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## maskil Le'David

### True Freedom

**"For the Children of Israel are servants to Me, they are My servants, whom I have taken out of the land of Egypt - I am Hashem, your G-d"** (Vayikra 25:55).

We often find the Torah mentioning this idea of Bnei Yisrael being Hashem's servants. Again and again we read of how Hashem redeemed Bnei Yisrael from the Egyptian enslavement through many miracles and wonders, and also gave them the Torah, so they would be completely subservient to Him alone, utterly detached from the Egyptian bondage.

On the one hand, the Torah can be viewed as a burdensome commitment: one is required to forgo his personal wishes and desires, sacrificing them for the sake of Hashem's Will. Sometimes, following the correct path can even cause us financial loss, embarrassment, or other similar "difficulties." Nevertheless, man is instructed to obey the holy Torah and conduct himself according to its teachings. However, the Mishna lays down an interesting, seemingly contradictory idea: Despite man being subservient to the Torah, we are told (Avot 6:2), "You can have no freer man than one who engages in the study of the Torah." In light of this, is the Torah considered a yoke and burden, or does it contain an aspect of freedom, to the extent that one who toils in it is considered a free man?

At the beginning of Parshat Bechukotai (Vayikra 26:3) it says, "If you will follow My decrees," and Rashi explains these words: Engage in intensive Torah study. This means the Torah demands that we invest considerable toil and effort. It is not enough for a person to study Torah inattentively and observe its mitzvot by rote, without effort and investment. This strengthens our question: If Torah study requires toil and effort, and toiling in it is a Torah commandment, how then can one define those who engage in Torah as free men?

The answer is that accepting the yoke of Torah and mitzvot is a form of servitude, and this was

in fact Hashem's goal when giving us the Torah. He wished to eradicate from us the yoke of the Egyptian bondage and instead place us under the yoke of Torah and mitzvot. However, anyone who observes the Torah and its commandments sees the fulfillment of "A servant of Hashem, he alone is free" (Psalm Avdei Hazman of the Rihal, *Sha'arei Ha'avodah of Rabbeinu Yonah* 45).

To help clarify this, we will explain with a parable. On Erev Pesach, man is forced to clean his home because he is obligated to remove the *chametz* from every corner and crevice. We all know that this cleaning effort before Pesach amounts to a form of slavery and involves enormous toil. However, as soon as Pesach arrives, all feelings of servitude disappear and are forgotten. Now we feel like free men; free of any toil and trouble.

Similarly, in most Jewish homes Erev Shabbat is a stressful time, with everyone in the household engaged in preparations for the rapidly approaching Shabbat. If a stranger turns up in our home on a Friday, he will certainly notice frenzied activity, and might even feel a certain tension in the atmosphere. But then the time comes to light the Shabbat candles and the men hurry off to the *beit kneset*, and the home is immediately enveloped with a feeling of great tranquility. The entire household feels relaxed and happy, as it says (see Rashi *Bereishit* 2:2), "When Shabbat arrives, rest arrives." Concerning this *Chazal* say (*Avodah Zara* 3a), "One who toils on Erev Shabbat will eat on Shabbat," meaning that one who invests effort and labors on Erev Shabbat, will merit feeling the tranquility and serenity of Shabbat. He will also be able to enjoy and delight in the Shabbat delicacies.

We can apply the lesson of these pressurized and stressful times, such as Erev Pesach and Erev Shabbat, to the times we are obligated to observe mitzvot which involve intensive effort. Sometimes fulfilling mitzvot demands an investment of strength, including the fight against one's evil inclination; it tries very hard to get in the way of our *avodah* in Torah and mitzvot. But when a Jew succeeds in overcoming his *yetzer hara* and, for instance, gets up early to pray with a minyan, that feeling of servitude he feels when pulling himself out of bed is very quickly transformed into a feeling of joy and tranquility - a result of successfully overcoming his inclination.

