. You shall not ignore it.

לֹא תִרְאֶה אֶת שׁוֹר אָחִיךָ אוֹ
אֶת שֵׂיוֹ גִּדְּחִים וְהִתְעַלְמָתָּ
מֵהֶם, הָשֵׁב תְּשִׁיבָם לְאָחִיךָ.

וְאִם לֹא קָרֹב אָחִיךָ אֵלֶיךָ
וְלֹא יָדַעְתָּ, וְאִסַּפְתָּ אֹלָם
תּוֹךְ בֵּיתְךָ, וְהָיָה עִמָּךְ עַד
דֹּרֶשׁ אָחִיךָ אֹתוֹ וְהָשִׁבְתָּ
לוֹ.

וְכֵן תַּעֲשֶׂה לְחֻמְרוֹ, וְכֵן
תַּעֲשֶׂה לְשִׁמְלָתוֹ, וְכֵן תַּעֲשֶׂה
לְכָל אֲבֵדַת אָחִיךָ אֲשֶׁר
תֵּאֲבֹד מִמֶּנּוּ וּמִצֵּאתָהּ, לֹא
תִּזְכֹּל לְהִתְעַלֵּם.

When chancing upon a lost object in the street, one cannot ignore it; you must collect it and attempt to return it to its owner.

The Talmud discusses the relevant laws at length, including the signs an owner must present to be believed.

In cases where there are clearly no unique identifying signs, the law is that it is finders keepers, because an owner will never be identified.

The Dispute Before the Court

The Talmud discusses a case where two individuals found a garment without any identifying marks, which means it belongs to the finder. However, both claim to have found it first, and thus claim the garment now belongs to them. They bring the dispute to the court and ask the judges to rule on who is entitled to the garment.

Source 2 Talmud, Bava Metzia 2a

Student's
pg. 1

Two people are grasping a garment, one says, 'I found it,' and the other says, 'I found it.' One says, 'It is entirely mine,' and the other says, 'It is entirely mine.' This one must swear that no less than half of it belongs to him, and the other must swear that no less than half of it belongs to him, and they divide it.

שְׁנַיִם אוֹחֲזִין בְּטִלְיָה, זֶה אוֹמֵר אֲנִי מְצֹאתֶיהָ וְזֶה אוֹמֵר אֲנִי מְצֹאתֶיהָ, זֶה אוֹמֵר כֻּלָּהּ שְׁלִי וְזֶה אוֹמֵר כֻּלָּהּ שְׁלִי, זֶה יִשָּׁבַע שֶׁאֵין לוֹ כֶּה פָּחוֹת מִחֲצִיָּה וְזֶה יִשָּׁבַע שֶׁאֵין לוֹ כֶּה פָּחוֹת מִחֲצִיָּה, וַיִּחְלְקוּ.

Since there are no witnesses and neither of them has any proof as to who claimed the garment first, the Mishnah rules that each must swear that at least half of the garment belongs to him, and then they divide it.

The practice of taking an oath is common in Jewish law. When a person makes a claim but lacks witnesses or proof, the court offers them the option to swear in G-d's name that they are telling the truth. Since an oath is considered a very serious matter, and everyone understood the tragic consequences associated with a false oath, it was often enough to make a liar retract their false claims and admit the truth.

Source 3 Maimonides' Mishneh Torah, Laws of Oaths, Chapter 11

Student's
pg. 1

The procedure for judicial oaths is as follows: The one taking the oath holds a Torah scroll in their arm, standing while swearing either in G-d's explicit name or with a less holy name, through an oath or a curse. For example, they might say, "I swear by the L-rd, the G-d of Israel, that I do not owe this person anything."

וּשְׁבוּעַת הַדִּינִין... כִּן הִיא. הַנִּשְׁבָּע אוֹחֲזֵ סֵפֶר תּוֹרָה בְּזֵרְעוֹ וְהוּא עוֹמֵד וְנִשְׁבָּע בְּשֵׁם אוֹ כְּכֹנִי בְּשְׁבוּעָה אוֹ בְּאֵלֶּה... כְּגוֹן שֶׁיֹּאמֶר הָרִינִי נִשְׁבָּע בִּה' אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל... שֶׁאֵין לִי חֵיב לְזֶה כְּלוּם.

Student's
pg. 2

How do we impress upon the person taking the oath the gravity of the situation? We say to them:

וְכִיצַד מְאַיְמִין עַל הַנִּשְׁבָּע? אוֹמְרִין לוֹ:

"Be aware that the entire world trembled at the moment G-d said to Moses, 'Do not take the Name of the L-rd your G-d in vain' (Exodus 20:7). For all other sins in the Torah, G-d says, 'He will cleanse,' but regarding this, it says, 'He will not cleanse.' For all other sins, punishment is exacted from the individual alone, but here, it is exacted from them and from their family if they cover for them.

"הוּא יוֹדֵעַ שֶׁכָּל הָעוֹלָם כָּלוּ נִדְדָּעוּ בְּשַׁעַת שֶׁאָמַר הַקֹּדֶשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְמִשְׁחָה לֹא תִשָּׂא אֶת שֵׁם ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשׁוּא. וְכָל עֲבֻרוֹת שֶׁבִּתּוֹרָה נִאָּמַר בָּהֶן וְנִקָּה וְכֵן נִאָּמַר 'לֹא יִנָּקֶה'. כָּל עֲבֻרוֹת שֶׁבִּתּוֹרָה נִפְרָעִין מִמֶּנּוּ, וְכֵן מִמֶּנּוּ וּמִמִּשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ שֶׁמְחַפִּין עָלָיו זֶה.

