



הַמִּזְרָחִי

HAMIZRACHI

PARSHA WEEKLY

PARSHAT BEHAR
5782 • 2022

ISRAEL Parsha Picture

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פִּי תִבְאוּ אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי נֹתֵן
לְכֶם וְשַׁבְתָּהּ הָאָרֶץ שַׁבַּת לָהּ:

ויקרא פרק כהב



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www.mizrachi.org
www.mizrachi.tv
office@mizrachi.org
+972 (0)2 620 9000
f t i g

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Based in Jerusalem and with branches across the globe, Mizrachi – an acronym for *merkaz ruchani* (spiritual center) – was founded in 1902 by Rabbi Yitzchak Yaakov Reines, and is led today by Rabbi Doron Perez. Mizrachi's role was then and remains with vigor today, to be a proactive partner and to take personal responsibility in contributing to the collective destiny of *Klal Yisrael* through a commitment to Torah, the Land of Israel and the People of Israel.

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EDITOR

Rabbi Reuven Taragin

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Esther Shafier

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Ari Levine

Josh Maurer

Yaakov Panitch

Ian Schwartz

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Leah Rubin

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Human ‘Havings’ or Human Beings?

Shabbat & the Sabbatical Year



Rabbi Doron Perez

Executive Chairman, World Mizrachi

Remarkably, since the turn of the twenty-first century, shopping malls in the Western world occupy more real estate than schools.

G.K. Chesterton once said that “education is the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to the next.” Our privileged and affluent generation invests more time and resources in the myriad tastes and preferences of the body than it does in the needs and aspirations of the soul. Before our eyes, material gratification has trumped spiritual meaning; consumerism has superseded education.

Human ‘Havings’

In recent years, shopping malls have been supplanted by internet consumerism, a shift speeded by the pandemic. In the comfort of our home and with the click of a button on Amazon, AliExpress and the like, we can order any product from almost anywhere in the world and have it delivered to our doorstep within a few days. We have become human “havings,” as what we have and possess becomes ever more central to our core identities. Some social commentators have termed our current state of affairs as “affluenza” - an all-consuming ailment and “a painful, contagious, socially transmitted condition of overload, debt, anxiety and waste resulting from the dogged pursuit of more.”¹

Incredibly, there is no Hebrew word for the English word “have”; the closest equivalent

is “יש לי”, literally translated as “there is to me.” Why is Hebrew missing such an elemental word? It seems that Judaism has a radically different attitude toward the things we own. The word “have” implies that what I own is part of me, that it is mine. But in the Torah's view, we must never be defined by what we own, for what we have is not truly ours. Ultimately, everything in the world belongs to G-d - לה' - הארץ ומלואה - “The entire world and all in it belongs to Hashem.”²

G-d, of course, has bestowed upon us the right to property - to legally own property and possessions as part of the course of normative human interaction. This right, however, comes with terms and limits. The Torah cites two powerful examples of these limits - the shemitta year and the yovel (Jubilee) year. During the shemitta year, all agricultural land owned by Jews is rendered ownerless, allowing everyone to partake of its produce. And at the end of the shemitta year, all money that we have lent to others is relinquished and the debts are wiped away.³ An even stronger limitation on property ownership is implemented during the yovel year, when all land acquired from others is returned to its original owners, כי לי כל הארץ, “for the whole world belongs to Me.”⁴

Shemitta and yovel underscore the need to regulate private wealth and consumerism and to ensure they do not become the dominant values in a Jewish society. We must never be defined by what we have. We are merely the custodians of our

possessions, transient caretakers called upon to use our possessions for G-dly causes greater than ourselves.

Human 'Doings'

As we have all too often become human "havings," caught up in a culture of consumerism, we have also allowed ourselves to become human "doings." In our market and industry-driven economy, there is a premium placed on productivity. The quicker we are able to manufacture and produce at industrial levels, the more successful we become. The technological interconnectedness of the global economy has only exacerbated our frenetic work pace, as colleagues and clients throughout the world reach out to us day and night with the expectation of an immediate response. Our output-driven lives are dictated by urgency, deadlines and performance. We have become human "doings," constantly on the go. You snooze, you lose!

It is true that little in life is accomplished without hard work, dedication, toil and a proactive focus on getting things done. The great challenge of life, however, is to achieve balance. It is the transformative concept of Shabbat which aims to restore this critical balance .

Human 'Beings'

To ensure that the dual impulses of consumerism and productivity, of having and doing, are not all-consuming, we are blessed - every single week - with the opportunity to be human "beings," to simply *be*. By prohibiting all acts of creative work and shaping the world for material gain, Shabbat celebrates this state of simply *being*. It allows us to experience one day each week without producing or procuring, transforming us from human "havings" and human "doings" into human "beings." Shabbat alters our mindset, focusing us not on what is yet to be done but rather on what has already been achieved; not on what we lack, but on what we already have. Shabbat prohibits us from dwelling on our concerns for the future, demanding that we be fully present. It calls upon us to give

full attention to that which is important and meaningful as opposed to that which is urgent and pressing. We focus not on results but on the relationships that truly matter - with Hashem, ourselves, our spouses and family and friends.

How do we achieve this state of mind? Our Sages offer a remarkable insight which is hinted to in the ten commandments: "Six days you shall labor and complete all your work but the seventh day is a Shabbat to Hashem." The verse states that we must complete *all* of our work before Shabbat. Our Sages point out that this is an impossible task. When do we ever complete everything we set out to do ? We *always* have unfinished tasks that we need to continue working on after Shabbat! They explain that there is only one place in which you can, indeed, "complete all your work" - in the precincts of the mind. G-d has commanded us to enter Shabbat *as if* all of our work is done. Shabbat calls upon us to alter our frame of mind, to transcend the daily vicissitudes of life and enter into an oasis in time and a wellspring of mindfulness.⁵

Shabbat & Shemitta

One of many gifts that the Jewish people have given the world is the magical concept of Shabbat. It is a time to balance our proactive, producing and procuring selves with our mindful and spiritual selves.

This is precisely the focal point of both the weekly shabbat as well s the sabbatical year. Indeed, the Torah in this week's parsha, Behar, refers to the sabbatical year as "shabbat" far more frequently than it uses its other names such as shemitta and *shevi'it*⁶. Only Shabbat and shemitta are called by the unique term שבח להשם, "Shabbat to Hashem," for both are unique times dedicated to G-d and heavenly pursuits.

For millennia, shabbat gave our people the strength and perspective to survive in exile. Today, in the land of Israel, shabbat and shemitta are shaping our future. Every seven days, the economy comes to a standstill, as Jews across the Land pause and spiritually reboot. Every seven years,

the Land of Israel itself and the entire agrarian economy come to a grinding halt for an entire year. It is a time for societal recalibration.

The weekly shabbat and shemitta year are times for resetting our spiritual compass, an opportunity to give primacy to our cherished relationships and to reconnect with our core values. It is a critical time of perspective, wholeness and restoration of balance, when our self-worth stems not from what we *have* and what we *do*, but from who we are. It is a time to be truly redeemed as human beings.

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1. *Affluenza*, John de Graaf, David Wann and Thomas H. Naylor, Berrett-Koehler Publishers (2005)
 2. Tehillim 25:1
 3. When people stopped loaning money to the poor because of this law, Hillel instituted the Pruzbul to circumvent this law; see page 12 of this magazine for an explanation of the mechanics of the Pruzbul.
 4. Vayikra 25:23
 5. The Midrash from the Mechilta is cited in Rashi, Shemot, 20:9Rambam, Yad, Laws of Kings 11:3.
 6. See Vayikra, 25:1-8

PIRKEI AVOT

If Only I



Rabbi Reuven Taragin
Educational Director, World Mizrahi

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הוא הנה אומר, אם אין אני לי, מי לי. וכשאני לעצמי, מה אני. ואם לא עכשיו, אימתי (אבות א:ד)

He [Hillel] used to say: If I am not for myself, who is for me?

But if I am for my own self [only], what am I?" (Avot 1:14)

After emphasizing the importance of self-responsibility by stating that "If I am not for myself, who is for me?," Hillel immediately presents the flip side by adding "When I am for myself (only), what am I?"

Hillel's statement can be understood on a number of levels.

Our Interaction With Others

Rav Chaim Volozhen (Ruach Chaim, Avot 1:14) understood Hillel's statement as reminding us of our dependence on others. Though responsible for and able to accomplish much ourselves, we need others to help us maximize our potential. Rav Chaim focuses on our needing Hashem's help in everything we do. In addition to Hashem's help, we also need that of those around us.

The Midrash Shmuel understands that Hillel encourages us to think beyond ourselves. Our responsibility for ourselves should not cause us to think that we should care only about ourselves. If our lives are focused only on ourselves, "what are we?" A person whose life begins and ends with himself is of little significance.

Our Existence

Hillel's language ("what am I") hints at a deeper, existential component. Rav Shimon Shkop (the great pre-World War II Talmudic scholar) understands Hillel as addressing the existential plane (Sha'arei Yosher, Introduction). Naturally, people view their existence as limited to

themselves. Rav Shimon describes this perspective as crude and explains that more refined people see their existence as inclusive of others and, in fact, all of Hashem's creations.

People often see their care for others as a value that conflicts (or at least competes) with care for themselves. Rav Shimon explains that, in truth, they complement each other.



People often see their care for others as a value that conflicts (or at least competes) with care for themselves.

Soul Perspective

The Baal Hatanya (Sefer HaTanya, Chapter 32) uses a similar idea to explain Hillel's response to the convert who asked to be taught the entire Torah while standing on one foot: "Don't do to others what you don't want to be done to yourself — this is the whole Torah (Shabbat 31a)." As important as this idea is, we still wonder how Hillel could present it as the **entirety** of the Torah?

The Baal Hatanya explains that the ability to care for others on the same level we care for ourselves hinges on focusing upon our spiritual, as opposed to physical, existence. On the physical level, human

beings are separate, independent entities. On the spiritual, soul level, though, we are all part of a larger whole. Because the Torah ultimately aims to focus us on the spiritual, caring about others as we do ourselves, can be viewed as the core of the entire Torah.

The Ba'al Hatanya added that this existential perspective is the basis of all Jews seeing themselves as brothers. Rav Kook built off this idea in many letters he wrote encouraging competing Israeli political parties to remember their brotherly relationship with one another (See, for example, Ma'amarei Hare'iyah 1:76, and 2:365).

Balance

The Sefat Emet brings the two sides of our Mishnah together by summarizing that, on the one hand, it is crucial that we appreciate that we are each unique, important, and responsible for our own growth and success. On the other hand, we need to see ourselves as part of the broader picture of *Klal Yisrael* and of Hashem's full creation.

● Transcribed by Yedidyah Rosenswasser.

