

CURRENT TALMUD PASSAGE

Posted February 14, 2001 by Rabbi Judy Abrams. Please refer to Maqom's home page for information about previous passages.

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BH

OPPOSITES ATTRACT: REBELLION AND CHASTISEMENT

We have studied these laws of the "Ben Sorer", the rebellious son:

If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, that will not hearken to the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and though they chasten him, will not hearken unto them, then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him and bring him out unto the elders of his city and unto the gate of his place and they shall say to the elders: "This, our son, is stubborn and rebellious. He does not listen to our voice. He is a glutton and a drunkard," And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die, so shall you put away the evil from your midst and all Israel shall hear and fear. (Deuteronomy 21:18-21)

If [the boy accused of being a stubborn and rebellious son] stole [meat and wine] of his father's and consumed [them] in his father's domain [he is not considered a stubborn and rebellious son].

If [the boy accused of being a stubborn and rebellious son] stole [meat and wine] of others and consumed [them] in their domain [he is not considered a stubborn and rebellious son].

Until [the boy accused of being a stubborn and rebellious son] stole [meat and wine] of his father's and consumed [them] in another's domain he is considered a stubborn and rebellious son.

Rabbi Yose bar Rabbi Yehuda says, "[He is not considered a stubborn and rebellious son] until he steals from [both] his father and his mother. (M. Sanhedrin 8:3)

The root sarar (sameich-reish-reish) means rebellious. The root yasar (yud-sameich-reish), which is quite similar means to discipline, chasten or admonish. While these two roots are not exactly the same, they point to one of Hebrew's most eloquent qualities: words often mean one thing and their opposite as well. For example, the root shin-nun-hey, shanah, means to repeat. The Mishnah is a document repeated orally. A year, shanah, is something that repeats. Sheinayim, teeth, repeat themselves in upper and lower jaws. "V'shinantam", "you shall repeat them", is a phrase from the first paragraph of the Shema. But lishanot, with the same root, means "to change".

The Musar movement was founded in the mid-19th century by Israel Salanter. It arose because a movement of the yeshivah world of the mitnagdim (intellectual Talmud students who opposed Hassidism). Salanter's co-worker and student, Isaac Blaser identified the problem of each individual's balancing between Torah learning and the fear of God. By the mid-twentieth century, musar learning was the prevailing kind of education in Lithuanian yeshivot. It was "an entire educational system, based on, and aiming toward, integration and subjection of the youthful emotions to a deeply instilled emotional defense system of a rigoristic Jewish life according to halakhah ("Musar Movement", Encyclopedia Judaica).

Discussion Questions:

1. What do rebellion and chastisement have to do with each other? What else could be put in this "circle of words"?

2. What do you think of the Musar movement? Have you come across "musarniks" in your lifetime?