Student's pg. 2 “Moreover, they cause harm to the enemies of Israel (a euphemism for Israel), as all of Israel is responsible for one another.”

This entire warning is delivered in language that they understand, so that they comprehend the seriousness of the matter and the sinner may return to the right path.

וְלֹא עוֹד אֶלָּא גּוֹרָם לְהַפְרֹעַ
מִשׁוֹנְאֵיהֶם שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל
שֶׁכָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל עֹרֵבִין זֶה
בְּזֶה."

וְעַנֵּן הָאִיּוֹם הַזֶּה כֻּלּוֹ
בְּלִשׁוֹן שֶׁהֵן מְכִירִין אוֹמְרִים
לָהֶם כְּדֵי שְׂיָבִינוּ בְּדִבְרֵים
וַיַּחֲזֹר הַחוּטָא לְמוֹטָב.

For advanced students:

One might ask: Why are they not required to swear that they grabbed the garment first or that the entire garment belongs to them? Why is the oath phrased in such an odd way—that at least half of the garment belongs to them?

The answer is that in this case, the ruling is known in advance: If both stick to their claims and swear in G-d's name, each will receive half of the garment. However, if they both swear that they own the entire garment, it is clear that one of them is swearing falsely, and we want to avoid a court sanctioning dueling oaths which are impossible to be true at the same time.

Therefore, the judges propose an alternative to both parties—to swear that at least half of the garment belongs to them. This formula leaves the option for both oaths to be true: If they did in fact grab the garment simultaneously, their oath would not be false, and the ruling would result in the proper equal division.

It should be noted that it is possible that neither is deliberately swearing falsely, for they may both genuinely believe that they grabbed the garment first, since the situation was not clear.

B. "Two People Grasping" on a Soul Level

>> The Rebbe

Student's
pg. 3

We can explain the entire topic on the level of the individual Jew's internal life.

ונציע כל הסוגיא ענינה בחיי הנפש של
איש הישראלי:

There are various ways to understand the Torah, with different levels of learning and interpretation. Every story, commandment, or law written in the Torah has a simple, straightforward level of understanding—known as the "peshat"—and a deeper layer, which is the inner significance of the law as it relates to a person's soul.

In this particular entry, the Rebbe takes the Mishnah we have just studied, which at the peshat level discusses two people arguing over a garment, and explains it as a metaphor for the inner workings of the human soul in a way that is relevant to us in the year 2024.

Two Grappling For a Garment

Student's
pg. 3

Just like there are garments for the body in the physical sense, there are also garments for the soul in the spiritual sense. The spiritual garments are the Torah and mitzvot we observe, and the reward we receive for them.

הנה כמו שיש טלית ולבוש בחיי גוף האדם,
דוגמתם נמצא גם בחיים הרוחניים של
כל אחד ואחד. ובפרט הם תורה ומצוות
שמקיים, ושכרם, וכמו שיתבאר לקמן.

A garment in Kabbalistic terms is a mitzvah that a person fulfills and the resulting reward.

Student's
pg. 3

Our Mishnah is addressing a case where two people are holding onto a single matter of Torah and mitzvot. There are grounds to say that the mitzvah was achieved as a result of their joint efforts, but each of them claims full credit for it.

ומשנתנו דנה דין שנים שאוחזין בענין
אחד של תורה או מצווה, היינו שיש מקום
לומר שנעשה דבר זה על ידי השתתפות
שניהם יחדיו, אבל כל אחד מהם טוען
ששייך רק לו בלבד.

In the Kabbalah, two people arguing over a garment is two people who did a mitzvah together, but both claim exclusive credit for it.

Student's pg. 3 The Mishnah specifies the area where such a dispute is common, regarding "garments." This refers to Torah and mitzvot and their reward, as they fill the spiritual role that parallels the role of clothes in the physical sense.

ומבארת המשנה באיזה ענין מצויה ביותר מחלוקת כזו, "בטלית" דוקא - היינו בענין של תורה ומצוות ושכרן, שתפקידו בחיים הרוחניים של האדם, כתפקיד הלבוש בחיים הגשמיים של האדם.

Food and Garments of the Soul

Student's pg. 3 The physical needs of people can be divided into two general categories: food and clothing. Jacob referred to these categories when he asked G-d "give me bread to eat and a garment to wear." The Torah also commands us to "love the stranger, to give him bread and clothing." Nachmanides explains, "these are all of man's needs."

דהנה, צרכי האדם ההכרחיים נחלקים בכלל לשני סוגים: מזון ולבוש. וכבקשת יעקב¹ ונתן לי לחם לאכול ובגד ללבוש, ואומר² ואוהב גר לתת לו לחם ושמלה, ופירש הרמב"ן "והם כל צרכי האדם".

Student's pg. 4

On the verse "And He loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing," which implies that G-d cares for converts and the underprivileged by providing for their basic needs, such as food and clothing, Nachmanides explains that the Torah specifically mentions these two elements because they represent the most fundamental human necessities. No person can survive without them.

