

Lesson 5

RESPECT ONE'S PROPERTY

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Section #1

prohibition of:

THEFT

“You shall not steal; neither shall you deal falsely, nor lie to one another.”

Leviticus 19:11

INTRO

The ability to own property was granted to us by G-d in order to use our belongings for positive purposes. When we channel the use of our assets in a constructive fashion, we fulfill the intent of why ownership was allotted to us.

Theft, essentially, takes place with anything that can be calculated and transferred with money, such as movable objects or land. One is guilty of stealing no matter how minute the value, and one should not justify his actions based on the seemingly insignificant worth.

Theft takes away from positive interaction and produces disunity. It is an affront to the basic respect entitled to every human being. Therefore, the act of stealing is not only limited to the isolated event; it also robs humanity of its social order.

**The judgment of a case involving a pruta
(smallest negotiable coin) is as significant
as a judgment involving one hundred maneh
(a substantial amount of money).
Talmud Sanhedrin 8a**

**“Rabbi Yochanan said, one who steals from
a friend even the smallest coinage of
money is like they take from him his soul.”
Talmud Baba Kama 119a**

**The world was corrupt in front
of God and the land was filled with crime.
Genesis 6:11**

**Although the generation of the
flood committed numerous sins,
the primary "crime" for which they
were eradicated was that of theft.
Talmud Sanhedrin 108a**

"Whoever steals money from the smallest coinage of money and higher transgresses a negative prohibition as it says, "Do not steal" ...whether one steals money from an Israelite or one steals money from a Gentile and whether one steals from an adult or a minor.

"It is forbidden to steal anything; even less than the value of the smallest coinage. It is forbidden to steal in a joking manner or to steal on the condition of returning or on the condition of paying everything back, so that he will not become accustomed to steal.

Rambam Book of Damages 1:1-2

“... and according to the abundance of the lights that are to that soul, so is the measure of abundant spiritual energy that they channel upon him from above, and according to the abundant spiritual energy that is channeled to the soul, so is the money that he has in this world. We find that when they steal his money, they steal from him that supernal abundant spiritual energy that descends to his soul from above, and even if it is only the smallest coinage of money, behold he steals from his soul the smallest amount of the abundant spiritual energy that descends to him as was mentioned.”

**Rabbi Isaac Luria
Gate of the Commandments Mishpatim**

"It is forbidden to use a neighbor's article without his knowledge, even if one is sure that the owner would not object... It is necessary to admonish the public regarding this matter, as most people break this rule for lack of knowledge."

**Rabbi Shlomo Ganzfried
Kitzur Shulchan Aruch
Vol. 4 Chapter 182:13**

**someone who steals shows
complete lack of trust in God.
Rabbeinu Bachya: Beshalach**

**Rebbe Yossi says:
Let the money of your friend
be as dear to you as you own..."
Ethics of our Fathers 2:17**

Section #2.

LIAR, LIAR, PANTS ON FIRE...

Similar to the damage and chaos which literal stealing causes; there is stealing in speech and mind as well.

G'nevas Da'as= deception

In certain ways, this can cause even more detriment than stealing an object.

A person's soul, is a part of the Almighty Himself, the embodiment of perfect, pure truth.

Engaging in dishonest conduct contaminates this Godly dimension of the soul, and thus constitutes a most grievous sin, more severe than the theft of property.

**Rabbenu Yona of Gerona
Shaarei Teshuva**

**A person who tells lies will not be in G-d's presence.
Talmud Sotah 42a**

**One act of falsification gives birth to another and perhaps to greater acts of dishonesty.
Shocher Tov Psalms 7**

**Dishonesty is considered a mordant personality trait that will lead to animosity and hatred amongst men and ultimately will cause the destruction of society.
Maharsha Shabbat 104a**

Section #3- CHARITY

You're on your way home after a long day at work. You're sweaty and exhausted, not to mention, famished. You just put in all your efforts, slaving away for the past nine hours, just to come home with enough money to put some food on the table and pay the bills.

