



Table Talk Parshat Behar

In this week's Parsha, we find discussion about how to treat people physically and emotionally.

ויקרא כ"ה:מ"ב-מ"ג

כִּי־עֲבָדָתִי כֵּם אֲשֶׁר־הָזָאתִי אֶתְם מִזֶּרֶד מִצְרַיִם לֹא יִמְכְּרֶה מִמְּבָרֶת עָבֶד: לְאַתְּנִקְרָה בָּזֶה בְּמִרְךָ וְנִנְאָתֶם מִאֱלֹקִיךְ:

Leviticus 25:42-43

For they are My servants, whom I freed from the land of Egypt; they may not give themselves over into servitude. You shall not rule over him ruthlessly; you shall fear your God.

"In miracles, God changes physical nature but never human nature. Were He to do so, the entire project of the Torah – the free worship of free human beings – would have been rendered null and void. There is no greatness in programming a million computers to obey instructions. God's greatness lay in taking the risk of creating a being, Homo sapiens, capable of choice and responsibility and thus of freely obeying God. God wanted humankind to abolish slavery, but by their own choice, in their own time. Slavery as such was not abolished in Britain and America until the nineteenth century, and in America, not without a civil war. The challenge to which Torah legislation was an answer is: how can one create a social structure in which, of their own accord, people will eventually come to see slavery as wrong and freely choose to abandon it?"

- The Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

ויקרא כ"ה:י"ז

וְלֹא תֹנוּ אִישׁ אֶת־עָמִיתוֹ וְנִנְאָתֶם מִאֱלֹקִיךְ כִּי אַנְּיִ הָאֱלֹקִים:

Leviticus 25:17

Do not wrong one another, but fear your God; for I, Hashem, am your God.

רש"י על ויקרא כ"ה:י"ז:א'

ולא תנו איש את עמיתו. באה הזהיר על אונאתם דברים, שלא יקנית את חברו ולא ישיאנו עזה שאינה הוגנת לו, לפי דברו והנתנו של יושע, וא"ת מי יודע אם ותפונתי לרעה? לכך נאמר ונראת מִאֱלֹקִיךְ — כיודע מוחשבות הוא יודע. כל דבר שפיטור ללב, שאין מכיר אלא מי ששהמקשבה בלבו, נאמר בו ונראת מִאֱלֹקִיךְ (ספרא; בבא מציעא נ"ה):

Rashi on Leviticus 25:17:1

YE SHALL NOT THEREFORE BE EXTORTIONATE TO ONE ANOTHER — Here Scripture warns against vexing by words (wounding a person's feelings) — that one should not annoy his fellow-man, nor give him an advice which is unfitted for him, but is in accordance with the plan and the advantage of the adviser.

Let's Talk!

How does the Torah teach us that slavery is not right?

Why did Hashem create the world, leaving some decisions up to human beings?

Has it been hard for people to choose to give up slavery?

What are ways that our words can hurt people's feelings?

How is misleading someone, giving them advice that helps you and not them, a very wrong thing to do?

How does being empathetic help us watch our words?



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