HAFTARAH - PARSHANUT ON THE PARSHA

The Fulfillment of Parshat Behar: Purchase & Promise



Rabbanit Shani Taragin
Educational Director, World Mizrahi

The haftarah read in conjunction with this week's parasha, Parshat Behar, is selected from one of the few and most beautiful prophecies of consolation of Yirmiyahu (Yirmiyahu 32:6-27). The exposition of the chapter (not read as the haftarah) details the dire background of Yirmiyahu and the people at the time of the prophecy – it is the tenth year of King Tzidkiyahu, the eighteenth year since the rise of the Babylonian king Nevuchadnezzar. The Babylonians have not only stripped the Judean kingdom of autonomy, but have also besieged Yerushalayim, leading to the ultimate battle and destruction of the Beit HaMikdash, and the exile of remaining Judeans. Yirmiyahu, reflecting the imminent national state of the people, was under personal siege at the time, confined to the royal prison near the Mikdash for having prophesied that Tzidkiyahu and Yerushalayim would fall to the Babylonians.

The haftarah reading opens with Hashem announcing to Yirmiyahu that his cousin Chanamel, will be coming to Yirmiyahu's prison compound to request that Yirmiyahu purchase his field in the city of Anatot (Yirmiyahu's home town), thereby "redeeming" the ancestral property. The prophecy continues with Yirmiyahu acquiring the property (32:9-11), the disposition of purchase (32:12-15), Yirmiyahu's anguished prayer (32:16-25) and one verse of the Divine response (32:26-7). The obvious relationship between the haftarah and the parasha is the commandment to redeem the property of one's kinsman, a mitzvah that occupies one sole verse of the parasha: "If your brother should become poor and sell some of his property, then his close

relative shall come and redeem that which his brother has sold" (Vayikra 25:25). (The idea of redemption is mentioned again in the parashah in verses 47-55 referring to redemption of a person who has sold himself into slavery to a gentile because of his financial straits, but not referring to his land.)

Why did Chaza"l choose a prophecy reminiscent of just one verse of the parasha, rather than choosing an excerpt reflecting the general subject of the parasha– the laws of shmitta and yovel (the sabbatical year and the jubilee year)?! It seems that Yirmiyahu, acting as Chanamel's nearest family relative and redeemer (indicative of the terrible starvation and death of more direct family members), is exemplifying both personal and national redemption. For this reason, Yirmiyahu wrote down the "hidden" text which contained the detailed account of the transaction, and the "open" abbreviated account of the purchase contract and was implored by Hashem to "place them in an earthenware container to preserve them for many years (v.14).

Parshat Behar is not merely a passage of commandments relating to the laws of shemitta and yovel, but rather a presentation of the theme of Am Yisrael's relationship to the Land of Israel. The laws of the sabbatical and jubilee years require the owners to relinquish all signs of ownership over the land, underscoring the premise that the Land ultimately belongs to Hashem who "leases" the land to the people of Israel. The "leased" land must be retained by the Jewish people and even if temporarily sold due to financial need, in the jubilee year, each portion of land must be restored to the original owner to whom

Hashem allotted the land. The bond between the Land of Israel and the people of Israel remains eternal, and should ideally be preserved within families even when ownership temporarily shifts. The prophecy of the haftarah underscores the individual family member's personal commitment to his relative and to the Land, and simultaneously Hashem's national commitment to His people and their settlement in the Land.

This theme continues in next week's parasha, Bchukotai wherein we learn of the dire consequences of destruction and exile for failing to observe the laws of the sabbatical and jubilee years. The haftarah presents a wonderful parshanut of personal and national fulfillment of the words of the parashah, reminding us of Hashem's ultimate ownership of the Land. When confronted with the reality of the Babylonian siege-mounds ready to storm the city and witnessing the pestilence-plagued city, Yirmiyahu turned to Hashem questioning Hashem's commandment to purchase the land for money! Hashem responded to the same prophet who for the past thirty-nine years foretold punishment, destruction and despair, with a message of redemption, implanting hope and faith in return- "Houses and fields and vineyards will yet be bought in this land" (Yirmiyahu 32:15). For Hashem has a special covenantal relationship with His people and His land, providing us with eternal hope – "I am Hashem...Is anything too wondrous for me?" (Yirmiyahu 32:27). With the same words employed to encourage Sarah Immenu of miraculous birth that will lead to nationhood (Bereishit 18:14), Hashem encourages Yirmiyahu of national rebirth and return to the Land!

Halachic Q&A



Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Head, Mizrahi Rabbinic Council | Founder and Chairman, Sulamot

Question: If somebody counts the weeks and not the days or the days and not the weeks, does he need to count sefirat ha'omer again?

Answer: Somebody who counts only the days should go back and count again properly without a bracha. If he forgets to go back, he can continue the next night with a bracha. However, somebody who counts the weeks and not the days has not fulfilled his obligation at all. Therefore, he must go back that day and count properly with a bracha, and if he forgets to go back, he cannot continue counting with a bracha the next night. The only exception to this rule is on a night where the count reaches a full week (such as on day seven, fourteen, twenty one, etc.). If he were to count only the weeks and not the days, he would be able to continue with a bracha the next night.

Question: Can one say “shehecheyanu” during sefirah?

Answer: There are some who have the practice not to say shehecheyanu during sefirah. The Mishnah Berurah, however, and most poskim think it is mutar lechatchila to say shehecheyanu. According to all, one can make a shehecheyanu on a mitzvah overet (passing mitzvah) such as brit milah, birth of a daughter, pidyon haben, or seeing a friend you haven't seen in over thirty days that brings you joy.

Question: Can one mix or serve food while it is on the hot plate on Shabbat?

Answer: A food which is not yet fully cooked should not be mixed nor served from while it is still on the source of heat. Likewise, one should not mix foods that are fully cooked and on the direct source of heat. Sephardim are lenient and allow one to serve from foods that are fully cooked and on the direct source of heat (Rav Ovadya Yosef). This is not permitted for ashkenazim unless there is a need, such as if the pot is heavy, and if the food is fully cooked (Chazon Ish).

Question: Can one filter drinks on Shabbat?

Answer: Clear drinks which most people drink without any filtering can be filtered on Shabbat even with a filter (SA OC 319:1). This is because filtering them is not considered a tikun (repair) as most people drink it without filtering. Likewise, there is no issue of borer because whatever particles are mixed with the liquid are considered as one species with the water, as people generally do not view them separately. There is no issue of borer within one species.

Drinks which are a bit murky that most people would filter before drinking cannot not be filtered with a filter. The Mishnah Berurah writes that they should not be filtered at all. However, there is room for those who are lenient to do so with an instrument not generally used for filtering.

Drinks that cannot be drunk without filtering cannot be filtered, even with an instrument not generally used for filtering.

Question: Can I remove the shell of peanuts on Shabbat?

Answer: Peanuts have a reddish thin layer on the inside and a harder brownish layer surrounding it. The Chazon Ish (quoted in the sefer Orchot Shabbat) allows one to remove the hard layer, and this is the accepted ruling in Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchata. However, the ruling may be different nowadays. In the past, peanuts were sold with their hard shell, and therefore, taking off the shell was considered like an act done at home (and therefore not prohibited as a melacha of “dash”). Nowadays, peanuts are almost always sold without their harder shell and only with the reddish shell. Therefore, if someone were to buy peanuts with their shells, it is proper to be machmir to remove the harder shell with your hands and not with a utensil and crack them one by one (Beitza 13b). One can remove the thin shells of many peanuts at once if it is done right before it will be eaten.

Question: Can one smell a plant that is connected to the ground on Shabbos?

Answer: A fruit that is fitting to be eaten cannot be smelled while it is connected to the ground out of concern that one may come to pick the fruits. It is permissible to smell flowers or plants that are not fitting to be eaten (SA OC 336:10).

● Translated from Hebrew and abbreviated by Yaakov Panitch.

תקציר לפרשת בהר

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מברכת ה' איננו רק שכר ומתנה, המגיע בעקבות קיום המצווה. היבול המבורך הנו ברכת ה' השלוחה לאדם כתוצאה של הקשר בין האדם לה'. באכילת התבואה המבורכת חוזר האדם למצב הראשוני, כפי שהיה בגן עדן מקדם, שבו נהנה האדם מברכת ה' באופן ישיר ובלתי אמצעי.

פרשת הברכות והקללות, המופיעה בפרשת בחוקות, משלימה את התמונה: הקללות וחזרות ומדגישות את שממת הארץ כתוצאה של אי-קיום מצוות השמיטה.

כל עוד עם ישראל מרגיש את הקשר המיוחד, שומר תורה ומצוות, ומבין שהוא לא הבעלים על הארץ ומבטא זאת בקיום שמיטה – הארץ פועלת כארץ ה' ונותנת את פירותיה.

אולם כאשר עם ישראל לא מבין את הקשר המהותי בין הארץ לה' ואיננו שומר את השמיטה, נכרתת מאליה ברכת ה' מן הארץ, וכתוצאה מכך הארץ איננה פועלת כארץ ה', ואיננה נותנת את פירותיה. הארץ הופכת לשוממה ועם ישראל יוצא לגלות. כל עוד ישראל בגלות הארץ נשאר שוממה מפני שלא עבודת ה' על ידי עם ה' אין אפשרות להצמיח דבר בארץ ה'. ארץ ישראל פורחת רק במציאות שבה עם ישראל נמצא בארצו ומרגיש את בעלותו המיוחדת של ה' על ארץ ישראל. הביטוי לתחושה זו הוא בשמירת השמיטה, שבה מתגלה הקשר בין ה' לארץ ישראל ולעם ישראל, ובה ארץ ישראל הופכת להיות מעין גן עדן.

שכן ה' נטע למענו את הגן – "וַיִּטַע ה' אֶל-לוֹהִים גֵּן בְּעֵדֶן מִקְדָּם וַיִּשָּׂם שָׁם אֶת הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר יָצַר" (שם, ח) – וכל שנותר לאדם לעשות הוא להנכיח את הקשר עם ה' ע"י תפילה, ולקטוף את הפירות. חטא אדם הראשון מבטא את חוסר ההכרה של האדם בה' כבעל הגן, וגירוש האדם מגן עדן בעקבות זאת הוא העברתו למציאות אחרת, שבה עליו לעבוד קשה כדי להצמיח משהו מן האדמה. הגירוש מגן עדן הוא תוצאה של הניתוק בין עבודת האדמה לבין המצב הרוחני של האדם. מכאן ואילך האדמה נמסרת כביכול לרשות האדם, ועליו לעמול קשה מאוד כדי להוציא ממנה לחם.