After all your time and energy were just invested in finishing today's tasks, you notice a poor man, sitting on the street corner; who doesn't even have a home to return to. You reach into your pocket for a dollar, hand it to the gentleman, and he responds, "G-d bless you sir."

What happened here was more than a generous donation of a piece of currency; it was a donation of a piece of your life. You spent time--day in and out--toiling for every dollar that would come to you; nevertheless, you made the stipulation that a portion of that time, a small portion of your own life, was worth giving away for somebody else.

This is the marvel of charity. It is the exact opposite of stealing. One gives up a part of himself; of his very being and labor.

Charity is not limited to monetary contributions. It can also be with time, volunteered to aid another. The positive counterpart, and command to be fulfilled by humanity; is to give, at least a small amount of, charity every day.

**For the poor will never cease from the earth,
and therefore I command you, saying: you
shall surely open your hand to your brother, to
your poor and your destitute in your land.
Deuteronomy 15:11**

**“And you shall walk in His ways”
Deuteronomy 28:9**

**Just as He is called Compassionate,
so you should be compassionate;**

**Just as He is called Merciful,
so you should be merciful ...
Talmud Shabbat 133b**

**Rabbi Yeshua taught: More than the
person of means does in giving to the pauper,
the pauper does for the person of means who's giving
Midrash Rabbah, Leviticus 34:8**

Tzedakah= charity; righteousness

There is no true connection between possessions and the one who acquires them: for disaster may cause him to lose his wealth during his lifetime, and at the very least it will pass to others when he dies. He only appears wealthy, for his acquisitions are not bound to him spiritually. Whereas when he dispenses his wealth in Tzedakah and good deeds, he completes his spiritual existence - the true and lasting essence of his life ... thus in decreasing his apparent wealth, he has acquired a true and everlasting fortune that is guarded forever.

Malbim on Proverbs 13:8

"Tzedakah uplifts a nation."

Proverbs 14:34

**"Tzedakah exalts any individual
nation that practices it"**

Ramban Leviticus 17:20

**“Thus said the Compassionate One:
Guard justice and perform acts of tzedakah,
for My salvation is soon to come, and
My benevolence to be revealed.”
Isaiah 56:1**

**“Zion will be redeemed with justice and
those who return to her with tzedakah”
Isaiah 1:27**

**A soul comes into the world and lives
seventy or eighty years, just to do a favor for
another ... in matters of the material, and
particularly in the spiritual.
HaYom Yom, 5 Iyar**

“...in the case of Tzedakah, which one gives from the toil of his hands, surely all the strength of his vital soul is invested in the effort of his labor, or any other occupation by which he earned this money. Thus when he gives this money to Tzedakah, his entire vital soul ascends to G-d. Even he who does not earn his livelihood from his labors, nevertheless, since he could have purchased the life of his vital soul with this money, he is actually giving his soul’s life to G-d.”

Tanya Ch. 37

**Great is the mitzvah of tzedakah
for it brings close the Redemption.**

Talmud Bava Batra 10a

And this is why our Sages have said that it hastens the Redemption: For with one act of tzedakah one elevates a great deal of the vital soul; more of its faculties and powers, in fact, than he might elevate through many other active mitzvot (combined).

Tanya Ch. 37

Section #4.

SUPPLEMENTARY ARTICLES

How could a Religious Person Commit a Crime?

By Tzvi Freeman

chabad.org

Question:

A high administrative official in our synagogue swindled a great sum of money from congregational offerings. He is well versed in Torah and certainly knows the difference between right and wrong. So how is it possible that he did such a thing?

Answer:

I'll answer with a story.

Rabbi Chaim of Sanz (Polish chassidic master, 1793-1876) once sought an honest man in the marketplace. First he stopped Yossel and asked, "Yossel! If you found a wallet on the street, what would you do?"

"Of course, I would return it to its owner!" replied Yossel.

"Yossel, you are a fool!" exclaimed the rabbi. "Now stay here."

And the rabbi called over another man.

"Feivel, if you found a wallet on the street, what would you do?"

