

Pardes Yehuda

← Weekly Torah Journal By Yehuda Z. Klitnick →

פרשת בהר בחקותי תשע"ז חוק - פרק ה year 6 #305 Parshas Bhar Bechukosi 5777

Freeing the slaves frees the masters

וקדשתם את שנת החמישים שנה וקראתם דרור בארץ לכל-יִשְׂבֵּיהָ: (25:10) "And you shall sanctify the fiftieth year, and proclaim freedom/liberty [for slaves] throughout all the land for all who live on it" In the Yovel year we are also required to free all Jewish slaves. There is a difficulty here why is the Torah requiring us to "proclaim freedom/liberty throughout all the land, since the Yovel year represents independence only for the slaves that would be freed, in what way is it considered liberating for "all" of the people? The following story will help us answer these questions. Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer was once walking home with his nephew on a cold winter day. As he reached his home and started to ascend the steps, he suddenly turned around. Rav Isser Zalman began pacing on the sidewalk, apparently deep in thought. His nephew pressed him for an explanation for his bizarre behavior, but he shrugged him off. After ten minutes, Rav Isser Zalman again approached the house, but again did an about-face and resumed pacing. As it was growing bitterly cold, his perplexed nephew begged for mercy or at least an explanation. Rav Isser Zalman relented and explained. "As I walked up the steps, I heard the young woman who comes every week to help out in the kitchen singing to herself while mopping the floor. I realized that if I barged in right in the middle, she would be embarrassed and stop singing. I don't have the right to deny her the pleasure she has of singing while she works, so I decided to wait outside until she finishes." Rav Isser Zalman's reached out his sensitivity to his cleaning lady. Based on this story we can answer another difficulty. The Gemarra (Kiddushin 20a) teaches us that whoever purchases a Jewish slave is in effect acquiring a master for himself. The question is how is the slave a master? The answer is that Torah demands an employer be responsible for the well-being of his employees. He is obligated to provide them with a warm and supportive work environment which takes their feelings and welfare into account. Hence the slave is a master. Now by ordering the slaves to go free in the Yovel year, the Torah is in effect lifting a major burden off of their current owners, in essence creating a newfound freedom and liberty not just for the freed slaves but also for their masters. (Rav Zalman Sorotzkin)

Toil in Torah and you will have created yourself

אם-בחקתי תלכו ואת-מצותי תשמרו ועשיתם אתם: (כו ג)
 "If you walk in My statutes, and keep My commandments, and do them." (26:3) The obvious question is if it says ואת-מצותי תשמרו and keep My commandments, why then does the Torah repeat אתם ועשיתם and do them? The explanation to this posuk can be according to the Midrash on this posuk: "Keep My commandments, and do them" - if you observe them, I will accredit it to you as if you had made yourself. Therefore the posuk says, "If you walk in My statutes", which Rashi explains

means that if you will toil in the study of Torah, and nevertheless "keep My commandments", and overcome the increased evil inclination, then "you shall do them" - I will accredit to you as if you had made yourself, and then you shall read the verse "ועשיתם אתם". But if you do not toil in the study of Torah, then even if you keep My commandments it will not be considered as if you had made yourself. This is a great achievement.

ואם-תלכו עמי קרי: (כו כא)

"And if you go with Me casually" (26:21) It's interesting what occurs in this Parsha: Posuk 21 says וואם-תלכו עמי קרי posuk 23 says ויהלכתי אה-אני עמכם בקרי posuk 24 says ויהלכתם עמי קרי posuk 27 says ויהלכתי עמכם בקמת קרי posuk 28 says ויהלכתם עמי בקרי posuk 40 & 41 says ואת אשר-הלכו עמי בקרי: אה-אני אלה עמם בקרי. We see that the first and second are קרי, the third and fourth are בקרי, the fifth is קרי, and the sixth and seventh are בקרי. The Vilna Gaon explains a clue how one is to remember the order of קרי and בקרי according to the mesorah? This is how it is determined - we look at the posukim in Melachim 1: 8: 63-64 ביום ההוא קדש המלך "On that day the king sanctified...", the word את is written seven times ... ויזבח שלמה את ... את-העלה ואת-המנחה ואת הלבי השלמים: and in our posukim the word קרי is also written seven times. Now by using that posuk as an aid, corresponding to where the word את is written over there, here the word קרי is written, and corresponding to where it writes את here it writes בקרי (Kol Eliyahu-Vilna Gaon)

Pirkei Avos Chapter 5

פרקי אבות פרק ה

The middos of Avraham are essential

כל מי שיש בידו שלשה דברים הללו, מתלמידיו של אברהם אבינו. ושלשה דברים אחרים, מתלמידיו של בלעם הרשע. עין טובה, ורוח נמוכה, ונפש שפלה, מתלמידיו של אברהם אבינו. עין רעה, ורוח גבוהה, ונפש רחבה, מתלמידיו של בלעם הרשע. וכו' תלמידיו של אברהם אבינו, אובלין בעולם הזה ונותלין בעולם הבא, (פרק ה משנה יט)

Whoever possesses the following three traits is of the disciples of our father Avraham; and whoever possesses the opposite three traits is of the disciples of the wicked Bilaam. The disciples of our father Avraham have a good eye, a meek spirit and a humble soul. The disciples of the wicked Bilaam have an evil eye, a haughty spirit and a gross soul. What is the difference between the disciples of our father Avraham and the disciples of the wicked Bilaam? The disciples of our father Avraham benefit in this world and inherit the World To Come. (5:19) The great Tzaddik Reb Pinchus of Koritz a talmid of the Mezrich Maggid asks: why doesn't the Mishna state simply whoever does good deeds is a disciple of our father Avraham, and whoever doesn't do good deeds is a disciple of Bilaam? From this the Rebbe derives a deep insight, that by doing good

deeds alone, will not merit you the title of being a disciple of Avraham. *Middos Tovos* / good traits and behavior, is the recipe for being a disciple of Avraham. However if a person has one

of the negative traits listed in the Mishna, he is a disciple of Bilaam, even if he does good deeds. (מענים של אבותר)

