

Parashat Behar/Behukotai: Living Side by Side

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Vayikra 25:36	
<p>וְכִי-יָמוּךְ אֶחָיִךְ וַיִּמָּטָה יָדוֹ עֲמֶךָ וַהֲחִזְקֶתָ בּוֹ גֵּר וְתוֹשָׁב וְחִי עִמָּךְ: אֶל-תִּקַּח מֵאִתּוֹ גִּנָּשׁ וְתִרְבִּית וְיִרְאֶת מֵאֱלֹהֶיךָ: וְחִי אִתְּךָ עִמָּךְ:</p>	<p>If your kin, being in straits, come under your authority, and are held by you as though resident aliens, let them live by your side: do not exact advance or accrued interest, but fear your God. Let your kin live by your side as such.</p>

1. Water for One

Bavli Bava Metzia 62a	
<p>וְרַבִּי יוֹחָנָן, הָאֵי "וְחִי אֶחָיִךְ עִמָּךְ" מֵאִי עֶבֶיד לֵיהּ? מִבְּעֵי לֵיהּ לְכַדְתֵּינָא: שְׁנַיִם שָׁהִי מְהֻלְכִין בְּדֶרֶךְ וּבִיד אֶחָד מֵהֶן קִיתוֹן שֶׁל מַיִם, אִם שׁוֹתִין שְׁנֵיהֶם – מֵתִים. וְאִם שׁוֹתֶה אֶחָד מֵהֶן – מִגֵּיעַ לִישׁוּב. דְּרַשׁ בֶּן פִּטְוֹרָא: מוֹטָב שְׁשִׁשְׁתּוֹ שְׁנֵיהֶם וַיָּמוּתוּ, וְאִל יִרְאֶה אֶחָד מֵהֶם בְּמִיתָתוֹ שֶׁל חֲבִירוֹ. עַד שֶׁבָּא רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא וְלִימַד: "וְחִי אֶחָיִךְ עִמָּךְ", חֲסִיד קוֹדְמִים לְחִי חֲבִירָךְ.</p>	<p>The Gemara asks: And Rabbi Yoḥanan, what does he do with this verse: "And your brother shall live with you"? The Gemara answers: He requires the verse for that which is taught in a <i>baraita</i>: If two people were walking on a desolate path and there was a jug [kiton] of water in the possession of one of them, and the situation was such that if both drink from the jug, both will die, as there is not enough water, but if only one of them drinks, he will reach a settled area, there is a dispute as to the <i>halakha</i>. Ben Petora taught: It is preferable that both of them drink and die, and let neither one of them see the death of the other. This was the accepted opinion until Rabbi Akiva came and taught that the verse states: "And your brother shall live with you," indicating that your life takes precedence over the life of the other.</p>

Rabbi Moshe Schreiber (Sofer), Hatam Sofer on Parashat Kedoshim	
<p>ואהבת לרעך כמוך אר"ע זה כלל גדול בתורה יש לפרש ר"ע לטעמי' דדרש ר"פ איזהו נשך וחי אחיך עמך חייך קודמין לחיי חבירך וא"כ כיון שחייך קודמין איך אפשר לקיים ואהבת לרעך כמוך מיהו הא דחייך קודמין היינו בעניני עוה"ז אבל בחיי הנצחיי דהיינו בלימוד התורה חייב ללמד לאחרים אפי' הוא מבטל עצמו מלימודו מ"מ חייב ללמד עם אחרים...</p>	<p>"And you shall love your fellow as yourself" — Rabbi Akiva said: This is a great principle in the Torah. This can be explained according to Rabbi Akiva's own reasoning, as he expounded at the beginning of <i>Eizehu Neshech</i> (Bava Metzia): on the verse "your brother shall live with you" — [from which he taught that] <i>your life takes precedence over the life of your fellow</i>. If so — since your life takes precedence — how can one truly fulfill "Love your fellow as yourself"? However, the rule that "your life comes first" applies only to matters of <i>this world</i>. But when it comes to <i>eternal life</i> — that is, the study of Torah — one is obligated to teach others, even if it means sacrificing his own personal Torah study.</p>

¹ All translations are from Sefaria, unless otherwise noted.

2. Safety for None

Mishnah Temurot 8:12	
<p>וְכֵן נָשִׁים שֶׁאָמְרוּ לָהֶם נְכָרִים, תְּנוּ אֶחָת מֵכֶם וְנִטְמָא, וְאִם לֹא, הֲרִי אֲנוּ מְטֻמְּאִים אֶת כָּלְכֶם, יִטְמְאוּ אֶת כָּלָן, וְאֵל יִמְסְרוּ לָהֶם נֶפֶשׁ אֶחָת מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל:</p>	<p>Similarly, if gentiles say to women, "Give us one of you that we may defile her, and if not, we will defile you all", then let them all be defiled rather than hand over to them one soul from Israel.</p>

