



LOVE YOUR FELLOW —EVEN WHEN IT'S DANGEROUS?

What is more important:
my own life, or saving someone else's?
A discussion on moral dilemmas and courage.

TEACHER'S MANUAL



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This week's Torah reading tells us, "Do not stand by your fellow's blood, for I am G-d." Rashi explains: "Do not watch him die while you could have saved him. For example, he is drowning in a river and being attacked by animals or bandits."

The Rebbe asks:

- A. What prompted Rashi to explain this verse with an explanation that doesn't seem to add anything?
- B. Why does Rashi use a specific and detailed example? It is clear that there are all kinds of possible dangers.

The explanation:

The reader of the above verse may ask why the Torah needs to give such a commandment. The Torah has already commanded us to help our fellows and seek their wellbeing ("Love your fellow as yourself," for example). It must be that this verse is teaching us something new. What is new here?

B. Two Conflicting Values.....4

To explain this, Rashi emphasizes that this verse is dealing with a situation where the rescuer may be putting their own life on the line to save the victim. This is why the Torah says "Do not stand by"—you must endanger yourself to save your fellow.

To illustrate this, Rashi brings a real-life example that poses this dilemma: A person is drowning, and simultaneously being attacked by animals or bandits taking advantage of their vulnerable state. Does a passerby have an obligation to rescue them, thereby putting their own life in danger? The Torah says yes: If the victim can be saved, it is obligatory to attempt a rescue. The Talmud recounts how Rabbi Isi fell into the hands of murderers and Rabbi Yochanan believed nothing could be done. Reish Lakish, however, chose to endanger himself and save Rabbi Isi from the murderers, and he succeeded (Source 2).

C. "Blood is the Life" 13

Rashi's deeper meaning: Blood represents the life-force of a Jew, our spiritual life which is Torah and mitzvot. Here, a Jew is in mortal spiritual danger: They have lost their passion and vitality for Torah and mitzvot, because they are drowning in negative elements. The Torah commands us: "Do not stand by your fellow's blood"—we may not stand idly by. If by Divine Providence we encounter a Jew in spiritual danger, that means it is up to us to work to revive them by drawing them closer to Judaism.

Introduction

Imagine this: you're walking along the riverbank when suddenly you spot someone being swept away by the current, struggling for their life. There's no lifeguard in sight. Your heart races, and you're hit with a dilemma: should you jump in and risk your own life, or stay on the shore and search for help?

In moments like these, the Torah does not leave us without guidance. In this week's Torah portion, Kedoshim, we encounter one of the most powerful moral imperatives:

“Do not stand by your fellow’s blood.”

We are forbidden to remain passive when someone else's life is in danger.

But does the obligation to save another person also require us to risk our own lives? To what extent are we expected to give up our personal safety for someone else's sake?

Let's dive together into the depths of this issue and discover what the Torah expects of us, and the lessons we can learn about courage, sensitivity, and personal responsibility.

השיעור לכפרשת אחרי מות - קדושים

משיחת שבת פרשת קדושים ה'תשמ"ו

תורת מנחים ה'תשמ"ו חלק ג'

עמוד 259 ואילך (בלתי מוגה), עמוד 278 ואילך (מוגה)

A. Do Not Stand by Your Fellow's Blood

Parshat Kedoshim includes many fundamental laws, and therefore it was conveyed to the Jews during a gathering of the entire nation. The very first command given is: "You shall be holy, for I, the L-rd your G-d, am holy." This is followed by numerous and varied commandments.

In Parshat Kedoshim, there are many mitzvot. Rambam counts 51 commandments in total – 28 positive commandments and 23 prohibitions.

Here are a few examples:

Prohibitions: Cursing one's parents, stealing and robbery, making false oaths in monetary cases, cursing others, tripping up a blind person—whether literally or by offering deceptive advice to someone unfamiliar with a matter, conducting dishonest business or deceptive trade, gossip, hating another Jew, taking revenge or bearing a grudge by reminding someone of past wrongs, disrespecting the convert.

Positive mitzvot include: "Love your fellow as yourself," rising before the elderly and showing them respect, honoring one's parents (though not at the expense of keeping Shabbat).

In this class, we will focus on one of the most important mitzvot mentioned in this parshah:

Source 1 Leviticus 19:16

Student's
pg. 1 You shall not go around as a gossip amidst your people. You shall not stand by your fellow's blood. I am G-d.

לֹא תֵלֶךְ רְכִיל בְּעֹמֶד, לֹא תַעֲמֶד
עַל דָם רָעָם, אָנִי הִ.

Rashi

Student's
pg. 1 You shall not stand by your fellow's blood: Do not watch him die while you could have saved him. For example, he is drowning in a river and being attacked by animals or bandits

לֹא תַעֲמֶד עַל דָם רָעָם.
לִרְאֹת בְמִתְהוֹ וְאַתָּה
יָכֹל לְהַצִּילוֹ, כִּנּוֹן
טוֹבָע בְּנָהָר וְחַיָּה אוֹ
לִסְטִים בְאַיִם עַלְיִן.

>> The Rebbe

What does Rashi want?

