

What to Do With the Tainted Money?

A The Spread of Contamination

הַבֶּשֶׂר אֲשֶׁר-יִגַּע בְּכָל-טָמֵא לֹא יֵאָכַל בָּאֵשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהַבֶּשֶׂר כָּל-טְהוֹר יֹאכַל בְּשָׂר׃ וְהַנֶּפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר-תֹּאכַל
בְּשָׂר מִזֶּבַח הַשְּׁלָמִים אֲשֶׁר לַה' וְטָמְאָתוֹ עָלָיו וְנִכְרְתָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהִוא מֵעַמּוּיָהּ׃ וְנֶפֶשׁ כִּי-תִגַּע בְּכָל-טָמֵא
בְּטִמְאַת אָדָם אוֹ בְּבְהֵמָה טָמְאָה אוֹ בְּכָל-שֶׂקֶץ טָמֵא וְאָכַל מִבְּשַׂר-זֶבַח הַשְּׁלָמִים אֲשֶׁר לַה' וְנִכְרְתָה
הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַהִוא מֵעַמּוּיָהּ׃ (פ)

Flesh that touches anything unclean shall not be eaten; it shall be consumed in fire. As for other flesh, only he who is clean may eat such flesh. But the person who, in a state of uncleanness, eats flesh from the LORD's sacrifices of well-being, that person shall be cut off from his kin. When a person touches anything unclean, be it human uncleanness or an unclean animal or any unclean creature, and eats flesh from the LORD's sacrifices of well-being, that person shall be cut off from his kin.

Vayikra (Leviticus) 7:19-21

וְלֹא-תָבִיא תוֹעֵבָה אֶל-בֵּיתְךָ וְהִייתָ חָרֵם כְּמֵהוּ שֶׁקֶץ׃ וְהִשְׁקַצְנוּ וְתַעֲב׃ וְתִתְעַבְנוּ כִּי-חָרֵם הוּא׃
You must not bring an abhorrent thing into your house, or you will be excommunicated like it; You must reject it as abominable and abhorrent, for it is excommunicated.

Deuteronomy 7:26

...We should not attach any item of Idol Worship to our money or property, in order to gain pleasure from it, and for this reason, the Torah says "You must not bring an abhorrent thing into your house." And one reason for this commandment is to distance every element of detested idol worship...

And within the commandment is that one should not attach to his own money, which God graced him with, to the money of another which was gained through theft, violence or exploitation, or from any disgusting element, because all of these are included in the elements of idol worship. For man's heart is inclined towards evil, which desires [items paid for by any means] and brings it into the home; and this inclination towards evil is called idol worship... And about monies such as these, that we have discussed, and about the elements of idol worship, on all these it is written "you will be excommunicated (Herem) like it," meaning that any thing which is attached to it is excommunicated, and God's blessing is absent from it, and it is lost and destroyed, as the Rabbis say, "The inclusion of even one *perutah* [a very small amount] of money gained by extorting interest will destroy large treasuries of money."

Sefer HaChinuch (The Book of Education), Mitzvah 429

the case of the stolen lulav:

א"ר יוחנן משום רבי שמעון בן יוחי משום דהוה ליה מצוה הבאה בעבירה שנאמר (מלאכי א, יג) והבאתם גזול ואת הפסח ואת החולה גזול...

Rabbi Yohanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai: It is unfit because it is a mitzvah that comes

to be fulfilled by means of a transgression, which renders the mitzvah unfulfilled, as it is stated: “And you have brought that which was stolen and the lame, and the sick; that is how you bring the offering; should I accept this of your hand?” (Malachi 1:13)...

Talmud Bavli, Sukkah 30a

A Jew who is worshipping false deities . . . we do not accept any sacrifices from him at all. Even a burnt offering which is accepted from a gentile, is not accepted from this apostate.