"Rabbi, you know me," answered Feivel. "I would probably keep it for myself. I need the money badly, and I'm not such a good Jew."

"Feivel, you must repent! In the meantime, stand here!"

And he called over another man.

"Laibel, if you found a wallet on the street, what would you do?"

Laibel began to tremble.

"Answer me, Laibel, what would you do?"

"Rabbi," Laibel spoke, his eyes to the ground. "I really don't know what I would do! I don't know who would win inside me, my yetser tov (good inclination) or my yetser hara (evil inclination)!"

"Laibel," the rabbi replied, "you are an honest man!"

Such is human nature: When temptation stares a person in the face, no one can guarantee what he will do. Especially if the temptation is there day after day.

Even when the Holy Temple stood in Jerusalem, when a priest would enter the treasury, he had to enter with two of his colleagues.

So this is what Torah teaches us: Don't be so quick to condemn your fellow man for dishonesty. You yourself can never be sure what you would do in his circumstances.

The Torah teaches that the man must pay his penalty and lose his post. But it also teaches that we should all recognize that any of us could have done the same thing in his situation.

There is a law that a very old man cannot sit on a Bet Din (Jewish court). The reason? Because he has forgotten the troubles of having to work to support a family and he will not be able to sympathize with the petty criminal.

Obsessed with Giving
by Rabbi Dov Greenberg
chabad.org

One of the most striking characteristics of the Jewish people was that, whenever they were asked, they gave. In the wilderness, when asked to contribute to the Golden Calf, they gave without delay. When asked to make a donation to the building of the Sanctuary they did likewise. The Golden Calf was a pagan idol. The Sanctuary was a home for the Divine presence. There was nothing in common between them except that they both came into being through voluntary donations. The Jerusalem Talmud expresses amazement: "One cannot understand the nature of this people: if appealed to for the Calf they give; if appealed to for the Sanctuary they give." Go, figure! It seems Jews are obsessed with giving. But it is incumbent upon us to make sure our giving is directed to a good cause.

The late Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, an outstanding rabbinic thinker of the twentieth century, recounts an occasion when his grandfather, the great Jewish scholar Rabbi Chaim of Brisk, was asked what the function of a rabbi is. He replied, "To redress the grievances of those who are abandoned and alone, to protect the dignity of the poor, and to save the oppressed from the hands of his oppressor."

Rabbi Chaim's father, Rabbi Joseph Dovber Soloveichik, known as the "Beis Halevi" was once sitting with his students when a man approached him with a strange question: "Is it permitted for me to drink milk instead of wine at the Passover Seder?"

"Are you forbidden to drink wine for health reasons?" the Rabbi asked. "No, it's just that wine is too expensive. I can't afford it."

The Talmud expresses amazement: "One cannot understand the nature of this people: if appealed to for the Golden Calf they give; if appealed to for the Sanctuary they give."

Instead of answering the man's question, the Rabbi gave him twenty-five rubles. "Now you can have wine at your Seder," he said. After the man left, a student asked the Rabbi, "Why did you have to give him twenty-five rubles? Five would be more than enough to purchase the required amount of wine."

Rabbi Soloveichik answered, "If he intended to use milk at the Seder, that means he also doesn't have money for meat [Jewish law forbids having milk and meat at the same meal], and he probably also doesn't have money for the other items served at the Seder. I wanted to give him enough so that he could have a complete Seder."

Tzedakah, the Hebrew term meaning both charity and justice, is one of Judaism's most majestic and powerful pillars. The Talmud states: "Tzedakah is equal to all the other commandments combined." Rabbi Judah bar Ilai in the Talmud put it dramatically:

Iron is strong, but fire melts it.

Fire is strong, but water extinguishes it.

Water is strong, but the clouds carry it.

The clouds are strong, but the wind drives them.

The wind is strong, but man withstands it.

Man is strong, but fear weakens him.

Fear is strong, but wine removes it.

Wine is strong, but sleep overcomes it.

Sleep is strong, but death stands over it.

What is stronger than death?

Acts of generosity, for it is written "Tzedakah delivers from death".

