



Parashat Hashavua Behar Bechukotai, Iyar 26, 5785

Harav Shaul Israeli zt"l
Founder and President

About Optimism in Times of Crisis

Harav Yosef Carmel

We will share ideas from the *haftara* that we will be missing this year because of the double *parasha*. The *haftara* of Behar deals with the commandment to Yirmiyahu to acquire fields in *Eretz Yisrael* even though the destruction of the Land was about to occur. The *perek* (Yirmiyahu 32), which begins a few *p'sukim* before the *haftara*, introduces the timing as the tenth year of Tzidkiyahu, which makes it a year before the destruction of the *Beit Hamikdash* and the end of Tzidkiyahu's reign. Yirmiyahu tells with certainty that the king will be caught and taken into exile in Bavel (ibid. 3-5).

Yirmiyahu underwent years of suffering and danger. Hashem did not allow him to form a family (ibid. 16:2). His neighbors tried to hurt him in different ways (ibid. 18:18, 20). He was suspected of sins, and King Yehoyakim threw him into jail. Only divine intervention saved Yirmiyahu (ibid. 36:26). Similarly, Tzidkiyahu allowed his officers to throw him into a pit, where he sank into mud (38:6), and he survived only through the intervention of a righteous officer.

Despite all of these hardships, Yirmiyahu taught his nation that there was what to be optimistic about in the long term. Members of the eternal nation should know that Hashem will not abandon His nation (see Tehillim 94:14). So, the prophet of destruction was also a prophet of liberation.

As Behar's *haftara* indicates (Yirmiyahu 32: 9-15), even at a time of famine, on the eve of destruction, Yirmiyahu bought a field. The text describes the process in detail – the writing of a document, its signing, the paying of money, the preservation of the document. It then spells out that buying land in *Eretz Yisrael* would become prevalent because the nation would return from the upcoming exile.

Our generations have seen *Eretz Yisrael* transformed from a land primarily desolate from the time of the destruction of the second *Beit Hamikdash*, into the base for the marvelous ingathering of exiles. Hashem had us shake off the ashes of Aushwitz and form a flourishing state. Our generation has proven its dedication to the cause of rebuilding our ancestral home. Almost all have stepped forward to help on behalf of the nation and its Land, not losing hope despite the horrible blow we took on Simchat Torah 5784 and all of the brave soldiers who fell, the many who were injured, and the hostages, many of whom have still not returned home. We continue on with dedication despite the hatred of Jews that has spread throughout the world. We must follow the path of Yirmiyahu, unified with one heart, progressing step by step with belief in Hashem and confidence, strengthening and entrenching our beloved state. We are on the path to the building of a society that will do "charity and justice," as we can learn from *Avraham Avinu* (Bereishit 18:19), and "justice and charity," as we can learn from King David (Shmuel II, 8:15).

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by Rav Daniel Mann

Keeping Bread on the Table

Question: I learned that one should leave bread on the table until *Birkat Hamazon*, but at most, I see this done on Shabbat. Should I be careful to do so also during the week?

Answer: This practice comes from the *gemara* (Sanhedrin 92a), which says that one needs to leave bread on the table if he wants to have blessing. The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 180:1-2) brings this idea and also writes in more halachic language not to remove the bread until after *Birkat Hamazon*.

Several reasons are given (see Mishna Berura 180:1-2). Most of them focus on *bentching*, which perhaps explains why the concept only appears regarding bread. The Zohar is quoted as saying that in order for *Birkat Hamazon* to leave blessing, there must be something left on which the blessing can take hold and then “expand.” (Along the mystical side of *Birkat Hamazon*, the Kaf Hachayim recommends keeping salt on the table during *Birkat Hamazon*, so the table will resemble a *mizbe'ach*.) The Levush (ad loc. 1-2) explains that it is proper for it to be evident what one is thanking Hashem for, and also to show that he had more than enough to eat. The one explanation that focuses on the meal itself comes from Rashi (on the *gemara*) – we want there to be food left to give a poor person.

One difference between the reasons relates to the size of the piece. According to Rashi, it should be considerable (Sha’ar Hatziyun 180:3). Rashi’s explanation does not seem relevant nowadays, so Az Nidberu (XI:46) says that where it is uncommon for a poor person to come (we add – if he comes, we will not give him leftover bread), one does not have to leave a nice-sized piece. Another difference is that according to the others, the bread does not need to be on the table while eating, but can be removed and returned for *bentching*.

