

**Pardes from Jerusalem - Weekly Parsha Podcast –**  
**Parshat Behar**  
**ניחא דליבא – Cultivating Tranquility of the Heart**

A teaching from Reb Sholom Brodt, z"l, Yeshivat Simchat Shlomo, Nachlaot, Jerusalem, May 2012, inspired by the Ishbitzer Rebbe. Based on a verse in Proverbs 17:1, "Better a dry crust and tranquility and calmness within, than a house full of feasting with strife."

"טוב פת חרבה ושלום בה, מבית מלא זבחי ריב" (משלי יז, א).

The Ishbitzer Rebbe, Rav Mordechai Yosef Leiner, 1801 – 1854, Poland, teaches in his most notable work, *Mei HaShiloach*, that there are basically three groups of *mitzvot* in *Parshat Behar*: *Shmittah* (Sabbatical year), *Yovel* (Jubilee year) and *Reebeet* (the prohibition of charging interest on loans).

He also understands the opening verse in *Parshat Behar* as relating to tranquility of the heart: "...when you come to the land that I am giving to you, **the land – the HEART – will rest** (be tranquil), a Shabbat for HaShem" (Leviticus 25:2).

"...כי תבאו אל הארץ אשר אני נתן לכם ושבתה הארץ, שבת לה' " (ויקרא כה, ב).

HaShem is promising the children of Israel that when they come to the *Aretz*, the Land of Israel, they will attain **ניחא דליבא** - *naicah d'leeba* - tranquility and calmness of the heart. The Zohar (1:183b) teaches the connection between "the land" and "the heart" when stating that, "Eretz Yisrael is the heart of the world, for it is the portal to heaven. Just like the heart is the source of life for the body and it divides and spreads out life force to all the parts of the body, so too Eretz Yisrael is the source of life for the soul, spreading out this life force and bountiful influence of health to all peoples of the world."

In fact, in our relationship with the Divine, the Compassionate One desires more than anything one's heart (Zohar 2:182b, Sanhedrin 106b) - רחמנא לבא בעי.

When we are really in love with someone, we give this person our hearts and we trust them fully with our hearts. The tranquil heart loves. At home, it experiences tranquility even amidst turbulence.

The Ishbitzer further explains that **these three groups of mitzvot serve as the gateways and channels for attaining tranquility of the heart. Each of these mitzvot derives from having faith and trusting that the Divine provides for us.**

## **1 – Shmittah – The Sabbatical Year (Leviticus 25:1-8)**

*Shmittah*, “letting go, relaxing one’s grip on, releasing” - **letting go** of our perceived ownership of the land that the Divine is giving us; **relaxing one’s grip on** our innate need to feel that we are in power and in control of our survival and destiny; **releasing** our fears of saying, “HaShem, I am ready to trust you with my very survival.” In this world we like to be the owners, we like to be the decision makers. We want to and we have a need to feel that we are in control. Imagine a whole year of not cultivating your fields, an entire year of putting your trust for your *parnassah* - livelihood – completely into HaShem’s hands. There is a moral instructional aspect to this mitzvah: **to increase our *emunah* and *bitachon* – faith and trust – in HaShem.** Actually, our *parnassah* is always in HaShem’s hands. Our awareness of this truth is heightened and deepened during the *Shmittah* year.

We clearly need to be in control. But the secret is to know how to be in control of **ourselves**, to make sacred and dedicated space for the *Shechinah* – the Divine Presence within us – to manifest and become revealed. We need to learn how to be in our space without blocking everyone else out, without blocking out the Divine’s Light. We need to learn how to bridge our *emunah* from the mind to *bitachon* in the heart, and from the heart into our very limbs and bones, so that even our bodies will not sense any lack of space or loss as a result of “letting go.” Even better, we deeply yearn for an embodied experience in welcoming the *Shechinah*’s Presence within and around us.