Student's There are a few points that need explanation:
pg. 1

1. The verse “Do not stand by your neighbor’s blood” seems straightforward and easy to understand. It would seem there is no need for any additional explanation. So why did Rashi need to comment on this verse? What difficulty did he find in the verse that made it necessary for him to offer an explanation?
2. Rashi gives an example of what “your neighbor’s blood” refers to—he says, “for example,” and offers a specific case. This is puzzling: what is he adding by giving a particular example? The beginner student reading the verse would already know that there are many different situations where a person could be in danger. So why did Rashi find it necessary to bring a specific example?

צורך להבין :

א) הפסוק ”לא תעמוד על דם רעך” - מובן בפשטות, ואין כל צורך, לכארה, בביאור והסביר. מדוע אם כן, הוצרך רשי להתעכבר על פירוש הפסוק? – מה הוקשה לו בפסוק שבגלל זה הוצרך לפרשו?!

ב) רשי מביא דוגמא למצב של לא תעמוד דם רעך – ”כגון טובע נהר וחיה או ליסטים באים עלייו”. ואינו מובן: מה בא רשי למדנו בהבאת הדוגמא? הרי ה’בן חמש למקרא’ יודע שבעולם הזה ישנים ריבוי מקרים ומצביים של סכנה, ואם כן, מדוע צורך רשי להביא דוגמא לכך?

Of course we have to save lives!

Student's The explanation is as follows:
pg. 2

When a beginner student reads the verse “Do not stand by your neighbor’s blood,” they understand that the verse is not just teaching us the basic rule that one must save another person from mortal danger. There is nothing novel about that idea, so what would the verse be teaching us?

There are already many verses that teach us about proper interpersonal behavior. For example, we are told that Abraham “commanded his sons

והביאור בזה:

כאשר ה’בן חמש למקרא’ לומד את הפסוק ”לא תעמוד על דם רעך” - הוא מבין שאין כוונת הכתוב להשミニינו את עצם החיוב של הצלת חבריו מミتها - משום שאין בזה כל חידוש!

ישנים כמה וכמה פסוקים שתוכנם על דבר הנגאה טוביה בין אדם לחברו, החל ממה שהוא

and his household after him . . . to perform righteousness and justice." There are also verses like "Lend money to My people," "You must help him," and others. And most importantly, there is the general command in our Torah portion to "Love your fellow as yourself."

Given all of this, there would seem to be no need for an additional verse simply to tell us that if we see another person in mortal danger, we must do whatever we can to save them.

babrachim "asher yizova et binyo ve'at bitho achario go' la'asot tsadka go'"¹, "am casf' tloha et umi go'"², "uzob tuzob umo" v'ciyza boha, ud l'zioyi hcalli shbepershatnu³ (b'semicot lefso'k "la tamud go'") : "v'ahavat le'reud camuk",

v'b'mila, ain cil zoruk la'shme'una shcaasher adam ro'ah et chavero b'scnet mitha, hoa zrich la'asot et ha'tlui bo cdi la'atzilu.

Evidently, the verse is telling us something else, something new. What is that?

³ קדושים יט, יט.

¹ וירא יט, יט.
² משפטים כב, כד.

B. Conflicting Values

When Saving Another Puts Me at Risk

In Tractate Bava Metzia, Ben Petura and Rabbi Akiva disagree about a difficult case:

“Two people are walking on a journey, and one of them has a jug of water. If both drink, they will both die. But if only one drinks, he will survive and reach civilization.”

Ben Petura taught: It is better that both drink and die, rather than one see the death of his fellow.

Until Rabbi Akiva came and taught: ‘Your brother shall live with you—your own life takes precedence over the life of your fellow.’

What are they arguing about? The core issue is whether a person is required to put their own life at risk in order to save someone else.

Rabbi Akiva—the very one who famously taught that “Love your fellow as yourself” is a central rule of the Torah—is the one who says that this love does not mean giving up your own life for someone else.

This leads us to the central question: Is there an obligation to endanger oneself in order to save another?

And this question breaks down into two parts:

1. If we say there is no obligation to risk one's life to save another, is one permitted to do so voluntarily?

2. If we say there is an obligation, how much risk must one take? Must one enter a situation of equal uncertainty (a 50/50 chance), or even where danger seems more likely than survival?

Rashi addresses this very dilemma, stating that the verse “Do not stand by your fellow's blood” refers specifically to such a case:

>> The Rebbe

Do I need to endanger myself?

Student's pg. 3

Rashi is therefore compelled to explain that this verse is talking about a specific situation where there is a real need for the commandment "Do not stand by your neighbor's blood," instructing us not to "watch them die if you can save them."

What kind of situation is this? When the other person is in such a form of danger that any attempt to save them would also involve risking one's own life. In other words, if someone doesn't remain in their place but goes out to try and rescue the other person, they are putting themselves in danger.

In this case it can be argued that one is allowed (and perhaps even required) to stay put in order not to endanger themselves. It is about such a situation that the special command comes: "Do not stand by your neighbor's blood." When it is a matter of someone's life at stake (and not merely injury or a loss of money), it is forbidden to stay on the sidelines and watch the other person die when one is in a position to try to save them. One must get up and act, even if it involves personal risk.

