

Behar
Bechukotai
May 8th 2021
26th of Iyar 5781
901



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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"á



MASKIL LEDAVID

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

True Freedom

"For the Children of Israel are servants to Me, they are My servants, whom I have taken out of the land of Egypt – I am Hashem, your G-d" (Vayikra 25:55)

On more than several occasions we find that the Torah mentions the idea that Bnei Yisrael are Hashem's servants. After being enslaved to the Egyptians, Hashem redeemed Bnei Yisrael with many miracles and wonders, and also gave them the Torah, so they could become completely subservient to Him alone, utterly detached from the Egyptian bondage.

On the one hand, the Torah can be viewed as a burdensome commitment, for man is required to forgo his personal wishes and desires, sacrificing them for the sake of Hashem's will. Sometimes, following the correct path can even cause us financial loss, embarrassment or other similar difficulties. Nevertheless, man is instructed to obey the Holy Torah and conduct himself according to its teachings. However, the Mishna lays down an interesting idea: Despite man being subservient to the Torah, we are told (Avot 6:2), "You can have no freer man than one who engages in the study of the Torah." In light of this, the question arises: should Torah be considered a yoke and burden, or does it contain an aspect of freedom, to the extent that one who toils in it is considered as a free man?

At the beginning of Parshat Bechukotai (Vayikra 26:3) it says, "If you will follow My decrees" and Rashi explains on these words: Engage in intensive Torah study. This means the Torah demands that we invest considerable toil and effort. It is not enough for a person to study Torah inattentively and observe its mitzvot out of habit without effort and investment. This fact strengthens our question: If Torah study requires toil and effort, besides which, toiling in Torah is an inseparable part of the mitzvot and actually a Torah commandment, how then can one define those who engage in Torah as free men?

The answer is that indeed accepting the yoke of Torah and mitzvot is a form of servitude, and this was in fact Hashem's goal when giving us the Torah. He wished to eradicate from us the yoke of the Egyptian bondage and instead place us under the yoke of Torah and mitzvot. However, despite this, anyone who observes the Torah and its commandments sees the fulfillment of "A servant of Hashem, he alone is free" (Psalm 'Avdei Hazman' of the Rihal, Sha'arei Ha'avodah of Rabbeinu Yonah 45).

In order to clarify this matter, we will explain with a parable. On Erev Pesach man is forced to clean his home because he is obligated to remove the chametz from every corner and crevice. Who better than us can testify that this cleaning effort before Pesach amounts to a form of slavery and involves enormous toil? However, as soon as Pesach arrives, all feelings of servitude felt up until that point disappear and are forgotten about, as if they never existed. Right now we feel like liberated men, free of any toil and trouble.

Similarly, in most Jewish homes, Erev Shabbat is a de-

manding time, with everyone in the household engaged in preparations for the fast-approaching Shabbat. If a stranger turns up in our home on a Friday, he will certainly notice frenzied activity, and might even feel a certain pressure in the atmosphere. But, when Shabbat is about to enter – the wife lights the candles and the men hurry off to the Beit Knesset – then the home is immediately enveloped with a feeling of great tranquility. The entire household feels relaxed and delighted, as it says (see Rashi Bereishit 2:2), "When Shabbat arrives, rest arrives". Concerning this Chazal say (Avodah Zara 3a), "One who toils on Erev Shabbat will eat on Shabbat", meaning one who invests effort and labors in good time on Erev Shabbat will then merit feeling the tranquility and serenity that is inherent to Shabbat. He will also be able to enjoy and delight in the Shabbat delicacies.

It would be appropriate to apply the lesson of these pressurized and stressful times, such as Erev Pesach and Shabbat, to the times we are obligated to observe those mitzvot that involve intensive effort. There is no doubt that fulfilling mitzvot sometimes demands an investment of strength, including the fight against one's Evil Inclination who tries hard to exert his authority over us so we should not become subservient to the yoke of Torah and mitzvot. But when a person succeeds in overcoming this Yetzer Hara and for example, gets up early to pray with a minyan, that burdensome feeling of servitude he feels when pulling himself out of bed is very quickly transformed into feelings of joy and tranquility, a result of successfully compelling his inclination.