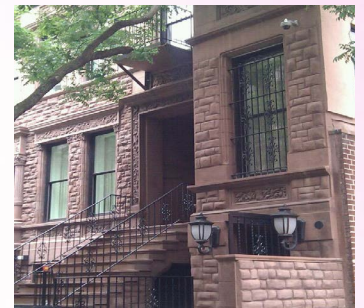
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22 Iyar 5786

9 May 2026

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Behar Bechukotai



## Hilula

22 Iyar

Rabbi Shlomo Eliezer  
Alfandri, the Saba Kadisha

23 Iyar

Rabbi Shmuel Florentine,  
Rav of Salonika

24 Iyar

Rabbi Baruch ben Chaim,  
Rav of Sha'arei Tzion

25 Iyar

Rabbi Chaim Churi,  
Av Beit Din of Gabes,  
Tunisia

26 Iyar

Rabbeinu Moshe Chaim  
Luzzatto

27 Iyar

Rabbi Yitzchak Abulafia

28 Iyar

Shmuel Hanavi





## PARSHAH PEARLS

### Inspiring Reflections

#### All I Did Was Say a Few Words

**“Each of you shall not aggrieve his fellow”** (*Vayikra* 25:17).

This verse, as *Chazal* explain in the Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 58b) refers to hurting someone **with words**; hurting someone **financially** has already been addressed in a previous verse, “When you make a sale to your fellow or make a purchase from the hand of your fellow, do not aggrieve one another.”

How do we define the prohibition of hurting someone with words?

The Gemara continues: If he is a *ba'al teshuva*, do not say to him, “Remember your previous ways.” If he is the son of converts, do not say to him, “Remember your father’s ways.” If he is a convert and comes to learn Torah, do not say to him, “The mouth that ate non-kosher meat and unclean creatures wishes to study the Torah that was uttered by the Almighty!?”

Rabbi Yochanan in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai says: “Hurting someone with words is more severe than hurting someone financially. We learn this from the prohibition of hurting someone with words, which is followed by ‘and you shall fear your G-d.’ When talking about hurting someone financially, it does not say, ‘And you shall fear your G-d.’”

The Torah considers it more severe to hurt someone personally, explains Rabbi Chaim Casar *zt”l*, a Yemenite Sage, in his *sefer Kaitz Hamizbe’ach*, because man may presume he did nothing wrong by simply speaking in a way that people generally speak; he did not actually take anything away from the person.

This is why the Torah is stricter with this prohibition. Although it is only mere words, a person’s speech can cause more harm than anything else. This demonstrates how careful we must be with our speech – it can very quickly lead to prohibitions of hurting others with words.



## WORDS OF THE SAGES

### Just Being Family is Not Enough

The Chafetz Chaim relates a wonderful story that demonstrates the difference between one who toils Torah, to one who studies Torah without investing effort. As an introduction, he quotes the Mishna from *Sanhedrin*, “All Yisrael have a share in the World to Come, as it says: ‘Your people are all righteous *tzaddikim*; they shall inherit the land forever.’”

“Your people are all righteous!” If this is the case, why should one go to the trouble of continually doing and progressing – after all, we are all promised a share in the World to Come? The Chafetz Chaim *zt”l* asks this question, which he answers with the following story:

Kiev was home to a very affluent Jew called Yisrael Brodsky. He owned many large factories that employed hundreds of workers, managers, accountants, secretaries, and cleaners. Each one received a wage according to his position and rank.

Brodsky was renowned for his open-handedness. He generously donated to all charity causes and distributed his money freely in support of Torah institutions, as well as poor and needy families. His concern for relatives was well-known, and if one of them fell upon hard times he would support them with a monthly allowance, saying, “It is as though I have an additional employee.”

He visited his factories from time to time, displaying interest in the goings-on. He would meet with the managers and assess the state of his factories.

On one occasion he said to himself, “My managers are always the focus of my attention. It is about time I showed interest in the dedicated workers too, expressing my appreciation for their hard work and efforts.”

He decided to drop in at the factories, give his workers a nice bonus for their efforts, and share in the success of his business. He arrived at one of the workplaces, where all the workers stood on line as he spoke to each one. He showed an interest in their work, offered words of encouragement and handed over the bonus.

The first in line was a veteran worker who introduced himself as having eighteen years’ experience. Brodsky patted him on the shoulder and gave him the bonus.

The next in line introduced himself as “responsible for the morning shift.” Brodsky thanked him and presented him with the bonus.

The third introduced himself as the operator of the factory’s central machine. Brodsky expressed his appreciation and handed over the bonus.

And so it went with the tens of workers; after introducing themselves, Brodsky thanked them profusely and presented them with their bonus.

Finally, he approached the last in line and asked him what position he held. He answered, “I am a third cousin of your father and I hang around here.” All the workers burst out laughing and Brodsky replied, “Very nice. As a relative, your presence is welcome.” But the bonus – he did not receive.

The Chafetz Chaim concluded: “Now it is clear. Indeed, all Am Yisrael have a portion in the World to Come! They are family! But there are those who only ‘hang around’ here in This World as part of the family of Am Yisrael, and there are those who also invest in the service of the Factory Owner – the Creator of the World! How great is their reward and the kindness Hashem showers upon them!”

