



THE SHALOM BAYIT JOURNAL



Parashat Ki Teitzei

One Voice

Understanding the Torah and the Human Experience

Working with teenagers in counseling can be challenging, but also very rewarding. Many teens who seek counseling are struggling to find their own voice and their own way. Developing independence is an important part of adolescence, and counseling can give them a supportive place to work through that process.

Parenting a struggling teenager can be one of the most demanding parts of raising a child. I often tell parents that parenting works better as a team. Parents will not always agree, but what matters is that they work through those differences and give their child a sense that they are working together.

When parents are divided, children can begin relying on themselves before they are ready. They may learn which parent to go to for a different answer or become caught between competing authorities. Sometimes what looks like maturity is really a child taking on too much responsibility too soon.

Parashat Ki Teitzei introduces the case of **בן סוֹרֵר וּמוֹרֶה**, the wayward and rebellious son. Chazal define the case through a specific set of conditions, making it extremely rare. According to one opinion in the Gemara, it never happened at all. Many commentators therefore highlight its lessons for raising children. (Sanhedrin 71a)

**כִּי־יְהִי־הָאִישׁ בֶּן סוֹרֵר וּמוֹרֶה אֵינָנו שֹׁמֵעַ בְּקוֹל אָבִיו
וּבְקוֹל אִמּוֹ וַיִּסְרוּ אוֹתוֹ וְלֹא יִשְׁמַע אֲלֵיהֶם**

“If a man has a wayward and rebellious son who does not listen to the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and they discipline him, but he still does not listen to them.”

(Devarim 21:18)

The Torah then requires his father and mother to bring him before the elders. There they say:

**וְאָמְרוּ אֶל־זִקְנֵי עִירוֹ בְּנֵנוּ זֶה סוֹרֵר וּמוֹרֶה אֵינָנו שֹׁמֵעַ
בְּקוֹלֵנוּ זֹלָל וְסָבָא**

“They shall say to the elders of his city, ‘This son of ours is wayward and rebellious. He does not listen to our voice. He is a glutton and a drunkard.’”

(Devarim 21:20)





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בְּקוֹלֵנוּ means “our voice.” The father and mother must have the same voice. This offers an important parenting lesson. Parents do not have to agree on every detail, but children benefit when they experience them as partners rather than competing authorities. What matters is a unified and consistent approach.

The word מורה, moreh, here means rebellious. The Sifrei adds another layer, explaining שמורה לעצמו דרך אחרת, “that he directs himself toward another path.” The word moreh can also carry the sense of teaching or directing. Instead of continuing to receive direction from his parents, the child has begun choosing a different path for himself.

As parents, it is natural to want to protect and shield our children. But when a child’s behavior becomes concerning, there are times when parents need to respond, even if that response is uncomfortable for everyone involved.

Working together becomes especially important when a child’s growing independence begins leading him toward a concerning path. Parents then need a unified voice as well as the willingness to make difficult decisions together. If the Torah’s conditions are met, bringing him before the court could ultimately cost their son his life.

Rabbeinu Bachya explains that love of God must take precedence even over the love parents have for a child. Their willingness to take this painful step becomes an example of values taking precedence over powerful emotions. In difficult cases, moral values must sometimes come before personal feelings.

Speaking with one voice means recognizing the importance of working together. Children need parents who are able to provide consistent direction and support.

The case of בן סורר ומורה reminds us that healthy independence grows with guidance. Teenagers need stability, boundaries, and parental partnership so they do not have to find their path entirely on their own.



About The Shalom Bayit Journal

The Shalom Bayit Journal explores the intersection of Torah, psychology, relationships, and the human experience. Through thoughtful essays and practical reflection, the Journal seeks to make timeless wisdom meaningful and accessible for everyday life.

