

Rashi z"l writes, based on the Gemara (Kiddushin 20a), that the various sections of *Parashat Behar*, the first *Parashah* we read this week, follow a precise order: First, the Torah prohibits us from doing business with the produce of *Shemittah* / the Sabbatical year. If, nevertheless, one covets money and trades in *Shemittah* produce, he eventually will become destitute and will need to sell his movable property. If he still does not desist, he will next need to sell his real estate. If he still does not get the message, he will need to sell his house. Eventually, he will need to borrow money on interest. If he still does not mend his ways, he will, as time goes on, be compelled to sell himself as a slave to another Jew. If he still does not abandon his evil ways, he eventually will sell himself to a heathen! [Until here from *Rashi*]

R' Yerachmiel Shulman z"l Hy"d (*Menahel Ruchani* of the *Bet Yosef-Novardok Yeshiva* in Pinsk, Poland; killed in the Holocaust) writes: Possibly, there was no greater tragedy for 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian Jewry than the "Cantonist Decree," under which Jewish children were kidnaped and impressed into decades of oppressive military service. How then can we imagine that a Jew would "kidnap" himself and sell himself as a slave to a heathen? Clearly, R' Shulman answers, the Torah is not describing a punishment for violating the *Shemittah*. Rather, it is describing a form of madness that comes upon one who abandons the Torah. One who lets go of the Torah a little bit is at risk for eventually letting go completely, followed by letting go of his common sense and even his very humanity, the Torah warns. - **Continued in box inside** -

## Tefilah

This year, we will iy"H devote this space to discussing various aspects of our prayers.

*Midrash Rabbah* (beginning of *Parashat Va'etchanan*) teaches that there are ten different words for prayer:

- 1) "Shav'ah" (שוועה) (*Shmot* 2:23);
- 2) "Tze'akah" (צעקה) (*ibid*);
- 3) "Ne'akah" (נאקה) (*Shmot* 2:24);
- 4) "Rinah" (רנה) (*Yirmiyah* 7:16);
- 5) "Pegi'ah" (פגיעה) (*ibid*);
- 6) "Bitzur" (ביצור) (*Tehilim* 18:7);
- 7) "Keri'ah" (קריאה) (*ibid*);
- 8) "Nipul" (ניפול) (*Devarim* 9:25);
- 9) "Pilul" (פילול) (*Tehilim* 106:30); and
- 10) "Tachanunim" (תחנונים) (*Devarim* 3:23).

*Midrash Yalkut Shimoni* adds three more: "Atirah: (עתירה) (*Bereishit* 25:21); "Amidah" (עמידה) (*Tehilim* 106:30); and "Chilui" (חילוי) (*Shmot* 32:11). [We will iy"H discuss these different types of prayer in future issues.]

R' Shimshon Dovid Pinkus z"l (rabbi of Ofakim, Israel; died 2001) writes: Just as a person should not be content to study one tractate of *Talmud* his entire life--rather, he should pursue broad Torah knowledge--so one should utilize multiple forms of prayer, as appropriate for the occasion (besides ensuring that he prays with *Kavanah* and in accordance with all the laws of prayer). If a person has an urgent need for which to pray, knowing the correct form could mean the difference between being answered or not being answered.

For example, in the second blessing of *Shemoneh Esrei*, we praise *Hashem* as the one who heals the sick. One who pours his heart out for his sick relative when he says those words is not utilizing prayer properly, for that blessing is a place for praising *Hashem*, not for making requests.

(*She'arim B'Tefilah* p.1)

### Hamaayan / The Torah Spring

10815 Meadowhill Road, Silver Spring, MD 20901 / 301-593-2272

Send e-mail to: [TheTorahSpring@gmail.com](mailto:TheTorahSpring@gmail.com)

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**“Speak to *Bnei Yisrael* and say to them, ‘If a man articulates a vow to *Hashem* . . .” (27:2)**

Following the *Tochachah* / rebuke and curses in *Parashat Ki Tavo*, Moshe Rabbeinu comforts *Bnei Yisrael* (*Devarim* 29:9), “You are standing today, all of you, before *Hashem*, your *Elokim* . . .” *Rashi* z”l explains: “When *Yisrael* heard the ninety-eight curses, besides the forty-nine in *Sefer Vayikra* [i.e., in our *Parashah*], their faces turned pale. They exclaimed, ‘Who can possibly withstand these?!’ Therefore, Moshe began to calm them, ‘See! You are standing before *Hashem* today!’—Many times you have provoked the Omnipresent to anger and yet He has not destroyed you. Rather, you still continue in His presence. [Until here from *Rashi*]

R’ Amram Zvi Gruenwald z”l (1907-1951; *Dayan* / rabbinical court judge in Oyber-Visheve, Hungary and rabbi in the Fernwald D.P. camp) asks: Why is the *Tochachah* in our *Parashah* not followed by words of comfort?

