

If the thief will be found in an underground passage, and he is struck and dies, there is no blood for him. If the sun shone upon him, he has blood, he shall pay; if he has nothing, he shall be sold for his theft. (22:1,2)

It seems quite simple. A person breaks into a house at night, indicating by his covert approach that he does not want to be discovered. Thus, his life has no value, because he would murder in order to protect his identity. On the other hand, the thief that steals by light of day presents less of a danger to the owner of the house. Therefore, when he is caught, he pays. If he is unable to pay, he is sold into slavery. The *halachah* that an indigent thief is sold into slavery is not exclusive to *ba b'machteres*, one who breaks into a house. It applies to any thief who cannot pay. It is, thus, surprising that the Torah chose to write *v'nimkar, b'gneivaso*, he shall be sold for this theft: his theft, specifically here, rather than earlier by the "standard" case of theft.

Horav Yosef Zundel Salant, zl, quotes *Chazal (Sanhedrin 72b)* who interpret the case of *ba b'machteres* as speaking about a father who is in such need of money that he is prepared to steal from his own son. Sadly, some people are lenient when it is about their son's money. They have reasons to justify what (I feel) is the nadir of miscreancy, convincing themselves that they may take advantage of their children, since they did "so much" for them earlier in life. Veritably, such fathers only take advantage. They were hardly there for them when their input was crucial. They appear only when it is to their advantage.

The question now arises: A father steals from his son, since he feels, "Why not?" – He owes me!" The father is caught and, lo and behold, has no money to pay for his sin. He should now be sold as a slave. This is a shameful punishment for a son to bring upon his father – and, this is exactly how some "sons" and some people (who have nothing to do but find fault) might view the rightful punishment which the father earned for himself. No son wants to be the cause of his father's shame. The Torah, therefore, chose to write the law of *v'nimkar b'gneivaso* specifically at this point, in order to convey a message. The son is not bringing about his father's shame. The father who sought to take advantage of his son's filial love is the one who is shaming himself.

One last word: There is a phenomenon of toxic parents who can be intentionally malevolent, but, more often, they are just self-centered and do not understand that their children have their own conflicting desires and emotional needs. A psychologist divides it into categories, which, for the most part, do not have to grow into conflict, if both parties are aware that a problem exists and maintain a willingness to address the issues. Some parents think that they require their children's assistance in caring for them; their feelings always take precedence over the feelings of their children. They are acutely aware of personal problems, which plague them, and they expect their children to remain mum and conceal these problems. They are controlling, using guilt or money to control a child's life. They refuse to allow their child to grow up and become an independent adult.

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They refuse to recognize self-imposed parameters created by their children, (ie., their children want their own “space”.) They constantly undermine their children. Last is the passive-aggressive parent who controls his child through his moods. Many of us have seen this in action in some of the finest homes. It affects both young and adult children, stunting their lives and marriages. We should take a lesson from the Torah, which teaches us that no parent may manipulate the lives of his/her children. They are our responsibility, not our convenience.