

INSPIRE

BHAR BECHUKOSEI- CHAZAK
22 IYAR 5780 - 15 MAY 2020

Capitalist or Communist?

Karl Marx may have been the pioneer, but many other Jews were also involved in the struggle for communism, particularly in the early days of the Russian revolution. Personally, I don't think that we have any apologies to make for this phenomenon. Having suffered unbearably under successive oppressive regimes, many of those political activists genuinely thought communism would be better for the people than czarist corruption. Their sense of idealism fueled hopes for a better life and a more equitable future for all. On paper, communism was a good idea. The fact that it failed—and that the new leaders outdid their predecessors' oppression—may reflect the personalities involved as much as the system they promoted. What is Judaism's economic system? Is there one? I would describe it as "capitalism with a conscience." In promoting free enterprise, the Torah is clearly capitalistic. But it is a conditional capitalism, and certainly a compassionate capitalism. Winston Churchill once said, "The inherent vice of capitalism is the unequal sharing of blessings. The inherent vice of communism is the equal sharing of miseries." So Judaism introduced an open market system, where the sharing of blessings was not left to chance or wishful thinking, but was made mandatory.

Our Parshah gives us a classic example. Shemittah, the Sabbatical year, was designed to allow the land to rest and regenerate. Six years the land would be worked, but in the seventh year it would rest and lie fallow. The agricultural cycle in the Holy Land imposed strict rules and regulations on the owner of the land. No planting, no pruning, no agricultural work whatsoever in the seventh year—and whatever grew by itself would be "ownerless" and there for the taking for all. The owner could take some, but so could his workers, friends and neighbors. The landowner, in his own land, would have no more right than the stranger. For six years you own the property, but in the seventh you enjoy no special claims. This is but one of many examples of Judaism's "capitalism with a conscience." There are many other legislated obligations to the poor—not optional extras, not even pious recommendations, but clear mandatory contributions to the less fortunate. The ten percent tithes, as well as the obligation to leave to the poor the unharvested corners of one's field, the gleanings, and the forgotten sheaves are all part of the system of compassionate capitalism. Judaism thus presents an economic system which boasts the best of both worlds—the advantages of an unfettered free market, allowing personal expression and success relative to hard work, without the drawbacks of corporate greed. If the land belongs to G-d, then we have no exclusive ownership over it. G-d bestows His blessings upon us, but clearly, the deal is that we must share. Without Torah law, capitalism fails. Unbridled ambition and the lust for money and power lead to monopolies and conglomerates that leave no room for the next guy and widen the gap between the haves and the have-nots.

The Sabbatical year is one of many checks and balances that keep our capitalism kosher and kind. Some people are too businesslike. Everything is measured and exact. Business is business. If I invited you for Shabbat, then I won't repeat the invitation until you reciprocate first. If you gave my son \$50 for his bar mitzvah, then that is exactly what I will give your son. We should be softer, more flexible, not so hard, tough and businesslike. By all means, be a capitalist, but be a kosher capitalist. What a person is "worth" financially should be irrelevant to the respect you accord to him. Retain the traditional Jewish characteristics of kindness, compassion, tzedakah and chesed, generosity of spirit, heart—and pocket. May you make lots of money, and encourage G-d to keep showering you with His blessings by sharing it generously with others.



LOUGHTONSHUL
MORE THAN A SHUL

Shabbos Times

FRIDAY NIGHT
CANDLE LIGHTING 8:31
SHABBAT ENDS 9:46

ZOOM THIS FRIDAY 7PM
WITH RABBI YAAKOV &
ZACHARIA SINGER

MAZAL TOV TO RAY & LOIS
COHEN ON BIRTH OF A
GRANDDAUGHTER
MAY YOU HAVE MUCH
NACHAS FROM HER

Reminder to count the omer



This week we read two Torah portions, Behar and Bechukotai.

Behar contains the commandments of the Sabbatical and

Jubilee years: "Count for yourself seven Sabbaths of years, seven years seven times...and you shall sanctify the fiftieth year."

Every seventh year is a Sabbatical year; the fiftieth is a Jubilee. Then the cycle begins anew.

Concerning the Jubilee year the Torah states, "Proclaim liberty throughout the land for all its inhabitants."

According to the Talmud, this means that there can only be a Jubilee year "when all its inhabitants" are living in the land.