A common scenario

Student's pg. 4

Rashi brings an example in order to clarify and illustrate the meaning of the verse. Based on the principle that "the Torah addresses practical situations," Rashi needs to bring an example that would be common and practical. This is why Rashi chooses the case of "someone

ולכן, מוכחה רשי לפרש שבפסוק זה מדובר אודות מצב מיוחד שבו יש צורך במצווי "לא תעמוד על דם רעך" - "לראות בmittato אתה יכול להצילו".

הא כיצד - כשהחבירו נמצא בסכנה כזו של ניסיון להצילו כרוך בסיכון עצמי, כמובן, אם לא ישאר לעמוד במקומו, אלא יתרחק לנסota להציל את חבירו, אזי מסכן בכך את עצמו, ובמילא, יש סברא ומחשבה שבמקרה זהה יכול (ואולי גם צריך) להישאר לעמוד במקומו, כדי שלא לסכן את עצמו, הנה, על זה בא ציווי מיוחד: "לא תעמוד על דם רעך" - שכאש מדובר אודות "דם רעך", סכת מיתה מה שאין כן בפצעה בלבד, ועל אחת כמה וכמה במוון בלבד, אזי - "לא לעמוד" אסור לך להישאר אדייש, לעמוד ולראות בmittato, בהיותך במצב שאתה יכול להצילו", אלא עלייך ללבת ולעשות כן, אפילו אם בכך אתה מסכן את עצמך.

ומביא רשי דוגמא לדבר, "כגון כו'", כדי להבהיר ולהמחיש את פירוש הכתוב.

ובהקדמה: על פי הכלל ש"דיבר הכתוב בהוועה", צריך רשי להביא דוגמא

drowning in a river and being attacked by animals or robbers."

The beginner student knows that people usually settle near rivers. Water is essential for life—people need it to drink, to water fields so they can grow crops for making bread, and so on. Therefore, people typically live close to a river, rather than living in dry areas like a desert. A river is preferable over the sea because the river's water is fresh, unlike the salty seawater. Living next to a river enables people to draw water from the river at hand, without needing to exert themselves and dig wells where they may or may not find water.

It is also normal for people to enter the river to bathe. Especially among the Jewish people, immersion in natural bodies of water is a major part of family life, a regular monthly practice. In the absence of a constructed mikvah—such as when the local community activists aren't building one...—women need to go to the river to immerse, using a partition for privacy. Some men also use a mikvah regularly, and all use it on the eve of Yom Kippur.

As a result, the scenario of someone "drowning in a river" was very much a real, everyday concern. A person bathing in the river might suddenly feel weak—perhaps from overworking or, for a young child learning this text, from tiring themselves out with study—or a strong wind might suddenly

שבהוּה דָוָקָא. וְלֹכַן, מִבְיאָ רְשָׁיָה אֶת הדוגמא של "טובע בנهر וחיה או לסתים באים עליו", כדלקמן:

ה'בָן חַמֵש לְמִקְרָא' יָדַע שִׁישׁוּבִי בְנֵי אָדָם הֵם - בְּדָרְךְ כָּלָל - בְּסִמְכּוֹת לְנָהָר, שְׁכִן, הַמַּצְרָק הַכִּי עִקְרִי בְּחַיִי הָאָדָם הָוָא - מִים כָּדִי לְשִׁתּוֹת וְלְהַשְׁקּוֹת אֶת הַשְׁדּוֹת שִׁיצְמִיחוּ תְּבוֹאָה שֶׁמְמָנָה יַעֲשֶׂה לְחַם וּכְוֹ', וְלֹכַן, דְּרָכָם שֶׁל בְנֵי אָדָם לְהַתִּישְׁבָּה (לֹא בְּמִדְבָּר, שָׁאַין בּוּ מִים, כִּי אָם) בְּסִמְכּוֹת לְנָהָר (נָהָר דָוָקָא, שְׁמִימִיו מְתֻוקִים, וְלֹא יִם, שְׁמִימִיו מְלֻחִים וְאַינְם רְאוּיִם לְשִׁתְיָה), שָׁאַזְוּ יָכוֹלָו לְשֹׁאַב מִים מִנָּהָר שֶׁנֶּמֶצָּא בְּקָרְבָּתְ מָקוֹם (וְלֹא יַצְטַרְכוּ לְהַתִּיעַ וְלַחֲפֹשׁ מִים עַל יָדֵי חַפִּירָת בָּאָרוֹת וְכַיּוֹצָא בָּזָה, וּמָה גַם שָׁאָפְּילָו לְאַחֲרֵי הַחַפִּירָה יַתְּכַן שְׁלָא יִמְצָא כִּי אָם טִיפִּין טִיפִּין כְּוֹ'). וְכַמּוּ כֵן דָבָר הַרְגִּיל אֶצְלָ בְנֵי אָדָם לְהִיכְנָס לְתוֹךְ הַנָּהָר - כִּי לְרֹחֹוץ בְּמַיִם הַנָּהָר.

ובפרט אֶצְלָ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הַרְיִ הַטְּבִילָה - בְּ"מִקְוָה מִים" הִיא עֲנֵין הַכִּי עִקְרִי בְּחַיִי מִשְׁפָּחָה, וְדָבָר הַרְגִּיל - מִידִי חַודְשׁ בְּחַדְשׁוֹ, וּבְמִילָא, בְּמָקוֹם שָׁאַין "מִקְוָה" (מַכְיוֹן שָׁאַין "עֲסָקִים" שִׁיתְעַסְקָוּ בְּבָנִיָּה מִקְוָה...), צְرִיכָות הַנְּשִׁים (וְעַל דָּרְךְ זֶה הָאָנָשִׁים הַזֹּהָרִים בְּטְבִילָת עֹזְרָא⁵, או בָּעֶרֶב יּוֹם הַכִּפּוֹרִים⁶) לִילְךָ לְטְבִול בְּנָהָר⁷.