Why indeed do many not follow this practice, especially during the week? Yalkut Yosef (OC 180:(1)) says that since poor people are not an issue, any leftover is enough, including crumbs, and presumably there are always crumbs. It is difficult, though, to assume that the other elements can be accomplished with inadvertent, tiny leftover bread, and the classical sources who say to leave bread also do not seem to assume this.

I heard third hand in the name of an important *talmid chacham* that he does not follow this practice because in our days, it will likely cause one to waste or even disgrace the bread (see Shulchan Aruch ibid. 3-4). Again, the question is: what changed that this should be a problem, when the *gemara* and *poskim* were not concerned?

It is **possible** that the different usage of bread in our days has played a role. It is clear from many sources (including Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 89:4) that traditionally, one would bring a loaf of bread to the table and cut off pieces as needed. (The concept of “sliced bread” is a 20th century innovation.) The normal thing, then, is for there to be bread left over from the loaf at the end of the meal, and then the practice is not to remove it before *bentching*. Now, it is more common for people, if they eat bread at all at a weekday meal, to bring the number of slices they want. Therefore, arguably, it is less common for there to be leftover pieces, and people have less of an idea what to do with them.

It is difficult to know whether this practice is a full-fledged halachic obligation or a recommended *minhag* linked to the prospect of *beracha* (see Yalkut Yosef ibid.). It is also difficult to know how to deal with a situation in which there is lack of adherence to such a codified practice – was there logic to its suspension or was it a case of a not famous *halacha* just being forgotten or ignored, especially under changed settings?

If one has a loaf or extra slices on the table, we recommend keeping some there until *bentching* or returning leftovers for *bentching* (but not a full loaf – see *gemara* ibid). If he just brought a roll or sandwiches to the table, it is hard to know whether to recommend bringing bread just to have for *bentching*, especially when not eating at one’s own table (see Yalkut Yosef ibid.).

“Behind the Scenes” Zoom shiur

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Igrot HaRe'aya - Letters of Rav Kook

Excitement over a Friend's New Newspaper – #319

Date and Place: 4 Menachem Av 5670 (1910), Rechovot

Recipient and Background: Rav Meir Berlin (Bar Ilan). Rav Berlin, the youngest child of Rav Kook's *rosh yeshiva* at Volozhin, the Netziv, and brother of Rav Chaim Berlin, Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem with whom Rav Kook recently shared several correspondences. Rav Meir Berlin had begun, while still living in Europe, to be involved in communal affairs as an activist, and later a leader, of the religious Zionist movement's Mizrahi organization. At this time, he was in the midst of founding a newspaper about Jewish national life from a religious perspective, "*Ha'ivri*." Rav Kook, who was fifteen years older than Rav Berlin, knew the latter as a child in Volozhin, when Rav Kook was a student as a young man.

Body: I am at this moment visiting the pleasant *moshava* Rechovot, may it be built firmly. I am totally enchanted with the hope and consolation Hashem provides, as I see with my eyes the increasing adornment of what was previously our desired but desolate Land, as our brethren, who are scattered in exile, slowly return to it.

My heart widens as I see the dwellings of peaceful people, the pleasant orchards, with impressive grapevines, fig trees, and pomegranates, which grow from the clumps of earth of our nation's Land. [On the other hand,] my kidneys pain me over the national soul, which comes from a holy pristine source, from the well of its life, the light of Hashem, i.e., the laws of the Torah of life and His holy word. This national soul (i.e., the most devoted to Hashem) is sleeping and sits off to the side (i.e., does not take part in the development of the Land) because those who have left the path of life (i.e., are not religious) and forget Hashem, and those who are most aligned with Hashem feel like foreigners to each other. Because of this and that, those with the greatest proclivity for blessed activity and wonderful characteristics will not be able to reveal their grandeur in a way that will be appreciated by large parts of our nation, who require reawakening at this time in the most significant meaning of the term, a reawakening of truth with all its splendor.

