

How To Have It All

Dear Parents,

One of the great challenges our generation faces is finding a proper balance between our spiritual and material needs and interests. The blessing of unprecedented wealth and availability of luxuries and conveniences is tempered by the trials they present to a Torah observant Jew. Many are envious of a lifestyle that they see others enjoying, and may likely go into debt in their efforts to show they are similarly well off. Others who are blessed with greater means, may ascribe their financial success to their efforts, abilities and cleverness, and become totally focused on amassing wealth, at the expense of family, learning and helping others.

What does the Torah prescribe to help us maintain a proper balance? Our *Parsha (Vayikra 25:2)* opens up with a discussion of the laws of *Shemita*, a unique law that requires a farmer (in *Eretz Yisrael*) to not plant his land every seventh year. Many different reasons for this *mitzvah* are presented by the *Mefarshim*. The *Kli Yakar* says as follows: **The purpose of the mitzvah is to implant the Jewish People with the *midah* of *Eemunah* and *Bitachon* in *Hashem*.** He goes on to explain that *Hashem* was concerned, that when the *Klal Yisrael* would settle in *Eretz Yisrael*, and begin to plant crops, when the land would produce bountiful harvest, they would come to believe that their success was due to nature and their own efforts and skills. They would begin to forget *Hashem, Ch'V*.

Shemita came along to demonstrate that agricultural success was not due to the forces of nature but like everything else, was controlled by *Hashem*. In the sixth year, when the vitality of the land would naturally start waning due to six consecutive years of uninterrupted planting, *Hashem* commanded extra *Bracha* to that crop. Not only was the crop not inferior, the produce was of such a superior, miraculous nature that a tiny amount would satiate a person and the one year's crop could feed people for three years, in place of the usual one year.

Due to the fundamental importance of this lesson of realizing that one's livelihood and prosperity comes from *Hashem* and is not simply 'natural,' it becomes clear why not keeping the *mitzvos* of *Shemita* and *Yovel* lead to *Klal Yisrael* going into *Galus (Vayikra 26:34-35 and Divrei HaYomim II 36:21)*. ***Eretz Yisrael* gives off the message that one's faith and trust must be in *Hashem*, and not the strength and power of one's hands.** If *Klal Yisrael* was ignoring this idea, and the land's message of trust in *Hashem* was not getting through to the Jews, there was no longer any purpose or benefit for the Jews to remain, and they were exiled, *R'L*.

The vital message of trust in *Hashem* was reinforced every seventh year and was intended as a powerful lesson in the proper attitude we should have in regards to wealth and material possessions. It all comes from *Hashem* - one needs only to work minimally and responsibly, be honest and forthright in his business dealings and not to show off his wealth as if to say - "look what I did."

Using simple arithmetic, one can safely say that every person consciously absorbed this message of *Shemita*, which occurred every seventh year, at least once during their childhood years before his or her Bar or Bas Mitzvah. The all-powerful message that one's trust must be in *Hashem*, that all material abundance comes from *Hashem* and nature does not play a more than a minimal role in *Parnassah* or one's bottom line, were part and parcel of every developing child's learning and growing experience.

We, who unfortunately do not currently enjoy the tangible spiritual messages that emanate from the very land of *Eretz Yisrael*, how do we impart a strong message of *Bitachon* to our children? There is no need for a formal curriculum or prepared speeches. **Your children will absolutely absorb the level of *Bitachon* that you have within you and how you live your life.** If money is a means to providing sustenance and helping others, your children will have the keys to a successful and happy life. If you are happy with what you have and don't feel deprived by what you don't have, your children likewise won't be searching for more and won't be jealous of every new fad, shoe or *tchatchke* that a classmate may have. They won't feel the need to go into debt when they get older nor enter the rat race of keeping up with the Joneses/Cohens.

Hashem has fashioned a beautiful world where each generation can pursue a closeness to Him and limit their material possessions to those necessary and appropriate for a comfortable, yet simple life. Our children can be helped to buck current trends and see the value in having more time and focus on *Torah, Avodah* and *Gemillas Chasodim*. No material gift in the world can come close to matching the present we can bequeath them of how to live a fulfilling life of devotion to *Hashem*.

Best wishes for a *Shabbos* of *simcha* and satisfaction,



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