וּמְכִיּוֹן שְׁכִן, הַרְיִ גַם הַמְצִיאוֹת שֶׁל "טְבִול בְּנָהָר" הִיא דָבָר שִׁבְהוּה, כַּאֲשֶׁר הָאָדָם הַרְוֹחֵץ בְּנָהָר מַרְגִּישׁ לְפָתָע חִלְשָׁוֹת (מִפְנִי שְׁהַתִּיעַ בְּפְרָנְסָטוֹ וְכַיּוֹצָא בָּזָה, או

7. על יָדֵי הַקְּפָתָה מִפְצֵץ וְכַיּוֹצָא בָּזָה. רָאָה רַמְבָ"ס הַלִּי מִקְוֹאוֹת פְּשׁ הַיּוֹם. שׂוּעַ יְהִי סְדָרָא ס"ב.

5. רָאָה בְּרִכּוֹת כְּבָבָב, בְּבַיִקְבָּב, אֶ. רַמְבָ"ס הַלִּי קְשׁ בְּסָפָן. הַלִּי תְּפִלָּה פְּדַי הַדָּבָר שׂוּעַ אַדְחָה אַיִ"ח הַלִּי קְשׁ רְסָסִית. וְעוֹד. 6. שׂוּעַ אַדְחָה אַזְזָבָל יְהִי כְּפָר סָתְרָיִסְיָא וְאַלְיָן. וְשׂוּעַ.

arise. Situations like these could lead to someone being in danger of drowning, which is why Rashi highlights this example of something that happens in everyday life.

A Combined Danger

The example of “someone drowning in a river” by itself does not fully explain why there would need to be a specific command like “Do not stand by your fellow’s blood.” After all, there’s no good reason to think one could just stand by and do nothing. Even if the person is afraid to jump into the river because they might drown themselves, they could still try to help by throwing a rope or something similar. The beginner student has already observed this possibility earlier in the Torah, when Moses was saved. Pharaoh’s daughter stretched out her hand, and a miracle occurred that allowed her to reach the basket he was in. So again—why the need for a special command not to stand by? It seems obvious that you should try to help.

This is why Rashi adds to the example and says “drowning in a river and an animal or robbers are approaching.”

When someone is drowning, they naturally struggle with all their might to reach the shore and get onto dry land. This effort weakens them. So, if an animal happens to be waiting on the riverbank—even a regular predatory animal that wouldn’t usually attack humans—it might now see a chance. Seeing a person so weak and helpless, the animal may sense that it can attack without resistance.

אצל הבן חמש למקרא - מפני שהתייגע בלימודו או כשבאה לפתע רוח חזקה, וכיוצא בזה, שאז עלול לקרות شيיה במצב של “טובע בנهر” - דבר שבאהו.

אמנם, בדוגמה של “טובע בנهر” כשלעצמה - אי אפשר להמחיש מקרה שבו יש צורך במצווי “לא לעמוד על דם רעך” (שלילת עמידה במקומו), שהרי אין כל סברא ומהשבה להישאר לעמוד, שכן, גם אם איןו יכול לקפוץ לתוך הנהר מפני שחווש שמא יטבע בעצמו, יכול לנסות להצילו על ידי זה שיזורק לו חבל וכיוצא בזה (וכיסיפור מפורש של הצלת משה - שכבר למדו הבן חמש למקרא - “ותרא את התבאה... ותשלח את אמתה (ידה, שנשתרבבה אמתה אמות הרבה) ותקחה”⁸), ואם כן, מה בא למדנו במצווי “לא לעמוד במקומו, פשיטה שלא ישאר לעמוד במקומו, אלא ינסה להצילו!

ולכן, מוסיף רשיי “טובע בנهر וחיה או לסתים באים עליו”: דרכו של “טובע בנهر” - שימושدل ומתייגע ביוטר לטפס ולעלות ליבשה, ועל ידי זה נחלש וכו’. ובמילא, כאשר על שפת הנהר עומדת “חיה” - הרי אף שאינה “חיה רעה” (שהרי דבר הכתוב בהוותה), אלא חיה סתם, שבדרך כלל פוחדת להתנפל על בני אדם, וכמפורש בקרוא: “ומוראכם וחתקם יהיה על כל חיית הארץ”, ובפרט בפירוש רשיי שם: אפילו “תינוק בן יומו” - מכל מקום,

The same applies to robbers. We're not talking about violent criminals who attack anyone on sight, but rather about opportunists. Normally, such robbers are afraid to attack people openly, but when they see someone drowning and struggling, they might decide to wait for him to reach the shore, knowing they can easily overpower him.

In a situation like this—someone drowning, with a threat waiting nearby—there might be a natural assumption that you're allowed to stay put. After all, approaching to help might put you in harm's way. The animal or the robbers might come after you too. That being the case, you may think it's acceptable—or even required—to protect yourself and not get involved.