During the *Shmittah* year, the *Netivot Shalom* (Rav Sholom Noach Berezovsky, the Slonimer Rebbe, 1911 – 2000, made Aliyah during the British Mandate and lived in Jerusalem) teaches that we are learning to bring our faith into our very bones. The holy Shabbat and the holy Land nourish the faith of the mind and heart. However, the Shabbat of the Land nourishes the faith of our limbs and bones. Imagine your body being nourished with faith by letting go, by sharing your food with everyone. Sharing equally and not grabbing, opening the hands to give and receive, allowing and teaching the body to join with the soul in the delights of being in relationship with the Divine and walking the path of Her mitzvot. **As our faith and trust are nourished by the observance of *Shmittah*, we attain tranquility of the heart.**

## **2 – Yovel – The Jubilee Year (Leviticus 25: 8-13)**

The *Yovel* year comes every 50<sup>th</sup> year, immediately after every seventh *Shmittah* year. In addition to following the same agricultural laws as in the *Shmittah* year (hence we were not to work the land for two consecutive years), we are also commanded to **“let go”** in other ways – to **let go** of our slaves (y.s. - *more similar to indentured servitude*) and our dependence on them and to let them free. To **let go** of ancestral land that we bought from others who had sold these lands due to financial hardship. Ownership of a portion of land in Israel that is larger than one’s real share can only be temporary. During the *Yovel* year everyone was to be restored to their real place in the land. **Here too we learn to attain tranquility of the heart by further strengthening our trust in the Divine rather than in the possession of people and of land.**

### **3 – Reebeet – Prohibition of Usury (Leviticus 25: 35-38)**

The Torah teaches that we are obligated to help our impoverished brothers, the convert and the settler whose means of support have become unstable. The highest level of helping the needy person – the highest level of *tzedakah* and *gemilut chassadim* (performing acts of loving kindness, as described by Maimonides - is to provide the person with a job or with an interest-free loan. Many Jewish individuals and all Jewish communities characteristically have a *g'mach* fund (short for *gemilut chassidim*), also known as a Hebrew Free Loan Society. A Jew may not charge a fellow Jew interest, nor may a Jew pay interest to a fellow Jew. Although you may argue that there is nothing morally wrong with charging and paying interest on a loan, HaShem forbids this. Why?

Within the Jewish community, **HaShem wants us to be close with each other**, and so He **commands us** to set aside a portion of our wealth to be used in helping our impoverished brothers and sisters to help them get back on their feet (with money that might otherwise be used to increase our personal wealth), by providing interest-free loans as needed, and **forbids us** to charge or pay interest on these loans. Just like you would expect your father, mother, brother or sister to help you out with an interest-free loan when needed, HaShem expects you to do the same for your fellow Jewish brothers and sisters.

HaShem is asking us to let go of a certain degree of ownership over our money and to trust Him that He is our Provider and will continue to provide us with all that we truly need. **Again, we learn that tranquility of the heart is gained through trusting in HaShem.**

Reb Sholom teaches that we make holy space in our lives for HaShem, for others and for ourselves in the observance of these three mitzvot. We create a space of sharing and helping. Then the gates of blessings for *parnassah* – financial sustainability and livelihood – are opened wider and wider and the channels are clear to receive HaShem's abundant blessings. **The closer we are with each other, the more we experience closeness with the Divine.**

He concludes by reminding us that tranquility of the heart at any given moment does not necessarily mean that everything appears fine (even if in the deeper sense it really is, we don't always experience our lives that way). In fact, we do need to do our *tikkun* – both inwardly and outwardly – healing and fixing ourselves and the world at large. Rather, tranquility of the heart suggests that we are able to show up, to be present and to go about whatever needs to be done and whatever the Divine is asking of us without getting all shook up and losing our inner balance. The heart is working and struggling but it is doing so in a state of tranquility. It knows when it's at home and is fixing its true home, enhancing the inner beauty and inviting the presence of the holy Shechinah to be revealed.

May we all be blessed to have a tranquil heart, a peaceful heart --- to do whatever each of us is doing **with all our heart**, to feel at home with ourselves, where each one of us can give ourselves permission to be one's true self, one's higher self. **THIS is tranquility of the heart!**  
Ken Yehi Ratzon! So may it be so!