

B'HAR – B'CHUKOTEI 5773
“Parnasa –U’ Mishpacha” [Livelihood and Family]
Rabbi Aharon Ziegler

Parashat BeHar focuses on the laws of *Shmita* and *Yovel* [*The Jubilee Year*], and in this context, we are taught:

“And you shall sanctify the fiftieth year, and proclaim freedom throughout the land for all its inhabitants; it shall be the Jubilee year for you, *and you shall return each man to his land, and you shall return each man to his family*. It shall be the Jubilee –the fiftieth year- for you; you shall sow, and you shall not reap its after-growth, and you shall not pick that which was set aside.” [25:10-11]

We can well understand how a person returns to his land during Yovel; any field that had been sold reverts back to its original owner. But what does the pasuk mean that during Yovel a man returns “**to his family**”?

The Meshech Chachma (Rabbi Meir Simcha HaKohen, 1843-1926) explains that the text instructs us about the benefits which occur when a man returns to his land. Having sold the land allotted to them from the days of Yehoshua –the family must now seek Parnasa away from home. One heads north, and this other –south, to seek his parnassa. However, if every man returns to his original land, the ancestral homes will return to the generation in the place where their fathers bequeathed it to them. And those family members, who sold their land and were distanced from each other, will be gathered together once again.

“You shall return each man to his family” shows the benefits of the Mitzvah. Returning the fields to the original owners during Yovel- unites families. All the relatives who were forced to move away will now return home and reunite. So the pasuk reads, “You shall return each man to his land,” and as a result, “you will return each man to his family.

Accordingly, we see the relationship between Parnassa and Livelihood. Changing jobs for higher pay but more traveling required, or changing positions within the company for increased pay but more hours required, one must consider very thoughtfully what the effect of such a change will have on the spouse and children. Of course, at times there is no choice, it’s simply “no change – no job”. But where there is a choice, then the breadwinner must consider the entire family dynamics. The benefits of higher pay may not be worth the erosion of family life.

Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah, a young and great Talmudic Sage the Gemara Berachot [27b] relates, was offered the most prestigious position of being the “Nasi” of all Israel, [that’s like becoming the “Chief Rabbi”]. He felt deeply humbled, honored and elated, but he did not immediately respond with his heart and emotion, rather, he thoughtfully replied, “eizil ve’imlich b’inshei beiti”, I will have to discuss the matter with my wife and family. To

which Rav Soloveitchik commented, of course Rabbi Elazar realized that this once in a lifetime offer would bring fame, glory and honor to himself and the entire family, but he also realized that the new position will be more time consuming, require many trips to Rome on behalf of the Jewish community and consequently, affect the entire family. The Halacha is that any change from the original family relationship that affects the wife must be done with her approval. “Ish El Achuzato Ve’Ish El Mishpachto Tashuvu”