בראותה אדם הטובע בנהר, יתכן (ורגיל)
שנתמthin לו ("באים עליו"), בידעה שתוכל
לנצחו בקלות.

ועל דרך זה כאשר על שפט הנהר עומדים
"לסטים" - לא "לסטים" שיתנפלו על כל אדם
שימצא בקרבתם, דוגמת "חיה רעה" (שהרי
דיבר הכתוב בהזהה), כי אם, "לסטים" דוגמת
"חיה" סתם, שבדרך כלל פוחדים מבני אדם,
ורק בראותם אדם הטובע בנהר, אזי "באים
עליו", בידעם שיוכלונצחו בקלות.

במקרה כזה - "טובע בנהר וחיה או לסטים באים
עליו" - יש סברא ומחשבה להישאר לעמוד:

כאשר חיה או לסטים עומדים על שפט הנהר
וממתינים לטובע בנהר, הרי כשיתקרב מישחו
כדי לנסות להצילו - יש להניח שהחיה או
הLASTIM יתנקמו בו, שכן, אף על פי שמדובר
אודות חיה או לסטים שבדרך כלל לא
יתנפלו על בני אדם, מכל מקום, במקרה כזה,
כשעומדים וממתינים לטובע בנהר, וואז ינסה
מישחו להצילו כו' - זה יהיה שונה¹⁰.

Don't stand by

Because intervening to save this person is dangerous, there's a logical reason to believe that it is permitted—or even required—to stand by and not intervene.

This is exactly the kind of situation the verse addresses with the words "Do not stand by your fellow's blood." If someone's life is at risk, you're not allowed to stay back and watch, even if helping them involves some danger to yourself.

ומכיוון שיש חשש סכנה להתקרב להצילו, יש
סברא ומחשבה שמותר לו (ואולי גם צריך)
ליישאר לעמוד, ולא ללכט להצילו, מכיוון
שהוא לא לסכן את עצמו.

הנה על זה נאמר בכתב "לא לעמוד על דם
רעך": כשהמדובר אודות "דם רעך" (סכנת
מיתה) אסור לך ליישאר לעמוד ("לא לעמוד"
לדרות במיתתו), כאשר "אתה יכול להצילו",
גם אם יש בך חשש סכנה.

משיחת שבת פרשת קדושים ה'תשמ"ו
торת מנחם ה'תשמ"ו חלק ג', עמוד 278 ואילך – מוגה

Story - The Child Rescuer

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This story was written by the Rebbe's mother, Rebbetzin Chana, in her memoirs, about her nine-year-old son:

In 1911 my son accompanied me to a health clinic in Balaklava, Crimea. There was a cave that led to the sea. The narrow stream of water flowed between the two walls of the cave and rolled into the sea. The place where the stream and the sea met was very dangerous; even experienced swimmers were cautious.

One time I was at the shore, where we gathered to spend time. I heard that a boy was drowning, and went to see what was happening. I heard from others, and saw for myself, that a small child had rowed out in a single-person boat with one oar—a kayak. As I said before, the place where the stream and the sea met was a very dangerous place. The boat began to sink with the child inside.

When my son noticed this, he swam out to the boat, climbed inside, and took the oar from the exhausted, barely conscious boy. Taking control, he steered it out of the danger zone and brought it to the shore, saving the passenger.

But after this difficult—extraordinary, I would say—rescue, my son was physically and emotionally strained. With no warning or forethought, he had to create a strategy to determine in which direction he could safely steer to a less dangerous area. My son therefore became very weak, and he himself began to struggle to stay afloat close to the bank. When I saw him, he was exhausted and pale, and his clothes were drenched.

Thank G-d, we succeeded in bringing him out safely.

In the following Talmudic story, we see how two great sages grappled with this issue:

Source 2 Jerusalem Talmud, Terumot 47a

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Rabbi Isi was captured in Safsufa. Rabbi Yonatan said, may the dead be wrapped in his shroud. Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said, even if I should kill or be killed, I shall go and save him by force. He went and negotiated, and they handed him over to him. He said to them, come to our old sage, he shall pray for you. They came to Rabbi Yochanan. He said to them, what was in your heart to do to him shall be done to these people. They hadn't yet reached Apipsaros and they were all gone.

רבי איסי איחציד בספסופה. אמר רבי יונתן יברך המת בסדין. אמר רבי שמעון בן לוי עד דאנא קטיל ואנה מיתקטיל אני איזיל וממשיזיב ליה בחילא. אזל ופישון ויהבוניה ליה. אמר לו ואתון גבי גבי סבין והוא פאליל עלייכו. אthon גבי רבי יוחנן. אמר לו מה דהוה בלבקבון אייעבד ליה יתעביד לו. ימطا לההוא עמא לא מט� אפיקסروس עד דזאולין כויהו.

Dead be wrapped in his shroud: That is to say, he had given up on him and believed he had no hope, and the only thing to do was to prepare burial shrouds. But Reish Lakish heard of this and said, "Either I will kill or be killed—I will go and rescue him by force." He went and appeased those bandits, and they released the man and handed him over to Reish Lakish.