אולם, במקום אחד בלבד נשמר הקשר המיוחד בין האדמה לה' – בארץ ישראל. ארץ ישראל נקראת "ארץ ה'", אשר "תמיד עיני ה' אלוקיך בה" (דברים י"א, יב). לכן, בארץ ישראל ממשך להתקיים הקשר בין עבודת ה' לבין עבודת האדמה ופריחת הארץ. ירידת המטר בארץ ישראל תלויה במצבו הרוחני של העם. כלומר – ארץ ישראל היא מעין גן עדן המצוי בתוך העולם הזה.

שנת השמיטה מבטאת את ייחודה של ארץ ישראל בצורה החזקה ביותר: במשך שנה תמימה עם ישראל איננו עובד את האדמה, ומתקיים מברכת ה': וְכִי תֵאמְרוּ מַה נֹאכַל בְּשָׁנָה הַשְּׁבִיעִת הֵן לֹא נִזְרַע וְלֹא נִקְטַף אֶת תְּבוּאֵתֵינוּ: וְצִוִּיתִי אֶת בְּרַכְתִּי לְכֶם בְּשָׁנָה הַשְּׁשִׁית וְעִשְׂתֶּם אֶת הַתְּבוּאָה לְשֵׁלֶשׁ הַשָּׁנִים. (ויקרא כ"ה, כ-כא).

הקיום בשנת השמיטה והיובל הוא מעין הקיום בגן עדן: ה' מצווה את ברכתו, וכך הארץ מצמיחה יבול, ממנו האדם יכול ליהנות ללא טרחה. היבול הבא

בתחילתה של פרשת בהר (ויקרא כ"ה) מופיעות מצוות השמיטה והיובל. מצוות אלה מבטאות את הרעיון שהארץ שייכת לה'. במשך רוב השנים האדם מחויב לעבוד את האדמה, הארץ הופכת להיות כרכוש השייך לו ויש לו רשות להשתמש בה ולנצל לצרכיו; אולם, פעם בשבע שנים (בשמיטה) האדם צריך לעצור ולהפסיק להשתמש באדמה כאילו היא רכוש, ולהתייחס אליה כאל "ארץ ה'" – שאין לו רשות להשתמש בה, מאחר והיא אינה רכוש הפרטי. פעם בחמישים שנה (ביובל), הנחלות חוזרות לבעליהן, כביטוי לכך שאין תוקף נצחי למכירה ולקנייה של קרקעות בארץ ישראל, מאחר והארץ שייכת לה' ולא לבני אדם.

ייחודה של ארץ ישראל כארץ ה' בא לידי ביטוי גם בתלות של הארץ בגשמים (דברים י"א, יא-יז). בארץ ישראל התוצרת החקלאית תלויה במצב הרוחני של העם – ללא מטר אין תוצרת חקלאית, והמטר בארץ ישראל תלוי בשמיעה בקול ה'. נמצא שהמטר בארץ ישראל מבטא את הקשר בין התנהגותו של האדם (ומצבו הרוחני) לבין השגשוג הכלכלי.

קשר זה מבטא לראשונה בפרשת בראשית: וְכָל שְׁיֵי הַשָּׂדֶה טָרֶם יִהְיֶה בְּאֶרֶץ וְכָל עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה טָרֶם יִצְמַח כִּי לֹא הִמְטִיר ה' אֶל-לֵהִים עַל הָאָרֶץ וְאָדָם אִין לְעַבֵּד אֶת הָאָדָמָה. (בראשית ב', ה). על פסוק זה אומר רש"י: "ומה טעם "לא המטיר"? לפי ש"אדם אין לעבוד את האדמה", ואין מכיר בטובתם של גשמים, וכשבא אדם וידע שהם צורך לעולם התפלל עליהם וירדו וצמחו האילנות והדשאים"

גן עדן הוא מקום של קשר ישיר בין ה', הארץ והאדם, ובו האדם יכול היה ליהנות מן האדמה ללא עבודה,

Begin and End



Sivan Rahav Meir and Yedidya Meir
World Mizrahi Scholars-in-Residence

The "Behar" Torah portion begins with Shabbat and ends with Shabbat. It begins with "Shabbat of the Land" or the shmita (Sabbatical) year. The entire year is a Shabbat for the earth. It's an opportunity to let go, to relax, to desist from working the land. To put the ceaseless financial hustle on pause. The Torah portion ends with the Shabbat that comes each week, a day in which we detach ourselves from the outside world in order to connect to ourselves. It's a day when we desist from racing after money, stop obsessing over Internet "likes" and other cyber attractions, and simply rest from everything, in order to look within.

Rabbi Professor Jonathan Sacks wrote that this Torah portion presents a great challenge, especially for the Jew today, in the convenient and technologically advanced world in which we are privileged to live. Today it is much more difficult to refrain from working, creating, and accumulating. At the height of material success, when everything is accessible, available, and fun, it's not easy to make the decision to stop and rest for a while.

היא במצוות השבת. אחת לשבוע האדם מתבקש לאפס את המערכת ולהיטען מחדש. להתנתק מהרעשים החיצוניים כדי להתחבר לפנימיות. הרב קוק כתב שאנחנו צריכים "להתנער ממהומת החיים הרגילה". כשהוא כתב זאת, מהומת החיים הייתה סוס ועגלה. היום היא גדולה הרבה יותר.

דוד המלך מגדיר בחמש מילים את הסוד הזה: "הַרְפוּ וְדַעוּ כִּי אֲנֹכִי אֱלוֹקִים", הוא אומר בספר תהלים. זוהי המלצה להפסיק לעתים את האחיזה העיקשת במציאות. דווקא ההרפיה יכולה לתת לנו יותר שקט וביטחון.

Rabbi Sacks expressed himself on this topic as follows:

"The true challenges with which the Children of Israel will need to cope will not be slavery but freedom, not poverty but abundance, not wandering but the comforts of home."

This is our test in a 24/7 world where all good things are at our fingertips: to stop, pause, and reflect.



We need to pay attention to the cracks, the sooner the better. In this week's Torah portion, the story is told of a man whose financial situation begins to deteriorate. What should be done? "You shall support him". And Rashi explains: it's forbidden to allow him to fall and become destitute. He needs to be supported at once. Rashi compares this to a donkey bearing a heavy load. If the load begins to totter while on the back of the donkey, one person can stabilize it. But after the load falls to the ground and its contents scatter, not even five people will be able to return it to its previous state. What's the conclusion? We must always strive to locate the cracks in

פרשנים רבים כותבים שההוראה הזו נכונה לא רק לגבי מצב כלכלי, אלא גם ביחס לנפש, למצוקות בין בני זוג, בחינוך ילדים ועוד – רצוי לטפל במשברים כשהם מתחילים, באיתור מוקדם, ולא לחכות לפיצוץ. לפקוח עיניים ביחס לעצמנו וביחס לאחרים, ולנסות לראות דברים מבעוד מועד.



אנחנו רגילים להתקדם במרוץ החיים, לעבוד ולאגור רכוש, ולא מפסיקים להתעדכן ולעדכן. פרשת השבוע שוברת את המנגנון הזה פעמיים: ראשית, במצוות השמיטה. האדם עובד שש שנים רצופות, אבל בשנה השביעית הוא צריך להפסיק. עליו להרפות, לשמוט, לנוח. הפעם השנייה שבה המרוץ הבלתי פוסק עוצר

a potentially distressful situation, before things deteriorate further.

Many commentators write that this instruction does not only pertain to a financial situation but also to our health, to the relationship with our spouse, to the education of our children and more. It's desirable to address difficulties before they become crises, to detect a problem early and not wait until it worsens. Instead, it makes sense to consider the image of a donkey carrying a heavy load and of offering support, where a little assistance or attention can make a big difference. We must be constantly on the alert, sensitive to problems as they arise, provide support where needed, and never neglect anyone in distress. To open our eyes in relation to ourselves and to others, and to endeavor to see potential problems in advance. Afterward, it will be a lot more difficult to fix the situation. "You shall support him."

המצב הכלכלי, הבריאותי והנפשי של רבים – אינו טוב כעת. זה אומר שעלינו להיות רגישים ועירניים במיוחד. לטפל, לחזק, לא להזניח מצוקות.

בפרשת השבוע מסופר על אדם שמצבו הכלכלי מתחיל להתדרדר. מה צריך לעשות? "וְהִחֲזַקְתָּ בוֹ", נכתב בפרשה, ורש"י מסביר: אסור להניח לו ליפול ולהתרסק. צריך לחזק אותו כבר מההתחלה. הוא ממשיך זאת לחמור שסוּחב משא כבד. אם המשא מתנדנד כשהוא על גב החמור – אדם אחד יכול לייצב אותו. אבל אם הכול נפל לארץ והתפזר – גם חמישה אנשים לא יכולים להחזיר את המצב לקדמותו. מה המסקנה? להתאמץ ולאחר סדקים ראשונים של מצוקה, לפני שהדברים מתדרדרים.

For the Shabbat Table



Rabbi Danny Mirvis

Deputy CEO, World Mizrachi

Rabbi at Ohel Moshe Synagogue, Herzliya Pituach

“**A**nd if your brother becomes poor and his hand falters with you - and you shall support him (whether he is) a stranger and (or) a sojourner and he shall live with you. You shall not take from him interest or increase - and you shall fear your Go-d and your brother shall live with you" (Vayikra 25:35-36).

Towards the end of this week's Parsha we are commanded to support those who have fallen into financial trouble. At the same time, we are taught the prohibition against charging interest. We should lend money to those in need, but not for any personal gain.

One might assume that handing out loans is a lower level of charity than giving financial gifts. After all, loans are to be returned, so they do not involve the same level of generosity or self-sacrifice as giving one's wealth away to others without expecting anything in return. However, Rambam states about the commandment to lend money:

"This Mitzva is greater than giving charity to the pauper who requests, because this one (the pauper) is already required to request, but this one (the borrower) has not yet reached that level" (Rambam, Hilchot Malveh VeLoveh 1:1).

In what way is lending somebody money greater than giving it to them?



Helping those in need is not only about helping their bank balance. Providing emotional support, caring for their respect and saving them embarrassment are key elements of giving charity.

In his Sefer HaMitzvot (positive commandment 197), Rambam explains that one who takes a loan does not suffer any embarrassment, for the true extent of his poverty is unknown. Therefore, he feels far greater relief than one who receives money and is unable to return it. Although a pauper is in a more desperate financial situation, the emotional and psychological support of giving a loan can be far greater than that of giving charity.

A different answer can be found in Rashi on this week's Parsha:

"Do not leave him until he will decline and fall and it will be difficult to help him up again, rather support him from the time his hand falters. To what is this similar? To a load which is on a donkey. As long as

it is on the donkey, one (person) can take hold of it and put it (back) in place. Once it has fallen to the ground, five (people) cannot put it (back) in place" (Rashi, Vayikra 25:35).

