

Top 10 Ideas - Class 9

Saturday, April 10, 2010

9:00 PM

כִּי-תָצוּר אֶל-עִיר יָמִים רַבִּים לְהִלָּחֵם עָלֶיהָ לְתַפְשָׁהּ, לֹא-תִשְׁחִית יֵט
כִּי אֶת-עֵצָהּ לְנֹדֶחַ עָלֶיו גְּרֹזֶן--כִּי מִמֶּנּוּ תֹאכַל, וְאֵתוּ לֹא תִכְרֹת:
הָאֲדָם עֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה, לְבֹא מִפְּנֵיךָ בַּמְצוֹר.

19 When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by wielding an axe against them; for thou mayest eat of them, but thou shalt not cut them down; for is the tree of the field man, that it should be besieged of thee?

1. At its most basic level this law introduces into Judaism a respect for nature and an ecological sensibility.
 - a. But for the rabbis this law was expanded to create an even larger Jewish principle- the principle against wasting anything useful or beneficial.
 - b. This is called "Bal Tashchit" from the Hebrew in the verse "you must not destroy. A law forbidding wastefulness.
2. Compare with Deut 20:20. What does this teach us?
3. Therefore - not permitted to kill a tree by purposeful dehydration or drawing off too much sap.
4. Ibn Ezra expanded this verse above to mean that you cannot destroy anything that has usefulness to humankind.
5. Talmud Bava Kama 5b: Rabbi Eliezer said: " I heard that a person who rends his clothes in mourning more than is necessary transgresses the commandment against wastefulness.
6. Shabbat 140b: A person who could get along on corn but insists on wheat (a rarer commodity), or a person who could drink mead by drinks wine instead infringes on the ordinance of bal tash'hit.
7. Mishnet Torah (Hilchot Melachim 6:10) - Maimonides expanded on R. Eliezers, idea, starting that the law of bal tash'hit applies in every case, not merely in times of war and extends the principle to utensils, clothing, buildings, wells, and food - and by implication all others useful items.
8. Nechama Leibowitz: "Everything is granted to us in trust and so we must use what is granted to us wisely and keep it in good condition for its true Owner and Creator. From Sefer Ha hinukh:
 - a. "This precept is designed to inculcate love of the good and beneficial. This will lead to the avoidance of destructiveness and the promotion of well-being. This is the way of the pious and the worthy who love peace and rejoice in the well being of all people, bringing them near to the Torah. They do not suffer the loss of even a grain of mustard, being distressed at the sight of any loss or destruction. If they can help they prevent any destruction with all the means at their