Reish Lakish then said to them, "Come with me to our elder—Rabbi Yochanan—and he will pray for you, for having returned him to me." They came before Rabbi Yochanan, and he said to them, "What you intended to do to him shall be done to you." And indeed, all that had been decreed upon them came to pass, and before they reached the place called Apipsaros, they had all been killed.

יברך המת בסדין. כלומר,
שנתיאש הימנו אין לו
אלא להכין לעצמו תכרכיכי
המת. ושהמע רבי שמעון בן
לקיש ואמר: "או אני אהרג
או אני נהרג — אני אלך
ואציל אותו בכח", וההלך
ופיס לאוֹתָן הגמלים
והניחוהו וננתנו אותו לידי.

ואמר לנו: "ותבאו עמי
אצל הוגן שלנו — והוא ר' יוחנן — והוא יתפלל עליכם
על אשר החרהם אותו
לי". ובאו אצל ר' יוחנן
ואמר לנו: "מה שחייבת
רוצים לעשות עמו, בן
יעשה לנו ויבא עליון
הפל". וכן היה, שלא הגיעו
למקום אפיקסרים, עד
שנחרנו בלאן.

Optional Section:

Who was Reish Lakish, and what was his background?

Some say that in his youth Reish Lakish studied Torah, but due to poverty he left his studies and sold himself to the Ludim—gladiators who fought wild beasts in the arena for public entertainment. That was his livelihood, and with his strong build, he succeeded in this dangerous trade. Eventually, he escaped from the Ludim—and then came the moment that changed his life...

The Talmud (Bava Metzia 84a) recounts that one day Rabbi Yochanan was bathing in the Jordan River. Reish Lakish (who had known him in their youth) saw him and jumped in after him. Rabbi Yochanan said to him: "Your strength should be used for Torah!" Reish Lakish responded: "Your beauty is fit for women!" Rabbi Yochanan, who was famously handsome, replied: "If you return to Torah, I will give you my sister—who is even more beautiful than I—as your wife."

Reish Lakish agreed. Rabbi Yochanan then taught him Tanach and Mishnah, and made him into a Torah scholar—to the point where he nearly equaled Rabbi Yochanan himself. He studied day and night and devoted his life entirely to Torah. Reish Lakish is the one who famously said (Berachot 63b): "The words of Torah endure only in one who kills himself over them."

Perhaps this explains why Reish Lakish volunteered to go and risk himself to save Rabbi Isi—

because he was uniquely capable of doing so. He came from that kind of background, and had the tools to help. Rabbi Yonatan, on the other hand, did not.

Indeed, this is how halacha is ruled: when someone is drowning or in another form of danger, if there is a lifeguard or trained officer nearby, they are under a greater obligation to risk themselves to save him. First, because they are trained; and second, because this is their profession, and therefore they are believed to have special Divine assistance.

Ultimately, it comes down to the level of piety of each person.

And so, for example, during the October 7 massacre, there were ambulance crews who were afraid to enter the Gaza Envelope areas and followed official orders not to enter an area that had not yet been cleared. But there were also medics who risked their lives, entered areas still crawling with terrorists, and saved many Jewish lives.

(End of optional section)

What does Jewish law say?

Source 3 Shulchan Aruch Harav, Laws of Bodily Injury and Harm

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One who sees their fellow drowning, or being attacked by bandits and they can personally save them or hire others to, must save them or hire others, and the rescuer can be repaid later if the victim is able to. If the victim does not have the means, the rescuer is still obligated to save them, as the verse says: "Do not stand by your fellow's blood."

הרוֹאָה אֶת חֶבְרוֹ טֹבֶע בַּיִם
אוֹ לְסֶטֶם בָּאִים עַלְיוֹ וַיְכֹל
לְהַצִּילוֹ הוּא בְּעַצְמוֹ אוֹ לְשִׁכְרֵר
אֶחָרִים לְהַצִּילוֹ — חִיב לְשָׁרֶח
וּלְשָׁפֵר וְלְהַצִּילוֹ, וְחוֹזֵר וּנְפַרְעֵז
מִמְּנָנוֹ אִם יִשְׁלֹׁ. וְאִם לֹא —
לֹא יִמְנַע, וְאִם נִמְנַע — עֹבֵר עַל
לֹא תִּעַמְּד עַל דָּם רָצֶחֶת.

When it comes to effort or paying money to save a person from danger, it is clear that one is obligated to do so. The question arises, however, when it comes to risking oneself:

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For the rescuer to place themselves in potential danger—some say they must, in order to save the victim from certain danger, and others disagree. Practically, we are lenient when it comes to a doubt over a life-and death ruling.

וְאִפְלָוּ לְבָנָם בְּסֶפֶק סְבָנוֹה — יִשְׁ
אָזְמָרִים שְׁאָרִיךְ כִּדְיַע לְהַצִּיל
אֶת חֶבְרוֹ מִמִּתְהָ וּדְאִת (וַיִּשְׁ
חוֹלְקִין בָּהּ. וּסְפִקְנֶשֶׁות
לְהַקְלָה).

The first opinion that the Alter Rebbe brings is that one must take the risk. However, he continues and says there is an opposing opinion, and therefore, in a case of doubt regarding lives, one can be lenient.

C. Blood is the Life-force

>> The Rebbe

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A deeper reading of Rashi's commentary teaches us a lesson about spreading Torah and Judaism.

