

Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman

פרשת בהר-בחקתי

**וכי תמכרו ממכר לעמיתך או קנה מיד עמיתך אל תונו איש את אחיו
“When you make a sale to your fellow or make a purchase from the hand of your fellow,
do not aggrieve one another” (25:14)**

The conclusion of this posuk contains the Biblical prohibition against hurting other people with words. The Sefer HaChinuch (338) writes "We should not say words to a Jew that will cause him pain and anguish which he cannot prevent. Specifically, Chazal (Bava Metzia 58b) said: 'What is the nature of this prohibition? If there is a person who repented from his sins, one should not say to him, 'Remember your past deeds.' If a person is ill, one should not say to him as Iyov's friends said (Iyov 4:6), 'Your fear is your foolishness' (i.e. if you are troubled by your illness, then it would seem that your professed piety is not genuine). If one sees workers looking for food, he should not send them to a person that he knows does not have any food to offer. If one sees an item in a store that he has no intention to buy, he should not ask how much it costs (because this gives the impression that he will purchase the item.)' Regarding all this, the posuk says, 'Do not aggrieve one another.'"

The first Midrash Rabbah in the parsha relates two interesting stories that teach us important lessons regarding the power of speech. R' Shimon ben Gamliel once sent his servant Tavi to the market to buy a good piece of meat. Tavi returned with a tongue. He then asked him to go and buy a bad piece of meat and Tavi once again returned with a tongue. R' Shimon asked, "What is this? How can a tongue be both good and bad?" Tavi answered him, "Both good and bad can come from the tongue. When it is good, there is nothing better. When it is bad, there is nothing worse."

In the second story, Rebbi made a meal for his students and served them both soft and hard tongues. The students all chose the soft tongues and left the hard tongues on the serving platter. When Rebbi saw this, he told his students, "Know what you have just done. Just as you chose the soft tongues and left the hard ones, so should your tongue be soft toward other people."

"Death and life in the hands of the tongue" (Mishlei 18:21). The lesson from the soft nature of the physical tongue is a lesson for us, hinting how we have to act with our tongue. The power of speech has tremendous potential for both good and evil. We must be careful how we use this special gift that Hashem gave us and not to use it to cause pain but only to bring about good things with it

**והארץ לא תמכר לצמדת כי לי הארץ כי גרים ותושבים אתם עמדי
“The land shall not be sold into perpetuity, for the land is Mine; for you are sojourners
and residents with Me” (25:23)**

How are we both "sojourners and residents" with Hashem? The Toras Kohanim explains that if one is a sojourner in this world, he will be a resident in the next world. However, if one is a resident in this world, he will merely be as a sojourner in the next world. The Chofetz Chaim says that people sometimes think that they will live forever. This is not the right outlook to have on life. Our attitude should be one of gerim, of temporary residents in this world. We should constantly remain aware of the limitations of our time in this world and be sure to use every moment to its fullest. A tourist always plans an itinerary for his trip because he knows that he needs to use every moment of the trip wisely. After all, he will be going home in just a few days. This is how we should view life in this world. It is an opportunity to gain as many mitzvos as we can and to become as close as we can to Hashem. But this will not last forever because we will

soon return to the next world, the place that our souls truly call home. If we keep this idea in mind, we will have success in our endeavors. This lesson is brought home on Sukkos, when we leave our homes to live in a temporary residence for seven days. The holiday of Sukkos is meant instill this idea in us so that it will be with us for the whole year.

וכי ימוך אחיך ומטה ידו עמך והחזקת בו גר ותושב וחי עמך
“If your brother becomes impoverished and his means falter in your proximity, you shall strengthen him - proselyte or resident - so that he can live with you” (25:35)

Rashi comments that one should help his fellow while he is starting to fall and should not wait until he completely crashes. Rashi likens this to stabilizing a fallen donkey. When it packages are sliding off, one person can steady the animal alone. But once the animal falls to the ground, it takes many people working together to help it up. The sefer Zichron Meir writes that these guidelines also apply to helping with spiritual matters. One should not wait until a person gets completely frustrated and not wait until he falls all the way down. When one sees that a friend is starting to go down and is suffering a small setback, he should try to support him and fix his troubles right away. This also applies on an individual level. When a person makes a mistake and does something wrong, he should repent and correct his mistake right away before it gets out of hand. It is much easier to correct a character flaw or a tendency to do something wrong early before it becomes second nature to a person and rooted in his character.

Rabbi Moshe Sternbach asks: Why does this mitzvah to support one's fellow Jew come right after the mitzvos of Shemittah and Yovel? A person should not think that, just like by Shemittah where we are commanded to trust that Hashem will take care of us, we should have trust in Hashem that our friend's situation will improve. This bitachon should not apply to the attitude that one has toward his friend. We should not have bitachon regarding our friends' material or spiritual woes. Bitachon is only for how a person deals with himself. When it comes to someone else, one is commanded to get up and help the other person. The concept of bitachos does not free a person from taking care of his friend when he has a difficult time.

אם בחקתי תלכו ואת מצותי תשמרו ועשיתם אתם
“If you will go in My decrees and observe My commandments and perform them” (26:3)

The Midrash notes that the blessings in the parsha begin with the letter "alef" and end with the letter "tav." This indicates that the brachos promised by Hashem include every possible bracha, from A to Z. The curses begin with the letter "vav" and end with the letter "hey." Those letters are right next to each other, indicating that the curses are limited to what is written in the posuk and not more. The Etz Yosef points out that the letters are even backwards, "vav" before "hey," to teach that the curses are the opposite of what Hashem wants. Hashem truly desires to bless us and any punishments that we receive are not ideal but only because we do not merit blessings.

The Mincha Belula writes that the word "im," containing the letters "alef" and "mem," hints to a number of our redemptions that involve people whose names begin with those letters. We were led out of Egypt by Aharon and Moshe. We were saved from Haman by Esther and Mordechai. Soon, we will be redeemed by Eliyahu and Moshiach. The posuk is teaching us that in order to merit redemption, we must follow the laws of the Torah. The only way to get to "im" is through "bechukosai teileichu."

Written by Michael Gutmann