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SHABBAT PARSHAT BEHAR-BECHUKOTAI · 22 IYAR 5769 · MAY 16, 2009 · VOL. 16 NO. 29

PARSHA INSIGHTS

KEEPING UP WITH THE KOHENS

“Do not make for yourselves idols...” (26:1)

A prince living in the lap of luxury two hundred years ago felt that he had everything that money could buy. Take that prince and transfer him to 2009 and he would be far from happy. He has no car, no air-conditioning, no elevator, no microwave and no computer. He would compare his 'luxury' to the ordinary life of the modern world, and his happiness would evaporate. He would feel deprived.

Luxury is relative.

Greed is not based on any absolute desire for a specific thing. It is all about having more than everyone else.

According to the *Chovot Halevivot* the first cause of not recognizing G-d is that we focus on what we don't have and take what we have for granted. We fail to see that our lives are a twenty-four-hour-a-day gift.

In this week's Torah portion the Torah seems to write a random list of laws: *Shemita*, laws of sale of moveable objects, laws of sale of land, sale of one's house, laws of interest, the redeeming of a Hebrew slave and the redeeming of a Jew sold as a slave to a non-Jew. Rashi explains that the Torah is warning us of an inevitable progression.

What stops a person from keeping *Shemita* properly?

Greed.

If we don't keep *Shemita* properly we won't profit from the sale of *Shemita* products. Quite the reverse. We will find ourselves short of money to the extent that we will have to sell our moveable property. If that doesn't wake us up, the next step is we will be forced to sell our real estate.

Then the house we live in. If that doesn't bring us back, then we will commit the sin of lending money to Jews for interest. If we don't stop there and repent, the next step is that we will have to sell ourselves to a fellow Jew as a servant, and if that doesn't bring us to our senses, eventually we will be sold to a heathen and end up indulging in immorality, worshipping idols and breaking Shabbat.

“Do not make for yourselves idols...”

The main idol of the modern world is conspicuous consumption and material success.

Doctors now recognize stress as one of the single greatest causes of chronic disease in our society.

And amongst the main causes of stress is maintaining a lifestyle that demands keeping up with the Kohens.

If it weren't for envy and greed we would all be happy with the sufficiencies of existence. A modest and simple way of life.

“The main idol of the modern world is conspicuous consumption and material success.”

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

BEHAR

The Torah prohibits normal farming of the Land of Israel every seven years. This “Shabbat” for the Land is called “*shemita*”. The year 5768 was a *shemita* year in Israel. After every seventh *shemita*, the fiftieth year, *yovel* (jubilee) is announced with the sound of the shofar on Yom Kippur. This was also a year for the Land to lie fallow. G-d promises to provide a bumper crop prior to the *shemita* and *yovel* years. During *yovel*, all land is returned to its original division from the time of Joshua, and all Jewish indentured servants are freed, even if they have not completed their six years of work. A Jewish indentured servant may not be given any demeaning, unnecessary or excessively difficult work, and may not be sold in the public market. The price of his labor must be calculated according to the amount of time remaining until he will automatically become free. The price of land is similarly calculated. Should anyone sell his ancestral land, he has the right to redeem it after two years. If a house in a walled city is sold, the right of redemption is limited to

the first year after the sale. The Levites’ cities belong to them forever. The Jewish People are forbidden to take advantage of one another by lending or borrowing with interest. Family members should redeem any relative who was sold as an indentured servant as a result of impoverishment.

BECHUKOTAI

The Torah promises prosperity for the Jewish People if they follow G-d’s commandments. However, if they fail to live up to the responsibility of being the Chosen People, then chilling punishments will result. The Torah details the harsh historical process that will fall upon them when Divine protection is removed. These punishments, whose purpose is to bring the Jewish People to repent, will be in seven stages, each more severe than the last. *Sefer Vayikra*, the book of Leviticus, concludes with the details of *erachin* – the process by which someone vows to give the *Beit Hamikdash* the equivalent monetary value of a person, an animal or property.

