



“וְלִפְנֵי עֵוֶר לֹא תִתֵּן מִכְשׁוֹל” (ERECH #8)

ויקרא יט 14:19

 **“Do not place an obstacle before a blind person.”**

Leviticus 19:14

The Torah states (Leviticus 19:14): “You shall not curse the deaf nor place a stumbling block before the blind; you shall fear your God - I am your Lord.” In Hebrew, the sin of placing a stumbling block before a blind person is referred to as *lifnei iver lo titten michshol* or in short, “*lifnei iver*.”

The commandment literally implies that one must not deliberately place an obstacle in front of a person who cannot see. However, the commandment has been interpreted as referring to many aspects of blindness in both the literal and metaphoric sense, and its meaning is therefore more profound.

The commandment “*Lifnei iver*” has numerous moral and ethical connotations in everyday life that go beyond placing a physical obstacle in front of a person who cannot see. The verse has been given numerous interpretations by the Sages, and is one of many commandments in the Torah that forbid causing harm to others. The commandment falls under the general category of laws that forbid us to take advantage of another person’s weaknesses. “Blind” is interpreted metaphorically to represent any person or group that is unaware, unsuspecting, ignorant, or morally blind, and individuals are prohibited from taking advantage of them or tempting them to do wrong.

The Ramban understood *lifnei iver* as a general prohibition, encompassing all instances of leading others to sin.

The commandment “You must not place an obstacle in front of the blind” is part of a series of commandments that refer to various situations in which one must not take advantage of another person’s weaknesses:

יג לא-תעשק את-רעהו ולא תגזל; לא-תלין פְעֵלַת שְׂכִיר אֲתָךְ- עַד-בֹּקֶר. יד לא-תקלל תרש- וְלִפְנֵי עֵוֶר לֹא תִתֵּן מִכְשׁוֹל; וַיִּרְאֵת מֵאַלְהֵיךָ אֲנִי יְהוָה.

Do not cheat or rob your neighbor. Do not hold back the wages of a hired worker overnight. Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind but fear your God. I am the Lord.

