

2018 CMTL DVAR TORAH SNAPSHOTS

From: Teaching Hashkofoh

Students need beliefs that can sustain their commitment when experience doesn't, and experiences that can motivate them when belief wavers.

From: If Sarah Imeinu Had Died in Pittsburgh

Sometimes you learn a lot from your neighbors when it comes time to bury your dead. We have a lot to live up to.

From: Charity vs. Security: A Jewish Analysis of a Moral Policy Question

One of the core values and virtues of halakhic Judaism is that we cannot dismiss arguments rooted in traditional texts simply because we find them implausible; we have to engage the texts ourselves.

From: Halakhic Discourse and Modern Sensibilities: A Dvar Torah l'ilui nishmat Rabbi Ozer Glickman z"l

Our community lacks faith in its Torah scholars on the issue of racism. Torah leaders need to understand how deeply corrosive this lack of faith is to the religious health of our community, and especially of our youth. It is taken as compelling evidence that Torah scholarship at best fails to enhance moral sensitivity, and at worst diminishes it.

From: Chanukkah, Miracles, and Zionism

One eternal message of Chanukkah is that miracles do not endure forever, and even those blessed by miracles must make every effort – spiritually and practically – to be ready for the transition back to normal life.

From: Does G-d Write Thrillers? The Role of Suspense in Scripture

People who are paralyzed by moral complexity cannot lead... But people who feel no pain when confronting morally complex situations generally should not be allowed to lead.

From: Does Judaism Recognize the Notion of Systemic Injustice?

The path from moral principle to moral policy is rarely straightforward. But the path from lack of moral principle to immoral policy often is straightforward.

From: Rubashkin and the Fall of the Jedi

We should be very, very wary of celebrating a Jewish redemption that is not accompanied by a profound sensitivity to labor ethics.

From: Does "It's Never Been Done?" Imply "It Should Never Be Done?" Part 3

This leaves us as we began, with no evidence that such an idea has ever been normative Halakhah. I hasten to add that this does not mean that it is now forbidden to argue that it should become normative.

From: The Use of Halakhic Materials in Discussions of Public Ethics

Both these models assume that the Halakhah for integrated societies must fundamentally be either the halakhah for Jews, or else Noachide Law. But perhaps this binary is incorrect, and the Halakhah for an integrated society would be entirely different.

From: *Masterpiece Cakeshop and the Spies*

We should recognize as a society that moral changes which occur with sweeping rapidity are risky... and therefore where possible, people who stick to their suddenly unpopular moral positions should be protected.

From: *Did a Rabbi Really Just Say That?!*

The folk etymology for “toeivah” is “toeh atah bah”, meaning “You go astray when engaging in it”. This etymology has been used variously to deny the reality of homosexual desire and to deny that the prohibition has any moral significance.

From: *PSHAT and MEANING: AN I on an EYE for an Eye-IN*

Moral intuition was an ordinary Rabbinic tool for determining the reasonableness of an interpretation.

From: *Slaves, Wage Slaves, and Divine Service*

Halakhic People can recognize that there are times and ways in which we should permit or require people to make commitments that they cannot undo unilaterally. But we should also see freedom as the default, and countenance the surrender of autonomy only grudgingly.

From: *The Parah-dox and Orthodox Ethics*

Is it better to have thought and lost, or never to have thought at all?

From: *(When) Should Halakhah Be Enforced?*

An immediate task for a halakhically committed community is to build moral authority for the Law in the areas where halakhah requires enforcement to produce *tzedek*. To do that, we need to demonstrate our own commitment to *tzedek* within *halakhah*.

From: *Are Husbands Commanded to Make Their Wives Happy?*

Love can only flourish in freedom. Law can give us freedom from oppression, and thereby freedom to love, but law cannot make us love. Moreover, no one healthy can be made happy by someone who is compelled to fulfill their wishes.

From: *Did King David Hand in First Drafts as Final Papers?*

Poems are included in Biblical narratives because they convey a subjective viewpoint that supplements the perspective of the omniscient narrator.

From: *Are All Sins Ugly?*

Noach's drunkenness is an attempt to undo Adam and Eve's acquisition of the “knowledge of good and evil,” and his nakedness is an attempt to recreate their prelapsarian shamelessness.

From: *The Kavanaugh Hearings and Torah Conversation*

Reclaiming our capacity for [Torah conversations about politics] seems urgently necessary, for America and for Torah.