ISRAEL Forever

PEACE IN THE LAND

“I will provide peace in the land”, promises G-d to His people, “if you will follow My decrees and observe My commandments and perform them.”

This Divine promise that will be read from the Torah this Shabbat is the only reliable formula for peace in the land that G-d gave to His chosen people. All attempts to

find a “partner for peace” among the enemies pledged to destroy us have proven to be exercises in futility.

Perhaps this annual reminder will stir a nation weary of war and terror to the observance of Torah, which in the words of the above-mentioned promise will enable “you to dwell securely in your land”.

LOVE OF THE LAND- THE PLACES

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

EIN EITAM – SACRED SPRING

Somewhere between Yerushalayim and Hebron is a spring known as Ein Eitam. *Ein* means spring and *Eitam* was the name of a nearby town.

The waters of this spring, which was located 23



amot higher than the floor of the *Beit Hamikdash*, flowed into the mikveh in which the *kohen gadol* immersed himself on Yom Kippur for his service in the *Beit Hamikdash*.

לע"נ
מרת לאה בת שמואל ע"ה
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

PARSHA Q&A ?

BEHAR

1. If one possesses *shemita* food after it is no longer available in the field, what must he do with it?
2. From where does the *yovel* year get its name?
3. What prohibitions are derived from the verse “*v’lo tonu ish et amito* — a person shall not afflict his fellow”?
4. If a home in a walled city is sold, when can it be redeemed?
5. What does the word “days” mean in this week’s Parsha?
6. What is considered a walled city?
7. To what is one who leaves *Eretz Yisrael* compared?
8. Why does Rashi mention the plague of the firstborn in this week’s Parsha?
9. List three prohibitions which demonstrate the dignity with which one must treat a Jewish indentured servant.
10. Where is it permitted to prostrate oneself on a stone floor?

BECHUKOTAI

1. To what do the words “*bechukotai telechu*” refer?
2. When is rain “in its season”?
3. What is meant by “you shall eat your bread to satisfaction”?
4. What is meant by “and a sword will not pass through your land”?
5. Which progression of seven transgressions are taught in Chapter 26, and why in that particular order?
6. What is one benefit which the Jewish People derive from the Land of Israel’s state of ruin?
7. What positive element is implied by the words “and I will bring them into the land of their enemies”?
8. In verse 26:42, why is the word “remember” not used in connection with the name of Yitzchak?
9. What happens when a poor person dedicates the value of a person to the Beit Hamikdash and doesn’t have sufficient funds to fulfill his vow?
10. Where must “*ma’aser sheini*” be eaten?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this week’s Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary unless otherwise stated.

BEHAR

1. 25:7 - Remove it from his property and declare it ownerless.
2. 25:10 - From the sounding of the shofar. A ram’s horn is called a *yovel*.
3. 25:17 - One may not intentionally hurt people’s feelings, nor give bad advice while secretly intending to reap benefit.
4. 25:29 - Only within the first year after the sale.
5. 25:29 - The days of an entire year.
6. 25:29 - A city surrounded by a wall since the time of Yehoshua.
7. 25:38 - To one who worships idols.
8. 25:38 - The prohibition against taking interest is accompanied by the phrase “I am the L-rd your G-d who took you out of Egypt.” Rashi explains that just as G-d discerned in Egypt between those who were first-born and those who were not, so too will G-d discern and punish those who lend with interest, pretending they are acting on behalf of others.
9. 25:39-43 - a) Do not make him perform humiliating tasks; b) Do not sell him publicly; c) Do not make him perform unnecessary jobs.
10. 26:1 - In the Mikdash.

BECHUKOTAI

1. 26:3 - Laboring in the study of Torah.