Thus, "When the tribes of Reuven and Gad and half of Menashe were exiled, the Jubilee was abolished."

Nonetheless, the Talmud relates that in the times of the Second Holy Temple the fiftieth year was still officially sanctified, even though the mitzva of the Jubilee was no longer in effect.

This was done to maintain the same cycle as before, i.e., with the counting commencing again in the fifty-first year.

After the Second Temple was destroyed (and during the Babylonian exile), the fiftieth year ceased to be sanctified.

The cycle of counting Sabbatical years began on the fiftieth year itself.

Thus, there have been three ways of relating to the Jubilee. Chasidic philosophy explains that the Sabbatical and Jubilee years are symbolic of spiritual levels in a Jew's service of G-d:

The Sabbatical year relates to the negation of the sense of self. The person perceives himself as an individual, yet willingly nullifies himself before G-d.

The Jubilee year relates to a higher level, of freedom from all limitations, a level that will be realized in the Messianic era.

This also explains why the Sabbatical year applies today, whereas the mitzva of the Jubilee was only fully observed during the First Temple period.

The very highest level of spirituality could only be attained at a time when the Divine Presence was manifested in the world so strongly.

The Second Temple period was somewhere in the middle. G-dly revelation illuminated the world, but in a less obvious manner.

The Jubilee was therefore counted and sanctified but not observed. The lowest level occurred after the Destruction, when it was no longer possible to even comprehend the intense spirituality of the Jubilee and it ceased to be counted.

Today, our service consists of "only" accepting the yoke of heaven and nullifying the ego, but in a sense this gives us the greatest advantage, as it enables us to access the soul's essence.

It also helps us prepare for the Sabbatical of the Messianic era, may it commence at once.

FOOD FOR THE SOUL

It is a mistake to consider man and woman two separate beings. They are no more than two halves of a single form, two converse hemispheres that fit tightly together to make a perfect whole.

They are heaven and earth encapsulated in flesh and blood. It is only that on its way to enter this world, this sphere was shattered apart.

What was once the infinity of a perfect globe became two finite surfaces. What was once a duet of sublime harmony became two bizarre solos of unfinished motions, of unresolved discord.

So much so, that each one hears in itself only half a melody, and so too it hears in the other. Each sees the other and says, "That is broken."

Feigning wholeness, the two halves wander aimlessly in space alone. Until each fragment allows itself to surrender, to admit that it too is broken. Only then can it search for the warmth it is missing.

For the depth of its own self that was ripped away. For the harmony that will make sense of its song. And in perfect union, two finite beings find in one another infinite beauty.

QUESTION: I HAD A DREAM LAST NIGHT IN WHICH I SAW MY LATE FATHER. HE HELD MY HANDS AND MOUTHED SOME WORDS. IT WAS SO VIVID THAT I WAS SURE IT WAS REAL. WHAT DOES MY DREAM MEAN? DOES IT MEAN ANYTHING? SHOULD I BE WORRIED?

Answer: Dreams are a display of what our mind sees when we don't control it. They can be caused by many different factors. How we should react to a dream will be determined by the type of dream we experienced. Some dreams are the result of external stimuli (if you sleep with a fan blowing on your face, you may dream of flying a helicopter), or biological causes (if you go to bed thirsty, you may dream of yourself hiking through a parched desert searching for water). These dreams are not terribly significant. The message may simply be to take a drink of water, or move the fan away from your head. Other dreams are the continuation of the thoughts of the day (a problem we ponder during the day can sometimes be solved in a dream at night), or an expression of unwanted thoughts—issues that are bothering us and we are trying not to think about pop up in our dreams (we often dream of our darkest secrets being revealed, or our deepest phobias being faced). These dreams are a window into our subconscious, a peek into the thoughts with which our mind is occupied when it is allowed to run loose. They should not be seen as portents of what lies in the future, but rather exposés of what lurks in our mind. But then there is another type of dream, a dream that seems to border on the prophetic. Unlike the confused and nonsensical dreams we typically see, these are characterised by the vividness you describe in your dream of your father. While most dreams are better ignored, these cannot be dismissed as ramblings of the idle mind; they are too powerful, too awesome to just forget. The Kabbalists explain that while we sleep, our souls leave our bodies and ascend to their heavenly source to replenish their energy. While a residue of the soul remains with the body to keep it alive, the main portion of the soul travels to higher places. In this disembodied state, the soul is free to experience visions and encounters that are usually off-limits to beings of this world. This includes the possibility of meeting other disembodied souls—particularly the souls of loved ones who have passed away. It is their opportunity to convey a message to those they have left behind. It is possible that your dream comes under this last category. How you should respond to it depends on the mood of the dream. Did your father seem disturbed or troubled in any way? Did you wake up feeling uncomfortable or sad? Then perhaps he needs something from you. Was he mourned appropriately? Have memorial prayers (Kaddish and Yizkor) been said for him? Is his grave attended to, and the anniversary of his passing (yahrzeit) observed? If not, he may be coming to you, his daughter, to ask you to rectify these things, to ensure that his memory is honored and his soul given the assistance it needs to find rest. On the other hand, his demeanor in the dream may have been one of peace and contentment. Did you wake up feeling comfort and warmth? If so, then he is just paying you a visit. He came to say hello, to express his love and support for you, and to remind you that he is there for you, proud of you, and will always be your father. There is no cause for worry. Your father has given you either a mission, or a gift.