From Rashi's parable we learn that the earlier we help a person in need, the easier it will be to help them. If we wait for people to hit rock-bottom, they will need far greater assistance to get back on their feet.

Both as individuals and as a society, there are strong lessons to be taken from Rambam and Rashi. Helping those in need is not only about helping their bank balance. Providing emotional support, caring for their respect and saving them embarrassment are key elements of giving charity.

We should not wait for people to become desperate before offering a helping hand. This is not only true of helping those who ask for financial support. It is true of helping anybody in need of any form of support. The earlier we respond with assistance, the easier it will be to help the person in need and the less embarrassing it will be for them.

It is not only what we give that is important, but how we give and when we give as well.

Shabbat Shalom.

The Economics of Liberty



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt”l

The most surprising best-selling book in 2014 was French economist Thomas Piketty’s *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*¹ – a dense 700-page-long treatise on economic theory backed by massive statistical research – not the usual stuff of runaway literary successes.

Much of its appeal was the way it documented the phenomenon that is reshaping societies throughout the world: in the current global economy, inequalities are growing apace. In the United States between 1979 and 2013, the top one percent saw their incomes grow by more than 240 per cent, while the lowest fifth experienced a rise of only 10 percent.² More striking still is the difference in capital income from assets such as housing, stocks and bonds, where the top one percent have seen a growth of 300 per cent, and the bottom fifth have suffered a fall of 60 per cent. In global terms, the combined wealth of the richest 85 individuals is equal to the total of the poorest 3.5 billion – half the population of the world.³

Piketty’s contribution was in showing why this has happened. The market economy, he argues, tends to make us more and less equal at the same time: more equal because it spreads education, knowledge and skills more widely than in the past, but less equal because over time, especially in mature economies, the rate of return on capital tends to outpace the rate of growth of income and output. Those who own capital assets grow richer, faster than those who rely entirely on income from their labour. The increase in inequality is, he says, “potentially threatening to democratic societies and to the values of social justice on which they are based.”

This is the latest chapter in a very old story indeed. Isaiah Berlin made the point that not all values can co-exist – in this case, freedom and equality.⁴ You can have one or the other but not both: the more economic freedom, the less equality; the more equality, the less freedom. That was the key conflict of the Cold War era, between capitalism and communism. Communism lost the battle. In the 1980s, under Ronald Reagan in America, Margaret Thatcher in Britain, markets were liberalized, and by the end of the decade the Soviet Union had collapsed. But unfettered economic freedom produces its own discontents, and Piketty’s book is one of several warning signs.



What kind of society do we seek? What social order best does justice to human dignity and the delicate bonds linking us to one another and to G-d?

All of this makes the social legislation of parshat Behar a text for our time, because the Torah is profoundly concerned, not just with economics, but with the more fundamental moral and human issues. What kind of society do we seek? What social order best does justice to human dignity and the delicate bonds linking us to one another and to G-d?

What makes Judaism distinctive is its commitment to *both* freedom *and* equality, while at the same time recognising the tension between them. The opening chapters of Genesis describe the consequences of G-d’s gift to humans

of individual freedom. But since we are social animals, we need also collective freedom. Hence the significance of the opening chapters of Shemot, with their characterisation of Egypt as an example of a society that deprives people of liberty, enslaving populations and making the many subject to the will of the few. Time and again the Torah explains its laws as ways of preserving freedom, remembering what it was like, in Egypt, to be deprived of liberty.

The Torah is also committed to the equal dignity of human beings in the image, and under the sovereignty, of G-d. That quest for equality was not fully realised in the biblical era. There were hierarchies in biblical Israel. Not everyone could be a king; not everyone was a priest. But Judaism had no class system. It had no equivalent of Plato’s division of society into men of gold, silver and bronze, or Aristotle’s belief that some are born to rule, others to be ruled. In the community of the covenant envisaged by the Torah, we are all G-d’s children, all precious in His sight, each with a contribution to make to the common good.

The fundamental insight of parshat Behar is precisely that restated by Piketty, namely that economic inequalities have a tendency to increase over time, and the result may be a loss of freedom as well. People can become enslaved by a burden of debt. In biblical times this might involve selling yourself literally into slavery as the only way of guaranteeing food and shelter. Families might be forced into selling their land: their ancestral inheritance from the days of Moses. The result would be a society in which, in the course of time, a few would become substantial landowners while many became landless and impoverished.

The Torah's solution, set out in Behar, is a periodic restoration of people's fundamental liberties. Every seventh year, debts were to be released and Israelite slaves set free. After seven sabbatical cycles, the Jubilee year was to be a time when, with few exceptions, ancestral land returned to its original owners. The Liberty Bell in Philadelphia is engraved with the famous words of the Jubilee command, in the King James translation:

"Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof."
(Lev. 25:10)

So relevant does this vision remain that the international movement for debt relief for developing countries by the year 2000 was called *Jubilee 2000*, an explicit reference to the principles set out in our parsha.

Three things are worth noting about the Torah's social and economic programme. First, it is more concerned with human freedom than with a narrow focus on economic equality. Losing your land or becoming trapped by debt are real constraints on freedom.⁵ Fundamental to a Jewish understanding of the moral dimension of economics is the idea of independence, "each person under his own vine and fig tree" as the prophet Micah puts it (Mic. 4:4). We pray in the Grace after Meals, "Do not make us dependent on the gifts or loans of other people ... so that we may suffer neither shame nor humiliation." There is something profoundly degrading in losing your independence and being forced to depend on the goodwill of others. Hence the provisions of Behar are directed not at equality but at restoring people's capacity to earn their own livelihood as free and independent agents.

Next, it takes this entire system out of the hands of human legislators. It rests on two fundamental ideas about capital and labour. First, the land belongs to G-d:

"Since the land is Mine, no land shall be sold permanently. You are foreigners and resident aliens as far as I am concerned." (Lev. 25:23)

Second, the same applies to people:

"Because the Israelites are My servants, whom I brought out of Egypt, they must not be sold as slaves." (Lev. 25:42)

This means that personal and economic liberty are not open to political negotiation. They are inalienable, G-d-given rights. This is what lay behind John F. Kennedy's reference in his 1961 Presidential Inaugural, to the "revolutionary beliefs for which our forebears fought," namely "the belief that the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state but from the hand of G-d."



What matters to the Torah is not simply technical indices such as the rate of growth or absolute standards of wealth but the quality and texture of relationships: people's independence and sense of dignity, the ways in which the system allows people to recover from misfortune, and the extent to which it allows the members of a society to live the truth that "when you eat from the labour of your hands you will be happy and it will be well with you."

Third, it tells us that economics is, and must remain, a discipline that rests on moral foundations. What matters to the Torah is not simply technical indices such as the rate of growth or absolute standards of wealth but the quality and texture of relationships: people's independence and sense of dignity, the ways in which the system allows people to recover from misfortune, and the extent to which it allows the members of a society to live the truth that "when you eat from the labour of your hands you will be happy and it will be well with you." (Ps. 128:2)

In no other intellectual area have Jews been so dominant. They have won 41

percent of Nobel prizes in economics.⁶ They developed some of the greatest ideas in the field: David Ricardo's theory of comparative advantage, John von Neumann's Game Theory (a development of which gained Professor Robert Aumann a Nobel Prize), Milton Friedman's monetary theory, Gary Becker's extension of economic theory to family dynamics, Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky's theory of behavioural economics, and many others. Not always but often the moral dimension has been evident in their work.

There is something impressive, even spiritual, in the fact that Jews have sought to create – down here on earth, not up in heaven in an afterlife – systems that seek to maximise human liberty and creativity. And the foundations lie in our parsha, whose ancient words are still inspiring.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Which do you think is more important, freedom or equality?
- What does being created in the image of G-d have to do with equality and freedom?
- Why do you think there have been so many Jewish Nobel Prize winners?

1. Thomas Picketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, translation: Arthur Goldhammer, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014.
2. <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2012/12/a-giant-statistical-round-up-of-the-income-inequality-crisis-in-16-charts/266074>.
3. <http://www.theguardian.com/business/2014/jan/20oxfam-85-richest-people-half-of-the-world>.
4. Isaiah Berlin, "Two concepts of liberty," in *Four Essays on Liberty*, Oxford University Press, 1969.
5. This is the argument set out by Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen in his book, *Development as Freedom*, Oxford Paperbacks, 2001.
6. See the Jewish Virtual Library's list of Jewish Nobel laureates: <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/nobels.html>

Opposite Meanings



Rabbi Yisroel Reisman
Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshiva Torah Vodaas

In this week's Parsha, we learn about the Mitzvah of Yovel, and within it the prohibition about not selling land in Eretz Yisrael permanently.

”וְהָאָרֶץ לֹא תִמְכַּר לְצִמְתָּהּ.”

All land in Eretz Yisrael comes back on Yovel to its original owner, and therefore the sale of the land is not permanent. The word “לְצִמְתָּהּ” is meant to imply permanence. Yet, the *כתב הקבלה* says that the root of the word is related to that of *צמצום*, meaning to restrict or limit oneself. For example, when we fast, “לצום”, we are restricting ourselves from eating. Thus, we must ask what the comparison is between these different meanings of the word, on the one hand implying permanence while on the other hand implying restriction.

At first thought, perhaps this root “צם” can be an example of a contronym, a word with opposite meanings. Every language has examples of contronyms, and we can see different examples in both English and Hebrew. The word “clip” in English can mean to cut something out, but can also mean to combine things together. In Hebrew, the “לטסקל” can mean both to remove stones and to throw stones. Therefore, we can say that “צם” can have opposite meanings

However, based on a story from the Chozeh of Lublin, we can explain how these seemingly opposite meanings can in fact be coming from the same place. The story goes that a student once came to the Chozeh of Lublin with his daily schedule to get it approved. The Chozeh looked at the schedule, and was very excited to see all the ambitious plans for learning that the student hoped to accomplish. However, before approving it, the Chozeh added a line after each part of the schedule, saying “and sometimes the opposite”. The student asked the Chozeh why that line was necessary, if otherwise the schedule was a very good schedule. The Chozeh added that while it is a great schedule, the fear with any schedule is that sometimes people become so focused on their daily routine, that they forget that sometimes it is necessary to be flexible. While scheduling and being disciplined is important, we cannot become overly obsessed with our routine that that we forget the importance of helping out a friend in need, or taking care of a time sensitive act of Chessed that comes up. Sometimes, when other factors of values come up, we must break from our schedule and our plans, and therefore the Chozeh wanted to write at every part of the schedule that sometimes, the student will

do the opposite. Sometimes, a friend will need help during a certain time slot, or a poor person will need Tzedakah, and the student must remember that this is also part of the schedule.