Yerushalmi Terumot 8:4	
<p>תְּנִי סִיעוֹת בְּנֵי אָדָם שֶׁהָיוּ מְהֻלְכִין בַּדֶּרֶךְ וּפָגְעוּ לָהֶן גּוֹיִם. וְאָמְרוּ תְּנוּ לָנוּ אֶחָד מֵכֶם וְנַהַרֵּג אוֹתוֹ וְאִם לֹא הֲרִי אֲנוּ הוֹרְגִין אֶת כּוֹלְכֶם. אִפְּלוּ כּוֹלָן נִהָרְגִין לֹא יִמְסְרוּ נֶפֶשׁ אֶחָת מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל. יִיחַדּוּ לָהֶן אֶחָד כְּגוֹן שֶׁבַע בֶּן בִּכְרִי יִמְסְרוּ אוֹתוֹ וְלֹא יִיִּהְרֶגוּ. אָמַר רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן לָקִישׁ וְהוּא שִׁיְהֵא חַיִּיב מִיתָה כְּשֶׁבַע בֶּן בִּכְרִי. וְרַבִּי יוֹחָנָן אָמַר אִף עַל פִּי שְׁאִינוּ חַיִּיב מִיתָה כְּשֶׁבַע בֶּן בִּכְרִי.</p>	<p>It was stated: "A group of people on the road were met by Gentiles who said to them, give us one of you that we may kill him, otherwise we shall kill all of you; even if all of them are killed they should not hand over a Jewish person. If they designated one, like Sheba ben Bikhri, they should hand him over so as not to be killed." Rabbi Simeon ben Laqish said, on condition that he be guilty of a capital crime like Sheba ben Bikhri; but Rabbi Yohanan said, even if he is not guilty of a capital crime like Sheba ben Bikhri.</p>

2 Shmuel 20:1	
<p>וְשֵׁם נִקְרָא אִישׁ בְּלִיעֵל וְשֵׁמוֹ שֶׁבַע בֶּן-בִּכְרִי אִישׁ יְמִינִי וַיִּתְקַע בַּשֹּׁפָר וַיֹּאמֶר אֵין-לָנוּ חֵלֶק בְּדָוִד וְלֹא נַחֲלֶה-לָנוּ בְּבֶן-יִשִּׁי אִישׁ לֹאֲהֲלִיו יִשְׂרָאֵל:</p>	<p>A scoundrel named Sheba son of Bichri, a Benjaminite, happened to be there. He sounded the horn and proclaimed: "We have no portion in David, No share in Jesse's son! Back to your homes, O Israel!"</p>

Mishneh Hilkhhot Yesodei HaTorah 5:5	
<p>נָשִׁים שֶׁאָמְרוּ לָהֶם עוֹבְדֵי כּוֹכָבִים תְּנוּ לָנוּ אֶחָת מִכֶּן וְנִטְמָא אוֹתָהּ וְאִם לֹא נִטְמָא אֶת כָּלְכֶן יִטְמְאוּ כָּלָן וְאֵל יִמְסְרוּ לָהֶם נֶפֶשׁ אֶחָת מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל. וְכֵן אִם אָמְרוּ לָהֶם עוֹבְדֵי כּוֹכָבִים תְּנוּ לָנוּ אֶחָד מֵכֶם וְנַהַרְגֶנּוּ וְאִם לֹא נִהָרֵג כָּלְכֶם. יִהָרְגוּ כָלְכֶם וְאֵל יִמְסְרוּ לָהֶם נֶפֶשׁ אֶחָת מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל. וְאִם יִחַדּוּהוּ לָהֶם וְאָמְרוּ תְּנוּ לָנוּ פְּלוֹנִי אוֹ נִהָרֵג אֶת כָּלְכֶם. אִם הָיָה מְחַיֵּב מִיתָה כְּשֶׁבַע בֶּן בִּכְרִי יִתְּנוּ אוֹתוֹ לָהֶם. וְאִין מוֹרִין לָהֶם כֵּן לִכְתַּחֲלָה. וְאִם אֵינוּ חַיִּיב מִיתָה יִהָרְגוּ כָּלָן וְאֵל יִמְסְרוּ לָהֶם נֶפֶשׁ אֶחָת מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל:</p>	<p>It was stated: "A group of people on the road were met by Gentiles who said to them, give us one of you that we may kill him, otherwise we shall kill all of you; even if all of them are killed they should not hand over a Jewish person. If they designated one, like Sheba ben Bikhri, they should hand him over so as not to be killed." Rabbi Simeon ben Laqish said, on condition that he be guilty of a capital crime like Sheba ben Bikhri; but Rabbi Yohanan said, even if he is not guilty of a capital crime like Sheba ben Bikhri.</p>

3. Living Side by Side

Albert Camus, <i>The Plague</i>	
<p>I know that man is capable of great deeds. But if he isn't capable of great emotion, well, he leaves me cold.</p>	
<p>Big Question: What do you think our rabbis are trying to accomplish when offering examples where there is no perfect choice, only imperfect ones?</p>	