My dear friend, your dear letter, was like lightning from the sky, with the plans you sent me for the newspaper, "*Ha'ivri*" (The Hebrew). I read it, and my spirit was filled with life. The vitality of my earlier days, and the dew of your childhood flashed before my eyes, together with the image of the storehouse of a life of sanctity and love, which the brilliant man of Israel, our mentor, your father *zt"*, represented. He possessed the living national soul from its holy source.

To the extent that my weak hand will be able to be helpful, I am prepared, without making an oath, to serve the holy organization, who are founding and expanding the newspaper. They are unique individuals of unblemished minds. I am happily ready for whatever you will ask of me, because we have kindred spirits.

May you, my dear one, be strong and bold, along with all the special people who partner with you. With a bold spirit, raise the banner of the light of Hashem over His nation and His lot, before the eyes of all of Bnei Yisrael, who are thirsting to see things that are full of life and staying power, things that come from the source of the living wellspring that is connected to the living soul of Hashem, which is found in the chosen nation. It presents itself with a crown of grandeur and splendor from the depths of the reliable emotions and clear light and wisdom.

I am looking forward with a yearning of the heart for the realization of your holy, beloved project and for the expansion of your steps on the path of life with the help of Hashem's powerful "right hand."

We daven for a complete and speedy *refuah* for:

Itamar Chaim ben Tzipora

Nir Rephael ben Rachel Bracha

Arye Yitzchak ben Geula Miriam

Tal Shaul ben Yaffa

Ori Leah bat Chaya Temima

Neta bat Malka

Meira bat Esther

Together with all *cholei* Yisrael

P'ninat Mishpat

Can the Tenant Take Off for Theft?

(based on ruling 85035 of the Eretz Hemdah-Gazit Rabbinical Courts)

Case: The defendant (=def) rented a rental unit (=ru) in the landlord's (=pl) building for fourteen years. Def has left the apartment without paying around 6,000 NIS owed for electricity, water, and municipal tax. Def refuses to pay because pl's cleaner (=clw), who he claims has no permit to be in Israel (pl believes he is an Israeli citizen) stole 12,000 NIS of cash from him. Def was robbed when pl was away, several hours after def saw clw staying around the building for longer than reasonable. Security cameras (studied after the fact) show clw apparently suspiciously looking into ru around the time of a poker game. The cameras indicate another (unidentifiable) man sneaking into ru the next night. Pl admits it is likely that clw gave information to someone else who was able to find the money without turning the house upside down. However, he believes that he vetted clw reasonably, kept in touch with clw while he was cleaning, and helped def confront clw. He claims that def was more at fault for keeping a lot of money unprotected after a poker game, for not informing him about clw's unusual behavior, and for not going to the police.

Ruling: While rarely does Halacha hold an employer responsible for damage done by a worker, it is common practice nowadays that the employer takes responsibility. However, that practice does not extend to cases where the damage is totally unrelated to the work (here, clw is suspected of passing on information, not during the time he was working).

Pl cannot be held culpable for creating a dangerous situation vis a vis theft (see opinions in Rama, Choshen Mishpat 388:2), because that would require def to warn him about the situation, which he did not. Bringing in a dangerous worker could not create an obligation based on *gar'mi* in a case where the danger is unclear and certainly unintentional. (Consider that it was more likely for clw to steal from pl).

Can def make pl compensate because ru turned out to be an unsafe place to live? He cannot. For one, while this could be grounds to make pl improve security or possibly lower the rent, it would not require pl to forgo thousands of NIS, which could only be stolen because def decided to leave an unusual amount of cash unprotected in ru. More fundamentally, def decided to renew contracts at ru for fourteen years after knowing that there were often cleaners with the same profile as clw (often, his brother), and he did not even complain. Therefore, def cannot claim that conditions were not to standards he could accept.

Therefore, *beit din* will not obligate pl to reduce the money def owes him. However, *beit din* suggests to pl, who expressed the desire to be totally vindicated for his behavior, to voluntarily relieve def of up to 1,000 NIS, for the following reason. Many Israelis believe that workers with clw's profile, not infrequently steal sums of money (12,000 NIS is rare). Still, they employ them because enough money is saved by their low price to put up with occasional theft. In this case, then, it seems unfair that pl saved money on cheap labor, whereas loss due to theft went to def instead of pl.

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