

בס"ד
י' אלול תשפ"א
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פרשת כי תצא

One of the most fascinating commandments in the Torah is that of the *Ben Soreir U'Moreh*, the defiant and disobedient son who strays from his path, engaging in drunkenness, robbery, and gluttony before being stoned by the people of his city.¹ Interestingly enough, when describing how the son fails to heed the word of his parents, the pasuk says "אִינּוּ שָׁמַע," rather than say "אִינוּ שָׁמַע,"² and the *Ohr HaChaim*³ explains that this is to highlight that when a person follows their *yetzer hara*, they are stripped of their ability to perceive and comprehend, as the evil inclination stands on the entrance of the heart, preventing these important words of deterrence from entering the soul. He compares it to a king who hires burglars and thieves to serve as his guards; would such guards admit robbery victims into the palace to make complaints to the king? This, says the *Ohr HaChaim*, is the role of the *yetzer hara*, who sits between the two entrances of the heart like a fly, according to a Gemara in Berachos.⁴ When we can guard our hearts and prevent any sort of negative impulses from habituating themselves nearby, we can fortify our spirituality, and in turn, become even better human beings.

*Rabbeinu Bechaye*⁵ adds a very interesting point: If the son stole from people besides for his parents, or consumed the meat and wine with the permission of his parents, or ate the meat raw and drank the wine undiluted, he is exempt from the death penalty. Why? Because this lifestyle is clearly unsustainable and an anomalous situation; while the son has easy access to his parents' belongings and can always steal from them, he will often lack an unfettered entrance to that of strangers. This is combined with the knowledge that a person's eligibility to be a *Ben Soreir U'Moreh* is only between the ages of thirteen and 13 years and 3 months old: while an underage boy isn't subject to any of these prohibitions, a person over the threshold of 13 ¼ years is considered to be released from his father's authority, free to do as he chooses. There is an incredibly small window for a person subject to these prohibitions to actively rebel against his family in such a degenerate and dastardly way.

Evidently, the parameters for an eligible *Ben Soreir U'Moreh* are incredibly narrow; in fact, we learn in a Gemara in Sanhedrin⁶ that execution of a *Ben Soreir U'Moreh* never even occurred! If this is true, then why would these commandments ever be taught? This is part of the brilliance of the Torah, explains *Rabbeinu Bechaye*⁷ - it is a lesson for how we can love Hashem. There is no love stronger than that which a parent has for their child, and when a son transgresses Hashem's mitzvos, parents tend to dismiss it as pure foolishness. However, if they are cognizant of the obligation to hand over their son to the *beis din* for the ultimate penalty of stoning, even for such a minor infraction, it shows a true devotion to Torah and Hashem. This is our attempt to emulate the same servitude that Avraham Avinu exhibited to Hashem when he was willing to sacrifice his son, who was of complete innocence, according to *Rabbeinu Bechaye*, we are given this hypothetical to glean the moral implications that emerge from the mitzvos that Hashem gives us.

¹ רש"י דברים כא:יח ד"ה סורר

² דברים כא:יח

³ אור החיים דברים כא:יח כי יהיה לאיש וגו' איננו שומע

⁴ ברכות סא.

⁵ רבינו בחיי דברים כא:כא ד"ה ורגמוהו כל אנשי עירו

⁶ סנהדרין עא.

⁷ רבינו בחיי דברים כא:כא ד"ה וכל ישראל ישמעו ויראו

When we can learn out important lessons for Yahadus even from the most impertinent laws, it shows both an acute ability to see the Ribono Shel Olam's omnipotence in all walks of life, in addition to a level of commitment and piety to Hashem that we should always aspire to attain, whether it be through guarding our hearts, teaching our children with a household of sanctity, or fully devoting ourselves to Him. As we find ourselves in the midst of Elul, we should continue to find new ways to dedicate ourselves to HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and keep venturing to serve Him with every opportunity that comes our way, constantly and consistently striving to be better *ovdei Hashem*.