

Behar-Bechukosai 2015

1.

Difficult mitzvos

“Hashem spoke to Moshe on Mount Sinai” (25, 1)

"וידבר ה' אל משה בהר סיני."

Talelei Oros page 199 quotes the Chafetz Chaim who says we can learn a tremendous lesson from Moshe receiving the Torah from Har Sinai as stated in the beginning of Pirkei Avos. The concept of someone so high descending so low is an incredible concept. Hashem is the highest of the high, the loftiest of the lofty. Hashem temporarily left his elevated level in order to give us the Torah. This is analogous to a king who left his palace in order to travel to a small town. It is incumbent upon the members of this town to bestow upon this king the utmost respect. The nimshal (lesson) is; Hashem left the palace of all palaces in order to give us the Torah. The mitzvah of shmita is a very difficult mitzvah to fulfill. It is very difficult for one to abandon his field, leaving it fallow for a full year. Someone that fulfills this mitzvah is included in the category of those who are ‘strong.’ **Therefore, in order to strengthen people to fulfill all mitzvos, even those mitzvos that are difficult to fulfill, the Torah juxtaposed the mitzvah of shmita to Sinai. Meaning, just as Hashem left the heavens, so too we are able and must leave our fields. We must perform the difficult mitzvos as well.**

For example, we must be careful to give minimally ten percent of our money to tzedaka (charity) as the Halacha requires. (Yora daya hilchos tzedaka) The Tor (yoreh daya siman 247) writes and warns us to be very careful to give tzedaka to poor people because this world is a wheel. You’re on top now but eventually you or your kids will be on the bottom. The more one gives the more they will get as stated in the Gemara in Tanis (8b-9a).

This also shtims (coincides) with what we mentioned in Parshas Tazria 2015.

The Otzros Hatorah (on mila pages 126-127) quotes the Gemara in Nedarim (32a) that says mila is so important that it equals all of the mitzvos. (גדולה מילה ששקולה כנגד כל המצות). What is the explanation of this Gemara? The Sheboli Haleket quotes the Medrash that says the gematria (numerical value) of בריית is 612. The mila itself counts as one. Therefore: $1 + 612 = 613$. This is what the Gemara means when it states that mila equals all of the mitzvos.

The Akadas Yitzchak offers another explanation of this Gemara. When a person fixes the roots, then the tree will typically be fixed. Similarly, when a person fixes the core and essence of anything, then everything else gets fixed as well. When one has mila performed his entire body gets fixed.

The Tor says that mila is better than all other positive commandments.

What is so special about mila that it is better than all of the other mitzvos? Rabbi Yaakov Sofer (author of Caf Hachaim) logically explains that the mitzvah of mila is unique and differs from all other mitzvos in that it’s painful. Performing mila with happiness in order to fulfill the will of Hashem demonstrates the will to perform all other mitzvos with happiness as well. (This is similar to a kal v’chomer, if one can lift ten pounds, then surly he can lift five pounds. Similarly,

if one fulfills the mitzvah of mila which is painful, then surely he will perform other mitzvos which are painless.)

This also shtims (coincides) with the Nachalas Tzvi (page 224) in parshas Tetzaveh. “Now you should command the Children of Israel that they shall take for you pure olive oil, pressed for lighting, to kindle a lamp, continually.” (27, 20)

The menorah alludes to people who learn Torah, and that they need to learn purely lishma (for the sake of heaven). Sometimes a person is ‘pressed’ financially. However, he should not let this get to him. He should still learn and eventually everything will work out.

That’s why the pasuk uses the word “pressed”. To teach us that even in situations where we feel ‘crushed’, we should continue to learn so that the candle will remain lit.

The pasuk states (Megilas Esther perek eight) “the Jews had light.” The Gemara in Megilah (16b) explains that the light mentioned in the pasuk is referring to Torah!

Alternatively, the pasuk says “pressed” because we need to press our physical desires and crush ourselves in order to learn, and then the candle will burn constantly. As the Gemaras in Berachos (63) and Shabbas (83b) quote in the name of Resh Lakish, who says, that the Torah is only sustained in someone who kills himself over it. When one forgoes extra physical indulgences, his potential success in Torah automatically drastically increases.