Going back to the word “צמיתות”, we can now understand how the two different meanings connect. Permanence is very often good, and very often encouraged. However, with permanence very often comes restriction. Doing something permanently can restrict a person, both from ever undoing that act, and also ever deviating from that permanent reality that he has set for himself. Thus, we are told in this week's Parsha, that when you sell land in Eretz Yisrael, for whatever reason you would want to sell, make sure that you don't do it in a permanent, restricting, way.

Continued from previous page

opposition of the *Chazon Ish* to the *heter mechirah*.

As mentioned, the mitzvah of 'די הארץ שבת לך' is fulfilled by anyone who owns a field in Eretz Yisrael and leaves it fallow over shemittah. Thus,

it is a worthwhile endeavor to become a partner in a field before shemittah in order to fulfill this mitzvah, a practice that has become more popular recently. A similar practice has been employed with regard to the mitzvah of zero'a, lechayayim, and keivah (the foreleg, jaw,

and maw). One may become a partner in a *beheimah kesheirah* in Eretz Yisrael, and thereby fulfill the mitzvah of presenting these sections of the animal to a *Kohen* (see *Kreisi U'Pleisi* and *Yad Efrayim, Yoreh De'ah* 61:21)

True Freedom



Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth

Those who acquire slaves, acquire masters for themselves.

That is how the Talmud explains the concept of the 'eved ivri', the Hebrew slave which is referred to in parashat Behar. Actually, such a person was far from being a slave – he was more like a daytime worker with many privileges. Parashat Behar gives us a mitzvah relating to the 'yovel', the jubilee year, 'ukratem dror' you must proclaim liberty for every person in the land. It was a year through which the people were going to experience their freedom, and as a result they needed to free their slaves. Rashi explains that this even included a slave who had not yet served the regular six years. It also included one who had elected to stay on beyond six years! All slaves had to be freed.

The Pnei Yehoshua gives a beautiful perush. He tells us that in order to experience and appreciate our freedom,

we needed to give freedom to others. You can only truly value freedom for yourself if you value the freedom that others are entitled to.

We find the same principle in other areas of human activity. For example with regard to the concept of honour, in Pirkei Avot the question is asked "eizehu mechubad", who is an honourable person? And the answer is "hamechabd et habriyot" – it's somebody who honours others. You are the most honourable person if you respect the honour that's due to other people.

Perhaps the finest example of all comes from the name 'Moshe'. Why was Moses given that name? The Torah says "Ki min ha'mayim meshitiyhu", it is because he was drawn out of water – Pharaoh's daughter saved his life, when as a baby he was taken from the waters of the Nile. But in that case, his name should have been 'Mashui' – 'the one who was

drawn'. 'Moshe' means the one who draws others out! This indicates that Moshe would receive inspiration from his own experiences having been drawn out but also devote his life to draw others out of water and out of trouble. This is what inspired him to lead our people through the waters of the Red Sea and also to draw water out of a rock for the people to drink.

He felt that he had been saved only so that he might use his capacity to save the lives of others.

Therefore we learn that you are truly free if you give freedom to others. You are only truly honourable if you honour others. You can only truly experience and appreciate life if you give life to others. Therefore what defines us as human beings is not so much what we have, but rather what we give to the world around us.

Shabbat Shalom.

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Exile as Punishment for Violating Shemitta



Rabbi Shalom Rosner
Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh

ועשית את חוקותי ואת מצוותי תשמרו ועשיתם אותם ושבתם על הארץ לבטח. (ויקרא כה:יח)

Wherefore you perform My statutes and ordinances and do them; and you shall dwell in the land in safety. (Vayikra 25:18)

The Torah explicitly states that if we fulfill the commandments, we will be blessed with peace and prosperity in *Eretz Yisrael*. However, in the *tokhaha* of *Parshat Behukotai*, the Torah states:

אז תרצה הארץ את שבתותיה. (ויקרא כו:לד)
Then the land will make up for its sabbaticals. (Vayikra 26:34)

Rashi draws out the implication: “Israel is exiled on account of the violation of *Shemitta*, as it says: “Then the land will make up for its sabbaticals.” More than any other transgression, failure to observe *Shemitta* leads to exile. This connection between *Shemitta* and *Galut* (exile) demands an explanation.

In the sefer *KeMotzei Shalal Rav*, an idea is brought down by Rabbi Yaakov Hai Zarihan who suggests that the purpose of *Shemitta* is to show the farmer and everyone else that HaKadosh Barukh Hu is in charge. Even though the land is worked for six years and the land should naturally be worn out, Hashem provides us with enough sustenance during the sixth year to sustain us through *Shemitta* and the following growing season. *Shemitta* proves God’s providence, showing everyone that Hashem watches over, protects, and provides for each individual.

Rabbi Zarihan suggests that there is another way that Hashem’s providence is demonstrated: by the existence of the Jewish people. According to natural law, a small, persecuted, downtrodden nation in exile should cease to exist. Yet, the Jewish people have survived for thousands of



Today, we are privileged to be able to live in Eretz Yisrael and to once again observe Shemitta and other mitzvot ha’teluyot B’Aretz.

years, outlasting the very empires that persecuted them. The only explanation is Divine Providence. Hashem protected and watched over us.

Mark Twain once expressed his amazement at the miracle of the existence of the Jewish people:

If the statistics are right, the Jews constitute but one quarter of one percent of the human race. It suggests a nebulous puff of stardust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way. Properly, the Jew ought hardly to be heard of, but he is heard of, has always been heard of. He is as prominent on the planet as any other people, and his importance is extravagantly out of proportion to the smallness of his bulk.

His contributions to the world’s list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine, and abstruse learning are also very out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers. He has made a marvelous fight in this world in all ages and has done it with his hands tied behind him. He could be vain of himself and be excused for it. The Egyptians, the Babylonians, and the Persians rose, filled the planet

with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away. The Greeks and Romans followed and made a vast noise, and they were gone. Other people have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, and have vanished.

The Jew saw them all, survived them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert but aggressive mind. All things are mortal but the Jews. All other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?¹

When the Jewish people do not observe the laws of *Shemitta* in *Eretz Yisrael*, we destroy an opportunity to demonstrate God’s providence to the world. Consequently, we are switched to another mode of demonstrating Divine Providence: the miraculous continued existence of the Jewish people in exile among their persecutors.

One expression of Hashem’s providence is through the observance of *Shemitta*, another is through the Jews’ survival in exile. Today, we are privileged to be able to live in *Eretz Yisrael* and to once again observe *Shemitta* and other *mitzvot ha’teluyot B’Aretz*. May we fulfill all of them properly so that it can be the vehicle for Hashem’s bountiful providence.

1. Mark Twain, Concerning The Jews, *Harper’s Magazine*, 1899.

Lessons From Shemittah



Michal Horowitz
Judaic Studies Teacher

In *Parshas Behar*, the Torah commands us regarding *Shemittah* - the seventh Sabbatical year - and *Yovel* - the fiftieth Jubilee year. These mitzvos fall under the special category of *mitzvos ha'te'luvos ba'Aretz* - mitzvos that are in effect in the land of Israel, and not outside of it. As the land of Israel is a Holy Land, under unique and special Divine Providence, more than all the other lands (Ramban to Vayikra 18:24-25), its special status is further elevated through these land-dependent mitzvos.

And Hashem spoke to Moshe on Har Sinai, saying: Speak to the Children of Israel and you shall say to them: When you come to the land that I am giving you, the land shall rest a Sabbath to Hashem; for six years you may sow your field, and for six years you may prune your vineyard, and gather in its produce; and in the seventh year the land shall have a complete rest, a rest to Hashem, you shall not sow your field, nor shall you prune your vineyard (Vayikra 25:1-4).

For six years the farmer diligently tends to his soil, seeding, planting, weeding, harvesting and reaping the benefits of his labor. Working the land, the landowner is viscerally aware that the output of his fields - and his sustenance - depends, on a large part, on the efforts that he invests in his land. And while he reaps the harvest of his work, his labor further enhances the beauty and output of the Land.

The six years of labor represent *The heavens are the heavens of Hashem, and the land He gave to the sons of man* (Tehillim 115:16). It is our national responsibility and privilege to work the land, and to enjoy the fruits of that labor.

“When the settlement of Magdi’el celebrated its establishment, HaRav Avraham Yitzchak ha’Kohen Kook (1865-1935) zt’l participated in the festivities. The ceremony included the planting of trees, and R’ Kook was given the honor of placing the

first sapling in the ground. The organizers handed R’ Kook a hoe with which to dig the hole, but he threw it aside and began digging with his bare hands...

“Suddenly, R’ Kook’s entire body seemed to quiver and shake, and his face looked like a burning flame, as he placed the sapling in the ground with awe and trepidation.

“What is all this excitement about?” he was asked. “Thank G-d people plant hundreds of trees every day in *Eretz Yisrael!*” R’ Kook replied, “When I held that tender sapling in my hand, I remembered the imperative to emulate G-d and walk in His ways... At the beginning of Creation, the Holy One Blessed be He engaged in planting, as it says: *and Hashem Elokim planted a garden in Eden* (Bereishis 2:8). Similarly, teach the Sages, when you enter the Land, engage in planting, as it is written: *and when you come to the Land, you shall plant all types of food trees* (Vayikra 19:32) [Vayikra Rabba 25]. When I was about to put the sapling in the ground,’ Rav Kook explained, ‘I remembered these words and felt as if I was clinging to the *Shechinah*. Thus, I was overcome by emotion, fear and trembling” (An Angel Among Men, p.273-274).

And while working the land is holy work, and an emulation of G-d’s ways, allowing the land to rest in the seventh (and fiftieth) year is also a Divine command and emulation of His ways. As He rested on the seventh - *and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made* (Bereishis 2:2) - we too must cease working the land in the seventh year and allow it to rest.

The years where the land lies fallow reminds us that though *He gave the earth to the sons of men*, ultimately, there is only One Owner of all lands: *to Hashem is the earth and its fullness, the world and those who dwell in it* (Tehillim 24:1).

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik zt’l teaches, “The idea behind *Shemittah* and *Yovel* is that

man does not truly own anything. The use of the term *Shabbos* for both the seventh day and the seventh year is not coincidental. What is the common motif? To keep *Shabbos* is to bear witness that G-d is the Creator. Man professes faith that He is the Creator, not in the homiletical sense but in *halachic* terms. A *Shabbos* violator is considered a *mumar lechol ha’Torah*, one who has violated the entire Torah, because he denies the authority of G-d over creation. The same motif applies to *Shemittah*. It is a restoration of the authority of G-d and the proclamation of G-d as the Creator and the Maker.

“The prohibitions of the thirty-nine forbidden categories of work (*melachos*) involve an extension of one’s authority through productive work. *Shabbos* violation includes only *melechtes machsheves*, intentional actions that result in *constructive work*. *Mekalkel*, destructive acts, are permitted, because they do not demonstrate authority.

