

life

LESSONS

CRYING OUT FOR THEM

When the Ponevezher Rav was a young man, he visited the Chofetz Chaim at his home in Radin. When he entered the house, he saw the rebbetzin busy in the kitchen, but from the attic upstairs he heard screaming and wailing, the likes of which he had never heard before. Even more amazing, the rebbetzin did not seem to be perturbed at all by the noise.

“What is all the wailing about?” the future Ponevezher Rav asked the rebbetzin.

The rebbetzin told him that her husband, the Chofetz Chaim, had heard that a woman in the nearby city of Eishishok was having great difficulty in childbirth, posing a danger to both herself and the baby. So he was davening to Hashem on their behalf. The rebbetzin said this as if it were nothing unusual.

“If this is what the Chofetz Chaim is like,” the Ponevezher Rav said, “then I will stay here in Radin to learn under him.”

And thus, the Ponevezher Rav became a *talmid* of the Chofetz Chaim.

This story has a sequel. Many years later, when a rabbi told over this story to an audience, an elderly man approached him after the speech. He said, “I am the baby that was born in Eishishok that day thanks to the prayers of the Chofetz Chaim.”

Adapted from The Unbroken Chain by Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, with the permission of the author.



gem

OF THE WEEK

GIVING UP THE LAND

By Rabbi Moshe Pogrow

The right of private ownership of the land is null and void during the *shemittah* year. Nothing grows exclusively for the owner of the field. All—man and animal—have a share in the land’s produce. There is no special right for the owner.

One is forbidden to stop people from entering his field; rather, he must allow free access for both man and to animals, and it is forbidden to prevent them from picking and eating the produce. During *shemittah*, all the produce of his field is *hefker*, and he, the owner, like everyone else, may only take home small quantities, enough to eat for a limited period.

The Torah says in Shemos (23:11): *v’hashviis tishmetena u’netashta v’achlu evyonei amecha v’yisram tochal chayas hasadeh*—in the seventh year, you are to let the land lie fallow and abandon it, so that the poor among your people may eat of it, and what they leave over, let the wild animals eat. The owner of the field does not even have the right to distribute the produce to the poor.

Men and domesticated animals can eat in the house—as long as the wild
continued on reverse side

powerful
PRAYER

OSEH SHALOM:
OUR GREATEST WISH



The last few sentences of Birkas Hamazon, beginning with *yiru es Hashem*, informally express ideas about Hashem’s *rachamim*, our gratitude and trust, and our prayer for peace. They are not part of Birkas Hamazon, strictly speaking. The pasuk of *oseh shalom* forms the conclusion of the *tefillah*, as it does in Shemone Esrei. Our greatest wish is always for peace on us and upon all Israel. In Birkas Hamazon, this sentence takes on a special significance. For as the Midrash explains, “What good is an abundance of food and drink without peace? Therefore, all blessings end with peace.”

Adapted from World of Prayer by Rabbi Elie Munk

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A UNIFIED SYSTEM

By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation

This week's *parsha* discusses the *halachos* of *shemittah* and *yovel*. Inserted in the middle are two negative commandments. One is the prohibition to cheat in business by overcharging or underpaying, and the second is the prohibition against hurting feeling through insults or *ona'as devarim*. Pairing *mitzvos bein adam lamakom* with *mitzvos bein adam lachaveiro* is a common pattern in the Torah.

In last week's *parsha*, too, the Torah inserts the mitzvah of various harvest-related gifts to the poor in the middle of a discussion of various Yamim Tovim. Rashi says that this teaches us that whoever gives *leket*, *shikcha*, and *peah* (stalks of grain that fall to the ground during the harvest, forgotten bundles, and an unharvested corner designated for the poor, respectively) is considered as if he has built the Beis Hamikdash and brought his *korbanos* in it.

Parshas Kedoshim, which we read two weeks ago, contains 72 *mitzvos*. Some of them are *bein adam lamakom*, while others are *mitzvos bein adam lachaveiro*. One might expect the Torah to separate them into different thematic sections, placing all the *bein adam lamakom* in one section and all the interpersonal commandments in another. But that is not what the Torah did. The two types of mitzvos are intermingled, switching back and forth from one to the other. Honoring parents, *avodah zarah*. *Korbanos*, gifts for the poor. *Lashon hara*, workers' wages, *shaatnez*, *orlah*.

Likewise, in Parshas Mishpatim, Rashi tells us that the Sanhedrin must be placed right near the *mizbei'ach*. Indeed, the marble chamber in which the highest court convened was situated just steps away from it. The *mizbei'ach*, where we offer *korbanos*, represents the ultimate in *bein adam lamakom*. The Sanhedrin is the seat of justice, the place from which societal workings and disputes are resolved.

Why must these two be placed together? To teach us that our Torah is a unified system of *avodas Hashem*. No one may favor one type of mitzvah over another. Let no one think that being *machmir* on *frumkeit* makes him a *tzaddik* although his business dealings are not honest. One may not block another's driveway when rushing to catch Barchu. Nor may a person treat Shabbos and *kashrus* lightly and make up for it by donating a lot of money to *tzedakah*.

Hashem expects us to honor our fellow Jew with utmost sensitivity and attention to his needs. He also expects us to constantly draw closer to Him through the performance of His mitzvos. We can do both. 🕯

animals can eat in the field. As soon as each kind of produce stops being available in the open for animals, the right to keep it in the house ends.

There is a particular time at which each kind of *peiros shevi'is* must "disappear" from the house.

This time is called *shaas habiur*, and it applies not only to produce, but also to any money that has become invested with *kedushas shevi'is* through the sale of the produce.

In practice, the *shevi'is* laws constitute an unparalleled act of homage. Through its fields, gardens, and meadows, through every fruit and blade of grass, a whole nation proclaims for an entire year: "Our land belongs to G-d, and we are merely *gerim v'toshavim*, strangers and sojourners, with Him."

Without haughtiness, without pride of ownership, they join in complete equality with the poorest of men, becoming equal even with the wild animals of the field. During *shemittah*, G-d alone is exalted. 🕯

Based on the commentary of Rav Shmshon Raphael Hirsch zt"l on Chumash, with permission from the publisher.



wonder WORLD

GETTING THEIR FEET WET



What bird can walk on water?

The smallest seabirds in the world, the storm petrel is barely larger than a common sparrow. It is a sooty black color, with a square tail and heavy black bill.

Storm petrels have a unique feeding style; they appear to walk on water as they patter across the surface of the waves with their wings in a V position, scooping up small fish, plankton, and crustaceans.

Storm petrels are nocturnal and can be heard singing from their nests at night. They can live up to 11 years—impressive for such small birds. 🕯

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