



Parshat Behar 5774
Shabbat Shalom Weekly by Rabbi Kalman Packouz

“Giving up is a final solution to a temporary problem.”

– Anonymous holocaust survivor

GOOD MORNING! Two weeks ago I shared with you insights and wisdom on "Why do bad things happen to good people?" by my beloved Aish HaTorah colleague, Rabbi Shaul Rosenblatt in *Finding Light in the Darkness – The Toughest Challenges and How to Grow from Them*.

I previously mentioned Rabbi Rosenblatt's credentials for writing on this topic: At age twenty seven his wife and mother of four, Elana, finds out that she has cancer. After 3 years of embracing life and fighting for life, Elana returns her soul to her Maker and Shaul is left a widower to care for his children. Here are his thoughts on the difference between pain and suffering:

"We all go through pain in this world. It comes at us from the outside. Suffering, however, is self-inflicted. It depends entirely on how we decide to respond to our pain. If we allow pain to take over, to overwhelm us; if we allow ourselves to slip into the attractive comfort of despair, then we suffer. If we face pain and rise to the challenge, then we will still go through the pain, but we do not have to suffer.

"Day after day, month after month, year after year, I watched Elana in pain - if not physical, then emotional. She desperately wanted to see her children grow up; she wanted to dance at their weddings, but knew in her heart of hearts that she never would. She went through immense anguish.

"Never once, however, did I see her suffer. Not a single moment. Pain was not her enemy. It was her means for growth. Apathy was her enemy. Anger was her enemy. Despair was her enemy. Giving up was her enemy. But not pain.

"We can see the same thing in less extreme cases. When a woman gives birth, she goes through tremendous pain, but does she suffer? Bringing up children is incredibly painful - on many levels. But do we call it suffering? Running a marathon is overwhelmingly painful for the last few miles (and if you are as unfit as I am, then for all the miles previous to that also!), but is it suffering?

"I think the distinction between pain and suffering is as follows: If we are able to find meaning in pain, then we do not suffer. If we are unable to find meaning in pain, then it becomes overwhelming and we call that feeling of being overwhelmed "suffering."

"The simple ability to put pain into a meaningful context enables us to cope with it. Elana used to quote Nietzsche saying, "A man can deal with any what, as long as he has a good enough why."



"A child, for example, cuts his finger and screams the house down. An adult cuts his finger and gets on with life. Children live in the here and now, so a child has no context for his pain. There is no meaningful future to look forward to, just the immediacy of the pain. An adult realizes that the pain will pass and life will be good again in spite of it. He doesn't suffer. And, by the way, why is it that when you hug and kiss a child the pain seems to go? It's not the pain that goes, it's the suffering. You have given the child a meaningful context for the pain - the context of a parent's love. The child still feels the pain, but with a newfound context for it, he no longer suffers.

"An adult must find his own meaning in his pain. Sometimes it is obvious, as in the case of a woman in labor. Sometimes it is a little harder. But when he or she can look at the pain as a means to grow, a means to develop deeper self-understanding, then the pain remains, but the suffering will be forgotten.

*"Everyone goes through pain in life. But not one of us has to suffer if we do not want to.
"Again, the choice is ours."*

Torah Portion of the Week

In the second year of travel in the desert, Moshe and Aharon were commanded by the Almighty to count all male Israelites between twenty and sixty. There were 603,550 available for military service. The tribe of Levi was exempt because of their special duties as religious leaders. (It is probably from here that countries give divinity deferments to clergy and divinity students.)

The twelve tribes were directed regarding the formation (three tribes were on each side of the Portable Sanctuary) in which they were to camp and travel.

The 22,300 Levites were commanded in the Sanctuary service. The family of Gershon was to transport the coverings of the Sanctuary. The family of Kehos carried the Ark, Table, Menorah and Altars. The family of Merari transported the boards, pillars, bolts and sockets.

Dvar Torah based on *Growth Through Torah*

The Torah states:

"And the Almighty spoke to Moshe in the wilderness of Sinai" (Numbers 1:1).

Why does the Torah specify "the wilderness" of the Sinai desert? It would have been sufficient to say "in the Sinai desert"; everyone knows that deserts are wildernesses.

The Midrash Bamidbar Rabbah comments on this verse, "Whoever does not make himself open and free like a wilderness will not be able to acquire wisdom and Torah". This refers to having the trait of humility which allows a person to learn from everyone and to teach everyone.

An arrogant person will only be willing to learn from someone he feels is befitting his honor. A humble person is only concerned with gaining Torah knowledge and will be grateful to learn new ideas even from one who has less overall knowledge than himself.



The Midrash teaches that the Torah was given on Mt. Sinai because Mt. Sinai was the lowest of all the mountains. This symbolizes that if a person wants to receive wisdom he must be humble. If he is full of himself there is little room for anything else.

Dvar Torah based on *Love Your Neighbor*

The Torah states:

"These are the generations of Aharon and Moshe on the day that God spoke with Moshe on Mount Sinai. And these are the names of the sons of Aharon: Nadov the firstborn, Avihu, Elazar and Itamar" (Numbers 3:1,2).

If the first verse tells us that "these are the generations of Aharon and Moshe," then why are only the sons of Aharon mentioned in the next verse?

Rashi, the great commentator, quotes the Talmud (Sanhedrin 19b) that this teaches us that whoever teaches his neighbor's son Torah, as did Moshe teach Aharon's sons, is considered as if he has given birth to him. Our lesson: Whatever we can do to help educate Jewish children is building and strengthening our own extended family.

Shabbat Shalom!

