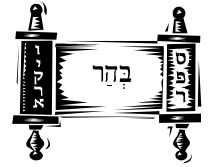




KINDER TORAH®



For parents to share with children at the Shabbos table — Parshas Behar
In Memory of Loving Husband, Father, and Grandfather Avigdor Ben Avraham z"l

Help Yourself

"If your brother sinks low, and his hand falters with you; you shall strengthen him" (Vayikra 25:35). Simply understood, this verse is referring to lending money to your fellow Jew who is poor. The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh has a beautiful and novel interpretation. "If your brother sinks low" refers to a person's low spiritual level, caused by a weakening in his Torah learning and mitzvah observance. That is the true poverty. "And his hand falters" means that his spirit darkens. "With you" the Ohr HaChaim explains to mean that the spirit lives together with the body. It is the other half of the person; the non-spiritual side that is bringing him down. "You shall strengthen him" and encourage yourself to do *teshuvah* (repentance). This is the best way to restore the spirit to its lofty level.

Kinderlach . . .
We all have our ups and downs. The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh is giving us practical advice for when we are down. Let us not wallow and feel sorry for ourselves. Rather, we should realize that this is an opportunity to do teshuva. Examine why we are down. Perhaps we are slacking off in our learning. Perhaps we are doing our mitzvos sloppily. Let us put ourselves back on the right track and strengthen ourselves. Use this temporary downer as an opportunity to come back stronger than ever!

Words That Hurt

"I am so upset with 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, Yossie 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.

Rebbe Shimon Bar Yochai

Lag B'omer is the yahrtzeit of Rebbe Shimon Bar Yochai, so it is only fitting that we recount one of his good deeds (from the Medrash Rabba Vayikra 34:12). On Rosh Hashanah, Hashem decrees how much income a person will have for the upcoming year, independent of how much or how hard he works. Similarly, his expenditures are also fixed. He has the choice whether or not to spend them on mitzvos such as giving charity to poor people. If he does not choose to do so, then he will lose the money in a much less desirable way. One Rosh Hashanah night, Rebbe Shimon dreamed that the king would take 600 *dinars* (a unit of money in the times of the Talmud) from his sons. Rebbe Shimon convinced them to give *tsedaka* (charity) and appointed them *gabbai tzedaka* (dispensers of charity). They asked their father where they would

find the money to distribute to the poor people. He told them to use their own money, and at the end of the year, he would refund them what they were lacking. At the end of the year, someone sent the king a false report, accusing them of a crime. The officer of the king seized them, threw them into prison, and told them they must make a silk garment for the king, or pay 600 *dinars*. When he heard this, Rebbe Shimon came to them in prison and asked them how much *tsedaka* they had given throughout the course of the year. They showed him their notepads, and he saw that they had given 594 *dinars*. Rebbe Shimon said to them, "Give me six *dinars*." They said, "The king wants 600 *dinars*. How can six *dinars* save us?" Rebbe Shimon said, "Don't worry." He took the six *dinars* and gave them to the guard as a bribe to be silent. He then helped his sons escape from the prison. "How did you know that six *dinars* would save us?" they asked Rebbe Shimon. "I knew from Rosh Hashanah that the king would take 600 *dinars* from you. You redeemed that money with the *tsedaka* that you gave." "Why didn't you tell us and we would have given the last six *dinars*?" they asked. "I wanted you to give the *tsedaka* for the sake of the mitzvah, not out of fear of the king," answered Rebbe Shimon.

Kinderlach . . .
Rebbe Shimon is teaching us two very important lessons. The first one is to do mitzvos for their own sake. Although rewards are very nice, they are just a step to a much higher level. The second is that we should merit that all of our money be spent on mitzvos. That is the best thing that it can be used for.

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