

DAF TSAFON

29 January 2022
27 Shvat 5782

Shabbat Mevarchim
Parasha Mishpatim
ArtScroll 416 Hertz 306



What is a true friend?

In this week's parasha we read about the laws of damages. Amongst the areas of damage we find the law of the ox. The verse states "If the ox of a man will gore his fellow man's ox and it dies they will sell the live ox and split its value and also the dead (ox) shall be split." [Exodus 21:35]

The expression at the beginning of this verse, "v'ki yeegof shor ish et shor re'eyhu..." is normally translated "When a man's ox will gore his friend's ox". However, the famous biblical commentators, Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra (1089-1167), quotes an interpretation from a certain 'Ben Zuta' who offers an alternate translation. Ben Zuta claims that the words "shor re'eyhu" mean, the "fellow ox" of the ox who is doing the goring. It is not to be translated as "the ox of his friend" as we commonly translate but rather "the ox gores his friend" – another ox!

The Ibn Ezra dismisses the interpretation of Ben Zuta. He writes "the ox has no 'friend' other than Ben Zuta himself!" In other words, anyone who says such an interpretation is a worthy companion to an ox and has no place in the Study Hall.

What is the meaning of a true friend and why can we not say the same about two animals?

Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner (1906-1980 USA) makes the following very interesting observation: The word "re'ya", which is one of several ways of saying "friend" in Hebrew, comes from the same root as the word "teruah" as in "It shall be a day of teruah [blasting] for you" [Bamidbar 29:1] (referring to Rosh Hashanah). The Targum Unkelos on this pasuk translates "yom teruah" as "yom yevava". "Yom yevava" means a day of moaning, or a day of broken up cries.

That is why the main thrust of the shofar sound is the "shevarim" (the broken wailing sound). There is a question in Halacha as to whether the true shevarim are the three short sounds we call, shevarim, or the series of shorter blasts that we call, teruah, or a combination of both, but whatever its nature, the "shevarim" is the essence of the shofar blowing. The single blast sound (tekiah) that proceeds and follows the "shevarim" merely provides a frame so to speak, to highlight the essence of the shofar sound – the sobbing cry of shevarim.

Thus, the etymology of Teruah, sharing the same root as re'yut [friendship] has the connotation of breaking something up. Rabbi Hutner explains that is why a friend is called re'yah, for the purpose of a friend is to "break you up" and to "give you chastisement". A true friend should stop us in our tracks and give us a kick in the pants, when necessary. A friend is not the type of person who always pats us on the back, telling us how great we are, always condoning whatever we do. The purpose of a friend (re'yah), as is the purpose of Teruah (shofar blast), is to tell us – sometimes – "you don't know what you are talking about"!

Obviously, there has to be an overall positive relationship. Someone who is always critical will not remain a friend for very long. A person needs to have a modicum of trust and confidence in someone before he is prepared to hear criticism from him. But the fellow who always slaps us on the back and tells us how great we are is likewise not a true friend. A true friend must be able to stop us and sometimes be able to break us.

In one of the blessings of Sheva Brachot (recited at a wedding and during celebration meals for the week thereafter), we refer to the newlywed couple as being "re'yim ahuvim" [loving friends]. Why? In order for a husband-wife to be "loving friends", they need to have the capacity to be able to say to each other "this is not the way to do it; this is not the way to act." Obviously, a relationship in which this is the entire basis of their interaction is not going to work. But for the relationship to grow, there needs to be not only the, "Honey, you're great" and "Honey, you are always right." Sometimes it must be "Honey, you are an idiot!" This is a true instance of "re'yim ahuvim".

This is why no ox ever had a "re'yah". No ox will ever tell its companion ox, "It is not right to eat like that" or "You are eating too much" or "You are eating too fast." A true friend needs to do that.

May we all merit having such true friendship between ourselves and our companions and between ourselves and our spouses.

Haftarah

ArtScroll 1156 Hertz 323

PUNISHMENT FOR DECEITFUL CONDUCT

Jeremiah XXXIV, 8-22 and XXXIII, 25, 26

Jeremiah denounces the ruling classes for violating solemn undertaking to release their Hebrew slaves (compare the first section of the Sidra). They had agreed to do so when the Babylonians first besieged Jerusalem (in 588 B.C.E.) but during a temporary lull, thinking the danger was over, forcibly brought them back into bondage. Because of this outrage, declares the prophet, the enemy will return, enslave Zedekiah and his princes, destroy Jerusalem and carry the people away into exile. The Haftarah ends on a more hopeful note – God will.

מזל טוב

Wedding anniversaries

Roger Cherry and Eva Balint
Graham and Daphne Flax
Dean and Michele Fleischmann
David and Leona Goldstein
Rozelle and Maurice Joffe
David and Diana Laufer
Michael and Susan Moses
Alex and Tammy Zak

מזל טוב

Bar and Bat Mitzvah anniversaries

Harold Don
Graham Flax
Joseph Gelbart
Kai Tofler
Frank Wittal

Jessica Bank

Our congregation acknowledges the following
yahrzeit anniversaries and wishes long life to those
who are commemorating a yahrzeit
during the coming week.

חיים ארוכים

Freddy Samuel Bachmayer	father of Deborah Zwi
Paula Beck	mother of Harry Beck
Vera Ecker	mother of Jackie Milch
Ralph Leonard Lazarus	husband of Lolo Lazarus
Vernon Rosenthal	father-in-law of Netty Rosenthal
Joshua Reuben Shteyman	son of Felix and Marine Shteyman
Samuel Solomon Zev	father of Marilyn Bark and Harold Zev