# Vayikra 19 וַיִּקְרָא

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| [**1**](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9920#v1). And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying,  **[2](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9920" \l "v2)**. Speak to the entire congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them, You shall be holy, for I, the Lord, your God, am holy.  **[3](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9920" \l "v3)**. Every man shall fear his mother and his father, and you shall observe My Sabbaths. I am the Lord, your God.  **[4](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9920" \l "v4)**. You shall not turn to the worthless idols, nor shall you make molten deities for yourselves. I am the Lord, your God.  ….  [**11**](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9920#v11). You shall not steal. You shall not deny falsely. You shall not lie, one man to his fellow  **[12](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9920" \l "v12)**. You shall not swear falsely by My Name, thereby profaning the Name of your God. I am the Lord.  **[13](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9920" \l "v13)**. You shall not oppress your fellow. You shall not rob. The hired worker's wage shall not remain with you overnight until morning.  **[14](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9920" \l "v14)**. **You shall not curse a deaf person. You shall not place a stumbling block before a blind person,** and you shall fear your God. I am the Lord.  **[15](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9920" \l "v15)**. You shall commit no injustice in judgment; you shall not favor a poor person or respect a great man; you shall judge your fellow with righteousness. | **א** וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָֹה אֶל משֶׁה לֵּאמֹר:  **ב** דַּבֵּר אֶל כָּל עֲדַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם קְדשִׁים תִּהְיוּ כִּי קָדוֹשׁ אֲנִי יְהוָֹה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:  **ג.**אִישׁ אִמּוֹ וְאָבִיו תִּירָאוּ וְאֶת שַׁבְּתֹתַי תִּשְׁמֹרוּ אֲנִי יְהוָֹה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:  **ד.**אַל תִּפְנוּ אֶל הָאֱלִילִם וֵאלֹהֵי מַסֵּכָה לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ לָכֶם אֲנִי יְהוָֹה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:  **…**.  **יא.**לֹא תִּגְנֹבוּ וְלֹא תְכַחֲשׁוּ וְלֹא תְשַׁקְּרוּ אִישׁ בַּעֲמִיתוֹ:  **יב.**וְלֹא תִשָּׁבְעוּ בִשְׁמִי לַשָּׁקֶר וְחִלַּלְתָּ אֶת שֵׁם אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲנִי יְהוָֹה:  **יג.**לֹא תַעֲשֹׁק אֶת רֵעֲךָ וְלֹא תִגְזֹל לֹא תָלִין פְּעֻלַּת שָׂכִיר אִתְּךָ עַד בֹּקֶר:  **יד. לֹא תְקַלֵּל חֵרֵשׁ וְלִפְנֵי עִוֵּר לֹא תִתֵּן מִכְשֹׁל וְיָרֵאתָ מֵאֱלֹהֶיךָ** אֲנִי יְהוָֹה:  **טו.**לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ עָוֶל בַּמִּשְׁפָּט לֹא תִשָּׂא פְנֵי דָל וְלֹא תֶהְדַּר פְּנֵי גָדוֹל בְּצֶדֶק תִּשְׁפֹּט עֲמִיתֶךָ: |

**Leading Idea**

What constitutes a stumbling block or obstacle? What does it mean to place an obstacle before the blind? We can all think of literal stumbling blocks – toys left on the floor, a piece of uneven sidewalk. But are there different kinds of stumbling blocks? We might place an obstacle:

* By physically placing an obstacle that cause someone to stumble
* By failing to remove an obstacle (tripping on things you have left on the floor)
* By providing misinformation
* By withholding information
* By withholding information out of your own self-interest

Nechama Leibowitz (1909-1997) offers us a further interpretation that expands our understanding – she suggests that *passivity and social inaction* can also be a way of placing a stumbling before the blind. If we recognize a danger and do not protest, we are responsible for what then transpires, so if we remain passive or remove ourselves from the problems of the world (inequality, violence, evil) we are transgressing the commandment not to place a stumbling block before the blind.

We can also ask if there is more than one kind of blindness. What if we are the person who is blind? Can there be ways that *we can place a stumbling block in front of ourselves*? Nietzsche claimed that we constantly deceive ourselves – and that we do so in order to keep our preferred sense of self – and our pride - intact. We can cause ourselves to fall when we deny that there are any hidden or darker motives to our thought or action. Self-deception also plays a big role in the thinking of Freud and Sartre. Some of the ways we can place a stumbling block in front of ourselves are:

* By not paying attention (being blind to what is around you or what is happening).
* By deceiving yourself - convincing yourself things are different from the way they are
* By being blind to the consequences of actions that will harm you

*For more detail on Jewish see:* [*http://www.vbm-torah.org/parsha.63/30kedoshim.htm*](http://www.vbm-torah.org/parsha.63/30kedoshim.htm)

* **Is it possible to trip someone up**



**Discussion plan: Obstacles and Tripping up**

1. Can you remember a time you tripped over something?
   1. *What did you trip over? Why did you trip?*
2. You are walking across the yard – what is the difference between slipping and tripping over?
3. When you trip over, do you always have to trip over *something*?
4. Can you trip over for no reason?
5. Can someone trip you up by accident?