The verse states "the blood is the soul," and the spiritual meaning of this is Torah and mitzvot, "for they are our life and the length of our days."

This is the deeper meaning of "do not stand by your fellow's blood"—it is referring to a Jew who is in a state of mortal danger in the spiritual sense. This is a Jew who has lost true vitality—vitality in matters of Judaism, Torah and mitzvot, and is in a state of "dry bones."

Rashi gives an example of this: "such as a person drowning in a river." The reason the person has reached this state of danger of spiritual death is the "wicked waters," which refers to all negative influences in the world. Due to his immersion in these negative matters the person has reached a state of drowning in a river, and moreover, drowning in the sea (as per the expression used in Maimonides and in the Shulchan Aruch), where the danger is even greater than drowning in a river.

And about such a situation the Torah says: "Do not stand by your fellow's blood." This means that when we see a Jew who is in a state of spiritual danger of death, G-d forbid—we must not stand by and watch his death,

ויש להוסיף שהענין של הפעצת התורה והיהדות - מודגש בתוכן הפנימי של פירוש רש".¹¹

ביאור הדברים: כתוב¹² "הדם ("דם רעך") - הוא הנפש", וענינו בروحניות - תורה ומצוותיה, ש"ם חיינו ואורך ימינו"¹³.

וזהו הפירוש הפנימי של "לא תעמוד על דם רעך" - יהודי שנמצא במעמד ומצב של סכנת מיתה ("דם רעך") בروحניות, חס ושלום, יהודי שאיבד את החיים האמיתית, חיota בענייני יהדות, תורה ומצוותיה, בבחינת "עצמות היבשות".¹⁴

ומבאי רש"י דוגמא לדבר - "כגון טובע בנهر", שכן, הסיבה לכך שהגיא למעמד ומצב של סכנת מיתה, היא - "מים רזויים שבעולם, אשר, מפני היותו מונח בהם, הגיע סוף כל מצב של טובע בנهر", רחמנא ליצלן, ויתירה מזה - "טובע בים" (כלשון הרמב"ם והשולחן ערוך), שאז, הסכנה היא גדולה יותר מאשר "טובע בנهر".

ובכן, אודות מצב כזה אומרת התורה: "לא תעמוד על דם רעך", קלומר, כאשר אתה רואה יהודי שנמצא במעמד ומצב של סכנת מיתה רוחנית, רחמנא ליצלן - אסור לך לעמוד לראות במיתתו", רחמנא ליצלן,¹⁵

14. תהילים קכ, ה. וראה תור"א ר"פ נה. המשך מים רבים תרל"ז בתהלה. פע"ה. ועוד.

11. דברים יב, כ.

12. נוסח תפלת ערבית. וראה ס"פ נזכרים. האזין לב, מז.

13. יהוקאל ל, א ואילך. וראה שיחת הנ"ל ס"ל ואילך.

Student's pg. 11 since we are able to save him. It is in our hands to restore and revive his soul—by spreading Torah and Judaism.

The very fact that we saw—by Divine Providence—a Jew in such a state, is itself proof that we are able to save him. For if not, why was he shown to us? It cannot be that he was shown to us merely so that we should feel pain. Rather, we must conclude that we are able to save him, and this is why he was shown to us, so that we should save him through our efforts in spreading Torah and Judaism.

There is an interesting novel point here. Generally it is taught in Chassidut that when we notice a shortcoming in another, it is by Divine Providence, to show that this same flaw exists in a more subtle form within ourselves. Here, however, the Rebbe takes it in a completely different direction: We were shown this because we are the ones who can help him.

Student's pg. 11 Additionally, the act of saving our fellow must be done without any personal calculations, even when the act of saving entails self-risk, due to the beast or the bandits, etc. That is, the effort to spread Torah and Judaism must be done in the manner of lechatchila ariber (boldly overcoming obstacles, from the outset).

Helping another does not always come easily. At times, it is difficult, and sometimes it even involves risk. The Rebbe says: just as a person takes a risk and jumps into the sea to save someone who is drowning, so too it is in the spiritual realm—we must be willing to take risks for another Jew.

Student's pg. 11 Yet, since one may fear the danger involved, the verse continues: I am G-d. Meaning, G-d is the true Master over the river, over the beast, or over the bandits, and therefore, when one acts to fulfill G-d's command to save his fellow, there is no need to fear anything in the world.

מכיוון ש"אתה יכול להצילו" ... בזידך חלי
הדבר להשיב ולהחיות את נפשו - על ידי
شتעוסק בהפצת התורה והיהדות!

עצם העובדה שראית - בהשגחה פרטית
- יהודי שנמצא במעמד ומצב האמור
("לראות במייתנו"), מהויה הוכחה ש"אתה
יכול להצילו", כי אם לא כן, מדוע הראו לך
אותו? לא יתכן שיראו לך אותו אך ורק כדי
שתצטער... אלא ודאי בהכרח לומר ש"אתה
יכול להצילו", ולכן הראו לך אותו, כדי
שתצילנו - על ידי פועלתך בהפצת התורה
והיהדות!

ונוסף לזה, צריכה להיות פועלות ההצלה של
"רעך" ללא כל חשבונות כו' - כאשר פועלות
ההצלה כרוכה בסיכון עצמי, מפני חייה או
לסתים כו'... כלומר, שההתעסוקה בהפצת
התורה והיהדות צריכה להיות באופן של
"לכתתיליה אריבער" [- לכתתיליה מלמעלה].