This is also why Jacob, when he prayed to G-d for help and protection upon leaving his father's house on his way to Haran, specifically requested food and clothing. These two items symbolize all of a person's essential needs.

Student's pg. 4 Just as the physical body requires food and clothing, the same is true in the spiritual sense. Every person needs spiritual food and clothing in order to achieve spiritual wholesomeness and to ascend spiritually.

וכמו שלחיי הגוף זקוק האדם למזונות ולבושים, כן הוא גם כן בחיי הרוחניים, אשר זקוק הוא למזון ולבוש רוחניים, כדי שיבוא לשלמותו ויעלה מעלה מעלה.

ויובן ענין מזון ולבוש בחיים הרוחניים, על דרך ענינם בחיים הגשמיים.

We can understand the function of spiritual food and clothing by exploring the function of physical food and clothing.

1. בראשית כ"ה, כ'.
2. דברים י', י"ח.

Student's
pg. 4

Food gives us life and energy. The food and drink that we consume becomes part of our flesh and blood, completely one with us. Clothing, by contrast, envelopes our body and shelters it from the heat and cold, but it remains an independent entity and does not merge with us.

The difference between Torah and mitzvot is along the same lines.

When we engage in Torah study we are trying to understand the subject matter to the point that we grasp it in our minds and it becomes part of us.

Source 4 Tanya, chapter 5

Student's
pg. 4

For just as physical bread nourishes the body as it is absorbed internally, in his very inner self, where it is transformed into blood and flesh of his flesh, whereby he lives and exists—so, too, is with the knowledge of the Torah and its comprehension by the soul of the person who studies it well, with a concentration of his intellect, until the Torah is absorbed by his intellect and is united with it and they become one. This becomes nourishment for the soul, and its inner life from the Giver of life, the blessed Ein Sof, Who is clothed in His wisdom and in His Torah that are absorbed in it.

Student's
pg. 5

>> The Rebbe

Student's
pg. 5

The verse states “your law is in my innards.” Other verses and teachings of the Sages compare Torah to water, wine, milk, bread, and meat.

דהנה, המזונות נותנים חיות וכח לאדם, על ידי שאוכל או שותה המאכל ומשקה, ונהפכים בקרבו להיות דם ובשר כבשרו, ומתאחדים עמו בתכלית. מה שאין כן הלבוש, שהוא מקיף את גוף האדם ומגין עליו מקור וחום, אבל דבר הוא בפני עצמו, ואינו מתאחד עם האדם.

וככל הדברים האלה הוא חילוק העיקרי בין תורה למצוות:

דתלמוד תורה ענינו הוא להבין ולהשיג הסוגיא שלומד, עד שנתפסת בשכלו ומתאחדת עמו והיו לאחדים.

כִּי כְמוֹ שֶׁהַלֶּחֶם הַגִּשְׁמִי זֶן אֶת הַגּוֹף כְּשֶׁמִּכְנִסוֹ בְּתוֹכוֹ וְקָרְבוֹ מִמֶּשׁ, וְנִהְפָּךְ שָׁם לְהִיּוֹת דָּם וּבָשָׂר כְּבָשָׂרוֹ וְאִזִּי יִחְיֶה וְיִתְקַיֵּם, כֵּן בִּידִיעַת הַתּוֹרָה וְהַשְׁגָּתָהּ בְּנַפְשׁ הָאָדָם שְׁלֹמְדָהּ הֵיטֵב, בְּעֵיוֹן שְׂכָלוֹ עַד שֶׁנִּתְפָּסֶת בְּשִׂכְלוֹ, וּמִתְאַחֶדֶת עִמּוֹ, וְהָיוּ לְאַחָדִים, נֶעֱשֶׂה מְזֹזֵן לְנַפְשׁ וְחַיִּים בְּקִרְבָּהּ, מַחְיֵי הַחַיִּים אֵין סוֹף בְּרוּךְ הוּא, הַמְּלוּבָּשׁ בְּחֻכְמָתוֹ וְתוֹרָתוֹ שֶׁבְּקִרְבָּהּ .

וזהו שנאמר בתורה³ ותורתך בתוך מעי, ונמשלה התורה למים, יין חלב,⁴ לחם,⁵ בשר.⁶

4. ישע'י נ"ה, א'. תענית ד' ע"א.
5. שבת ק"כ ע"א.
6. עירובין כ"א ע"ב. ב"ב כ"ב ע"א.

1. בראשית כ"ח, כ.
2. דברים י', י"ח.
3. תהלים מ', ט'.

Throughout the Torah and Talmud, food is often used as a metaphor for Torah.

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Mitzvot, by contrast, don't unite with a person to this degree. On the contrary, the most proper way to do a mitzvah is with the consciousness that it is a Divine decree, not because we find the reason behind it compelling.

Mitzvot are therefore termed "garments." The verse in Zechariah describes a vision the prophet saw: "Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes. . . . The angel said "Take off his filthy clothes." Then he said to Joshua, "See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put fine garments on you." Rashi explains, "sin is compared to filthy clothes, and merits are compared to beautiful white clothes."

מה שאין כן במצוות, שאין שייך בהם התאחדות כזו עם האדם, ואדרבה שלימות קיומם הוא, כשעושה המצווה מפני שהיא גזירת מלך, ולא מפני שטעם המצווה ישר בעיניו.