*If so, in what way is this different than tripping you up on purpose?*

1. Is there a difference between someone pushing you over and someone tripping you up?
2. Can someone put an obstacle in your way by accident?
3. Can a thought be an obstacle to success?
4. Can a thought trip you up?

*(If so, is there a difference between a thought being an obstacle and a thought tripping you up?)*

1. Can feelings be an obstacle? Can they trip you up?
2. Can someone trip you up by not telling you the truth?
3. Can someone trip you up by not passing on information?
4. Can someone put an obstacle in your way by telling you the truth?
5. Can you create an obstacle for someone by helping them too much?
6. When might putting obstacles on a path be a wise thing?

**Discussion plan; Tripping yourself up**

1. Can a thought be an obstacle? Can it trip you up?
2. If you have a test at school and you don’t eat breakfast – are you putting an obstacle in the way of your own success?
3. Can you put an obstacle in front of yourself? If so, could you then trip over it?
4. Can your good intentions ever trip you up?
5. If you have homework - but play football instead of doing it, are you putting an obstacle in front of yourself?

**Discussion Plan: Blindness**

1. Do you know anyone who was born blind?
2. Do you know anyone who was born with sight and became blind?
3. What is a “blind spot”
4. What does it mean to be “color blind”
5. Can you be blind to an experience?
6. If you can see, can you still be blind to what is happening in front of you?
7. What does it mean to ‘turn a blind eye’?
8. Can you be blind to other people’s opinions?
9. Can you be blind to other people’s needs?
10. Can blindness be a state of mind? If so, in what ways?
11. If your friend does something that really irritates you, can you choose to be

blind to what they are doing?

1. Is it possible that other people can see you better than you can see yourself?
2. Can you be blind to your own successes and failures?
3. Can you see the future? No? Does that mean you are blind to it?
4. Could you be blind to the obstacles someone is putting in your way?
5. If there is such a thing as insight, is there also ‘inblindness’?
6. Is there such a thing as being morally blind?
7. What is the difference between an obstacle and a constraint?
8. What is the difference between being blind to something and being indifferent to it?



**Activity: Moral Blindness**

Draw a picture of moral blindness.

Get together in a circle and speak to your pictures.

**Activity: Paired work with a blindfold.**

Provide blindfolds and divide the group in pairs – one person wears the blindfold while the other takes them for a short walk. Depending on the terrain, the person who is able to see can either hold the blindfolded person by the arm, or just give them verbal directions. However it is there responsibility to make sure that the person does not fall or bump into anything. Each person in the pair should experience both the position of the blind person and the person who is responsible for their safety. After the activity explore these questions in a group.

**Reflecting on what it was like to be blindfolded:**

* How did you feel while you were blindfolded?

*Circle the words that best describe your feelings;*

Anxious Uncomfortable Brave Powerful

Relaxed Curious Vulnerable Worried

Adventurous Naughty/Wicked Playful

*(are there other words you wish were here? Add them to the list)*

* Did you worry about falling or bumping into things?
* Did you worry whether your partner was going to play games with you?

**Reflecting on what it was like to lead the person who was blindfolded:**

* How did it feel when you were leading the blindfolded person”

*Circle the words that best describe your feelings;*

Anxious Uncomfortable Brave Powerful

Relaxed Curious Vulnerable Worried

Adventurous Naughty/Wicked Playful

*(are there other words you wish were here? Add them to the list)*

* How easily could you communicate?
* Did you notice your surroundings more than usual?

**Talmudic and Midrashic Sources: What is the meaning of ‘not putting a stumbling block before the blind’ in each case?**



‘You shall not put a stumbling block before the blind” refers to one who hits his grown up son. .

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If someone comes to consult you, do not give him wrong advice. Do not say to him: “Go out early” when robbers would attack him; or go out at noon when he would get sunstroke. Do not say to him: “Sell your field and buy yourself an ox” and then (by a trick) take the ox from him.

**Midrash: Sifra**



**Nehama Leibowitz** *Studies in Vayikra (Leviticus),*

*The well known Bible teacher Nechama Leibowitz offers us the widest extension of the law:*  
"But the Torah teaches us that even by sitting at home doing nothing, being passive (not acting), you cannot shake off your responsibility for what is happening in the world at large, for the inequality, violence and evil there. If you recognize a danger and do not protest, you have become responsible for any harm arising from it, and have gone against the command: “You shall not put a stumbling block before the blind…"

**Modern Stumbling Blocks**

Today we find ourselves both the victims and culprits of the commandment not to **place a stumbling block before the blind**. The consumer is blinded (almost from birth) by advertising and the need to consume, so that we no longer know what we really need. We are constantly searching to find ways to sell our own products, in order to accumulate enough wealth to purchase other people's products, because we have been blinded into thinking that we need them to be happy.

*Carmi Wisemon is Executive Director of Sviva Israel, an educational-environmental organization based in Israel*

### Friedrich Nietzsche "Epigrams and Interludes" - Epigram 68

### 'I have done that,' says my memory. 'I cannot have done that', says my pride, and pride is not to be stopped. Eventually--memory yields"