2. 26:4 - At times when people are not outside (e.g., Shabbat nights).
3. 26:5 - You will only require a little bread to be completely satisfied.
4. 26:6 - No foreign army will travel through your land even on their way to a different country.
5. 26:14,15 - Not studying Torah, not observing mitzvot, rejecting those who observe mitzvot, hating Sages, preventing others from observing mitzvot, denying that G-d gave the mitzvot, denying the existence of G-d. They are listed in this order because each transgression leads to the next.
6. 26:32 - No enemy nation will be able to settle in the Land of Israel.
7. 26:41 - G-d Himself, so to speak, will bring them into their enemies’ land. This means that even when the Jews are in exile, G-d will supply them with leaders who inspire them to keep the Torah. This guards the Jews from assimilating into the host culture.
8. 26:42 - Because the image of Yitzchak’s ashes (Yitzchak was prepared to be brought as an offering) upon the altar is always before G-d.
9. 27:8 - The person whose value was donated goes before the *kohen*, who sets the obligation according to the poor person’s ability to pay.
10. 27:30 - In Jerusalem.

- Food found in the public domain
- If naming the place where one lost an object qualifies as proof of ownership
- When a “white lie” is permitted
- Money found in a house of worship or any public area
- Acting beyond the letter of the law
- Which found objects must be announced
- Determining whether coins were lost or placed
- When a found object should be left alone
- Something found in a garbage dump or in a wall
- The boarding house and partnership mysteries
- The Torah commands regarding found objects
- Money found in a shop or bank
- The value of a found object requiring return
- The source for relying on an identifying *siman*
- For how long must a find be announced
- Investigating swindlers and caring for found object

THE PUNCTURING PREFIX

Coins that are found may either be assumed to have been lost by their owner and therefore the property of the finder, or purposely placed at that location by the owner, obligating the finder to announce his find so that the owner may make his claim. It all depends on the manner in which the coins are found.

If coins are found in a pattern associated with the pagan idol *kulis* the find must be announced. The worship of this idol consisted of casting stones before it in pyramid fashion. Should one find three coins lying in such planned fashion any-

where – one placed on the halves of two below it – he must assume they were purposely placed there and must announce his find.

Tosefot points out that the idol referred to in our *gemara* was called *kulis* by its worshippers, which comes from the word *kilus* that means praise. Our Sages, however, in the tradition of ridiculing idol worship, added the prefix *mar*, which means the opposite. The use of the term *kulis* in our *gemara*, which relates to a pattern rather than the idol itself, is an indication that this was the name applied to the idol by its worshippers, rather than the mocking term *markulis* found elsewhere in the Talmud.

• *Bava Metzia 25b*

What the SAGES Say

“...and it (a found object) shall remain with you until your brother inquires after it and you return it to him.” (*Devarim 22:2*)
“You must not return it until you inquire of the claimant to determine that he is not a swindler.” (*Mishna, Bava Metzia 23b*)

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NAME WITHHELD

From: Anonymous

Dear Rabbi,

I have been religious for sometime now. In fact, I have been shidduch dating for what feels like too long. I'm wondering if my Hebrew name has anything to do with the delay. You see, growing up, in Sunday school, I used a particular Hebrew name, and that was the name I used for my bar mitzvah. When I became religious, after not having used that name for many years, I started using it again socially and also for aliyas to the Torah. At some point, my mother found my "bris" certificate by a kosher mohel and the name I have been using, while similar to the original name, was/is a different name (not like Elijah and Eliyahu). Also, the original name is comprised of two names but the adapted name is only one. So, my question is, is the fact that I'm still using the adapted name a reason for nuptial delay and should I revert back to my original name? What about the fact that I've been using the other name for so long (although not so frequently)?

Dear Name Withheld,

According to Jewish sources, despite the fact that prophecy has ceased in general, there are still some residual situations and people in which inklings of prophecy appear. One of them is regarding parents' naming their children. So a Jewish name given at birth, and particularly at the circumcision, is very significant and contains within it a Divinely inspired connection to the person's spiritual essence. In addition, such a name expresses and enhances the unique qualities and powers of the individual, forming a type of aura that accompanies a person through life. It is for these reasons that it is so important to give traditionally acceptable names of righteous and holy people or things.

