

BEHAR

May 25th 2019
20th of Iyar 5779

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Weekly Bulletin on the Parshah

Pachad David

Published by Mosdot "Orot Chaim U'Moshe" in Israel

Under the auspices of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

Son of the tzaddik Rabbi Moshe Ahron Pinto, zt"l, and grandson of the holy tzaddik and miracle-worker Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zy"ta



MASKIL LEDAVID

Weekly talk on the Parshah given by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

Mitzvot Were Given to Strengthen Our Faith

"Hashem spoke to Moshe on Har Sinai, saying"

(Vayikra 25:1)

Parshat Behar mentions several different topics:

Shemitta (the Sabbatical Year) – Following six years of working the land, one must refrain from any field-related work during the seventh year.

Yovel (the Jubilee Year) – Following seven cycles of sabbatical years, the fiftieth year is sanctified as an additional year of rest for the land; all land is returned to its original owner, and servants are returned to their families.

Ribbit (Interest) – it is forbidden to take interest on a loan, or to offer a loan in exchange for any benefit.

Shabbat – At the very end of the parsha, the mitzva of Shabbat is mentioned once again - following six days of work, Shabbat is dedicated as a day of rest.

An attempt to understand the depths behind the reason for these mitzvot, will allow us a glimpse of what Hashem wished to teach us through observing these commandments. We shall also attempt to explain the connection between these different mitzvot.

Man possesses the characteristic that habit becomes nature. One who is accustomed to feeling a sense of ownership towards a certain possession, strongly feels that it belongs to him and that he is the sole owner. When he is confronted with a mitzva or task to perform which involves his money or possessions, it is doubly hard for him to part with his possessions, for if they belong to him why should he give them away to someone else? Due to this, Hashem wished to purify the Bnei Yisrael merits and implant the foundation of complete faith in the Creator of the world deep in their hearts. We should not become too attached to materialism, which encumbers our fulfillment of the mitzvot. In addition we should realize to whom riches and honor really belong. Therefore the Creator gave us many mitzvot which demonstrate this idea.

This is the reason for the commandment of shemitta- following six years of working the land, a person is inclined to think, look how much I earned over the last several years, now I have the opportunity to become even richer through

working the field for an additional year. But the Creator tells him – You must desist and rest in the seventh year and you are not allowed to work even if it appears that you will lose money as a result. Through observing this commandment, a person has the chance to stop the wheels of life and his chasing after money. He takes a years' break to think about his ideals, and comes to the realization- to whom do money and land really belong? "For all the world is Mine" (Shemot 19:5). Through this he starts to appreciate all that Hashem has given him.

The mitzva of Yovel (the Jubilee Year) was given to us for the same reason – to rid ourselves of this feeling of ownership of the world- there is a Creator and everything belongs to Him. Similarly with the commandment of ribbit (taking interest) – a person might be tempted to say, "Is the money not mine? I will do with it as I please and I will lend with fixed interest and earn sevenfold." But the Creator of the world, the Creator of man, forbids this most severely, the reason being in order to sanctify the most materialistic thing that a person owns – money. This commandment aids man so that he should not be drawn after materialism and that his thoughts should not be forever focused on how to earn even more money. In addition, from the point of view of the person who is about to lose his possessions and requires a loan – Hashem desires that his friend should come forward and assist him and enable him to get back on his feet, and this is why he is forbidden to take interest on money that he loans to his friend.

This is also the reason why, in the shemitta year and in the Yovel year, we are commanded to return servants to their families and also return houses to their original owners. This brings us to the realization that there is no such thing as complete ownership of servants and of land, but that they all belong to Him, and according to His wish He bestows and according to His wish He withdraws.

Now we can clearly see the thread that runs through the entire parsha. Materialism – money and worldly possessions- do not belong to us; we are simply here in this world as Hashem's officials. This is the idea behind the mitzvot of shemitta, Yovel, Shabbat and taking interest, and what they serve to instill in us.



Walking in their Ways

Tidbits of faith and trust penned by Moreinu v' Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

“He Annulled Several Decrees, Our Master Bar Yochai”

Each year, as Lag Ba'Omer, the hilula of the Tanna, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, draws near, I am reminded of a story from my childhood in Morocco, which ended on a happy note, in the merit of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.

My eldest sister had sustained a head injury and, as a result, was unable to walk. Throughout the years, my mother would take her to visit various specialists who tried to heal her, but none was successful.

Every year, on Lag Ba'Omer, Father would prepare a hilula celebration in honor of the Tanna, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. Numerous guests would be invited. They would sing liturgical praises and relate stories about the holy Tanna.