ולכן נקראו המצוות לבושים, וכמו שנאמר⁷ ויהושע היה לבוש בגדים צואים גו' הסירו הבגדים הצואים מעליו ויאמר אליו ראה העברתי מעליך עונך והלבש אותך מחלצות. ושם בפירוש רש"י: לפי שדימה העוון לבגדים צואים, דימה הזכיות למחלצות בגדים נאים ולבנים.

Source 5 Zechariah 3:3-4

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"Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes. . . . The angel said "Take off his filthy clothes."

ויהושע היה לבש בגדים צואים
... ויאמר ... הסירו הבגדים
הצואים מעליו.

In this vision of Zechariah the prophet, he sees Joshua the High Priest dressed in filthy garments, and the angel says to those standing before him, "Remove the filthy garments from him." The filthy garments symbolize the sin of Joshua, as "his sons were marrying women unfit for the priesthood, and he did not rebuke them" (Sanhedrin 93a).

We see that mitzvot (commandments) and sins are compared to garments. Sin is like a dirty garment, while a mitzvah is like a clean and beautiful garment.

C. "Each Says It Is Entirely Mine"

>> The Rebbe

Student's The Mishnah details the arguments made:
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"One says, 'I found it,' and the other says, 'I found it.' One says, 'It is entirely mine,' and the other says, 'It is entirely mine.'"

ומפרשת המשנה טענותיהם:

זה אומר אני מצאתיה וזה אומר אני מצאתיה, זה אומר כולה שלי וזה אומר כולה שלי.

People Are Influenced by Their Surroundings

Student's The nature of all people is wild and untamed. This
pg. 6 is true of everyone, even those who are diligent learners by nature and who possess refined character traits. The verse says about all people "a human is born like a wild donkey," and the sages say that it is only thanks to our teachers who guide us along the proper path that we merit the World to Come.

Even after a person has been trained and educated in Torah and mitzvot, the sages still counsel us "Exile yourself to a place of Torah . . . so that your colleagues will help you retain it, and do not rely on your own understanding." Maimonides writes "The nature of humans is to be influenced in their opinions and actions by their friends and associates."

דהנה האדם, יהיה מי שיהיה, אף אם הוא מתמיד בלימודו בטבעו, ורך כקנה במדותיו בתולדתו, הרי העיד עליו הכתוב⁸ עיר פרא אדם יולד, ורק רבו והמדריכו ללכת בדרך טובים מביאו לחיי עולם הבא⁹.

וגם אחרי שכבר חונך וגדל בתורה ומעשים טובים, הודיעונו חז"ל¹⁰ הוי גולה למקום תורה כו' שחבריו יקיימוה בידך ואל בינתך אל תשען. וביד [רמב"ם] הלכות דעות¹¹ כתב: דרך בריתו של אדם, להיות נמשך בדעותיו ובמעשיו אחר רעיו וחבריו כו'.

Source 6 Maimonides' Mishneh Torah, Laws of Character 3:1

Student's The nature of humans is to be influenced
pg. 6 in their opinions and actions by their
Student's friends and associates, and to follow the
pg. 7

דרך בריתו של אדם להיות
נמשך בדעותיו ובמעשיו
אחר רעיו וחבריו ונהג

10. אבות פ"ד מ"ד.
11. פ"ו ה"א.

8. איוב י"א, י"ב.
9. בבא מציעא ל"ג ע"א.

Student's pg. 7 customs of their community. Therefore, we should connect with the righteous and sit among the wise always in order to learn from their deeds. We should distance ourselves from the wicked who walk in darkness so that we do not learn from their actions.

כְּמִנְהַג אָנָשִׁי מְדִינָתוֹ. לְפִיכָךְ
צָרִיךְ אָדָם לְהִתְחַבֵּר לְצַדִּיקִים
וּלְיָשָׁב אֵצֶל הַחֲכָמִים תָּמִיד
כְּדֵי שֶׁיִּלְמַד מִמַּעֲשֵׂיהֶם.
וְיִתְרַחֵק מִן הָרָשָׁעִים
הַהוֹלְכִים בַּחֹשֶׁךְ כְּדֵי שֶׁלֹּא
יִלְמַד מִמַּעֲשֵׂיהֶם.

Source 7 Maimonides' Guide for the Perplexed, 2:40

Student's pg. 7 Man is naturally a social being.

הָאָדָם הוּא מְדִינִי בְּטָבְעוֹ.

This can be clearly seen: a person tends to be influenced by the environment in which they live and gravitates towards the prevailing opinions and norms. Few manage to maintain an independent ideological identity while living in a place where the dominant atmosphere supports a particular ideology. Hence, Maimonides warns that a person should reside in a community and neighborhood where the inhabitants are upstanding, as this will impact their own behavior, whether they are aware of it or not.

>> The Rebbe

The Teacher's Critical Role

Student's pg. 7 This is why two people are holding the garment: both the actor and the person who educated or guided them are each claiming "it is entirely mine."

וְלִכֵּן שְׁנַיִם אוֹחֲזִים בַּטְלִית, כִּי, הֵן
הָאָדָם הַעוֹשֶׂה וְהֵן זֶה שֶׁחֲנָכוּ אוֹ
הַדְרִיכּוּ, כֹּל אֶחָד מֵהֶם טוֹעֵן שֶׁלִּי
הוּא.