This is the meaning of the Chazal (Avot 6:2), "You can have no freer man than one who engages in the study of the Torah", meaning he is free of the Yetzer Hara and his offensive grasp. When the Yetzer Hara no longer stands in wait and is not in control of the person, then fulfilling the mitzvot, despite all the inherent exertion, lends him a feeling of satisfaction and joy. This is true freedom that has no parallel.

Avodat Hashem is unlike other slaveries that are simply an expression of suffering and pain. Rather, this servitude is a manifestation of the connection and commitment that Bnei Yisrael have towards their Creator. Therefore, on the contrary, when a person is careful to protect and even intensify this servitude, it quickly leads to feeling like a truly free man.

In the Shabbat morning prayers, we say "Moshe rejoiced in the gift of his portion: that You called him a faithful servant." This shows us that being defined as Hashem's servant brought Moshe Rabbeinu enormous joy. He was not just any servant, but a faithful servant to his Creator. Furthermore, Hashem is the One who endowed him with this title, as it says, "You called him a faithful servant." Similarly, we find that the tzadikim and great Sages would add the words 'Eved Hashem' when signing their name. This demonstrates the great joy and merit the tzadikim felt at being servants of Hashem.



Walking in their Ways

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

What Caused the Most Punctual Train in France to be Detained?

The great virtue of fixing times for Torah study can lead man to the highest summits. This idea finds expression in the following incident that took place with my talmid, HaRav Gavriel Elbaz n"y, today the president of our institutions in Lyon.

The story took place on a Motza'ei Shabbat, when I was scheduled to fly to Brazil for a wedding at which I was asked to officiate.

I had planned to travel by train from Lyon to Paris, where I would take a connecting train to the airport. There, I would take a direct flight to Brazil. The trip was perfectly timed, and any delay might make me miss the wedding.

The only train from Lyon to Paris on Motza'ei Shabbat was scheduled to leave ten minutes after Shabbat ends. Immediately after havdalah, I rushed to the train station, accompanied by Rav Elbaz and his brother.

As soon as I reached the train station, much to my dismay, I realized that I had taken my thirteen-year-old son's hat instead of my own. It would certainly arouse attention, if not cause an outright chillul Hashem, were I to walk around in this too-small hat. I was very distressed by this and told Rav Elbaz that it seemed to be a sign from Heaven that I should not take this trip.

I must insert here that those who planned the wedding obligated themselves to conduct it according to Jewish law only if I would be there. My missing the train could have disastrous results.

Rav Elbaz's brother spoke up. "Doesn't the Rav always preach to us, day in and day out, about the importance of trust in Hashem? Aren't we enjoined to place

our trust in Him in every situation? Let us believe wholeheartedly that Hashem will send the Rav his hat, and we will make the train on time for the wedding."

His words certainly planted seeds of hope within me, but I still didn't believe that an actual miracle would occur. Sceptically, I turned to him and said, "Look, it's already late. In another minute, the train is scheduled to stop here. How do you think I will manage to retrieve my hat in that short time?!"

Rav Elbaz suggested I phone my family and ask them to rush my hat to the train station. I followed his suggestion, although it seemed futile. By the natural order of things, there was no chance I would get my hat in time.

The train arrived at the station with a roar. I looked at it with a worried glance, whereas Rav Elbaz stood by calmly, certain it would wait for the hat to make an appearance.

For some unknown reason, the train stood in the station much longer than usual. It ended up waiting a full quarter of an hour, the exact amount of time it took for a member of my family to rush over and bring me my hat. I took the hat and, without waiting a second longer, jumped onto the train, just as its doors were about to close. HaRav Elbaz and his brother taught me a lesson in faith.

To this day, I cannot fathom how the most punctual train in all of France was detained for such a long time at one stop. But I was impressed by Rav Elbaz's complete faith in Hashem. I am certain that the merit of the delayed train stemmed from the fact that he fixes regular times for Torah study which he upholds at all costs, and one who does so merits faith and trust in Hashem. This is why his prayers were answered immediately.



