



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־עֲבָדֵי הֵם אֲשֶׁר־הוֹצֵאתִי אֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם לֹא יִמְכְּרוּ
מִמֶּנֶּה עֶבֶד: לֹא־תִרְדֶּה בּוֹ בְּכָרְךָ וְיִרְאֶת מְאֻלְקִיד:

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 תוֹנוּ אִישׁ אֶת־עֲמִיתוֹ וְיִרְאֶת מְאֻלְקִיד כִּי אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

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 תונו איש את עמיתו. כאן הזהיר על אונאת דברים, שלא יקניט את חברו ולא ישיאנו עצה שאינה הוגנת לו, לפי דרכו והנאותו של יועץ, וא"ת מי יודע אם נתפונתי לרעה? לך נאמר ויראת מאלקיד – היודע מהשבות הוא יודע. כל דבר המסור ללב, שאין מכיר אלא מי שהמחשבה בלבו, נאמר בו ויראת מאלקיד (ספרא; בבא מציעא נ"ח):

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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