

THE CONSEQUENCES OF OUR ACTIONS



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Ki Teitzei contains more mitzvot than any other *parasha* in the Torah - 74! Here is one of them:

'When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof, so that you refrain from bringing blood upon your house if the faller falls from it' (Devarim 22:8).

It's interesting that the person who falls from the roof is labelled as the 'faller' before the action has even happened! Rabbi David Milston writes that since this

person is likely to fall if we do not set up the right precautions, they are labelled a 'faller' from the outset.

The Torah teaches that we are completely responsible for setting up safeguards on our own property. Although this person might be destined to fall, it would ultimately only be due to our carelessness if they do.

More broadly speaking, I believe that here we are taught that we should be aware of the repercussions of our actions, in order to prevent hurting others.

However, the classic Torah commentators, Kli Yakar and Abarbanel, say that the person who falls to their death was going to die anyway, which is why they

are labelled the 'faller'. The owner of the property isn't responsible for their death; rather, he or she is responsible for the fact they died on **their** property as a result of **their** negligence.

One approach proposes that it is totally our fault if someone falls off our property, whereas the other proposes that they were predestined to die, and it is only through our negligence that they died falling off our roof (or some other negligence) and not someone else's. However, both approaches stress the importance of taking responsibility and ensuring our behaviour helps others, rather than putting them at risk of harm.

Questions to ponder:

1. Have you ever been hurt, either physically or emotionally, by someone's carelessness?
2. Why do you think the Torah uses such an extreme example of someone falling off a roof?
3. Do you think it's the 'faller' or the owner of the property that is more responsible for the consequence in the verse quoted above?