In Our Father's Path

Just Being Family is Not Enough

The Chafetz Chaim relates a wonderful story which demonstrates the difference between one who toils in G-d's gift to mankind, to one who studies Torah without investing effort. As an introduction, he quotes the Mishna from Sanhedrin, read as an introduction to each chapter of Avot, "All Yisrael has a share in the World to Come, as it is said: 'And your people are all righteous; they shall inherit the land forever.'"

"Your people are all righteous!" If this is the case, why should one go to the trouble of continually doing and progressing, if each person is promised a share in the World to Come? This question is asked by the Chafetz Chaim zt"l, which he answers by way of the following story:

Kiev was home to a very affluent individual called Yisrael Brodatzky. He owned many large factories, employing hundreds of workers, managers, accountants, secretaries and cleaners. Each received a wage in line with his position and rank.

Brodatzky was renowned for his open-handedness. He generously donated to all charitable causes, distributing his money freely in support of Torah institutions and poor and needy families. His concern for his relatives was well-known and if one of them fell upon hard times, he would support them with a monthly allowance, saying "It is as if I have an additional employee."

He made it his custom to visit his factories from time to time and show an interest in the goings-on. He would sit with the managers and assess the state of the factories.

On one occasion he said to himself: "My managers are always the focus of my attention. It is about time I showed an interest in the dedicated workers too, expressing my appreciation for their work and efforts."

He decided to drop in at the factories, taking the opportunity to give his workers a nice bonus for their efforts and share in the success of his business. He arrived at one of the workplaces and during the break all the workers stood on line as he spoke to each one. He showed an interest in their work, offered words of encouragement and handed over the bonus.

The first in line was a veteran worker who introduced himself as having eighteen years' experience. Brodatzky patted him on the shoulder and gave him the bonus.

The next in line introduced himself as responsible for the morning shift. Brodatzky thanked him and presented him with the bonus.

The third introduced himself as the operator of the factory's central machine. Brodatzky expressed his appreciation and handed over the bonus.

And so it went with all the workers; they introduced themselves, Brodatzky thanked them profusely and presented them with their bonus.

Finally, he approached the last in line and asked him what position he holds. He answered: "I am a third cousin of your father and I hang around here." All the workers burst out laughing. Brodatzky replied, "Very nice. As a relative, your presence is welcome." But the bonus – he did not receive.

The Chafetz Chaim concluded: Now it is clear. Indeed, all Yisrael have a portion in the World to Come! All are family! But what size is the reward of those who not only hang around here in This World as part of the family of Am Yisrael, but also invest in the service of the Factory Owner; the Creator of the World! How great is their reward and the kindness with which they are showered by Hashem!

How terrible it is if man simply loiters around and passes the time in This World. He then has to say thank you just for being allowed to continue staying on the premises. It is most worthwhile to toil in Torah and observe the mitzvot with at least a bit of effort, so as to merit, in return, the bonus and blessings of Hashem.

The Haftarah

"Hashem, my Strength, my Stronghold" (Yirmiyahu 16)

The connection to the Parshah: The Haftarah talks about the punishments Hashem will bring on the Jewish people if they do not follow His decrees and do not observe His mitzvot. This is the message of the rebuke which is mentioned in the Parshah – it is a prophecy of the evil that will befall Bnei Yisrael if, G-d forbid, they do not observe the Torah laws.

Guard Your Tongue

Prior Discussion and Persuasion to Repent

There are a few conditions that must be in place before being allowed to relate something derogatory about someone else.

One requirement is to clarify the matter with the person himself. Also, before bringing someone else into the picture, one must first try and rebuke the person who transgressed and try to persuade him to rectify his ways. (This rule is not applicable if talking to him will completely thwart, or even just diminish, the desired effect.)



Pearls of the Parsha

All I Did Was Say a Few Words

"Each of you shall not aggrieve his fellow" (Vayikra 25:17)

This verse, as Chazal explain in the Gemara (Baba Metzia 58b) refers to hurting someone with words, for hurting someone financially has already been addressed in a previous verse, "When you make a sale to your fellow or make a purchase from the hand of your fellow, do not aggrieve one another."