Rambam, *Ma'aseh ha-Karbanot* 3:4

Religious leaders and institutions can hardly avoid sharing a measure of responsibility and blame for the total disdain for moral standards which is so rampant in contemporary society. We may wax eloquent in extolling moral virtues, but a variety of ethnic and financial pressures have combined to bring about a state of affairs, where ethical considerations are shoved into the background. When it comes to the promotion of Israel, religious institutions, or other philanthropic causes, the promoters are frequently interested only in the “bottom line” and are totally indifferent to matters of character or ethical propriety . . . Have we forgotten the biblical precept that “he who praises the *Botze'a* (exploiter) commits blasphemy against God”? Religious leaders must face up to the fact that moral values cannot be inculcated by precept. It is only by providing inspiring models in a day-to-day behavior that ethical teachings can be effectively communicated. The “body language” conveyed by a congregation has far greater impact than the formal abstract teaching it disseminates. (*Sh'ma*)

Rabbi Walter Wurzburger (leading 20th century American Modern Orthodox rabbi):

B The Possibility of Redemption

If someone stole, but does not know from whom he stole [and he now wishes to repent], he should use [the stolen money] for public needs”

Talmud Bavli, *Beizah* 29a

Shepherds, charity collectors, and tax collectors [who have stolen], their repentance is very difficult, for they have stolen from the public and do not know to whom [specifically] to return the funds. Therefore [they should donate the stolen funds] to public works projects.

Shulchan Arukh, Choshen Mishpat 366:2

I recently learned that an organization I helped found and continue to serve as a board member has been selected to receive a grant for women’s empowerment from the Genesis Prize Foundation. This is great news. Funding for women’s empowerment is not easy to come by, not to mention that the staff devoted untold hours to the grant writing process, and board members put in time, effort, and our own money to secure the significant matching funds required by the Genesis Prize Foundation to be eligible for the grant.

Unfortunately, I received this news just days after the Genesis Prize Foundation reaffirmed their commitment to honoring Robert Kraft, their chosen “laureate” for the year, despite his recent arrest on prostitution charges at a Florida massage parlor whose employees are suspected victims of human trafficking. The dissonance, of course, is striking: Genesis Prize declares their commitment to bringing

greater gender equality to the Jewish community. And at the very same moment, they reveal their belief that devotion to Israel and to fighting antisemitism – the values for which they are honoring Kraft – outweighs any involvement in the mistreatment of women. Women’s human rights, according to this equation, simply do not measure up to the value of these traditional Jewish communal priorities.

Our organization will accept the Genesis Prize grant because we need it to do the work of women’s empowerment, and not taking the money will do nothing to further that work. We do not believe that our organization – or other organizations who have been doing the daily work of fighting for gender equity for years – should have to pay the price for the Genesis Prize Foundation’s decision to stand behind Kraft.

...I’d like to think the Genesis Prize Foundation is demonstrating Ahaseurusian obliviousness, rather than a more calculated belief that giving money to a cause will absolve them of other actions that undermine the very same cause. The Genesis Prize Women’s Empowerment grants should not be allowed to provide cover for the Foundation’s compromised values in their choice to double down on honoring Kraft. While giving money is necessary, it is not sufficient. Genesis Prize’s distribution of \$2 million in grants for women’s empowerment does not fulfill their obligation to work for greater gender equity in the Jewish community; in fact, it only begins their commitment to do so.

Barbara Dobkin, “Fighting for Gender Equity on Purim” March 21, 2019

Robert Mass, an attorney and a student of Jewish ethics, suggests that charitable organizations not accept contributions from convicted criminals, those under criminal indictment, and those who, by reputation, are involved in criminal enterprises; doing so undermines the ethical values the Jewish community is trying to instill. Mass notes that after a person has admitted wrong doing, taken his punishment, made restitution, and returned to the straight path, his *tzedakah* should be welcomed.

Joseph Telushkin, Love Your Neighbor as Yourself

וְזֵאת תִּנְחַת הָאֵשֶׁת קֹדֶשׁ קְדָשִׁים הוּא:

This is the ritual of the guilt offering: it is most holy.

Vayikra (Leviticus) 7:1

WHERE DO YOU STAND?



“Earlier today, the F.D.A. recalled billions of dollars in tainted money.”