

GREAT FOR SHARING  
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!

# בשבת



אור ישראל

Living Life Deeper

PARSHAS  
MATTOS-MASEI

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT  
RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS  
RABBI AVICHAI BENSOUSSAN

## MERCIFUL TO THE END

**T**owards the end of *Parshas Masei*, we find various laws governing how to treat one who accidentally killed someone.<sup>1</sup> In describing the responsibilities of the *Beis Din*, the *Passuk* says, "וְשָׁפוּר וְהָעֵדָה... וְהָעֵדָה יִשְׁפֹּטוּ" "And the assembly shall judge... and the assembly shall save."<sup>2</sup> Using this verse, the Gemara explains that it is incumbent on *Beis Din* to do what they can to save the life of an accused murderer.<sup>3</sup>

There are multiple avenues of mercy that a court must take while trying a capital crime.<sup>4</sup> In fact, a court that sentences a person to death once every seven years, and perhaps even once every seventy years, is considered a 'destructive court!'<sup>5</sup>

While we all relate to the idea of mercy, the application here seems a bit extreme. We aren't dealing with petty crime, rather, the people being tried are murderers! To even attempt to convict one of such a terrible crime, the criminal had to have been warned by two eyewitnesses against committing the crime. This person, who ignored the warnings and callously disregarded sacred human life, is deserving of mercy?

Reb Avraham Grodzinski<sup>6</sup> (1883-1944) explains that a world without mercy cannot endure. In fact, Hashem Himself created the world with mercy, knowing that if He used strict justice, humanity would cease to exist. The quality of mercy is indispensable to our lives, as a whole, and on a day to day basis. We cannot do without it! Thus, we must still exhibit mercy - even towards a person who has strayed so far.

It's easy to feel compassionate and benevolent towards someone who we feel deserves it - a crying child, a poor person, etc. However, there may be times where we feel justified in being resentful, or even vengeful. We may even be in a position to do something about it, and hurt the person who is the target of our feelings. It is especially critical at those times to remember how important it is to be merciful.

1 *Bamidbar* 35

2 *Bamidbar* 35:24-25

3 *Rosh Hashana* 26a

4 *Sefer HaChinuch*, *Mitzvah* 77

5 *Makkos* 7a

6 *Toras Avraham* p. 312

**The quality of mercy is indispensable to our lives, as a whole, and on a day to day basis.**

### Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

We may tend to think of the attribute of mercy as similar to hunger - you either feel it, or you don't. How does one acquire and strengthen this feeling if it doesn't come naturally?

We've all heard someone say, "Well, how would you feel if they did that to you?" The truth is, the idea of putting ourselves in another's situation is pretty good advice.

When we are faced with an opportunity to be compassionate - especially when we may be feeling frustrated or angry - we can close our eyes, and put ourselves in the other person's position.

How would we feel if we accidentally spilled a drink on our sibling's project? How would we feel if we had to go door to door, asking for a handout? How would we feel if we were not well, and had no one to visit us?

By applying these situations to ourselves, we are able to rouse our natural merciful feelings, as we all have compassion for ourselves. Once we kindle that feeling for ourselves, it becomes easier to extend it to others.

## You Make a Difference!

A monthly donation of just \$5 can make all the difference!

To sponsor, or receive Beshivticha in your email, please contact us at  
info@ohr-yisrael.com or 732-451-GROW (4769)

Chazal's words are like brilliant stars in the far corners of the galaxy. Mussar study is the telescope that allows us to see their splendor. - The Alter of Kelm,

Sparks of Mussar, p. 65-66

# BREAKING INTO PRISON

Reb Aryeh Levine, *zt"l*, "The *Tzaddik* of Jerusalem," (1885-1969) was well known for his piety and compassion. During the British Mandate, many Jews wound up in prison, and Reb Aryeh would make it a habit to visit. He would see to their needs, and bring messages to and from their loved ones.

One time, someone was arrested and jailed on Shabbos. Reb Aryeh was aware that this prisoner would not eat the non-kosher food provided, so he quickly put together a package of Shabbos food, and brought it to the prison. He approached the prison administration, explained why he had brought the food, and requested permission to deliver it to the prisoner. The administration refused to fulfill his request.

However, Reb Aryeh was not so easily deterred. After a few minutes of thought, he called over the two people who had accompanied him to the prison. After making sure that no one was watching, he climbed on their backs, scaled the walls of the prison, and jumped inside! The prison officers immediately grabbed him and brought him to their commander for his serious breach of law.

When the prison commander was informed that Reb Aryeh had endangered himself by scaling the high walls of the prison, instead of fury, he reacted with great respect. "I'm sure that you don't receive a salary for your position as the Rabbi of the Jewish prisoners. It's impossible that someone who fulfills his position for a salary would show such great sacrifice."

*\*Adapted from Barchi Nafshi, written by Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein*

**After making sure that no one was watching, he climbed on their backs, scaled the walls of the prison, and jumped inside!**

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Reb Yehuda *HaNasi* was severely chastised for not having proper mercy on animals.<sup>1</sup>
- If one has compassion on Hashem's creations, Hashem will have compassion on that person.<sup>2</sup>
- Avraham *Davened* that the people of Sodom should be saved, despite the fact that he knew they would never do *Teshuvah*.<sup>3</sup>
- Appearances can be deceiving. Indulging improper behavior may seem merciful, but can sometimes be a form of cruelty.<sup>4</sup>

1 *Bava Metzia* 85a

2 *Shabbos* 151b

3 *Ralbag Vayeira, Toeles* 14

4 *Orchos Tzadikim*, Chap. 7