How do we define the prohibition of hurting someone with words?

The Gemara continues: If he is a ba'al teshuva, do not say to him, remember your previous ways. If he is the son of converts, do not say to him, remember your father's ways. If he is a convert and comes to learn Torah, do not say to him, the mouth that ate non-kosher meat and unclean creatures wishes to study the Torah which was uttered by the Almighty?

Rabbi Yochanan in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai says: Hurting someone with words is more severe than hurting someone financially. This is derived from the fact that the prohibition of hurting someone with words is followed by "and you shall fear your G-d", whereas when talking about hurting someone financially it does not say "and you shall fear your G-d".

The reason why the Torah considers it more severe to hurt someone personally, explains Rabbi Chaim Casar zt"l, a Yemenite Sage, in his sefer 'Kaitz Hamizbe'ach', is so that man should not think 'this does not involve any insult', for all he did was talk in the way people speak; he did not actually take anything away from the person.

This is why the Torah is stricter with this prohibition. Even though it is mere words, a person's speech can cause more harm than anything else. This demonstrates the importance of taking the utmost care to distance ourselves completely even from seemingly harmless talk, since it can quickly lead to prohibitions of hurting others with words.

He Removed His Shoes Himself

"But with your brethren, the Children of Israel, a man with his brother, you shall not subjugate him through hard labor" (Vayikra 25:46)

The grandson of the Gaon Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyahsiv zt"l related the following incident (Reisha Degaluta, third section):

In 5763 when Saba zt"l was sick and very weak, he did not even have the strength to take off his shoes.

Suddenly I saw Saba getting up from his place with superhuman strength. He bent down and removed his shoes with enormous effort.

I said: "Saba, why are you taking off your shoes by yourself? Why do you not ask me to do it for you?"

Saba looked at me and replied with a Torah outlook:

"The Rambam writes that one is forbidden to make a Jewish bondsman do servant's labor. He explains that an example of this type of work would be to ask him to remove his master's shoes. This is because when he takes off his master's shoes he is bending down right under his master"...

When Does Rain Fall for Yisrael?

"My Shabbats shall you observe and My Sanctuary shall you revere, I am Hashem" (Vayikra 26:2)

The Midrash Yonatan brings a beautiful explanation on the connection between the end of Parshat Behar and the beginning of Parshat Bechukotai.

Parshat Behar concludes with the verse "My Shabbats you shall observe and My Sanctuary shall you revere, I am Hashem" which is followed by Parshat Bechukotai where it says "If you will follow My decrees and observe My commandments and perform them, then I will provide your rains in their right time, and the land will give its produce and the tree of the field will give its fruit".

He explains the reason according to the Gemara (Shabbat 118b), "Whoever observes the Shabbat according to its laws is forgiven for all his sins."

There is another Gemara that tells us (Ta'anit 7b), "Rain falls when the sins of Yisrael are forgiven."

This is a wonderful gem! Through "My Shabbats you shall observe" all Yisrael's sins will be forgiven and then automatically they merit Hashem's promise of "I will provide your rains in their right time", for as we explained, when Yisrael's sins are forgiven, they then merit the blessing of rain.

Treasures

Based on the teachings of
Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon
Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya
Pinto, shlita



Torah Toil Enters Our Bodies

"If you will follow My decrees and observe My commandments and perform them" (Vayikra 26:3)

Rashi writes on the words "and observe My commandments": You should engage in intensive Torah study.

The Mussar commentaries write that through toiling in Torah which causes our bodies to warm up, the Torah thereby enters our innards. As David Hamelech said (Tehillim 40:9), "Your Torah is in my innards".

One can add that Torah is unlike other foods that enter the intestines, which are then partially excreted as waste. Rather, the Torah enters and does not leave. This is the meaning of David Hamelech's words; his insides contain only Torah without any waste.

However, due to our many sins there are some people who misuse their Torah study and use it as a tool for conceit. Their punishment is severe because they transform the Torah into waste r"l.

This is the reason why the Generation of the Wilderness did not have bodily needs because "Torah was given to those who ate the manna". Just as Torah is Heavenly, so was food that descended from Heaven. Just as the manna was absorbed by their intestines and not excreted in any form, so too the Torah was fully absorbed in their intestines.