STORY OF THE WEEK (by Yehuda Z. Klitnick)

The Shabbos Fish brings a cantonist back to his Yiddishe roots

Reb Dovid of Tolna was the son of Reb Mordechai the Magid from Tchernobil. In his kitchen he had a cook named Hertz, who had a fellow named Itzik as his helper. When Hertz passed away the Rebbe insisted that Itzik become the cook. Who was this Itzik and what was his background? And why did the Rebbe insist on him becoming the cook? The answer lies in one stalwart Jewish boy's breaking the mold of the notorious "cantonist" system which prevailed in 19th Century Russia.

When Tsar Nicholas I came to the throne in 1825, Jews were not liable to conscription. Nicholas changed the picture tragically, when he issued a decree in 1827 "to oblige the Jews to the recruiting duty." The tsar saw this innovation as a smokescreen to place the Jews on an equal legal basis with gentiles, with the real goal being to eradicate any Jewish identity from their hearts, starting with the youngest members of the community.

A grievous alarm and confusion arose for the Jews. While gentiles were drafted at the age of 18 to 25, the Jewish communities were allowed to send young boys in place of mature men. These boy-soldiers were known as "cantonists." They were enrolled in schools for studying military service and basic literacy skills. On reaching 18, the cantonists were transferred to soldiering for the mind-numbing term of 25 years. Boys were separated from their families for life and typically sent to far-flung provinces, devoid of Jewish population.

Nicholas נ"מ' viewed Jews as being too weak for army service, cowardly and generally unreliable - hardly the stuff of strong Russian soldiers. He saw the cantonist system as a straight path to total assimilation of the Jews. The nefarious cantonist scheme was nothing less than a thinly-veiled mass kidnapping and brainwashing campaign aiming to strip Jews of their precious heritage. Underage Jews could usually not resist the prodding of instructors who sought to detach them from their heritage.

Our Itzik was torn from his pious parents at the age of 6, with his mother tearfully begging him to always remember his Yiddish identity. Instead of going to school, Itzik was somehow placed with a cruel peasant family who treated him very roughly. At first, Itzik's strong character didn't yield to attempts to induce him to convert. Then a cunning, sweet-talking priest took up the cause of influencing young Itzik to convert. He promised him all kinds of rewards until he finally broke through Itzik's defenses. A baptism רח"ל was scheduled for the following day.

Seeing his Yiddishe mamma in a dream that night spurred Itzik to abort the evil plan in its tracks. With hot tears, his mother told him that she had died from the pain of having him snatched away, and would suffer greatly in the Next World were he נ"ח to leave the faith of his ancestors. Itzik was inspired by the dream and the following day boldly told the priest he is not going to convert. The furious clergyman

sent Itzik to a very mean peasant family, worse than the first one. There Itzik was forced to sleep with the pigs in order to break his spirits. However Itzik was glad to escape the beatings and, with plenty of food, (but alas with no Torah) he became a strong young boy. There was a great need for strong soldiers and Itzik considered himself fortunate to be inducted into tsar's army. With his *Yiddishe Kup*, he was so successful that he rose to a high officer's rank.

Yitzik endured the hard military life, happy that he was no longer pressured to change his beliefs. Eventually his release date dawned and upon discharge, he found himself deep in a Russian *gubernia* devoid of Yidden. Yitzik straightaway tried to find some Jewish brothers and learned that the nearest town with some Jews was Tolna. He arrived in Tolna on an Erev Shabbos. He was bewildered by the Erev Shabbos preparations, and also the to-him strange clothing of the Chassidic men. He asked a passerby to brief him on the goings-on and the Yid, sensing his innocent sincerity, took to teaching him some basics of Shabbos, which was soon to be ushered in. The Yid told him to come to Shul, with the sure prospect of an invitation to someone's home for a meal. Yitzik had no idea what *hachnosas orchim* entailed, and so headed to the kitchen offering to work, as a way to earn his food. Then the miraculous happened. All of a sudden the smell of the Shabbos fish being prepared for the Tolna Rebbe captivated him and seized his senses. Long-dormant memories of his mother's cooking came to life from deep within him. The aroma was exactly the same as he remembered from his mother's cooking fish for Shabbos!! Itzik was overwhelmed by the sensory onslaught of decades-old memories. He sensed something magical, and transformative, in the smell of that Shabbos fish.

That Shabbos he ate the meals in high spirits at the Rebbe's Tish. The Rebbe sensed his sincerity and eventually led him to a spiritual rebirth. The Rebbe arranged for a tutor to begin learning Torah with Itzik, not ignoring the laws of Kashrus. Itzik continued to work as Hertz, the cook's helper; the Rebbe saw how Itzik threw himself heart and soul into making tasty kosher food, so when Hertz passed away, the Rebbe insisted that Itzik become the head cook.

Itzik advanced in Yiddishkeit and became a devoted chassid of the Tolna Rebbe. It was the aroma of the Shabbos fish which revived his neshama. Later, as he gained insight into Hashem's ways, he understood the Hashgacha Pratis which led him to Tolna. Reb Dovid of Tolna was very active in his outreach to many cantonists. Shabbos food is a cure to reach spirituality.

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