One year, after all of the attendees had already left, my handicapped sister turned to my father and asked, in all innocence, “Father, if Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai’s power is so great, why doesn’t he cure me? What will be when it is time for me to marry; which chatan will agree to a handicapped kallah?”

When the family members heard her request, said with such simplicity and through such pain, they all burst into tears. After they calmed down, Father told her, “Im yirtzeh Hashem, in the merit of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, you will stand on your own two feet and be able to walk again.”

That night, everyone slept peacefully. Suddenly, the air was pierced with chilling cries coming from my sister’s room. The entire family awoke and, in panic, immediately made their way to her room. To our utter amazement, there stood our sister, walking on her own two feet, as Father had promised.

We were overcome with emotion at the tremendous miracle we had witnessed. Only Father had the presence of mind to ask, “Why did you scream, my daughter? Tell us exactly what happened.”

Excitedly, she related that in the middle of the night, she felt as though someone were massaging her legs until they emitted heat waves. Then she heard a voice whispering to her, “Stand up. You can walk.” This is exactly what happened.

Father said that it was certainly Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, who had come to cure her of her infirmity, in the merit of her pure faith.



Words of our Sages

Who Filled Up the Cup For Me?

“If your brother becomes impoverished and his means falter in your proximity, you shall strengthen him – proselyte or resident – so that he can live with you”

(Vayikra 25:35)

In the Yeshiva of Kfar chasidim, the Mashgiach, Harav Eliyahu Lopian zt”l, had a custom that each student, after washing his hands, should fill the cup with water for the one waiting in line.

One of the students once asked the Mashgiach to enlighten them with his reasoning behind the custom: “Each person anyway fills up one cup, so why not fill up for your friend?” He explained that we must accustom ourselves to think about other people and their needs, and therefore it is preferable that each one should specifically fill up for his friend.

Rabbi Yitzchak Blazer zt”l of Petersburg, writes in his sefer ‘Netivot Or’, about an incident that happened to his Rebbe, the famous Rabbi Yisrael Salanter zt”l, in his youth:

It was the Eve of Yom Kippur and the village Jews were making their way to the Beit Haknesset for the Kol Nidrei prayer. The atmosphere in the streets was heavy with fear of the approaching Day of Judgment; the serious mood that enveloped the village was so dense and heavy, it could be cut with a knife...

On a quiet street, one of the esteemed Jews, termed by Rabbi Yisrael as ‘of the greatest of the G-d fearing’, walked with measured steps, deep in thought. The fear of the Day of Judgment was written all over his face, his entire essence proclaimed anxiety and apprehension...

Rabbi Yisrael was faced with an urgent question concerning an important matter. He sought out this honorable Jew in order to pose his question, but due to the man’s great fear and apprehension, he ignored Rabbi Yisrael. Not only did he not answer him, but he did not even bat an eyelid in his direction...

I turned away from him, Rabbi Yisrael told over, with a heavy feeling. An inner voice started to line up my complaints against him: “Why do I need to lose out because of your fear of G-d, because you are trembling with fright from the approaching Day of Judgment? What has it got to do with me? You are obligated to answer my question with patience! This is the correct way of performing good deeds and kindness. Does your great fear excuse you from your obligations between man and his fellow?”

In addition – that hidden voice complained – if you are sincerely G-d fearing, why do you not think about the very unpleasant feeling that you caused your friend by ignoring him, as if he doesn’t exist?”

This, then, is the level that we should constantly feel – “so that he can live with you”.

The Haftarah

“And Yirmiyahu said” (Yirmiyahu 32)

The connection to the parsha: Yirmiyahu HaNavi prophesied to the Bnei Yisrael about the return of the people and the land of Tzion from captivity, and about building houses and buying fields and vineyards in Eretz Yisrael. The parsha too talks about buying houses and fields and their redemption.

Guard Your Tongue

The General Rule

The Torah has warned us about not accepting lashon hara, which means not believing in one’s heart that the matter is true. There is no need to elaborate about the essence of the one who accepts lashon hara and the one being spoken about, for there is almost no difference between them.

The general idea is that there is a command incumbent upon every Jewish person not to accept lashon hara about another Jew, with the exception of an apikorus, informer and other similar types who have been excluded from the term ‘עמיתך’ (fellow).



Pearls of the Parshah

Who is Fitting to be Called Man?

"If your brother becomes impoverished and his means falter in your proximity, you shall strengthen him" (Vayikra 25:35)

The acts of kindness that the holy Jewish nation occupies themselves with day after day, hour after hour, is mentioned in Ketubim: "Forever will [Your] kindness be built" and "Each man would help his fellow and to his brother he would say 'Be strong'". Performing acts of kindness to one another is one of the foundations of the world. This idea is written in the Torah, repeated in Neviim and triplicated in Ketubim; there is no shortage of sources in the Torah, both in the written Law and in the Oral Law.