The word tzedakah derives from the Hebrew word tzedek, "justice." From a Jewish perspective, to give to the needy is not only an act of kindness; it is an act of justice. Jewish tradition teaches that part of the wealth we own does not really belong to us; it is money that G-d entrusted to us that we are required to pass on to those in need. Thus, to withhold charity is considered a subtle form of theft.

Two forms of charity

There are two components of tzedakah. The first is offering financial assistance to someone in need. The second is ensuring that each person is granted the ability to enjoy a dignified existence.

This explains a rather strange law in Judaism. A community must provide a poor person not only with the means to live, but also with enough money to be able to give to others. Rationally this is difficult to comprehend. The money will be given to the poor anyway. Why give it to one poor man to give to another? Psychologically, however, it makes very good sense. Giving is an essential part of dignity. Judaism sees it as no less than a human need. That is why even those who have to receive also have to be able to give. The rabbinic insistence that the community provide the poor with enough money so that they themselves can give is a profound insight into the human condition: we each need to feel that we are needed. It is a desire to satisfy a transcendent yearning, to be like G-d who is not only a "receiver," but also a "giver." It is a craving that emanates from the depths of our souls.

The stroke patient

In 1986, a man named Shlomo Telushkin had a severe stroke. Until the day he fell ill, he worked full-time as an accountant. One of his clients was the Lubavitcher Rebbe. One day while Mr. Telushkin was still in the hospital, his son - the author Joseph Telushkin, received a call from the Rebbe's secretary who had an accounting question he wished Joseph to pose to his father.

Joseph was puzzled by the request. It was only a few days since his father had regained consciousness, and he was still not fully himself. The Rebbe's secretary explained that during a conversation among the Rebbe and his secretaries, an accounting question had come up. The Rebbe said, "Ask Shlomo Telushkin." When he was reminded how sick Shlomo was, the Rebbe repeated, "Ask Shlomo."

We each need to feel that we are needed. It is a desire to satisfy a transcendent yearning, to be like G-d... a "giver." It is a craving that emanates from the depths of our souls

Of course, knowing that the question came from the Rebbe, Joseph went to his father's room and posed it to him. His father offered an immediate response; it turned out that the question was not difficult.

Reflecting on that incident Joseph Telushkin said: "What I realized at that moment was the Rebbe's brilliance and compassion. He knew how sick my father was, but also understood how important it was for my father, lying in a hospital bed, confused and half-paralyzed, to still feel productive." The Rebbe's aim was to grant dignity to an ill patient.

A sage once observed the two seas in Israel, the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. The Sea of Galilee is full of life, the Dead Sea has none. How could two seas, fed by a single source -- the River Jordan -- be so different? His answer: the Sea of Galilee receives water at one end and gives out water at the other. The Dead Sea receives water but does not give, and if you only receive but do not give, you do not live. In Judaism, giving is part of life itself.

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Let's get practical

The Lubavitcher Rebbe suggested that people place charity boxes in their homes, offices and childrens' bedrooms. Into that box, people could drop coins or dollars on a daily basis. The Rebbe felt this would create perpetual awareness of the need to give. A Charity box in a home or office redefines the space. It is no longer a home or an office. It is a sanctuary, a hub of kindness, a space in the world that reflects G-d and His will to give.

Our children will build a kinder world if they learn the importance of giving. Values are caught, not taught. They are communicated by what we do more than by what we say. Living charitably ourselves is the best way to ensure our children will give.

There is a beautiful Jewish custom that before Jewish mothers and girls kindle the Sabbath candles they place a few coins in the charity box. Giving habitually, rather than sporadically and impulsively, accustoms one to become more generous.

were you paying attention...?

1. What are some of the detrimental aspects of stealing in a society?
2. What takes place on a spiritual level when one steals?
3. Why can lying/deceit be even worse than actually stealing?
4. What is so special about charity? What is accomplished?
5. How do you think tzedakah brings closer the redemption?
6. Take a practical resolution to put a charity box in your house and put a small coin in at least once a day.