Since a person is naturally egoistic and highly influenced by society, it is clear that much credit is due to the educators of that person, who guided them to follow the right path. Therefore, the question arises: To whom should the credit for the person's good deeds be attributed? To the person themselves or to their educators?

In this case, there are two parties claiming that the talit—the mitzvah and its reward—belongs entirely to them.

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This is true on the general level, that there are always two people with a claim to the credit. Very often this is also true regarding the specific action as well: When a person studies Torah or observes a mitzvah because they were inspired by someone else to do this specific action. In this case the second party's claim "it is entirely mine" is even stronger than the claim made by a person who educated the actor in their youth. In this case the inspiration or guidance provided was the direct and proximate cause of the positive action.

In addition to the fact that a person is educated during their childhood by their mentors, which supports the claim that their good deeds are attributed to the educator, there are cases where an educator directly inspires another person to perform a mitzvah, and that person immediately follows through. In such instances, the educator's claim is even stronger, as the connection is direct and immediate.

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Both parties are claiming "it is entirely mine." The person who did the mitzvah argues that they are righteous in this regard and didn't need a guide for it. They argue that they are naturally inclined towards this mitzvah on their own.

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The guide also argues that they deserve full credit. They argue that without their guidance or timely rebuke this person wouldn't have done the mitzvah, and would have instead focused solely on their physical needs. Even if a person is diligent by nature, they still naturally prioritize their body over their soul, and would prefer their material benefit over the mitzvah.

וכמו שהוא בדרך כלל בכל אדם, ששנים אוחזים בטלית כנ"ל, הנה גם בפרט, הרי, לפעמים תכופות, עושה האדם מצווה או לומד תורה, על ידי התעוררות סמוכה לפעולה הבאה מאחר, ואז טענת השני כולה שלי, היא עוד ביתר שאת מטענת זה שחנכו בנעוריו, כיון שתוכחתו סיבה קרובה בזמן לפועל טוב הזה.

ובסוג זה דצדיקים, טענות שני הצדדים הם כולה שלי, כי עושה המצווה טוען שבענין זה - שהוא צדיק בו - לא הוכרח לכל מדריך ומוכיח, כי נמשך הוא מצד עצמו לעשיית מצווה זו...

והמעוררו, מדריכו או מוכיחו טוען גם כן כולה שלי, כי אומר, אשר לולא ההדרכה הנכונה או הוכחה בעתה, בטח לא היה עוסק כי אם בצרכי גופו, כי גם אם הוא מתמיד בלימודו בטבעו, אף על פי כן אוהב את גופו יותר בטבעו, וכיוצא בזה בקיום מצוות בסור מרע ועשה טוב.

Living Near a Teacher

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pg. 8

The sages teach, “a person should always live in the city of their teacher. So long as Shimi ben Gera was alive, King Solomon did not marry Pharaoh’s daughter—even though Solomon was the greatest man alive.”

ואמרו רז"ל¹² לעולם ידור אדם במקום רבו, שכל זמן ששמעי בן גרא קיים לא נשא שלמה את בת פרעה, אף שהיה שלמה גדול העולם.¹³

King Solomon was the wisest of all men, and the Talmud refers to him as "the greatest of the world." He was the one who built the Temple, and in his time there was peace and tranquility, and people came from all over the world to witness and enjoy his great wisdom. As part of the peace treaties he made with the nations of the world, he also married princesses from those nations, as was customary in those days, where the royal houses of the two allied nations were also connected through marriage.

The most important alliance, and the marriage that drew the most attention, was the alliance with Egypt and the marriage to Pharaoh's daughter. The sages did not view this marriage favorably (though she obviously first converted) and criticized it harshly. The Torah says, 'And it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not perfect with G-d his G-d, as was the heart of David his father' (1 Kings 11:4).

The Talmud says: Rabbi Yehuda said in the name of Shmuel: When Solomon married Pharaoh's daughter, the angel Gabriel descended, drove a stake into the sea, and caused a sandbar to appear, on which a great city was built in Rome. (Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 21b). This means that Solomon's marriage to Pharaoh's daughter was the first step leading to the establishment of the Roman Empire, which would later destroy the Second Temple about 900 years later.

The question arises: How could Solomon have done such a thing? Was there no one to correct him and tell him that this was unacceptable? The Talmud offers an amazing explanation:

Source 9 Talmud, Berachot 8a

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Rabbi Chiya bar Ami said in the name of Ula: A person should always live in the place of his teacher, so that he will avoid sins. For we find that as long as Shimi ben Gera (who, according to tradition, was the great scholar and teacher of Solomon; see

אמר רבי חייא בר אמי משמו של ר' זלאי: לעולם ידור אדם במקום רבו, שעל ידי כך ימנע מעבירות. שכן מוצאים אנו שכל זמן ששמעי בן גרא (שליפי המסרת היה גדול

12. ברכות ח' ע"א.

13. סנהדרין כ"א ע"א. ועיי' ג"כ שבת נ"ו ע"ב.

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Gittin 59a) was alive, Solomon did not marry Pharaoh's daughter, for it is only after the death of Shimi (1 Kings 2:27) that the Torah tells of Solomon's marriage to Pharaoh's daughter (beginning of chapter 3).