Rabbi Chaim Sonnenfeld zt"l, brings a gematria which serves to strengthen this concept concerning the pillar of kindness:

The word 'איש' (man) has the same numerical value as 'לרעהו' (fellow). Who is the one most fitting to be called 'איש'? One who performs acts of kindness with his fellow.

R' Chaim says that we find the same idea concerning one of the mitzvot of Purim- "and sending delicacies to one another" (איש לרעהו). The purpose of sending delicacies is to increase friendship between man and his friend, and this is possible only if both feel that they have equal status, and not that one of them is arrogant and feels above his friend. The source of all quarrels and arguments is the negative trait of conceit; only through feelings of equality can peace and friendship reign.

The sefer 'Chochmat Chaim' (a collection of R' Chaim's commentaries) adds that the word 'ידיד' (my friend) can be read both forward and backwards, implying that when is friendship sincere? Only when it goes both ways!

The Smile Does Not Reduce the Severity of the Transgression

"You shall not subjugate him through hard labor – you shall fear your G-d" (Vayikra 25:43)

On the verse, "Egypt enslaved the Children of Israel בפרך – with crushing harshness", Chazal expound that the word בפרך can be split into two words – בפה רך – with soft words. The implication is that since the Egyptians wished to be saved from retribution, they therefore persuaded the Bnei Yisrael with 'soft words', until they turned up for work on their own accord.

In this vein, the holy Rabbi Moshe Alshich zya"l explains the above verse:

After warning us not to work the servant with slave labor, the Torah brings an additional warning "You shall not subjugate him through hard labor" – not to subdue one's servant even by doing it through 'soft words', by begging him until he is appeased and in the end says that he is doing it of his own accord.

What is the reason for this?

The verse ends- 'and you shall fear your G-d'. Hashem "tests thoughts and emotions" and everything is revealed before Him. He knows that the person was only appeased because you persuaded him, because you spoke to him gently, and only out of embarrassment he was forced to say "This is what I desire to do".

In the Merit of His Attitude and Compassion

"You shall not subjugate him through hard labor" (Vayikra 25:43)

In his sefer 'Tochachot Chaim', Rabbi Chaim Falagi zya"l writes about a revelation that he dreamt one night:

It was a month after the passing of one of the honorable members of his city Izmir, in Turkey. The man appeared to Rabbi Chaim in a dream dressed in festive clothing, looking delighted.

"What did you do that you are being honored like this?" Rabbi Chaim asked him.

The niftar replied: "I merited eternal life for I behaved towards my servants with honor and mercy; I did not overburden them and I was not cruel to them and did not force them to carry out harsh labor."

In Our Fathers Footsteps

Nuggets of guidance culled from the teachings of Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto silita, on masechet Avot



"Rabbi Chanina, the deputy Kohen Gadol, says: Pray for the welfare of the government"

(Avot 2:2)

We can explain that Rabbi Chanina wished to say that a person should pray for the welfare of the government privately, without them knowing that you are praying for their welfare, and it shouldn't enter a person's head to say, through publicizing my name to the government and telling them that I am praying for their welfare, good will come out from this for the Jewish people, for our sages have warned us (Avot 1:10) "Do not become overly familiar with the government". A person shouldn't think that good will result from performing a service for the government, but instead he should pray to Hashem that He should divert the heart of the government for the good, and He will do what He sees fit.

We find a hint for this idea in the verse "The heart of a king is in the hand of Hashem" (Mishlei 21:1). Our Sages z"l tell us (Ta'anit 2a), that there are three keys in Hashem's possession that were not given over to a messenger. The verse adds that in addition, the heart of a king is also in Hashem's hands. A person does not have the power to do anything but to pray for the king's welfare, and Hashem will do His part. He will divert the heart of the government for the good, just as He does with the three things that were not given over to a messenger.

My esteemed father zya"l, would always pray for the welfare of the Moroccan monarchy, but this was something between him and His Creator. He never mentioned this to the sovereignties, even though had the king known about this he would have been grateful to him. However, Father zya"l did not wish to do so- he personally fulfilled the words of the Sages z"l, "Do not become overly familiar with the government".

"If someone takes upon himself the yoke of Torah – the yoke of the government and the yoke of worldly responsibilities are removed from him" (Avot 2:6)

This idea is middah k'neged middah. A person was not created in order to take from what is already prepared, but he must be prepared to toil in order to merit receiving- through doing he merits taking. This is why this world is called 'the world of performing', and not 'the world of completion', for this world is not the world of completion; the accomplished world is in the Next World, but down here there is work to do.

