

# *Don't Get Stoned!*

PARSHA INSIGHTS - KI SAITZAI (5759)

## **WHY BE SO HARSH ON THE REBELLIOUS SON?**

The *ben sorer umoreh* [disobedient son] has been the focus of our discussions several times. We will examine only one issue today. Why does he deserve the punishment of stoning? Note that *skila* [stoning] is the harshest form of capital punishment according to one opinion, and the second most severe according to the other view (*Mishna Sanhedrin* 49B). Why is the *ben sorer umoreh* disciplined this way?

*Rashi* on 21:18 cites the famous *Gemara Sanhedrin* 72A. Just because the boy stole money from his father, and he purchased meat and wine and ate it in a gluttonous fashion, does he deserve to die? It is because the Torah knows that eventually, he will use up all his father's wealth to satisfy his "addiction". In the end, he will be unable to find sufficient resources to satiate himself, so he will begin to assault people, rob them, and even resort to murder if necessary. The Torah prefers that he die now, while relatively innocent, rather than later, after becoming a hardened criminal.

This *Gemara* strengthens our original question. We are worried that the *ben sorer umoreh* will develop into a murderer. The death penalty for murderers is one of the lesser forms of capital punishment - beheading (*Mishna Sanhedrin* 76B, and see *Mishna Sanhedrin* 49B again). The rebellious son should receive nothing harsher than beheading!

Let us explore two solutions. The *Da'as Zekainim* on 21:18 quotes our *pasuk* [verse] regarding *ben sorer umoreh*. It states that this boy "is not hearkening to the voice of his father and the voice of his mother" (21:18). This being the case, IT IS AS IF HE IS CURSING HIS PARENTS. What is the consequence for such a heinous crime? You guessed it - *skila*, stoning. The source for this is *Parshas Emor* 20:9 with the *Mishna Sanhedrin* 53A. This explains the Torah's prescription of *skila* for the disobedient son. **His *neshama* [soul] needs the same purification procedure as someone who actually curses his parents.**

Another answer is found in the *Sifsai Chachamim* on 21:18, end of letter *Nun*. The *ben sorer umoreh* might end up murdering people on *Shabbos* [the Sabbath] as well as the other days of the week. Besides the inhumane crimes of killing and robbing, he will be violating one of the thirty nine chief categories of labor forbidden on *Shabbos*. This is known as "*shochet*" [slaughtering] or "*netilas neshama*" [taking a soul] (*Mishna Shabbos* bottom of 73A). The punishment for desecrating *Shabbos* is *skila*, stoning, as stated in the *Mishna Sanhedrin* 53A. Because of this, he receives *skila*.

It has been shown that the disobedience of the *ben sorer umoreh* has far-reaching implications. He is viewed as one who defames his parents, and his sinful lifestyle may very well lead to *chillul Shabbos* [desecrating the Sabbath]. These are two approaches to why he is stoned. May this remind us to observe the *mitzvos* [commandments] of honoring and revering parents properly. Let us start immediately. Next time we are tempted to react negatively concerning a point on which we disagree with our parents, we should remember how the Torah views *kibud av v'aim* [honoring your father and mother]. Its rewards are immeasurable and indescribable.

*By Rabbi Moshe Heigh*

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