



Kinder Torah[©]



For parents to share with children at the Shabbos table Parshas Behar - Bechukosai

Dedicated in Loving Memory of Avigdor Ben Avraham z"l

Show Its Importance

Who wants to receive blessings of prosperity, health, peace, and children? Hashem tells the Jewish people how to obtain these blessings in the beginning of Parshas Bechukosai (Vayikra 26:3). "If you will follow My decrees . . ." then you will be blessed. Rashi explains "following Hashem's decrees" to mean toiling in Torah. Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l explains that toiling means putting all of your efforts into learning Torah. He expands the concept to include all mitzvos. We can gauge the importance of something to a person by how much time and effort he puts into it. As Shlomo HaMelech writes in Mishle (2:4-5), "If you seek it [Torah] as if it were silver, if you search for it [Torah] as if it were hidden treasure -- then you will understand the fear of Hashem and discover the knowledge of our Ruler."

Kinderlach . . .

Did you ever see how hard someone works when he needs money? He finds time; he puts all of his thought into it, and all of his energy. The question is, do we put that same effort into Torah and mitzvos? Let us take for example, the mitzvah of doing acts of kindness to our fellow Jews. Do we think about what the other person needs? Do we take the time to give him what he needs? Do we put all of our energy into it? Hashem is telling us to make Torah and mitzvos the main priority in our lives. Kinderlach, Hashem wants to give us all of the blessings. In our lives, Torah and mitzvos are priority number one.

One Leads to Another

In the beginning of Parshas Behar, the Torah writes about the observance of the *Shmitta* (Sabbatical) year. The Jewish people are commanded to refrain from farming their lands every seventh year. Hashem promises them an abundance of crops in the sixth year to supply their needs throughout the seventh year. The Torah next details the requirement of fairness in business dealings. Following that are the guidelines for selling family-owned

lands. Selling one's home is the next topic of discussion in the Torah. The next subject is the prohibition against taking interest on a loan to your fellowman. Subsequently, we read about the laws of a servant. Lastly, the Torah writes about a Jew who becomes so desperate that he must sell himself as a slave to an idol worshipper (Vayikra 25:1-55). Rashi's commentary on verse 26:1 explains the juxtaposition of these passages in the Torah. Firstly, the Torah warns us about observance of the *Shmitta* year. If one's desire for money overcomes his trust in Hashem, and he works the land that year, then he will be tormented by a terrible series of events, each one worse than the one before. He will first have to sell his possessions. Then he will be forced to sell his land, and even his home. He will then be compelled to violate the Torah's prohibition against borrowing money with interest. He will then have no choice but to sell himself as a servant and slave to idol worshippers. What a terrible fate.

Kinderlach . . .

This is an example of the Mishna in Pirkei Avos (4:2) which states ". . . doing a mitzvah leads to another mitzvah, and doing an aveiyrah leads to another aveiyrah . . ." We may think that an aveiyrah is small and insignificant. Or that it will end right then and there. It is not so. One aveiyrah leads to another, and we see where it can end up. Kinderlach, our parents may seem overly strict at times. We have to realize that they are older and more experienced than we are. They have the wisdom and vision to see that a small aveiyrah is really the first step to terrible things that none of us want to experience. Let us all make an extra effort to listen to everything they say.

Words That Hurt

"I am so upset at Yossie," said Yitzy. "I pushed him one time a few weeks ago and he does not let me forget it. Every time I see him, he reminds me about it. I did *teshuvah* (repentance). I said that I was sorry, and I haven't pushed anyone since. Is it right for him to keep bringing it up?"

We have spoken many times

about mitzvos involving speech. This week we have another mitzvah involving speech, *onas devorim* (wronging someone with words). What is *onas devorim*? Reminding someone of their past sins can cause them pain. In our story, Shmuelly was causing Yitzy pain by reminding him of the time he pushed him. That is *onas devorim*. "Where did you buy that?" "How much did you pay?" These questions could be *onas devorim* if the person does not feel comfortable divulging such information. "That's so expensive, you could have gotten it cheaper!" "I know you do not have money now, but let me show you this great bargain." These statements make a person feel bad about something that is beyond his control.

Kinderlach . . .

We have to realize that words are very powerful. They can hurt a person very badly. In fact, the gemora writes that hurting a person's feelings is worse than causing him a monetary loss. You can always pay back the money, but once the words leave your mouth, you can never take them back. Therefore, let us all try very very hard, to watch what we say to our parents, brothers, sisters, friends, neighbors, and shopkeepers. We want our speech to be a pleasure for them to hear.

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