Since a person's essence and even purpose is expressed and enhanced by one's name, and so much of realizing the potential of this essence and purpose depends on finding one's soul mate, there is definitely a relationship between names and nuptials. This means that if the right name is withheld, the right *shidduch* might also be withheld.

In your case, since you now know the name given to you at your circumcision, you must use this name (comprised of the two original names written in the certificate), which is your unique name. From now on you should be called up to the Torah with this name, this is the name you

should use socially and this is the name that should be written in the ketuba, G-d willing.

Regarding the other name, since you say it is similar and refer to it as the adapted name, I assume it is either a variation of one of the original names, or very similar to it (perhaps the exact original was forgotten and then remembered as the substitute like Shalom and Shlomo). In either case, the adapted name was used by mistake in lieu of the original and not with the intention to change or add on to the original, so it need not be used any further. If for whatever reason you want to keep that name (and Providence may have had a role in the mix-up), it is possible to add it to the original. Since this would involve having three names, and in any case your question is complex, you should only do this with the guidance of a Rabbi who is well-versed with names and their meanings and influence.

I'll conclude with the following story:

There was a young man in the yeshiva who had a situation very similar to yours. When he arrived he used the name he had used in Hebrew school, which he thought was his name from his circumcision. He eventually started *shidduchim*, but despite the fact that he was bright, witty and good-looking, he dated many women over a relatively long period of time but didn't have any success. One Shabbat afternoon he attended the talk of a particular well-respected rabbi and kabbalist. Seemingly out of nowhere the rabbi made the following comment:

"There is a blessing customarily said at the circumcision that goes: 'Just as this boy has entered the covenant, so may he enter Torah learning, the chupa and good deeds'. The Hebrew for "just as" is "k'Shem" which literally means "as the name". From here we see that the name given at the circumcision accompanies, and is an integral part of, the person's growth in life. A person therefore must be careful to "take his name" into the Torah, under the chupa and into his good deeds, in that order."

The young man couldn't believe his ears. Just a week earlier his mother had found his "circumcision certificate" showing that his real name was similar to, but different than, the name he had been using. Before he "happened" to drop into this rabbi's talk he didn't intend to use this newly-found name because he didn't like it as much as his adapted name. But he understood from the rabbi's words that withholding his circumcision name might further withhold his entering the chupa. Within a week of announcing his "new" name he met the woman who became his wife.

HANDLING OF NUISANCE CALLS

Question: I frequently receive telephone calls from people I do not know who say they are conducting a survey and would like to ask me some questions. I invariably find that I have absolutely no interest in participating in such a survey, but I wish to avoid hurting the feelings of the caller. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: Your sensitivity of the feelings of the caller is cer-

tainly to be commended. This does not necessarily obligate you to waste time answering questions in an area of which you have no interest.

The right thing to do is to avoid rudely hanging up but to rather tell the caller that you appreciate being selected for participation in the survey but feel that you are unable to answer any questions to an unknown caller. Then just say a polite goodbye and hang up.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

SAVED BY A SWITCH

When a shop was opened below an apartment building in a city in the center of Israel its owners exhibited some of the baby cribs and other furniture they were selling by placing them on the pavement outside the building. This disturbed one of the building's residents and he asked them to refrain from thus interfering with his access to the building. His request went unheeded and he summoned the shop owners to a rabbinical court in Bnei Brak.

The judges heard the complaint and even sent someone to see whether it was justified. Upon determining that the exhibited furniture was not on an area used by pedestrians,

the court dismissed the charges. Impressed by the noble manner in which the complainant had accepted the ruling against him, the head of the court approached him before leaving the room and whispered into his ear: "What do you know if someday you may need their merchandise?"

A week and a half later the two-year-old son of this fellow climbed up on the balustrade of their fourth floor balcony while his parents were in the kitchen and fell. Paralyzed with fear the parents rushed downstairs expecting the worst only to have the shop owner hand them a perfectly healthy child whose life had been saved by falling into a baby crib with a deep mattress exhibited on the pavement.

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