“*Shemittah* is referred to as *Shabbos* because, like *Shabbos*, it is a time of surrender. *Shabbos*, *Shemittah*, and *Yovel* all involve the surrender of authority to the true Owner” (Chumash Masores haRav, Vayikra, p.205-207).

Through working the land, and then allowing the land to lie fallow, we emulate G-d in all of our ways. We acknowledge His dominion and accept His rulership. We bow our heads in submission to His will and gratefully give thanks for the bounty He blesses us with.

The heavens are G-d’s and the earth He gave to man (Ps.115:16) - “*He gave the earth to man so that man should make it heavenly*” (Chidushei HaRim, 1799-1866) (Quoted in Great Jewish Wisdom, p.27).

The 'Double Need' to Help the Needy



Rabbi Menachem Leibtag
Tanach Study Center | Yeshivat Har Etzion

In Parshat Behar we find three 'summary psukim' that may appear to be superfluous.

THIS LAND IS 'HIS' LAND

"And the land shall not be sold [to anyone] forever, for the Land is Mine, for you are like GEYRIM v'TOSHAVIM [strangers and residents] with Me. Throughout - ERETZ ACHUZATCHEM - the land or your inheritance, you shall give the land redemption" (25:23-24)

Even though G-d has 'given' the land to Bnei Yisrael for their inheritance, this statement highlights how the true ownership remains His. In other words, G-d remains sovereign, while He allows Bnei Yisrael the right to work the land as though it was theirs. To emphasize this 'arrangement', once every fifty years the land must return to G-d.

To appreciate the wording of this pasuk, let's compare it to a similar statement made by Avraham Avinu when he approached Bnei Chet to buy a burial plot. Note the textual parallels: "And he spoke to Bnei Chet saying, I am a GEYR v'TOSHAV among you, please allow me to buy an ACHUZAT KEVER [burial plot] from you" (Breishit 23:3-4)

Even though Avraham was a resident in the land, he was not the sovereign power; rather Bnei Chet were. As the land was not yet his, Avraham must purchase from them an ACHUZAH a 'hold' in the land, even though Bnei Chet control it.

Therefore, when Bnei Yisrael receive the Torah at Har Sinai, as they prepare to conquer "eretz canaan", these laws of "yovel" will help them appreciate the dialectic nature of their forthcoming sovereignty over the land. In relation to the surrounding nations, once Bnei Yisrael achieve conquest - they will become the sovereign power. However, in relation to G-d, they must constantly remember that the land still belongs to G-d. He has granted to them only towards the purpose that they become His nation. The laws of "yovel", which affect the very nature of property transactions during the entire fifty year shemita and yovel cycle,

will serve as a constant reminder that G-d has given them this land for a reason (and purpose).

This background can also help us understand what may be the underlying reason for the laws of "Terumah" - the small tithe that must be taken from the produce of land, and given to the "kohen".

Just as the resident of any land must pay a property tax to the country's sovereign power, so too Bnei Yisrael must pay a 'tax' - i.e. TERUMAH - to G-d, in recognition of His sovereignty over the land. Ultimately G-d gives this TERUMAH to the kohanim (His servants), but note how the Torah emphasizes how there are two stages in this process. First, the "terumah" is given to G-d: "And when you eat from the bread of the land, you shall lift up a TERUMAH for G-d..." (see Bamidbar 15:17-21)

Then (and only afterward) G-d awards this "teruma" to the "kohanim": "And G-d told Aharon, behold I am giving you My TERUMAH that I am keeping that Bnei Yisrael have set aside..." (see Bamidbar 18:8)

RELATED LAWS

After explaining the reason for yovel, the Torah continues with several related laws. These laws divide into two distinct sections, each containing examples of when one is forced to sell either: 1) His field, or 2) Himself. Each set of examples focuses on the need to lend assistance for those in financial distress, and is concluded with a special summary pasuk.

ERETZ CANAAN IS NOT FOR SALE

After the laws relating to how we must help someone who was forced to sell his own field, the Torah reminds us: "I am the Lord your G-d who took you out of the land of Egypt to give you the LAND OF CANAAN, L'HIYOT LACHEM L'ELOKIM - to be your G-d" (see 25:38)

To appreciate this pasuk, we must return to "brit Milah" (see Breishit 17:7-8), and the key phrase of that covenant: L'HIYOT LACHEM L'ELOKIM (see 17:7 & 17:8). Furthermore, it was specifically in that covenant that G-d

promised ERETZ CANAAN to Avraham Avinu, and in that very same pasuk, the Torah refers to the land as an ACHUZA (see 17:8).

Based on these parallels, we can conclude that this summary pasuk relates to "brit milah". Recall how "brit milah" focused on the special close relationship between G-d and His nation, and how Eretz Canaan was to become the land where that relationship would achieve its highest potential.

As Eretz Canaan serves as a vehicle through which Bnei Yisrael can better develop this relationship, it is important that each person receives his 'fare share' of this land. Certainly, we would not want the ownership of the land to fall into the hands of a wealthy elite. The laws of "yovel" in chapter 25 help assure that every individual keeps his share of the land.

It also becomes everyone's responsibility to make sure that anyone who becomes less fortunate remains able to keep his portion in Eretz Canaan.

WE ARE SERVANTS OF G-D, NOT MAN

Bamidbar 25:39-54 describes cases when someone becomes so poor that he must sell himself (not just his land) to his creditor; and how we are obligated to help him buy back his freedom. These psukim conclude with the following pasuk: "For Bnei Yisrael are servants to Me, they are My servants whom I have taken them out of the land of Egypt, I am the Lord your G-d." (25:55)

Now, it becomes obvious why this summary pasuk focuses on servitude, rather than land. Servitude to a fellow man would take away from man's ability to be a servant of G-d. Therefore, the summary pasuk of this section relates directly back to the events of Yetziat Mitzraim.

Even though man is free and enjoys the right to own land and determine his own destiny; he must remember that his freedom is a gift from G-d, and hence it should be utilized to serve Him. But even those who have achieved freedom share the responsibility to assist those in financial crisis, in order they too can remain 'free' to serve G-d.

Letting the Blessing Flow



Rabbi Eli Mansour

Edmond J Safra Synagogue, Brooklyn

Parashat Behar discusses the fascinating Misva of Shemita, which requires abstaining from all agricultural work in Eretz Yisrael every seventh year. Additionally, all produce that grows in the seventh year may not be harvested and stored by the owners, and must instead be left for anybody who wishes to take it.

The Torah anticipated that people might wonder how they could survive observing such a command: "If you say, 'What shall we eat in the seventh year, given that we will not plant or collect our produce?'" (25:20). G-d responds: "I shall command My blessing for you in the sixth year, and [the land] shall yield produce for the three years – you will plant in the eighth year and feed off the old produce until the ninth year when its produce arrives..." (25:21-22).

In other words, the Torah is telling the people: "Work less, and you'll earn more."

To put this into terms we can relate to, imagine a businessman closing his store for an entire year, and being guaranteed that he will earn greater profits this way. Business will be so good in the sixth year, before the store closes for the seventh, that the owner will be even better off by closing for the seventh year than he would if he remains open for that year.

Of course, no business consultant would ever recommend such a strategy for increasing revenue.

And this is precisely the message of Shemita – that it is Hashem, and not our business endeavors, that brings us our livelihood. The Torah commands the people to do something that should, by natural causes, result in financial ruin, assuring them that it will bring

them great prosperity, instead – thereby reinforcing the belief that although we are required to work hard to earn a living, the success of our work depends solely and entirely on G-d, as it is He, and only He, who brings us our sustenance.

We might ask, however, why does G-d say in the verses cited above that He will "command" His blessing during the sixth year to sustain the people? A "command" refers to something which could meet with resistance, that people might not want to do. How is this term appropriate when speaking about G-d's blessing? Does G-d need to "command" His blessing?



After all, G-d fed Beneh Yisrael manna for forty years in the desert, when they had no fields at all and were completely incapable of producing their own food.

A powerful explanation for this verse was suggested by Rav Elimelech of Lizhensk (1717-1786). He noted that the question, "What shall we eat in the seventh year?" is, in truth, misguided. After all, G-d fed Beneh Yisrael manna for forty years in the desert, when they had no fields at all and were completely incapable of producing their own food. He brought ten miraculous plagues upon the Egyptians and split the sea to allow Beneh Yisrael to cross. For that matter, He created the universe. Is there any question that He could sustain us if we don't work the land once in seven years? Compared to other things G-d has done and does, this is no big deal at all. The farmer who asked, "What shall we eat in the seventh year?"

should never have asked such a question, because it is obvious that G-d can provide sustenance regardless of how much or how little the farmer works.

And for this reason, Rav Elimelech explained, G-d responds that He will "command" His blessing. If the people don't ask this question and trust that Hashem will provide for them, then the blessing flows naturally. But when they lack faith, and they begin worrying and wondering how they will survive, then Hashem has to "command" the blessing. Anxiety about our livelihood causes a "blockage" in the pipelines of blessing, and thus G-d needs to "push" His blessing through the blocked pipes. This is the meaning of the phrase, "I shall command My blessing."

If we want the blessing to flow, we should place our full trust in the Almighty's ability and kindness. We must believe that He can and wants to care for us and support us, that we don't need to worry, that no matter what the circumstances are, He will provide for our needs. Although we must be responsible and put in the effort to support ourselves, we must place our trust in G-d and realize that ultimately, He provides our livelihood and is always there helping us. If we live with this faith, then we will never need to worry, and will always feel confident and secure that our needs are being cared for.

Free Birds



Rabbi Moshe Weinberger
Congregation Aish Kodesh, Woodmere

We long for the opportunity to observe the Yovel, the Jubilee Year, again. The Ramban in this week's parsha (on Vayikra 25:10) quotes a number of psukim from throughout Tanach to explain the meaning and origin of the word Yovel. One of the psukim he quotes is Yirmiyahu 17:8: "He shall be like a tree planted by the waters, that spreads out its roots by the river [יובל]." After all of the proofs he brings, the Ramban concludes, "But the true understanding is... 'יובל, Yovel' [means something which] returns to the river from which it came..." The word Yovel refers to a river, but it comes from the word "מוביל, to bring" because it means bringing something back to its source. During the Yovel, we somehow return to the waters, to the source, from which we draw the essence of our lives. We return to our roots.

We know that the Torah is eternal, yet we do not merit fulfilling the mitzvah of Yovel today. How can we relate to it? Let us review the three main aspects of Yovel mentioned in the Torah and consider how each one speaks to us today.

