



## DVAR TORAH

## BEHAR/ BECHUKOSAI



By: Rabbi Rory  
Meyerson

### Trusting Instead of Toiling

For six years, we work, produce, and enjoy the fruit of the land. Come the seventh year and we are commanded to rest and let the land lay fallow. This abrupt transition from work and toil into a restful sabbatical year is the מצוה of שמיטה. This מצוה is not limited to farmers. We all work hard – building businesses, solving problems and striving to accomplish meaningful things. In fact, we are commanded to work. The pasuk (Bereishis 3:19), in response to the sin of Adam and Chava, states: “בזעת אפרך תאכל לחם” – by the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread. We get up in the morning, hustle through our morning routines, a little davening and perhaps some learning and we are off to our busy days. We work to provide for our families. We all have routines.

What, then, is the purpose of שמיטה? What is the connection between Adam and Chava’s exit from Gan Eden, a place of absolute closeness to God, and the need to work the land? What does this one-year sabbatical accomplish for us?

The מצוה of שמיטה comes to restore us to the mindset of Gan Eden, one rooted not in self-reliance, but in the reliance on ה'. This is no small task. At its core, the מצוה of בטחון is rooted in אמונה. Simply put, אמונה is the intellectual belief in God, while בטחון is the emotional commitment that brings that belief into action. In practice, בטחון means that once I recognize that ה' runs the world and personally provides for every creature, I can rely on His abundant kindness to grant me what I need – including my פרנסה.

The Gemara (Kiddushin 82b) discusses which type of פרנסה is the best to pursue. In that context, R' Shimon ben Elazar wonders: “Have you ever seen a bird or animal with a trade? Yet they earn their sustenance without anguish. These animals were created to serve me. And I, a human being, was created to serve the One Who formed me. Shouldn't I earn my livelihood without anguish!? Rather it must be I [and humanity] have evil actions, and this lost me abundant sustenance.”

R' Shimon suggests that had we not sinned in Gan Eden, we never would not have needed to work for our livelihood. We could have lived like animals, with endless pastures to graze and no struggle. But is that such a good thing? Man should sit back and be idle. With no ambitions and no accomplishments?! Furthermore, the pasuk (Bereshis 2:15) describes Adam HaRishon’s role even before the sin as: “ויניחהו בגן עדן לעבדה ולשמרה” – placed in Gan Eden to serve and tend to it.”

In general, when making decisions, a person can ask: is this helping me serve ה', or is it primarily for my own benefit? Life’s decisions can always be boiled down to this dialectical: Me or God.

Before the Sin, Adam and Chavah lived with an iron-clad mindset: everything exists to serve God. Hence the פסוק above – לעבדה, to serve God. From this lofty mindset, the Gemara (Sanhedrin 59b) says that Adam merited to be fed by heavenly angels who roasted meat and prepared wine for him. Gan Eden is not a place that inherently has abundant sustenance like birds and animals. Rather the פרנסה is merited from a mindset that ה' is the Master of the World and He will take care of me. Similarly, if a person were to be hosted in someone’s house, he is rest assured the בעל הבית will provide for him.

However, when Adam HaRishon sinned by eating from the Eitz HaDa’as, he stepped into the world of the ego and began worrying, “What can I do to benefit Myself?” Thereby exiting the mindset that everything in this world is here to serve ה' and entering the world of the ego. This shift caused him to lose the abundant פרנסה from ה' and forced him to work for his sustenance.

Adam left the world of ה' being the Master and I am His servant and entered a world in which he must toil for his own sustenance. When a person is locked into בטחון, the mind’s natural fear mechanisms begin to quiet. Consider a child who, amid the terror of thunder crashing or shadows of imagined bandits lurking, clings desperately to his father’s arms. The storm rages beyond the father’s power; he can do nothing to stop it. Yet in his father’s embrace, the child feels utterly safe, his little heart at peace. He doesn't question or doubt – he simply knows his father will take care of him. That is the power of בטחון. In the embrace of the עולם של רבונו we are always taken care of. This sense of security emerges when we truly internalize that ה' alone determines our outcome.

