

Kindly take a moment to study MISHNAS CHAYIM in the merit of
Aharon Reuven *ben Avrohom a"h*
a fellow Jew who passed away with no relatives to arrange Torah study on behalf of his *neshamah*

PARSHAS KI SEITZEI 5775

A Joyous Breakdown

Have you ever had the experience of being stuck in an hours-long traffic jam? Or breaking down, waiting in your car by the side of the road until some form of assistance (hopefully) arrives? Imagine how it must have been a century or so ago with horse-drawn carriages; if something should happen, there's not even an option of taking out a cellphone and having some tow-truck drive over to address the situation.

But just such a thing occurred to the saintly R' Nosson Adler, *rebbe* of the Chasam Sofer. It was no less than midwinter, in the midst of a snow-covered landscape, when the wagon that was carrying the *rebbe* and his disciple ground to a halt. Instead of the "engine" conking out, it was one of the two horses that chose this most inopportune time and place to breathe its last. Far from any trace of civilization, the travelers were faced with the prospect of many, many hours in the cold until some form of replacement would appear.

R' Nosson Adler reacted by breaking out in joyous dancing. Why? As we shall see, the cause is rooted in this week's *parshah*.

Opportunity Knocks

One of the *mitzvos* delineated in the *parshah* is the prohibition against plowing with a combination of animals. As the *passuk* states: *לֹא תִקְרֹשׁ בְּשׂוֹר וּבְחֶמֶר יִקְדּוּ* – “Do not plow with an ox and donkey together” (*Devarim 22:10*). Actually, the commentators clarify that the prohibition is not limited to the items mentioned in the *passuk*, which were selected more by way of example. Thus, one violates the prohibition by using a combination other than an ox and a donkey. Furthermore, it is not only plowing together that is forbidden, but other forms of joint pulling are prohibited as well. The Mishnah (*Kilayim 8:2,3*) demonstrates how far-reaching the prohibition can be:

אָסוּרִין לְקָרֹשׁ וּלְמַשֵּׁךְ וּלְהַנְהִיג... וְהַיּוֹשֵׁב בְּקֶרֶן סוֹפֵג אֶת הָאֲרָבָעִים.

“It is forbidden to (have a combination) plow, bear (a load or wagon), or be led together... (Even) one who (merely) sits in a wagon (drawn by a forbidden combination) incurs the penalty of forty lashes (as with any standard prohibition).”

Against this backdrop we can return to R' Nosson Adler's encounter. He sat waiting with his *talmid*, the Chasam Sofer, as the wagoner ventured to the nearest village to obtain a replacement horse. As this entailed a sizeable distance, the pair had to endure the elements for quite some time until they finally recognized the figure of the driver with another animal in tow. But as he drew nearer, R' Nosson discerned that it wasn't a horse... but a donkey instead.

When R' Nosson beheld this development, he became ecstatic. The Chasam Sofer questioned the reason for his joy, and R' Nosson explained: "I spend most of my days in my hometown, closeted in study. I never dreamed that I would have a chance to fulfill the dictum of 'Do not plow with an ox and donkey together.' And yet today, that's exactly what happened. When I saw the wagoner had brought a donkey to join with the horse, I realized right away that we would have an even longer wait, as the donkey will have to be sent back in exchange for a proper horse. An opportunity to fulfill this mitzvah is surely a cause for celebration!"

A Forgotten Mitzvah

What is somewhat humbling about a story of this nature is the contrast it highlights between some of our prevalent attitudes and those of the more elevated spirits. We may have reacted with bitterness at the prospect of having to wait even longer because of the driver's error; by contrast, R' Nosson literally broke out in dancing.

Interestingly enough, Chazal relate a similar incident – one also involving a mitzvah in this week's *parshah*. The mitzvah of *shikchah* obligates a farmer who realizes that he forgot a bundle in the field to refrain from retrieving it; it is to be left, instead, for the poor to come and take possession.

Imagine if you or I were faced with such a situation – what would be the "gut-reaction"? It might not be such a happy experience. "Oh, no!" we might say. "How could I forget? Well, there goes a whole bundle down the drain."

But the Tosefta (*Pe'ah 3:13*) tells of a much different reaction:

"It once happened that a certain pious individual forgot his sheaf in the midst of his field. (Upon realizing his mistake), he remarked to his son: 'Go, and sacrifice on my behalf one bull as a burnt-offering and one bull as a peace-offering.' (His son) said to him: 'Father, what have you seen to rejoice over this particular mitzvah more than any of the *mitzvos* of the Torah?' (The father) said to him: 'Regarding any other mitzvah of the Torah, Hashem provides us the opportunity to fulfill them from our own knowledge. But this mitzvah (of *shikchah*) can only come about if it is not from our knowledge; for if Hashem would not will it, the opportunity to perform it would never come to our hands.'"

The pious man's attitude is most instructive. How many people would be only too thrilled if it they never had the opportunity to part with their possessions due to a lapse in awareness? On the contrary; if it did happen that they forgot, they might well be upset to learn about the forgotten sheaf that they will now have to forego. But the pious feel differently; the one featured above would have been upset *not* to have had the "fortune" to forget. When he actually did, he was elated; so grateful was he for the chance to fulfill this mitzvah and part with his possessions that he hastened to give away even more, in the form of sacrifices to Hashem.