WISHING ALL THOSE WITH YARTZEIT THIS WEEK - CHAYIM ARUCHIM

Bermange Josephine Father Yisrael Meir 24 Iyar
Goldring Rose Husband Zvi ben Kalonymus 24 Iyar

On the mountain of Sinai, G-d communicates to Moses the laws of the Sabbatical year: every seventh year, all work on the land should cease, and its produce becomes free for the taking for all, man and beast. Seven Sabbatical cycles are followed by a fiftieth year—the Jubilee year, on which work on the land ceases, all indentured servants are set free, and all ancestral estates in the Holy Land that have been sold revert to their original owners. Additional laws governing the sale of lands, and the prohibitions against fraud and usury, are also given. G-d promises that if the people of Israel will keep His commandments, they will enjoy material prosperity and dwell secure in their homeland. But He also delivers a harsh “rebuke,” warning of the exile, persecution and other evils that will befall them if they abandon their covenant with Him. Nevertheless, “Even when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away; nor will I ever abhor them, to destroy them and to break My covenant with them; for I am the L-rd their G-d.” The Parshah concludes with the rules on how to calculate the values of different types of pledges made to G-d.

Jeremiah 16:19-17:14. The haftorah discusses the punishments that await those who disregard G-d's law, and the blessings that are the lot of those who follow the Creator's wishes. This follows the theme of this week's Torah reading which details at length the blessings and curses. The prophet Jeremiah rebukes the people of Israel for their idolatrous ways and for not having faith in G-d. He conveys G-d's words of wrath towards those who do not put their trust in Him — foretelling exile as their punishment — and of blessings for those who do. “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and relies on mortal flesh for his strength, and whose heart turns away from the G-d. He shall be like a lone tree in the desert, and will not see when good comes, and will dwell on parched land in the desert, on salt-sodden soil that is not habitable. Blessed is the man who trusts in the G-d, to whom G-d will be his trust. For he shall be like a tree planted by the water, and which spreads its roots out into a stream, so it will not be affected when heat comes, and its leaves shall be green, and in the year of drought will not be anxious, neither shall it cease from bearing fruit.” The haftorah ends with the following poignant verses: “G-d who is the source of the hopes of Israel, all that forsake You shall be shamed, and they who turn away from me shall be marked out on the earth that they have forsaken G-d, the source of living waters. Heal me, O G-d, then shall I be healed; help me, then I shall be helped, for You are my praise!”



HUMOUR???

David Silverstein, an aspiring young actor was in love with Shira Rosenbaum so he asked her father Moishe for his daughter's hand in marriage. Moishe said, "I would never let my daughter marry an actor." David said, "Sir, I think you may change your mind if you see me perform. Won't you at least come and see the play?" So Moishe went to see the play, and the next day he called David, "You were right. I did change my mind. Go ahead and marry my daughter. You'll never make it as an actor."

Early one evening David Moskowitz scuttled out to his garage and pulled the lawn furniture out onto the driveway. Shortly after followed the lawn mower, a few gardening tools and a bicycle. A curious neighbor wandered over and asked if he was going to have a garage sale. "No," replied Moskowitz, "my son just bought his first car and right now he's getting ready for a big date." "So what's with all the stuff?" asked the neighbor. "Well, after years of moving tricycles, toys and sports equipment out of the way every time I came home from work I wanted to make sure the driveway was ready for him."