בְּתוּרָה וְרַבּוֹ שֶׁל שְׁלֹמֹה הָיָה
קִים, לֹא נָשָׂא שְׁלֹמֹה אֶת בַּת
פַּרְעֹה – רַק לְאַחַר שְׁמִסְפָּר
עַל הַמָּתָת שֶׁמָּעַי, מְסַפֵּר עַל
נְשׁוּאֵי שְׁלֹמֹה לְבַת פַּרְעֹה.

Shimi ben Gera was a man from the tribe of Benjamin and from the family of King Saul. He was a great scholar and Solomon's teacher. Immediately after the prophet mentions Shimi's death, the prophet continues the story of Solomon's marriage to Pharaoh's daughter. The Talmud learns from this that as long as Shimi was present in Solomon's surroundings, Solomon refrained from doing such a thing, as he was under his teacher's influence.

From this, we see the importance of the influence a teacher has on his student. Thus, the question of to whom the credit for a person's good deeds is attributed becomes more pronounced: to the person himself, or to his teacher who influenced him.

D. Both Shall Swear—and Divide

>> The Rebbe

The Power of an Oath

Student's
pg. 9

The ruling is “**this one must swear and the other must swear, and they divide it.**”

The function of an oath is that when we have a person whom we suspect of lying, and the prohibition against lying doesn't bother them, we hope that if we make them take an oath they will admit the truth rather than swear falsely, because taking a false oath is a very grave matter.

In other words, the oath will awaken this person's latent fear of Heaven and fear of transgression, thereby saving them from the less severe transgression. This is why the sages counsel us to take an oath to observe a mitzvah. The Code of Jewish Law formulates it as follows: “If you are afraid that your negative inclination will overpower you and lead you to transgress one of the negative mitzvot, or neglect the observance of one of the positive mitzvot, it is a mitzvah to take an oath and vow in order to motivate yourself.”

The severity of the oath awakens the awe of Heaven and fear of transgression, helping the person withstand the temptation to violate even a lesser transgression, cutting through whatever justifications they may invent.

Source 10 Code of Jewish Law, Yoreh Deah 203:6

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If you say, “I will review this chapter,” and fear that you may become negligent in it, it

והפסק הוא: זה ישבע כו' וזה ישבע כו' ויחלוקו.

והוא, כי ענין השבועה כפשוטו הוא, אשר במקום שיש חשש שאומר שקר, ואינו נרתע מהאיסור אשר בזה, הרי על ידי זה אשר יטילו עליו שבועה, יודה על האמת, ולא יהא נשבע לשקר, כי שבועה חמורה היא, וכמו שאמרו חז"ל בשבועות¹⁴ באריכות.

ונמצא אשר על ידי השבועה נתעוררו אצלו יראת שמים ויראת חטא, ובמילא ניצול גם מעוון הקל. ולכן אמרו רז"ל¹⁵ שנשבעין לקיים את המצווה, ופירש בשולחן ערוך¹⁶ “אם ירא שיתקפהו יצרו ויעבור על איזה מצווה ממצוות לא תעשה, או יתרשל מקיום מצוות עשה, מצווה לישוב ולנדור כדי לזרז עצמו.”

האומר אֶשְׁנֶה פֶּרֶק זֶה וְיִירָא שְׁמָא יִתְרַשֵּׁל בְּדִבְרֵי שְׂרִי

14. יורה דעה סימן ר"ג סעיף ו'.

14. ל"ט ע"א ושם.

15. נדרים ח' ע"א.

Student's is permissible for you to make a vow for the purpose
pg. 9 of self-motivation. Likewise, if you are afraid that
your negative inclination will overpower you and
Student's lead you to transgress one of the negative mitzvot,
pg. 10 or neglect the observance of one of the positive
mitzvot, it is a mitzvah to take an oath or a vow
in order to motivate yourself.

People who make vows to correct their character
and improve their actions are considered diligent
and praiseworthy.

For example: a person who was a glutton and
prohibited themselves from eating meat for
a year or two. Or a person who was a habitual
drunkard and prohibited wine upon themselves
for an extended period, or one who prohibited
themselves from drunkenness forever. Similarly, a
person who was obsessed with money and wealth
who prohibited themselves from accepting gifts.
This is a proper form of Divine service.

We see here that not only for the purpose of fulfilling commandments but also for correcting thoughts and habits, people used the power of oaths and vows.

>> The Rebbe

Student's Taking an oath awakens deeper powers
pg. 10 within the person. A person is termed "an
entire world," and the sages teach that
when G-d said "do not take G-d's name in
vain" the entire world trembled.

The Rebbe explains here that the act of taking an oath is not just a means of creating a greater sense of fear, which would compel you to make more effort to do the right thing. Rather, through the act of swearing, higher, more sublime forces within you are awakened. Therefore, it is permissible and even important to make a vow to arouse these deeper inner forces that will give you the strength to accomplish what you desire.

Student's Similarly in our Mishnah, the law is
pg. 10 determined by having both parties take an
oath.

לה למגדר לזרזי נפשה =
מתר לו לגדר כדי לזרז את
עצמו]. וכן אם ירא שיתקפו
יצרו ויעבר על איזו מצוה
ממצות לא תעשה או יתרשל
מקיום מצות עשה, מצוה
לשבע ולגדר כדי לזרז עצמו.

מי שגדר נדרים כדי לכונן
דעותיו ולתקן מעשיו הרי זה
זריז ומשבח.