He answers: The *Tochachah* in our *Parashah* is followed immediately by the instruction to appraise the assets of a person who vows to donate his worth to the *Bet Hamikdash* but does not have enough wealth to fulfill his vow completely. The *Halachah* is that such a person must be left with the tools of his trade and enough assets to sustain himself. This, writes R’ Gruenwald, is the “missing” expression of comfort after the *Tochachah*, for it teaches that *Hashem* never abandons a Jew completely.

(*Zichron Amram Zvi*)

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R’ Shulman continues: Without the foregoing explanation, it would be difficult to understand why the consequences of violating the *Shemittah* are so harsh. After all, observing the *Shemittah*--watching strangers freely picking the produce in one’s fields--is an incredibly difficult challenge. Moreover, the Torah seems to send conflicting messages: For six years, the fields are private property. In certain circumstances, the Torah even permits killing an intruder to protect one’s private property. Then, suddenly, the seventh year arrives and private fields become free for all?!

The answer, R’ Shulman writes, is that the Torah is teaching us a healthy attitude towards money: Private property is recognized and respected, but a person also must know how to restrain his desire for money. One who works on his *Middot* / character traits--such as the negative *Middah* of “*Chemdah*” / covetousness discussed here--in accordance with the Torah will live a life of sanity. Without the Torah’s safeguards, the world becomes an insane place where a Jew could even sell himself as a slave to a heathen.

(Letter “*Bet*” printed at the beginning of *Peninei Ha’chochmah*)

**“Speak to *Bnei Yisrael* and say to them, ‘When you come into the land that I give you, the land shall observe a Sabbath rest for *Hashem*. For six years you may sow your field and for six years you may prune your vineyard, and you may gather in its crop. But the seventh year shall be a complete rest for the land . . .” (25:2-4)**

R’ Eliezer Dovid Gruenwald z”l (1867-1928; rabbi and *Rosh Yeshiva* in Oyber Visheve, Hungary and other towns) writes: These verses seem out of order: First the Torah should say that we may work our fields for six years; then it should say that the seventh year should be a sabbatical! Why does it first say, “The land shall observe a Sabbath rest for *Hashem*”?

He explains: A *Midrash* records that the Torah complained to *Hashem*, “When *Bnei Yisrael* enter the Land, this one will turn to his home, and this one will turn to his vineyard. What will become of me? [Who will study Torah when *Mahn* no longer falls and the Jewish People need to work for their livelihoods?]

*Hashem* appeased the Torah: “I have given them *Shabbat* so that they will have a day on which to engage in Torah study.” [Until here from the *Midrash*]

This, continues R’ Gruenwald, is alluded to in our verses. The “Sabbath rest” referred to in verse 2 is not the *Shemittah*; that is mentioned expressly in verse 4. Rather, verse 2 is reminding us of the importance of observing *Shabbat* after we have entered *Eretz Yisrael* and begun working our fields.

In addition, this verse sheds light on the reason for the *Mitzvah* of *Shemittah*. Even if you have observed the “Sabbath rest,” i.e., you have devoted *Shabbat* to Torah study while working on the weekdays--that is only for six years. In the seventh year, even the weekdays should be like *Shabbat*--devoted to Torah study.

(*Keren Le’Dovid*)

**“For *Bnei Yisrael* are servants to Me, they are My servants, whom I have taken out of the land of Egypt--I am *Hashem*, your *Elokim*.” (25:55)**

R’ Yaakov Chagiz z”l (1620-1674; Morocco, Italy, and Turkey) writes that perhaps this verse means: “*Bnei Yisrael* are servants to Me”--they are already My servants, as is everyone in the world, because I created them. Moreover, “They (*Bnei Yisrael*) are My servants”--they owe special loyalty to Me because I took them out of the land of Egypt.

This, continues R’ Chagiz, certainly obligates us to have *Yirah* / fear and awe of *Hashem*, to sit before Him as servants sit before their master. Moreover, this should motivate a person to want to serve *Hashem*. Because of the importance of these lessons, concludes R’ Chagiz, belief in the Exodus is the key principle in the Torah.

(*Orach Mishor* ch.1)