

Behar 5775

BS"D Parashat Behar 5775

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Our parasha deals with varied mitzvot ranging from agriculture, commercial transactions of moveable items, as well as real estate in open areas and in walled and open cities, the freeing of avadim (indentured servants), and concludes with the mitzva of Shabbat.

Despite the diversity, these mitzvot have a common denominator – they are all time related. The Shmitta (Sabbatical year in cycles of seven), the Yovel (Jubilee once every 50 years), the rights of a seller to repurchase his property within a fixed time, freeing of slaves after 6 work years or at the event of the Yovel, and Shabbat which falls out every 7 days.

Time was first created by HaShem when He “uttered” the word “Bereshit” (in the beginning) – meaning now begins what Man will call time.

It is the most fleeting, abstract, enigmatic, esoteric and obscure concept. It envelopes all creation; none can escape it, nor limit it, nor change its course.

It has no independent existence. The past is instantaneously gone; the future has yet to arrive; the present turns immediately into the past. So what is time?

Time is the ultimate supernatural gift that HaShem has given to the Jewish people, and indeed only to us. HaShem granted us the ability to transform its fleeting elements – seconds, minutes, hours, days, and Sabbatical cycles, into eternal entities. We do so by performing mitzvot which transfer the “this world” dimension of time into eternal spiritual entities which are the building blocks of our personal place in Gan

Eden.

However these must be authentic mitzvot.

What is an authentic mitzva, as apart from an unauthentic one?

The great Ramban writes in his commentary to Vayikra 18,25:

,(לל ןן ןןןןןן) ןןןןן ןןןןןןןןןן , (לל ןןןן) ןןןןןןן ןןןןן ןןןןןןן ןןןןן
 ןן
 ןןןןןןןןןןןןןןן (ן,ןן) ןן
 :ןן

ןןן
 ןן
 ןן
 ןן
 ןן
 ...ןן

One is required to keep the mitzvot even in the exile, such as tefilin and mezuzah, so that the mitzvot will not be forgotten when we return to Eretz Yisrael; because the mitzvot were given essentially for those who reside in Eretz Yisrael. It is for this reason that our rabbis stated (Sifrei Devarim chapter 80) that to reside in Eretz Yisrael is equal to all the other mitzvot of the Torah.

The Ramban is saying that one who willingly remains in the galut and goes through the motions of the mitzvot or studies or teaches Torah there can be compared to one who studies the instructions for an appliance without having it. At best it's a waste of time, or worse – an exercise in futility.

The Ramban is saying that one who willingly remains in the galut and goes through the motions of the mitzvot or studies or teaches Torah there can be compared to one who studies the

instructions for an appliance without having it. At best it's a waste of time, or worse – an exercise in futility.

Another example of a mitzva which is not a pure and authentic one, is when one receives money for studying HaShem's holy Torah.

The Gemara (Yoma 35b) relates that as a student, Hillel would earn a minimal amount of money for his day labors, half of which he gave to his wife for the family and the other half to pay the entrance fee to the yeshiva. It happened that once he did not have the fee and was refused entrance. It was a cold winter day and Hillel climbed to the roof of the building where he put his ear to the skylight to hear the words of Torah. The cold caused him to lose consciousness. In the yeshiva, the rabbis Shemaya and Avtalion wondered why it was so dark when usually in the early morning hours the skylight would permit the entrance of light. They went up to the roof and found the unconscious Hillel with his ear pressed to the glass in order to hear the words of Torah.

That is an authentic mitzva of talmud Torah.

Hillel's learning time achieved eternal spiritual mass.

In the closing morning prayer (shacharit) of U'va TeZion Go'el there is a frightening phrase:

לֹא עֲשֶׂה לְעוֹלָם עֲשֶׂה לְעוֹלָם עֲשֶׂה

May we not labor for naught

It is essential that we make an accounting of the way we utilize the time that HaShem gives us. Time is a limited commodity which cannot be extended; the march of time cannot be slowed.

To turn the nebulous concept of time into an eternal essence requires a sincere heart dedicated to Torah, and to the Jewish

nation in Hashem's Holy Land.

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

Copyright © 5775/2015 Nachman Kahana