Riddle of the week

I add lots of flavour and have many layers, but if you get to close I'll make you cry. What am I?

Answer to last weeks

STORY TIME



The great Rabbi Moshe Sofer (the Chasam Sofer) was sitting with his students one day when they were interrupted by the Parness (the head) of the Jewish community. He hadn't want to disturb the rabbi when he was busy with his students, but when the Chasam Sofer noticed the man's distraught face, he excused himself and called the Parness into an adjoining room. "What has happened?" the rabbi inquired. The man answered with a sigh. "I am in deep trouble. I have lost my entire fortune. There's no hope, for I am in such deep debt, and I've signed promissory notes for others as well. I'm on the brink of utter ruin. Tomorrow, when it becomes known that I didn't go to the fair at Leipzig, my creditors will come running, and that will be my end." "How much money do you need to go to the fair?" the Chasam Sofer asked. "Oh, Rabbi, the amount I usually bring is not worth talking about. At this point, I would be grateful for travelling money and a bit of cash." The Parness mentioned an amount. "That's no problem. I think I have just that amount here." The Chasam Sofer went to a certain drawer in his desk and withdrew the cash. "Rabbi, I can't take the money from you. I came to you for advice, not a loan. If I take your money, how can I guarantee that I will be able to repay you?" The Chasam Sofer smiled. "Don't worry, with G-d's help, you will repay me. May you have much success." Deeply grateful and with new hope, the Parness took the money and left. He caught the early train to Leipzig, and upon leaving the train met a friend who was a big wholesaler and importer. He offered the Parness a shipment of coffee. The price was right, so the Parness gave a deposit and concluded the deal. Before the day ended, news reached the fair that the crop in Brazil had been damaged by bad weather, and the price of coffee had risen. The Parness sold the coffee at a great profit. The next day he bought large quantities of merchandise. The pattern repeated itself every day of the fair, and by the end, he had not only recouped all his losses, but had become even richer than before. It occurred to the Parness to buy something special for the Chasam Sofer. The rabbi was knowledgeable in jewels, so he purchased a valuable gem to present to him. Back home, he went at once to visit the rabbi and tell him the good news. "Your blessings were fulfilled beyond my dreams. In addition to repaying you, it would be an honor if you would accept this gift." The rabbi eagerly took the box and opened it, revealing the gem. "It's beautiful, and very valuable as well," he said turning the gem this way and that, all the while smiling in delight. Then he handed it back to the Parness. "But, Rabbi, it's yours." "No. You see, if you had given it to me at any other time, perhaps I would have accepted it, for it would support my yeshiva for some time. But since I gave you the loan, I cannot accept even something which has 'the dust of interest' on it." The Parness left, and some students who had observed the scene came to their rabbi with a question: "If you had no intention of accepting the gift, why did you receive it with so much happiness and pay it so much attention?" "I will tell you a story which will answer your question. Once I was traveling with my Rebbe, Rabbi Nosson Adler of Frankfurt. It was a trip of extreme urgency to the Jewish community. We started out after dark, and after we had gone but a short distance, the team of horses refused to budge. The driver went off to get help and we tried to shake off the cold by immersing ourselves in learning. "Finally the driver returned and readied the team to continue the journey. Suddenly, my Rebbe leaped out of the carriage and began dancing in the snow. I was shocked and couldn't understand his actions." "Don't you see, Moshe, the driver has harnessed a team of oxen together with horses!" "I explained to the driver that we were forbidden to be drawn by a team composed of mixed species ("kilayim," is forbidden, since the animals have differing strengths and it causes them hardship). I offered him extra money if he would exchange the oxen for horses." "When he had gone, I asked my teacher to enlighten me as to his strange behavior. He answered, 'My dear Moshe, when in Frankfurt do I get to do the rare commandment of kilayim? Now, that it comes my way, once in my life, should I not rejoice?' "That is why, when I got the chance to do the mitzva (commandment) of "ribbit" (not accepting interest from a fellow Jew), I rejoiced. Who comes to a rabbi to request a free loan? When that mitzva came my way, I couldn't conceal my joy and excitement!"