כיצד: מי שהיה זולל, ואסר
עליו הבשר שנה או שנתיים,
או שהיה שוגה ביינו, ואסר
הינו על עצמו זמן מרבה,
או אסר השכרות לעולם, וכן
מי שהיה רודף שלמונים
ונבהל להון, ואסר על עצמו
המתנות... דרך עבודה לשם
הם.

כי על ידי השבועה מתעוררים כוחות יותר
פנימיים באדם - החשוב כעולם מלא¹⁷ -
כמו שמצינו¹⁸ שנודעו העולם כולו
בשעה שנאמר לא תשא את שם ה' אלקיך
לשוא.

וגם כאן בדין המשנה, הברור הוא על ידי
שנשבעין.

17. סנהדרין ל"ז ע"א.
18. שבועות ל"ט ע"א.

Critiquing With Love

Student's
pg. 10

To determine whether it was the mentor's guidance or critique which caused a person to perform a mitzvah, we check whether the critique was delivered properly. Namely, did it come from the depths of the critic's heart—and not from any feeling of hatred? This requirement is alluded to by the proximity in the verses of "do not hate . . . you shall critique . . . love your fellow"

כי, כדי לדעת אם פעלה ההדרכה או התוכחה שיעשה המצווה, הוא על ידי בחינה, אם היתה התוכחה באופן הנרצה, היינו שבאה מקרב נפשו פנימה של המוכיח, ולא מחמת שנאה - וכרמז סמוכין דקרא¹⁹ לא תשנא גוי' הוכח תוכיח גוי' ואהבת לרעך.

First, it is necessary to ensure that rebuke comes from a place of love rather than hatred. This is learned from the Torah, where the commandment to "rebuke your neighbor" is bracketed on both sides by the commandments of "you shall not hate your brother" and "love your neighbor as yourself."

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Additionally, proper critique cannot be delivered for the first time in public. The critique must also not be a rejection of the person with both hands. If a person gave critique without being careful with these conditions, it won't be effective. On the contrary, it can cause the recipient to transgress further, as we clearly observe.

וגם שלא הוכיחו לראשונה ברבים²⁰, ובתוכחתו אין דוחה אותו בשתי ידיים²¹, שאם לא נזהר מזה, הרי התוכחה אינה פועלת פעולתה, ואדרבה יכולה לגרום שעוד יוסיף עוון על חטאו, וכמו שרואין במוחש.

Similarly, it is important not to do this in public and to avoid shaming the person, as well as not to do it in a way that leaves no room for them to retract.

Source 11 Sotah 7a

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The Sages taught: Always let the left hand repel, while the right hand brings close. This is not like Elisha, who pushed Gehazi away with both hands.

תנו רבנן: לעולם תהא שמאל דוחה וימין מקרבת, לא כאלישע שדחפו לגחזי בשתי ידיו.

Naaman, the commander of the army of the king of Aram, was afflicted with leprosy. During an Aramean raid on the kingdom of Israel, the Aramean army captured a young Israelite girl who became a servant to Naaman's wife. The girl suggested to Naaman's wife that there was a prophet in Israel, Elisha, who could heal his leprosy.

21. סוטה מ"ז ע"א.

19. יקרא י"ט י"ז-י"ח.
20. ערכין ט"ז ע"ב.

Naaman went to Elisha, who told him to dip seven times in the Jordan River to be healed. Naaman was very angry, asking why the rivers of Aram were not adequate. However, his servants convinced him to follow Elisha's instructions. Naaman dipped himself in the Jordan and was healed.

Naaman returned to Elisha and wanted to give him a gift, but Elisha refused, even after Naaman's insistence. Naaman then accepted the G-d of Israel and took soil from Israel to offer sacrifices in Aram.

After Naaman left, Gehazi, Elisha's servant, ran after him. Naaman asked Gehazi if something was wrong, and Gehazi lied, saying there was nothing. He claimed that Elisha had sent him to ask for money and clothing for two prophets in need. Naaman was eager to give and provided two talents of silver and two changes of clothes.

When Gehazi returned, Elisha asked where he had been. Gehazi lied again, but Elisha revealed that he knew Gehazi had taken the gifts. Elisha then announced that Gehazi and his descendants would suffer from Naaman's leprosy forever.

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Rabbi Yitzhak said: At that time, Elisha was studying the laws of the eight [impure] types of creeping creatures and told Gehazi: "Wicked one, the time has come to collect the payment for these eight creeping creatures." He then pronounced that Naaman's leprosy would cling to Gehazi and his descendants forever.

אָמַר רַבִּי יִצְחָק: בְּאוֹתָהּ שָׁעָה
הָיָה אֵלִישָׁע עוֹסֵק בְּשִׁמְנָה
שָׂרָצִים, אָמַר לוֹ: "רָשָׁע,
הַגִּיעַ עַתָּה לִיטוֹל שְׂכָר שִׁמְנָה
שָׂרָצִים. וְצָרַעַת נִצְמָן תִּדְבֹּק
בְּךָ וּבְצֶרְעֶךָ לְעוֹלָם".

Gehazi, now a leper, had to stay outside the camp and city, and he could not bear the shame and insult. He abandoned the way of Torah and mitzvot and went to Damascus, where he led many others astray.

When Elisha learned what happened as a result of his punishment on Gehazi, he went to Damascus to bring Gehazi back, and have him repent, but it was too late...