It is terrible for someone to simply loiter around and pass the time in This World. He should be exceedingly grateful for being allowed to remain on the premises. But those who toil in Torah and observe the mitzvot with much effort – they clearly merit the bonuses and blessings of Hashem, in This World and the Next.



## WALKING IN THEIR WAYS

Tidbits of faith and trust penned by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi **David Chananya Pinto, shlita**

### What Caused the Most Punctual Train in France to be Delayed?

The great virtue of fixing times for Torah study can lead man to the highest summits. This idea finds expression in the following incident which took place with my *talmid*, HaRav Gavriel Elbaz n"y, today the president of our institutions in Lyon.

The story took place on a Motza'ei Shabbat, when I was scheduled to fly to Brazil for a wedding at which I was asked to officiate.

I had planned to travel by train from Lyon to Paris, where I would take a connecting train to the airport. There, I would take a direct flight to Brazil. The trip was perfectly timed, and any delay might make me miss the wedding.

The only train from Lyon to Paris on Motza'ei Shabbat was scheduled to leave ten minutes after Shabbat ends. Immediately after havdalah, I rushed to the train station, accompanied by Rav Elbaz and his brother.

As soon as I reached the train station, much to my dismay, I realized I had taken my thirteen-year-old son's hat instead of my own. It would certainly arouse attention, if not cause an outright *chillul Hashem*, were I to walk around in this too-small hat. I was very distressed by this and told Rav Elbaz that it seemed to be a sign from Heaven that I should not take this trip.

I must add that the family committed to conduct the wedding according to Jewish law only if I would be there. My missing the train would have disastrous results.

Rav Elbaz's brother spoke up. "Doesn't the Rav constantly teach us, day in and day out, about the importance of trust in Hashem? Aren't we enjoined to place our trust in Him in every situation? Let us believe wholeheartedly that Hashem will send the Rav his hat, and we will make the train in time for the wedding."

His words certainly gave me hope, but I still didn't believe that an actual miracle would occur. Skeptically, I turned to him and said, "Look, it's already late. In another minute, the train is scheduled to stop here. How do you suppose I will retrieve my hat in that short time?!"

Rav Elbaz suggested I phone my family and ask them to rush my hat to the train station. I followed his suggestion, although it seemed futile. By the natural order of things, there was no chance I would get my hat in time.

The train arrived at the station with a roar. I looked at it with a worried glance, whereas Rav Elbaz stood by calmly, certain it would wait for the hat to make an appearance.

For some unknown reason, the train stood in the station much longer than usual. It ended up waiting a full quarter of an hour, the exact amount of time it took for a member of my family to rush over and bring me my hat. I took the hat and, without waiting a second longer, jumped onto the train, just as its doors were about to close. HaRav Elbaz and his brother taught me a lesson in faith.

To this day, I cannot fathom how the most punctual train in all of France was delayed for such a long time at one stop. But I was impressed by Rav Elbaz's complete faith in Hashem. Rav Elbaz fixes regular times for Torah study which he upholds at all costs, and one who does so merits faith and trust in Hashem. I am certain that in his merit the train was delayed. Due to his great faith, his prayers were answered immediately.



## FROM THE TREASURY

Based on the teachings of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi **David Chananya Pinto, shlita**

### Torah Toil Enters Our Bodies

**"If you will follow My decrees and observe My commandments and perform them"** (*Vayikra* 26:3).

Rashi comments on the words "and observe My commandments": You should engage in intensive Torah study.

The Mussar commentaries write that toiling in Torah causes our bodies to warm up; the Torah actually enters our innards. As David Hamelech says (*Tehillim* 40:9), "Your Torah is in my innards."

Torah is not like foods which enter the intestines, and are then partially excreted as waste. Rather, the Torah enters and does not leave. This is the meaning of David Hamelech's words; his insides contain only Torah without any waste.

However, there are some who misuse their Torah study and use it as a tool for conceit. Their punishment is severe because they transform the Torah into waste *r"l*.

This is the reason why the Generation of the Wilderness did not have bodily needs, because "Torah was given to those who ate the manna." Just as Torah is Heavenly, so too is food that descends from Heaven. Just as the manna was absorbed by their intestines and not excreted in any form, so too the Torah was fully absorbed in their intestines.

