

# Parsha Pearls

FROM THE WORDS OF THE GEDOLIM

Ki Savo 5769

**And Hashem will scatter you among all the peoples, from one end of the earth to the other.  
(28:64)**

The Tanna Devei Eliyahu (10) relates that a priest once said to Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi, "We are more merciful than you. When you had the ability to destroy us, you left over only the women, as it says, 'For Yoav and all of Israel dwelt there six months, until they had killed all the males of Edom' (I Melachim 11:16). [But you are living in exile among us for many years, and we let you live.]" Rabbi Yehuda said nothing, but walked outside and called one of his students to come in and answer the priest. The student said, "The owner of the house knows where to keep his tools. And when the owner of the house comes back to his house, he will bring his tools with him into the house." He said this again, and then a third time, until the priest understood what he meant.

Immediately, the priest stood up, lifted his two hands to heaven and said, "Blessed is the Omnipresent, blessed is He, who chose you, Israel, over all the people of the world and over all His creations, and acquired you permanently, and called you His children and servants, and called you a people, an inheritance, and a treasure to His name, and scattered you in many hundreds of places. When we met to plan to destroy you, we said, 'If we kill those in Eretz Yisroel, who will kill those in the north and the south? And in this manner our plans are abandoned.' Truly, the Owner of the house knows where to keep His tools, and when the Owner comes home, He will bring His tools into the house."

The Gemara (Shabbos 119a) tells the story of a man named Yosef, who was known to all as Yosef Mokir Shabbos (Yosef Who Honors Shabbos). Yosef and his family lived on bread and water all week long so that they could spend their meager income honoring the Shabbos with fine food and beautiful clothing. In Yosef's neighborhood there lived a rich and miserly gentile. The stargazers warned this gentile that all of his property would one day go to Yosef. So he sold all of his property, bought an expensive pearl and sewed it into his hat. One day, as he was walking on a bridge, a gust of wind blew the hat off his head and into the river. A fish then came and swallowed the pearl. Late Friday afternoon, the fish was caught and brought to the marketplace. But no Jew bought it – everyone had already bought their Shabbos fish. So someone suggested to the fishermen that they go to Yosef Mokir Shabbos. Yosef bought the fish, cut it open and found the precious pearl, which he sold for twelve attics full of gold coins. An old man met him and commented, "When one loans to Shabbos, Shabbos pays back."

There are two questions here: 1) For the lesson of the story - that Shabbos pays back - it would have been sufficient to say that Yosef found the pearl in the fish. Why does the Gemara need to tell us the history of the pearl – that it came from a rich man who sold all his property to buy it? 2) Why indeed did Yosef buy the fish? If it was so late in the day and all the other Jews already had fish, surely Yosef had fish too. If so, how did his purchase of this fish honor Shabbos?

The answer is that aside from the simple meaning of the story, Chazal had a deeper lesson to teach here. When the rich man heard that he was in danger of losing his property, his reaction was to concentrate all his wealth in one small object, thinking that it would then be easier to guard. The truth, however, was that this was a terrible mistake. It is never good to put all the eggs in one basket. The smart thing would have been to spread his wealth around the world in different investments.

But there is a third, even more foolproof way to protect one's assets: by doing mitzvos with the money. The Gemara (Bava Basra 11a) tells the story of King Munbaz, the convert to Judaism who used all of his wealth and the wealth accumulated by his royal predecessors to support the poor during a year of famine. His brothers and family complained, "Your fathers added to the wealth accumulated by their fathers, and you are wasting it all?" Munbaz replied: "My fathers stored it below, but I am storing it above. My fathers stored it in a place where the hand of others can reach, but I am storing it in a place where no one can take it away. My fathers stored it in a place where it does not bear fruit, but I am storing it in a place where it does bear fruit. My fathers stored money but I am storing souls. My fathers stored it up to leave it for others but I am storing it for myself. My fathers stored it for this world, but I am storing it for the World to Come."

If the rich man's approach to protecting his wealth represented the extreme of foolhardiness, Yosef Mokit Shabbos's approach was the extreme of wisdom. He spent almost all his money on Shabbos, and even when he had extra money, he bought more fish for Shabbos, so that it would be considered spent on a mitzvah. Thus it was fitting that the foolish rich man should lose his money to the wise Yosef.

In confronting the danger faced by Jews in exile, the Zionists have adopted the approach of the rich man in the story. They think that bringing all the Jews of the world to one small state will make it easier to protect them. They do not realize that scattering the Jews around the world was Hashem's plan to protect them, as the Tanna Devei Eliyahu says. Furthermore, they do not realize that the wisest investment for Jews in exile is to devote themselves to Torah and mitzvos, and leave their physical protection up to Hashem.

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