This is the rule: A person was created to toil. If he merits, his toil is in Torah, if not, his toil will be transferred to worldly responsibilities, as it says (Iyov 5:7) "For man is born to weariness". Chazal explain this to mean (Sanhedrin 99b) that if he toils in this place, his Torah toils for him in a different place. Rabbi Eliezer said, every person was created to toil, was he created to toil in speech, or was he created to toil in physical work? If he merits, his toil is in Torah, if he doesn't merit- his toil is in worldly responsibilities, meaning that he will have to toil for his income.



"LET HER BE PRAISED"

Portrayal of the True 'Eshet Chayil'
In memory of Rabbanit Mazal Madeleine Pinto

"She repays his good, but never his harm, all the days of her life"

How fitting are these words to describe the outstanding personality of Rabbanit Pinto, who merited standing at the side of the esteemed Rabbeinu Moshe Ahron Pinto zya" a. Together they established a home of royalty, a kingdom of Torah and chessed, and she, with her great wisdom, knew how to repay good all the days of her life.

While they were still living in Morocco in the house of the holy and righteous Pinto family, the Rabbanit became famous as one who performed kindness with any needy person, and especially with her holy and pure husband, who as we know remained ensconced in his home for forty years during which he toiled in Torah and prayer, without seeing the light of day.

In his hesped, Rabbi David Chananya Pinto shlita told over several stories about his mother, which shed light on the Rabbanit's personality and her appreciation of her righteous husband zya" a:

"Under no circumstances would Ima a" h agree to leave her small apartment on Rechov Harav Maimon in Ashdod. I know that many times she didn't sleep at night because of the fear that creatures and mice were roaming around in her apartment due to the dilapidated state of the building. Even though we begged her many times to leave the place and come and live closer to us, she would not agree on any account. She said, "Here I will dwell for I have desired it" – 'I will never leave the apartment of Abba the tzaddik.'"

And why was this?

"For you were forever faithful to him with your entire heart. She said, 'This house has absorbed the holiness of Abba, it is steeped in purity, steeped in kedushat ha'ainayim'. It is well-known that Abba was exceptionally careful with guarding his eyes, even to the following extent: Once on Purim Ima decided to have a bit of fun and dressed up as a strange woman. She approached Abba and asked him for a blessing, and when he asked for her name he realized that she has the same name as his wife... when he asked for her children's names he was surprised that her children's names were exactly the same as his children's... Abba did not raise his eyes to look at her, he only smiled and said "It is interesting that your name and your children's names are the same as my wife's and my children's..."

Ima smiled and said, "Rebbi Moshe! It is me, Madeleine...your wife...how did you not recognize my voice?! " What was Abba's reaction? "Please, next time don't do this to me, you could have made me stumble with guarding my eyes!" Ima answered him, "but I am your wife and what would have happened had you raised your eyes and looked at me?" Abba answered her "But I didn't know that it was you, my wife, so had I looked, it would have been considered a sin for me."

This is why Ima would not agree to leave the house that had absorbed so much holiness and yirah from the power of Abba's Torah."

Never To Disrupt His Learning

The Rabbanit Shayna Chaya Elyashiv, the wife of Maran HaGaon Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv zt" l, was the one who helped him reach exceptional greatness in Torah. One of her neighbors told over the following story which illustrates this: Once when I came to ask the Rav a question, the Rabbanit told me that the Rav is learning and cannot be disturbed right now.

I nevertheless repeated my request that maybe the Rabbanit can ask if she can let someone in just for a minute, since I have an urgent question that requires an immediate answer.

This is how the Rabbanit answered me: "My entire life I never disturbed his learning, do you want me to disturb him now...?"

On similar lines, her daughter, the Rabbanit Berlin, told over that one motzei Shabbat, Rabbanit Elyashiv's father-in-law, HaGaon HaTzaddik Rabbi Aryeh Levin zt" l, came to visit them. His daughter turned to her husband and said, "You already made havdalah, you can go to learn." He used to learn in the nearby Beit Midrash. Even though Rabbi Aryeh Levin hadn't seen his son-in-law for a long time and wished to converse with him, he did not mix in. Indeed Harav Elyashiv zt" l picked up his gemarah and went to learn in the Beit Midrash, just as he was accustomed to doing.

After he left the house, Rabbi Aryeh turned to his daughter and gently asked: "Tell me, I come here once a year in order to talk to your husband for a short time. Why did you need to tell him just now to go and learn, in another minute he would anyway have left for he is extremely diligent?"

"Father," she answered, "I never tell him 'go and learn'; he goes of his own accord. But right now our young child has high fever and is crying. I was concerned that he would notice and it will later disturb his concentration. Therefore I rushed him out the house, and now I will take the child to the doctor..."