The Mishna in Avos (end of fifth perek) states according to the exertion will be the reward (לפום (צערא אגרא). It all depends on the person and the amount of effort that he has put in. Rav Shach (Orchos Habayis) says that women who work in order to enable their husbands to learn are incredibly impressive. The harder their work is; the greater their reward will be. One should inform these women of the tremendous reward that awaits them in the world to come. There was a story of someone who was involved with serious kiruv (bringing people closer to Judaism) at night. He was giving shiurim at night. He was spending less time with his wife however. He came to Rav Shach to ask what to do. In this particular case Rav Shach advised to ‘definitely continue giving the shiurim, despite the difficulty this causes her. Let her know that you appreciate the tremendous sacrifice she is making. Then you should elaborate on the merit she earns through her share in your work and inform her that her portion of the reward will be no less than your own. This can be likened to a man who found a sack filled with diamonds one sweltering summer day. It was very hard and difficult to carry, and the man was hot and weary. Nevertheless, not for a moment did it occur to him to throw the sack away to lighten his burden! Similarly, although your work is very burdensome for you both, of you would bear in mind the reward awaiting you in the next world and the providential assistance you earn in this one, you would refuse to give up that burden for any price.’ Rav Shach did not stop with giving the young Rabbi words of support, however. He asked for his wife’s name and telephone number and promised to call to encourage her personally. Rav Shach called the wife and spoke with her at length about the enormous reward that she is destined for and gave her a beracha. She then became very excited. This phone call was like a breath of fresh air which imbued her with renewed strength to carry on. The following Shabbos they had irreligious guests over. Her extreme and unusual happiness was apparent. They asked her why she was so happy. She relayed the whole story. They were inspired so much from the story that they decided to immediately become religious. They reasoned, if the Torah can inspire the leader of the generation to make a phone call on his own initiative just to give a woman moral support, without any thought of gain on his part, it is so beautiful that we also would like to have a share in it.

2.

Toiling when learning

“If you will follow My decrees and observe My commandments and perform them.” (26, 3)

"אם בחקותי תלכו."

Rashi quotes the Toras Kohanim who explains that we should be toiling and rigorously learning.

Talelei Oros (page 270) quotes the Gemara in Berachos (63) that says the Torah only endures within someone who (metaphorically) kills himself over it (אין דברי תורה מתקיימין אלא במי שממית) (עצמו עליה). Meaning the Torah will only truly last and be remembered by someone who diligently learns.

The Taz (siman 47) explains that the Torah will not last within those who are learning with many comforts. This is the explanation of the Gemara in Nedarim (81). The nusach (text) of the beracha is ‘to deal with Torah’/ 'לעסוק בדברי תורה'. The Ran explains the Torah is not just another subject. Rav Chaim of Volozhin (introduction to Sifra Detzneusa) writes about his Rebbi the Gra. He explains that the Gra didn’t want to receive any of the deep Torah concepts, kabala, philosophical and mystical ideas from angels. He wanted to toil on his own.

“And the children struggled within her (Rivkah)...” (Berashis 25, 22)

Rashi quotes the Midrash that tells us that when Rivkah would walk past a shul Yaakov would kick to try and come out, and when she was passing a house of avoda zara then Esav would kick to come out.

The question arises; based on the Gemara in Nidah (30) it makes sense that Esav would want to go out to worship avodah zarah (idolatry). Yaakov, however, was learning the whole Torah with the Malach (angel) so why would he want to leave? His parnassah (sustenance) and restroom is easily accessible, why would he want to leave? The Kemotzei Shall Rav (pages 213-214) answers that Yaakov wanted to leave in order that he could toil when he learned Torah.

When we make a siyum we say ‘we wake up and they wake up, we wake up to learn and they wake up for wasteful matters. We toil and receive reward; they toil and do not receive reward.’ What is the explanation of this; they do receive reward; a nice pay check? The Chafetz Chaim explains that we get reward for the effort in addition to the result. They only get rewarded for the result. If there is no positive result then they will not receive reward regardless of how much effort they put into the endeavor.