Hashem wants man to be submissive to the Holy Torah, since only with submission can man come to properly fulfil the Torah. Rashi derives the command of toiling in Torah from the command to observe the mitzvot, to teach us that if there is a lack of toil in Torah, our observance of the mitzvot will also be deficient since one is dependent on the other.

There are some who do not schedule regular times for Torah study but outwardly appear as if they are Torah observant. However, a reality in which a person does not toil over Torah but at the same time is meticulous to fulfil all the mitzvot with great care, is non-existent. The Torah understands man's soul and testifies that observing mitzvot with meticulousness requires toil and effort and this is the only way man will come to observe them. Toiling in Torah demonstrates that this person is subservient to G-d's mitzvot and in this way he feels that he is truly a servant of Hashem.



A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA

Keep the Pain in Your Heart

Do not Ignore Other People

The obligation to take someone else into consideration is detailed in this week's Parsha: "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). The Torah obligates us to take positive measures, and refrain from certain behaviors, so that a fellow Jew can continue living his life with respect.

Beyond the specific commands mentioned here in the Torah, the command "so that he can live with you" is the general directive from which all other details stem. With this the Torah addresses the Jewish person and directs him to consider not only himself but also others; to step out of a selfish, inward, stance and turn our attention to others.

This is the Torah attitude concerning the severity of overlooking other people.

In this spirit, the Mashgiach of Kfar Chasidim, Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian zt"l, would routinely instruct his talmidim that after they wash their hands, they should fill up the cup for the next in line. "Either way, each person has to fill up the cup once, so why not fill up for your friend?" was his answer to someone who wondered

about this custom. The Mashgiach explained that since we must accustom ourselves to thinking about others and their needs, it is preferable for each student to do something specifically on behalf of his friend.

He Concealed His Pain in His Heart

The sefer 'Noam Siach' relates that on the fateful Motzei Shabbat, when the Gaon Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l, Rosh Yeshiva of 'Kol Torah', was told the bitter news of his wife's passing, he hurried over to Sharei Tzedek hospital. In the elevator on the way up to the room, those present were treated to an awesome sight: By chance, an ex-talmid entered the same elevator and to his surprise, met his Rebbe. He hurried to share the news of the birth of his son.

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman zt"l grasped his hand and blessed him with his famous smile, showing a detailed interest in the birth and the welfare of mother and baby, as he always did, as if he was not on the way to sit by his wife's body...

We find a source in the Torah for this outstanding conduct. Avraham Avinu wished to bury Sara his wife. She had just passed away but in order to bury her, he had to conduct a business deal with Ephron the Hittite. But first it says, "Avraham rose up from the presence of his dead, and spoke to the children of Het" (Bereisit 23:3). The Gaon Rabbi Yerucham of Mir zt"l explains:

The point of "Avraham rose up from the presence of his dead" is that when Avraham had to speak to the Hittites, "He rose up", it was

as if his dead was not lying in his presence! Since he was about to address human beings, out of respect for others he wiped away all his tears, washed his face and hid his pain in his heart, as if nothing had happened. For he was speaking to human beings and it would be disrespectful to address them with tears on his face, to speak to them while sobbing. He therefore took control of himself and his feelings and spoke to them with a smile on his face. This is kavod habriyot!

Every Jewish Person is 'Your Brother'

What then, can give us the power to follow in the footsteps of our great leaders? To rise above ourselves and break through our self-absorbed focus, thereby fulfilling the Torah command "so that he can live with you"? This is a directive which compels us to be benevolent to others through acts of charity and kindness, taking all their needs into consideration so they can continue living in a respectful fashion.

The answer lies in one word which repeats itself with impressive consistency throughout these Parshiot. Achicha – your brother! What is demanded of man is that he should help his brother. Not just anyone, but your brother! Consider, in your awareness and imagination, that every Jewish person is simply 'your brother'! You will then automatically proceed according to the Torah guidelines, because a person is always prepared to go above and beyond the norm – for a brother.

"So that he can live with you".