אמנם, מכיוון שבכל זאת חושש מפני הסכנה
שבדבר - ממשיך הכתוב: "אני ה'", כלומר,
הקב"ה הוא בעל הבית האמתי על ה"נהר",
על ה"חיה", או על ה"לסתים", ובמיוחד,
כאשר הולך לקיים את ציוויי הקב"ה להציל
את רעהו, אין לו לחושש ממשום דבר
שבעולם!

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There is an additional point here: "I am the L-rd—faithful to give reward, and faithful to punish." We have a negative inclination who tries to derail our good work. We must tell our negative inclination that G-d is faithful to give reward, as we read in Ethics of the Fathers, "know before Whom you labor and Who is your Employer, Who will pay you the reward of your work," and "your Employer is faithful to pay you the reward of your work."

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pg. 12

And at times, we must also remind the negative inclination that there is also a "stick"—faithful to punish—for this will frighten it from disturbing or preventing our work in saving our fellow through spreading Torah and Judaism.

All of the above is especially relevant to the shluchim engaged in spreading Torah and Judaism and spreading the wellsprings outward, on the mission of the Rebbe. One shliach can appoint a further shliach, and the chain can go on even a hundred times over. Everyone must know and remember that the Rebbe's instruction to engage in spreading Torah and Judaism is not just an enhancement of a mitzvah—it is actual saving of lives, for the Rebbe stands and declares: "Do not stand by your fellow's blood," "You are able to save him..."

At this point, we must keep in mind and emphasize: every Jew is a shliach. And every participant in this class is a shliach of the Rebbe's shluchim to spread Judaism to their friends, acquaintances, and so on, so that they will not drown.

ועוד עניין בזה - "אני ה'", "נאמן לשלם שכר ונאמן להיפרע": מכיוון שישנו את היצר הרע שמנסה לבלבל מעבודה זו - צריכים להודיע לו שהקב"ה "נאמן לשלם שכר", ועל דרך מה שכותב בפרק אבות של שבת זו - "ודע לפני מי אתה עמל וממי הוא בעל מלאכתך שישלם לך שכר פועלתך"¹⁵, "נאמן הוא בעל מלאכתך שישלם לך שכר פועלתך"¹⁶.

ולפעמים, יש צורך להזכיר ליצר הרע שיש גם "מקל"..." נאמן להיפרע", שכן, דבר זה ירתיעו מלבלבל ולהפריע לעבודתו של היהודי בהצלת רעהו על ידי הפצת התורה והיהדות.

כל האמור לעיל שיק במיוחד ל"שלוחים" העוסקים בהפצת התורה והיהדות, והפצת המיעינות חזאה, בשליחותו של כבוד קדושת מורי וחמי אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו - "שליח עושה שליח", אפילו מאה שלוחים¹⁷ - שעיליהם לדעת ולזיכור שציווי והוראות נשיא דורנו לעסוק בהפצת התורה והיהדות אינה בבחינת "הידור מצוה", כי אם, פיקוח נפש ממש, שכן, נשיא דורנו עומד ומכריז: "לא תעמוד על דם רעך"..." אתה יכול להצילו..."

17. ראה שיחות ליל שמוח"ת ש.ג. ס"ט (התוועדיות ח"א ע' 342).

15. פ"ב מ"ד.
16. שם מט"ז.

Student's pg. 12 And since this is the case, we must increase our activities in fulfilling the Rebbe's mission with even greater strength and even greater vigor, engaging in spreading Torah and Judaism and spreading the wellsprings of Chassidut outward, as stated, in the manner of *lechatchila aribet* (boldly overcoming obstacles, from the outset).

ומכיוון שכן, יש להוסיף ביותר שאת וביתר עוז במלחו השליחות של נשייא דורנו - לעסוק בהפצת התורה, והיהדות והפצת המיעינות חוצה, וכאמור, באופן של "לכתחילה אריבעד" [- לכתהילה מלמעלה].

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Key Points:

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- The verse in our Torah portion states, "Do not stand by your fellow's blood." Rashi explains that this refers to a person drowning in a river, surrounded by animals or bandits, and the Torah commands that one must rescue the drowning person.
- The Rebbe explains that the verse is not telling us that we must save a fellow Jew from mortal danger—this is already known from earlier verses. Rather, it refers to a situation where the rescuer must place his own life in danger to save the one drowning.
- Thus, Rashi brings a practical example: A person who is drowning in a river, and on the riverbank, there is an animal or bandits who wish to exploit the drowning person's weakness to harm him. In such a case, there is a danger to anyone who attempts to help.
- The Torah teaches that when there is a possibility to save the drowning person, one should not stand aside, but must rescue him, even at the cost of personal danger.
- The Spiritual Meaning of the Verse: When a Jew is in spiritual danger, it is an obligation to save his soul, even at the risk of one's own spiritual well-being.

Takeaway:

When we encounter a Jew in need of spiritual assistance—for example, someone sitting next to us in the synagogue who needs help with the prayer book—we must offer our help with a full heart, even if it disrupts or confuses our own prayer. This is the mission that G-d has given us, and He delights in such acts of selfless service to others.