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The verse states, "Elisha came to Damascus." Why did he go? Rabbi Yochanan said: He went to bring Gehazi back to repentance, but Gehazi did not return. Elisha told him: "Turn yourself back." Gehazi replied: "This is what I have received from you; anyone who sins and causes others to sin cannot repent."

"וַיָּבֵא אֵלִישָׁע דְּמָשֶׁק". לָמָּה
הָלַךְ? אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: שֶׁהָלַךְ
לְהַחְזִירוֹ לְגִיחוֹ בַּתְּשׁוּבָה,
וְלֹא חָזַר. אָמַר לוֹ, "חֲזוֹר בָּךְ".
אָמַר לוֹ, "כִּי מְקוּבְלִי מִמֶּךָ,
כָּל מִי שֶׁחָטָא וְהִחֲטִיא אֶת
הָרַבִּים — אֵין מִסְפִּיקִין בְּיָדוֹ
לְעֲשׂוֹת תְּשׁוּבָה".

>> The Rebbe

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But if a critical mentor claims “it is entirely mine” and takes an oath to this effect, thereby proving that this is something that is coming from the depths of their heart, then we can be certain that words that come from the heart will enter the heart of the listener. As the sages teach, “when a person has fear of Heaven their words are heeded.” We are certain that the critique had an effect, and its deliverer deserves a part of the “garment.”

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אבל אם איש המוכיח טוען כולה שלי ונשבע על זה, שזהו הוראה שנוגע לו הדבר בפנימיות נפשו - הרי דברים היוצאים מלב המוכיח בודאי נכנסו אל לב השומע, וכמאמר רז"ל²² כל אדם שיש בו יראת שמים דבריו נשמעין, ובודאי פעלה התוכחה שלו, ויש לו חלק בהטלית.

If the educator swore that it was indeed done correctly, then certainly it came from the depths of his heart, and he indeed has a share in the mitzvah—the garment.

Torah and Mitzvot With Fear of Heaven

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The second party, the one who actually performed the mitzvah, must also take an oath, to prove that their conduct wasn't just an external show. If their action was merely external they don't receive a portion of the “garment,” and the mitzvah doesn't provide protection for them—the function of a garment. As Tosafot teaches regarding Doeg and Achitofel, that their Torah study didn't protect them because they had no fear of Heaven.

וכן השני, המקיים המצווה בפועל, צריך לישבע, שזהו הוראה שלא היתה תורתו מן השפה ולחוץ, ועל דרך זה במצוות, כי אז אין לו חלק בטלית זה, שאין התורה ומצוות מגנים עליו - שזהו פעולת הלבושים כנ"ל - וכמו שכתוב בתוספות דיבור המתחיל כל²³ ודואג ואחיתופל דלא מגני להו [= שלא הגנה עליהם] תורתן לפי שלא היתה להם יראה כלל.

If the teacher swears that the instruction was indeed correct, then it surely came from the depth of his heart, and he does indeed have a share in the mitzvah—the talit.

If the observance of mitzvot is not done wholeheartedly and without the fear of G-d, the mitzvah lacks the deep power it could have. For example, a mitzvah performed with depth and the fear of G-d protects a person, whereas studying Torah and performing mitzvot without the fear of G-d does not protect the person.

This is evident in the lives of Doeg and Achitofel. Both were wise and renowned individuals, great Torah scholars, yet they both died young under tragic circumstances.

22. ברכות ו' ע"ב.
23. חגיגה ט"ו ע"ב.

The question arises: if Doeg and Achitofel were such great scholars, why did their Torah not protect them? Tosafot answers that their Torah learning did not protect them because it was done without fear of G-d. Since it was insincere, it did not provide protection. (Tosafot, Chagigah 15b).

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The sages teach that the ultimate goal of wisdom is repentance and good deeds—meaning the point of Torah study is for it to be accompanied by repentance and good deeds. If one doesn't study in this way, they are “reading the Torah and studying Mishnah while spurning their father, mother, and teacher.”

ואמרו²⁴ תכלית חכמה תשובה ומעשים טובים - עיקרה של תורה שיהא עמה תשובה ומעשים טובים. פירוש רש"י. ומפרש בש"ס תוצאות הלמוד אם אינו באופן כזה - שלא יהא אדם קורא ושונה ובוועט באביו ובאמו וברבו כו'.

We learn that only when the study of Torah and the observance of mitzvot are performed with repentance and the fear of G-d do they guide a person to follow the path of righteousness and protect him from misfortune.

When Both Acted Properly, They Split

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If the mitzvah-actor swears that they deserve a part of the “garment,” that their Torah and mitzvot were observed from the depths of their heart, their Divine service is complete. Moreover, this proves that they didn't only act because of the external inspiration and encouragement they received. In such a case the two parties split the “garment,” because they both contributed to it.

אבל אם נשבע שיש לו חלק בהטלית, היינו שבפנימיות נפשו נגע לימוד התורה וקיום המצוות, הרי מלבד שעבודתו היא עבודה שלימה, הנה זה משמש רא' שלא רק מפני התעוררות הבאה מבחוץ עשה המצווה, ולכן יחלוקו, כי השתתפות שניהם יש כאן, וזה וזה גורם.

מרשימת “שנים אוחזין בטלית” - סוגיא דריש מסכת בבא מציעא