



**DOUBLE STANDARDS**

**A**RE WE GUILTY OF DOUBLE STANDARDS? OF COURSE NOT, HOW COULD YOU SUGGEST SUCH A THING! Well there is a hint in the Sedra<sup>1</sup> reminding us to be careful not to fall into that trap. But perhaps not in the way one might imagine...

Towards the end of the Sedra we read of the warning to maintain fair, honest weights and measures. “You shall have a complete and correct weight; you shall have a complete and correct volume measure...”<sup>2</sup> Then follows the famous passage reminding us about Ama-lek, who attacked the Jewish people shortly after the Exodus. “Remember what Amalek did to you when you went out of Egypt...”

Rashi<sup>3</sup> explains that these two seemingly unrelated subjects of false weights and the attack of Amalek are actually connected. False weights and measures leads to attack by enemies; in particular, by Amalek.

The warning here seems unusual. False weights and measures is a form of stealing, and *all* stealing is strictly forbidden in the Torah. Why does the specific transgression of false weights and measures lead to attack by Amalek? It is notable that not only is it forbidden to give false weight or measure when selling goods but it is also forbidden merely to possess such false measures in one's house or shop - even if they are not used. This emphasises the idea that there must be a deeper message here as well.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explains that false weights and measures represents, as well as the literal transgression, the more general idea of applying a double standard to our lives: one for the material and another for the religious. We end up “cheating” our own spirituality.

In pursuit of material things, we work hard and have great ambition. The Sages say “he who has one hundred, wants two hundred; he who has two hundred, wants four hundred”<sup>4</sup>. We are relentless, pushing ourselves to the limit and beyond. The Torah justifies this effort, although Ethics of the Fathers qualifies it by saying “who is rich? he who is satisfied with his lot”.

We do not always have the same vigorous, ambitious approach to our spiritual lives. We often apply a double standard. Although the Torah encourages us to climb ever higher in matters of holiness, we are sometimes satisfied with the status quo.

Let's ask ourselves: Are we ambitious enough when it comes to our children's Jewish education – to the same extent as we are for their general education? We try to have a smart, well appointed home – but are we concerned to a comparable extent in having kosher Mezuzot on our doors, or a beautiful pair of Tefilin?

It is the possibility of this double standard which is criticised in the Sedra. When we use a “false measure” in evaluating our material and spiritual lives, we cheat ourselves of our true Jewish inheritance in which material and spiritual excellence are hopefully combined. This connects with “Amalek”, which in Chassidic teaching symbolises our personal coldness to spirituality. A double standard of this kind is inextricably linked with the coldness of Amalek<sup>5</sup>.

To put this right, perhaps we do need a certain kind of double standard, but in a positive way. When it comes to material possessions – let us try to be happy with what we have. But in spiritual terms: if one has 100, one should strive for 200, always advancing<sup>6</sup>.

1. Deuteronomy 21:10-25:19. 2. Deut. 25:13-16. 3. Rashi to Deut. 25:17. 4. Kohelet Rabbah 1:34. 5. See *Torat Menachem*, Purim 5722, secs.12-16. 6. See *Hayom Yom* 30 Sivan.

Torah teachings are holy - please treat this page with care  
***SPONSORED BY DR REUVEN JOEL***



SEDRA KI TETZE

**THE PERFECT ROOF**

Malka and Benny ran up the staircase, panting for breath. There were still boxes piled everywhere and the rooms were empty. The new house was the perfect place to play tag, but the spiral staircase was definitely the most exciting part.

Malka caught up to Benny on the stairs and slipped past him, reaching the top floor first. She raced right to the end of the hallway. "I made it first!" she called out, and leaned against the wall to catch her breath. Benny was right behind his sister and skidded to a halt at the wall.

"Hey, Malka. Where does this door lead to?" Malka had not noticed that she was leaning against a door, and she didn't remember seeing it before. "Let's find out!"

Together, Malka and Benny peeked around the edge of the door. There were a few stairs leading up to what looked like a roof.

"Let's go!" Benny lead the way up the stairs to a bright and sunny rooftop. From that height, the twins could see much of the city. The people looked like little ants down below. The roof was perfect with a little garden in the centre.

The twins looked at each other. Then they began to chase each other around the garden.

“What’s going on here?” The twins’ mother poked her head around the corner and climbed the stairs. “I didn’t know we had a roof!” she said as she climbed the stairs.

“Isn’t it perfect?!” Malka ran up to her mother and threw her arms around her waist. The twins’ mother looked around at the little garden and the view of all the people and cars below.

“Well,” she said, “it’s *almost* perfect. Do you know what it’s missing?” The twins shrugged their shoulders at the same time. “It says in this week’s Sedra that a roof must have a....?” She waited for the twins to chime in. “A fence!!”

Malka was very excited. “Let’s call Daddy now and start making a fence,” she said.

“Yes, let’s!” Benny was jumping up and down. “And you know what else I learned about this commandment? Each person also has a roof inside. Your roof is your feeling of being high up, your feeling that you are very important. But feeling too important can be dangerous.”

“Yes, When someone feels too high up, above other people, like a roof, they easily become angry and selfish,” the twins’ mother added, smiling.

“They can fall off the roof!” Malka chimed in. “That’s right,” Benny said. “So we need to be super-careful not to feel too important.”

“And to build a fence on our roof,” Malka added. “Let’s go call Daddy now.”

***Torah teachings are holy –  
please treat this page with care***