The year of שמיטה is a one-year workshop to ingrain upon us that ה' is the בעל הבית, the Host of this World, and we are His guests. We pause from our work to recognize that it is not by our own hand that we accomplish, rather it is at the Hand of ה' who graciously gives to us. By placing our trust in ה', we open up ourselves to a deeper closeness to God. A byproduct of such a relationship is as the פסוק promises, “וצויתי את ברכתי בשנה הששית ועשה את התבואה לשלש השנים”, I will give Blessing to you in the sixth year, that will produce enough for three years.” ה' is telling us, trust in Me and your success will triple. May we all be zoche to achieve this high level of בטחון and merit to be fully taken care of by God.



By: Rabbi Chaim Yeshaya Freeman

# INSIGHTS INTO PIRKEI AVOS



The Mishnah teaches in Pirkei Avot (4:9): “Reb Yonason said: Whoever upholds the Torah in a state of poverty will ultimately uphold it in a state of wealth, and whoever neglects the Torah in a state of wealth will ultimately neglect it in a state of poverty.” The Mishnah teaches us that a person’s financial situation should not determine their connection to Torah.

This idea is also found in this week’s parsha. The pasuk states **אם בחקתי תלכו** If you will go in My decrees. Rashi is bothered: What does it mean to “go” in My decrees if the pasuk already says to observe and perform the mitzvos? Rashi explains that this refers to **עמילות בתורה**. Not just learning but toiling in Torah.

Many people think that Torah learning is for Rabbanim or retirees. However, the Rambam (Talmud Torah 1:8) clearly writes that every Jew is obligated in Torah study. Poor or rich. Healthy or suffering. Young or old. Everyone must set aside time to learn Torah.

This Rambam is based on a Gemara (Yoma 35b) that a poor man, rich man and a wicked man will all go to the final judgement at the end of days and will be questioned as to whether they engaged in Torah study. If one comes up with an excuse that I was poor and busy trying to make a living, the court will respond that nobody was as poor as Hillel. The story goes that he would only earn one tarpik a day. He would divide it in half. One half was used as an entrance fee to the Beis Medrash and the other half was used to support his family. One day he did not find work and earned nothing. He was not allowed into the Beis Medrash. He went onto the roof and laid down by the skylight to hear the Torah. This occurred on Erev Shabbos during the winter and there was a heavy snowstorm. In the morning people came and saw that it was dark. They looked up and saw Hillel covered in snow. They found him buried and brought him down. They washed him and warmed him by the fire.

The Gemara continues that if a rich man comes with an excuse that I was busy managing my properties, the court will respond that nobody was as rich as Rabbi Elazar ben Charsom. His father left him a thousand cities on land and a thousand boats at sea. Despite this he dedicated time every day to learn Torah.

Finally, if a wicked person comes with an excuse that he was good looking and faced great challenges with his yetzer hara, the court will respond that there was nobody more handsome than Yosef Hatzadik. Despite his challenges he remained connected to Torah.

This is hinted in the pasuk we say daily **רבות מחשבות בלב איש ועצת ה' היא תקום**. The letters of **היא** stand for Hillel, Yosef and Elazar. A person can have many **חשבונות** but the **רצון ה'** is that a person connects to Torah in every situation.

Often the real issue is not a lack of time, but a lack of appreciation for Torah. The Chofetz Chaim would illustrate this with a parable. A wealthy man commissioned a magnificent custom-made yacht. During construction he was given a tour of another luxury yacht. As he walked through the yacht, he was shown a dark, noisy, unimpressive engine room. Displeased by its appearance, he instructed the builders to remove it from his own yacht. The engineers explained that without the engine room, the entire boat would be unable to function. Though it was not glamorous, it powered everything else on the ship. So too, Torah may not always appear exciting or glamorous. It requires effort, consistency, and discipline. But Torah is the engine room of a person’s life and of the entire world. It is what gives direction, strength, and purpose to everything else. Without it, nothing truly moves forward.

May we all merit to recognize the sweetness of Torah, to set aside fixed time for it each day no matter what life brings, and to build our lives around it as our true center and guiding force.

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