The first is the freeing of the slaves (Vayikra 25:10): "And you shall proclaim freedom [for Jewish slaves] in the land." It takes very little imagination to see how we need to be redeemed from so many different types of slavery even today. The Gemara says that we are meant to be slaves to Hashem and not slaves of slaves (Kiddushin 22b). How many of us are enslaved to our jobs and careers? We never see our wives or spend time with our children and when people ask us why we work so hard, we say, "It's because I love my children!" How many of us are enslaved to tiny electronic devices? We cannot go thirty seconds without

checking, looking at, and touching them. Yovel is when we declare ourselves free from human bondage and allow ourselves to be reclaimed by Hashem as His servants. We recognize that in our core, we are free men. We cannot be bound by human chains. Yovel reminds us to return to our roots, our essential freedom.

The second attribute of Yovel is (Vayikra 25:10), "And you shall return, each man to his property, and you shall return, each man to his family." Part of the essence of who we are is to stay connected to our families (see also Meshech Chochmah on this pasuk). How many brothers, sisters, or parents have grown apart from each other, either because of apathy or because of some dispute or pain and hurt one has caused the other. Yovel means returning to our hometowns and reconnecting with estranged family. By reconciling with people from whom we have become distant, we reconnect with our own roots, to our essential selves.

The third attribute is our connection with our homeland, Eretz Yisroel. The pasuk (Vayikra 25:23) says, "The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land belongs to Me." Yovel reminds us that our connection with Eretz Yisroel exists because we and the land belong to G-d. We cannot be separated. Today, many Jewish people with good intentions believe that they can give away portions of Eretz Yisroel for promises of "peace" or that we can engage in "land swaps" with our enemies. But they do not realize that doing so is like cutting off our arms, hoping that this will satisfy our enemies' bloodlust. We cannot separate from our homeland. It is part of us. Yovel reminds us that ultimately all of Eretz Yisroel will return to where it belongs, with us.

We see a common denominator in all three attributes of Yovel. They all involve returning to our roots, coming back to some part of our true selves from which we had become separated. With that background, we can understand the true meaning of freedom when the pasuk says, "And you shall declare freedom [דרור] in the land." Dovid Hamelech (Tehillim 84:4) speaks of a bird called the דרור, Dror: "Even a bird found a house, and a Dror, her nest." What is the nature of this bird called a Dror? The Gemara (Beiah 24a) says, "Raba Bar Rav Huna says, 'This refers to the Dror bird which does not accept [human] ownership... And why is it called a Dror bird? Because it lives [דר] in the house just like in the field.'" The nature of this free bird does not allow it to accept human mastery. So even when one puts this bird in his house, it behaves as if it were still in the field, flying and flitting around in every direction. It is impossible to capture it. It is true to its inner nature as a free creature no matter what its external circumstances are.

That is real freedom.

The Sheep, the Bull and the Twins



Rabbi YY Jacobson
TheYeshiva.net

It is well known that the first three months of the Jewish calendar - Nissan, Iyar and Sivan - constitute a trio. The first month commemorates the birth of an independent and free Jewish nation. Then, on the second day of Passover, we begin a count of 49 days that stretches through the end of the first month, the entire 29 days of the second month and the beginning of the third month. The 50th day is celebrated as the holiday of Shavuot, the day when the newly born Jewish nation received the Torah, and the Jewish people and G-d entered into a covenant that still lasts after 3,342 years.

What is the significance of this trio in the calendar and history of Judaism?

During this period of time between Passover and Shavuot, we also commemorate a devastating tragedy. An epidemic claimed the lives of 24,000 Jewish scholars who were students of the great Talmudic sage, Rabbi Akiba.

In Judaism's usual style of viewing historical episodes as part of an ongoing moral tale, the Talmud comments that the underlying spiritual reason for the disaster was the students' disrespect for one another. For this reason, the days of the counting are seen as a time of mourning; we don't perform weddings or engage in other festive activities during this time.

The zodiac, the 12 formations of stars corresponding to the 12 months of the year, are an important theme in the writings of the Midrash and the Kabbalah.

A complete segment of one of the earliest Kabbalistic texts, the Book of Formation (Sefer Yetzirah), is dedicated to highlighting the mystical meaning behind these parallels. In this essay, we will touch upon one of the numerous symbolisms behind the zodiac of Aries, Taurus and Gemini, which correspond to the first three months of the Jewish calendar, Nissan, Iyar and Sivan.

Generally speaking, there are three types of human beings: sheep, bulls and twins. As a

result, we usually encounter three forms of relationships among humans.

Sheep are meek, timid, docile and submissive. When you call somebody a sheep, that is the image you are attempting to conjure. Bulls, on the other hand, are resistant, individualistic and aggressive. When we define somebody as a "bully," we think of him as anything but tame and subservient.

Bulls are leaders; sheep are followers. Some people would rather be hammers; others have taken on the role of nails.

As is usually the case, marriage can serve as a relevant example. Marriages usually come in one of two varieties: the singular, or Aries, marriage, and the twosome, or Taurus, marriage.

In the singular marriage, one individual is utterly consumed by the dominant other. The wife or the husband turns into the docile and gentle "sheep," allowing him or herself to be swallowed by the other partner's ego, identity and whims.

In their intense craving to assuage the demands and psychological needs of their partner, we often encounter the phenomenon of a woman or man allowing a piece of themselves to die inside, forfeiting their individual identity and spirit. In such a marriage there is only one single person - the other has ceased to be an autonomous and distinct human being, owning her or his personal dignity.

Then there is the twosome marriage or the bull-like marriage. In this scenario, both parties refuse to give up anything of their individual patterns, habits and desires. Here we encounter the Taurus marriage, in which both the husband and the wife are so full of their own presence all the time that they cannot compromise their identities for the sake of the greater whole.

This generates strife and turmoil, as each attempts to bully the other to win the competition. Like good and healthy bulls, both parties are well aware of how to gore, both parties are well aware of how to inflict wounds on the other. This is the

reality of a twosome marriage - two individuals who never really learn to integrate their lives.

In Jewish mysticism, the numbers one and two represent these two conflicting traits. In the sheep model, there is only one person, for the other one has become nullified; in the bull model, there are two distinct humans competing over the same space. That is the deeper significance behind the Aries and Taurus corresponding to months one and two of the Jewish calendar.

Neither of the above marriage patterns works very well. Judaism's perspective of marriage is the threesome marriage or the Gemini model of marriage. That's why G-d chose to marry the Jewish people, as it were, during the third month, as He wished to give us a model for our own marriages and relationships.

Gemini, twins, are a unique phenomenon. When I look at my twin, I am gazing at somebody who is a distinct individual, independent of me. Yet, on the other hand, when I gaze at him, I encounter (a replica of) myself. This is the paradox and beauty of twinhood: I discover myself in the face of the other.

And this is the Torah vision of marriage -- where oneness is not achieved by the obliteration of the weaker partner, nor are the two partners in conflict with each other. Rather, it is the recognition of two individuals that the otherness of their spouse is not a reason for discomfort or annoyance, but rather an opportunity for each of them to grow beyond their egos and touch the truth to be found in the human other.

It stems from the understanding that I can encounter a far deeper part of my self - my divine self - by embracing the self of the other.

Marriage, in the Jewish understanding, is the discovery that to find the G-d within my individuality, I must connect to the G-d within your individuality. Because all of us have a little piece of G-d, and none of us have

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“You shall keep My Sabbaths and fear My Sanctuary. I am Hashem.”



Rabbi Judah Mischel

Executive Director, Camp HASC; Mashpiah, OU-NCSY

A fundamental principle in Jewish mysticism is that everything that exists in this world appears in three dimensions: space, time and soul. *Sefer Yetzirah* (The Book of Creation) refers to this concept as *Asha'n*, an acronym for *Olam*, space, *Shanah* time, and *Nefesh*, or how the essence of the time or place is also manifest in our souls.

This concept makes the above verse's connection between *Shabbos* and *Mikdash* more clearly understood. *Shabbos* is a *Mikdash*, a sanctuary that is expressed in each of these three dimensions.

A Mikdash in time

Shabbos is the highest, most sanctified day of the week just as the *Mikdash* is the most sanctified space on earth. A Jew going into *Shabbos* is like the Kohen Gadol going into the *Mikdash*. Throughout *Shabbos* we experience Temple-consciousness, and our service is like that of a *Kohein laHashem*, a priest cleaving to the Divine Presence.

A Mikdash in space

As we sit at the *Shabbos* Table, we are recreating the holy spatial environment of the *Beis haMikdash*. Our table is an image of the *Mizbe'ach*, our Challah is like the *Lechem haPanim*, our wine is like the *Nesachim* — wine libations poured on the altar, and our *Shabbos* candles are like the heavenly lights of the *Menorah*. The delicacies we enjoy are compared to eating from the *Korbanos*, the most elevated form of eating. There is a *Minhag*, a custom on Friday night, to enjoy the fragrance of

Hadassim, myrtle branches, or *Besamim* spices; this is like the fragrance of the *Ketores* in the Temple.

Our singing of *Zemiros* is like the singing of the *Levi'im*, and our *Divrei Torah* reflect the words of the *Sanhedrin*, the gathering of sages that would occur in the *Lishkah*, next to the Temple. The *Dibuk Chaveirim* and togetherness of our family and friends that we experience at the table is like the heightened atmosphere of Divine love in the *Kodesh haKedoshim*. As in the Temple, our home is filled with revealed goodness and total connection.

A Mikdash in soul

Most importantly, as we feast royally, we are in presence of Hashem, the King, lacking nothing. Our souls luxuriate in the *Beis haMelech*, the House of the King, where every good thing and holy delight is amply provided. We are all in a state of completion, in which no *Melachah* is to be done, no changes are to be made — even spiritually.

The *Makom haMikdash* is referred to as *haHar haTov haZeh* (*Devarim* 3:25), the mountain of revealed good. *Shabbos* is our time to enter that world of revealed good and to identify the good in ourselves and others. *Shabbos* is a time of blessing and goodness, a time to consider our spiritual state from a positive vantage point. *Tzadikim* compare this approach to the way we entered the Temple in a state of *Taharah*, purity, wholeness.

The Shem MiShmuel of Sochotchov (Parshas Shelach 5677) writes: “On *Shabbos* one should not dwell on

unworthiness at all, rather maintain an attitude of delight, joy and desire.

No words of criticism or anger come to our mouths or minds. It is not the time to delve into character traits or to examine that which might need improvement; *Klum Chaser b'Veis haMelech*, nothing is lacking in the presence of the King.”

One practical suggestion to maximize this opportunity is to cultivate a positive, sanctified space for guests and family at our *Shabbos* table by sharing a *Milah Tovah*, a ‘good word’, something positive about ourselves, or goodness that we have recently experienced. Call attention to what you are proud of: a challenge in *Midos* with which you struggled, an act of Chesed that you performed, an effort that you made toward holiness and growth. In this way, we can cultivate Temple consciousness, and create a realm of revealed good and completion in our *Nefesh*.