Hashem wants us to submit ourselves to the holy Torah; only with submission can one come to properly fulfil the Torah. Rashi learns out the mitzvah of toiling in Torah from the commandment to observe the mitzvot. This teaches us that if there is a lack of toil in Torah, our observance of the mitzvot will also be deficient, since one is dependent on the other.

Some people do not schedule regular times for Torah study, but outwardly they portray to be Torah observant. The reality is such, however, that a Jew cannot meticulously fulfil all the mitzvot without toiling in Torah. The Torah understands man's soul: observing mitzvot with meticulousness requires toil. Toiling in Torah demonstrates that this Jew is subservient to Hashem's mitzvot, and in this way he proves that he is truly a servant of Hashem.

# A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA



## What Can We Do to Help our Fellow

The obligation to look out for others is detailed in this week's *parsha*: "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" (*Vayikra* 25:35). The Torah obligates us to take positive measures and refrain from certain behaviors so that a fellow Jew can continue living his life with respect.

The command "so that he can live with you" is the general directive from which all the other details stem. With this the Torah addresses the Jewish person, directing him to consider not only himself but also others; we should not be selfish or self-centered, but rather turn our attention to others. This is the Torah attitude.

In this spirit, the Mashgiach of Kfar Chasidim, Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian *zt"l*, would routinely instruct his *talmidim* that after they wash their hands, they should fill up the cup for the next in line. "Either way, each person has to fill up the cup once, so why not fill up for your friend?" was his answer to someone who wondered about this custom. The Mashgiach explained that since we must accustom ourselves to thinking about others and their needs, it is preferable for each student to do something specifically on behalf of his friend.

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This is the meaning of *Chazal* (*Avot* 6:2), "You can have no freer man than one who engages in the study of the Torah" – meaning, he is free of the *yetzer hara's* grasp. When we overcome our *yetzer hara* and fulfill mitzvot, despite all exertion involved, that "subjugation" lends us a feeling of satisfaction and joy. This is true freedom that is unparalleled.

*Avodat Hashem* is a servitude without suffering

### He Concealed His Pain in His Heart

The *sefer Noam Siach* relates a phenomenal incident. The *gaon* Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *zt"l*, Rosh Yeshiva of Kol Torah, was told the bitter news of his wife's passing on a Motza'ei Shabbat; he hurried over to Shaare Zedek hospital. In the elevator, he happened to meet a former *talmid*. This *talmid* was excited to meet his rebbi, and hurried to share the news of his son's birth.

**Rabbi Shlomo Zalman *zt"l* grasped his hand and blessed him, with his famous smile, showing great interest in the birth and the welfare of mother and baby, as he always did – as if he was not on the way to sit by his wife's body...**

We find a source in the Torah for this outstanding conduct. Avraham Avinu wished to bury his wife, Sara. She had just passed away, but in order to bury her, he had to conduct a business deal with Ephron the Hittite. But first it says, "Avraham rose up from the presence of his dead, and spoke to the children of Het" (*Bereisit* 23:3). The *gaon* Rabbi Yerucham of Mir *zt"l* explains:

When Avraham had to speak to the Hittites, "He rose up" – as though his dead wife was not lying in his presence! He was about to address human beings, so out of respect for them, he wiped away all his tears, washed his

and pain. It is a servitude of the connection and commitment between Bnei Yisrael and their Creator. On the contrary, when a Jew invests in this servitude, it truly makes him feel like a free man.

In the Shabbat morning prayers we say, "Moshe rejoiced in the gift of his portion: that You called him a faithful servant."

This shows us that being defined as Hashem's

servant brought Moshe Rabbeinu enormous joy. He was not just any servant, but a *faithful* servant to his Creator. Furthermore, Hashem is the One who endowed him with this title, as it says, "You called him a faithful servant." Similarly, we find that many *tzaddikim* and great Sages would add the words "*eved Hashem*" when signing their name – a sign of the great joy and merit they felt from being servants of Hashem.

### Every Jewish Person is Your Brother

How can we follow in the footsteps of our great leaders? How can we rise above ourselves and break through our self-centeredness, fulfilling the Torah command "so that he can live with you?" This directive compels us to be benevolent to others through acts of charity and kindness, taking all their needs into consideration so they can continue living in a respectful fashion.

**The answer lies in one word which repeats itself with impressive consistency throughout these *parshiot*. "Achicha – your brother!" What is demanded of man is that he should help *his brother*. Not just anyone, but your brother! Consider every Jewish person to be your brother, and you will then automatically proceed according to the Torah guidelines.**

Because for a brother, one will go above and beyond – "So that he can live with you."

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**"Contemplate and see that Hashem is good"**

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