This acceptance of the essential goodness in ourselves and others is like the *Nachas Ru'ach*, the good pleasure and acceptance of the *Shechinah* brought about by our offerings. This is a sure way to create a *Shabbos* that is a *Mikdash* in soul.

Jubilee Jubilation

Mrs. Shira Smiles

International lecturer and curriculum developer

Parshat Behar begins with instructions on calculating the jubilee year, “Seven cycles of sabbatical years, seven times seven, the years of the seven cycles of sabbatical years shall be for you forty-nine years.” Then the Torah continues with instructions that on Yom Kippur “you shall sound the shofar throughout the land ... You shall proclaim freedom throughout the land for all its inhabitants. ... You shall return each man to his ancestral heritage and you shall return each man to his family.”

What a complex, seemingly convoluted and, for the Torah, an extraordinarily wordy calculation. Would it not have been equally effective to say, “After seven sabbatical cycles, the jubilee year will begin in the fiftieth year? Sound the shofar on Yom Kippur of that year.”

Besides the emphasis on the calculation, which the Rosh Yeshiva of Mount Kisco, Rabbi Yona Furst, explains in his compilation *Divrei Yonah* as a means of awakening us to the passage of time so that we use the time from one shmitah year to the next productively rather than wonder where the time went, several other questions are raised by these verses.

First, why do we inaugurate the jubilee year with the sounding of the shofar? Further, why do we sound the shofar on Yom Kippur, ten days after the actual onset of the jubilee year on Rosh Hashanah, and finally, since it would appear that most of the laws of the yovel seem to pertain to landowners, what is the significance of proclaiming freedom for all the inhabitants of the land, landowner and non-landowner alike?

Rashi writes that the year is named yovel for the sounding of the shofar, for the Torah calls the sounding of the shofar

at Sinai *mshoch hayovel*, the pulling or sounding of the shofar that would allow Bnei Yisroel (the Israelites) to again ascend the mountain. Nevertheless, why sound the shofar at all for the yovel year?

Both Rabbi Frand and Rabbi Pam quote the *Sefer Hachinuch* who explains that sounding the shofar throughout the land creates a universal rather than a personal experience. Rabbi Frand sees in this universality an element of peer pressure, for it must be hard for someone to suddenly give up what he has possessed for so long, his slave who has been indentured to him for up to forty-nine years. But the shofar blast reminds him that everyone is now doing this, for Hashem has so commanded, and he must also do what is right.

On the flip side, Rabbi Pam suggests that since this is a group experience, the landed slave owner has an automatic support group, knowing that everyone else is also suffering the “loss” of these slaves as well.

Related to the idea of giving up one’s slave is the entire concept of *mesirat nefesh*, self-sacrifice, and our most powerful example of self-sacrifice is Abraham who tied his beloved son Yitzchak as a sacrifice at G-d’s command. By blowing the ram’s horn, we are reminded of our ancestor’s willingness for literal self-sacrifice. At the angel’s command, Abraham substituted the ram, entangled by his horns in the bushes, as the substitute for his son. The ram’s horn, therefore, serves as an everlasting reminder of the greatest self-sacrifice.

But, as Rabbi Pam points out, while every day we recite, “And you shall love your G-d with all your heart and with all your soul,” to which giving one’s life for the sanctification of G-d’s name refers, it is sometimes even more difficult to part with one’s money and possessions, to which loving your G-d “with all your might/

wealth” refers. This truth is apparent not only with people sometimes fighting an attacker to save one’s wallet but especially with the prevalence of heart attacks caused by the stress of business and profit to maintain an ephemeral lifestyle.

This realization that we are not eternally and inextricably tied to our earthly possessions has the wondrous ability to free us from the stresses of this world and from the clutches of the *yetzer horo* (evil inclination), writes Rav Moshe Shternbach in *Taam Vodaat*. Thus the shofar blast proclaims freedom to all the inhabitants of the land who now internalize that whatever they have (or do not have) is a gift from G-d. With this mindset, one also understands boundaries, and I neither desire that which belongs to another, nor feel entitled to take that which is not mine, whether it is pencils and paper clips from the office, or borrowing a friend’s tools without first asking permission.

The shofar blast in the yovel year calls us back to realizing our own insignificance before Hashem just as it does during the Days of Awe, and brings us back to *Teshuvah* (repentance), as it releases us from the arrogance we acquire together with our possessions, writes Rabbi Moshe Egbi in his compilation, *Chochmat Hamatzpun*.

Ultimately, yovel is not only about the land returning to its original place, says Rabbi Gamliel Horowitz in *Tiv Hatorah*. What Hashem really wants is for all of us, even those who have veered off the right path, to return to our ancestral home, to our heritage. Hashem wants us to do *teshuvah* as we would on Yom Kippur and free our souls to go back where they belong, just as all property goes back to its original owner during yovel.

For the Shine and the Wisdom



Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi
Popular Torah teacher and author

We were born into a generation that strives for devotion, a generation that strives to belong to a large fan base: Fans of a famous and respected singer and, lehavdil, of a certain spiritual Torah. I adore the fans. While my generation was raised to be leaders and pioneers, this humble generation of new pioneers only wants to follow ... follow who everyone follows, find the most viral post, and just mark "Like".

How much the father, the older generation, mourns in the brilliant story of Rabbi Nachman: "A rabbi with only one son." The rabbi has an only son and he wants him to become "the great light." He wants a pioneer child. But his son only wants to travel to the righteous to be accepted, the little light that is blinded by the light of the great. I love this, for me this is the Kabbalah theory par excellence, until the light becomes too bright.

When the light is big, and especially when it is associated with holiness, you forget to be careful. So rabbinic - a puppet that blinds those who ask for advice, so that innocent children never suspect in their teacher that he, G-d forbid, could be the devil himself.

Thus, for many years, the precautions in Meron were neglected because the tzaddik protects, because the ascent to the mountain is sacred and sanctifies all means. And it is precisely Rabbi Shimon who will stand on the top of the mountain and demand, "Beware!" The very contagious can infect each other too much and if no one takes care of them and takes minimal precautions, all the splendor of the world cannot be saved.



The very contagious can infect each other too much and if no one takes care of them and takes minimal precautions, all the splendor of the world cannot be saved.

Rabbi Shimon had half a circle of students sitting around him learning. The number of students was limited, as was the way to join. The principle was to be careful and put a man in his place so as not to "step over my head with a holy people!" The Gemara describes how when the exemplary order was violated, students were sometimes trampled:

those who were already present or those who arrived late and tripped over the heads of a holy people.

It is the magnificence that urges caution. Even Rabbi Shimon had to return to the cave after his splendor had blinded the public space and, in fact, left no room for people with "simple" stickiness, for those who walk with myrtle on Shabbat evening, for those who live an hour.

The glow will ask us to take all precautions and warnings as far as a human hand touches it, so that, G-d forbid, no worldly life is cut short in one hour.



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it all; only together can we recreate the complete presence of G-d in our world.

Thus, true marriage houses not a single, all-negating being nor two dichotomized beings, but rather a threesome - a third element, the element of spirituality, within whose context two distinct beings translate into a harmonious whole.

This approach is the secret to creating genuine peace between nations, cultures, tribes and civilizations. Differences between people are not a reason for animosity and

conflict; on the contrary, through these very differences, each of us is given the opportunity to expand our own horizons and discover sparks of truths we lack within ourselves. You may not be in my image, but you are still in G-d's image; I may not be in your image, but I am still in G-d's image.

There are absolute universal standards of morality and ethics that bind us all. We cannot tolerate behavior that undermines the life of innocent people. But within that framework, authentic religion must

welcome, not fear, diversity and individualistic expression. When you truly cultivate a relationship with G-d, you know that in the presence of otherness, you can encounter a fragment of truth that you could never access within your own framework. As in the model of twins, you will encounter the depth of your own image in otherness.

Hebrew Language in the Parsha



David Curwin
balashon.com

Parashat Behar contains a set of mitzvot addressing the relationship between the people and the land. It begins with the laws of the Sabbatical and Jubilee years and concludes with the laws of slaves. In the middle there are a few verses dedicated to the issue of houses in walled or unwalled cities. Houses in the former are released in the Jubilee year, but those in the latter are not. The last verse in the section discusses the open areas surrounding the cities:

“But the unenclosed land about their cities cannot be sold, for that is their holding for all time.” (Vayikra 25:34)

The Hebrew word for that unenclosed, open land is מגרש. In modern Hebrew, it refers to a plot of land, or an empty lot. It can also be used to describe a field or

court for sports, like a basketball court – מגרש כדורסל.

The root of the word מגרש is גרש, meaning “to expel, drive away.” A related sense is “to divorce,” and the noun divorce is גרושין. What is the connection between מגרש and expulsion? According to some scholars, the word originally meant “the place where cattle are driven (out),” referring to the pasture outside the city.

This concept provides us with another familiar Biblical word: מדבר – “desert, wilderness.” The root of this word is דבר. While that root might be familiar from the word דבר – “thing, word” and the verb דבר – “to speak,” that is a root unrelated to מדבר. This other sense of דבר means “to follow behind” or “to push forward.” We see a form of the root in the verb הדביר – “subdue, overcome,” as used in the prayer for the IDF: שונאינו תחתיקם.

According to linguists, מדבר was therefore a place where cattle were pushed forward to graze. While we might envision a מדבר to be a barren, arid land, full of sand, that’s not the biblical usage. A good example can be found in a description of Moshe as a shepherd:

וּמֹשֶׁה הָיָה רֹעֵה אֶת-צֹאן יְתָרוֹ חֹתְנוֹ כִּהְיוּ מִדְּבַר וַיִּנְהַג אֶת-הַצֹּאן אַחֲרֵי הַמִּדְבָּר וַיָּבֵא אֶל-הַר הָאֵלֹהִים חֹרֶבָה:

“Now Moses, tending the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, drove the flock into the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.” (Shemot 3:1)

This was not barren land (since Moshe drove his flocks there), but it was unsettled. So it was a מדבר, as well as a מגרש.

Parsha Riddle



Reb Leor Broh
Mizrachi Melbourne

*In Parshat Behar what is common amongst the following 3 prohibited acts:
Verbal harassment, Abuse by an employer, Charging of interest on a loan?*

Answer to the Parsha Riddle

Only with respect these 3 prohibitions does the Torah add the words קָלַלְתָּ (And you shall fear your G-d). The explanation given is that in these 3 areas, one might be able to mislead others, e.g., an employer may give a demeaning job to his employee, but say that he needed it done, when he simply wanted to tease or humiliate him. Another example in the case of interest may be when he pretends that the funds he is lending belong to a non-Jew and that he is merely charging interest for the non-Jew, whereas the funds are actually his. The Torah therefore warns to fear G-d who will see through his actions and punish accordingly.



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