



# הַמִּזְרָחִי

# HAMIZRACHI

## PARSHA WEEKLY

PARSHAT BEHAR-BECHUKOTAI 5783 • 2023










ISRAEL  
Parsha Picture









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## INSIDE



### TORAT MIZRACHI

-  Rabbi Doron Perez 2
-  Rabbi Reuven Taragin 4
-  Rabbanit Shani Taragin 5
-  Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon 6
-  Rabbanit Sharon Rimon 7
-  Sivan Rahav Meir & Yedidya Meir 8
-  Rabbi Danny Mirvis 9




### PARSHAT HASHAVUA

-  Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l 10
-  Rabbi Hershel Schachter shlit"a 12
-  Rabbi Yisroel Reisman shlit"a 13
-  Chief Rabbi Sir Ephraim Mirvis KBE 14
-  Rabbi Shalom Rosner 15
-  Michal Horowitz 16
-  Rabbi Menachem Leibtag 17
-  Rabbi Eli Mansour 18

### INSPIRATION

-  Rabbi Moshe Weinberger 19
-  Rabbi YY Jacobson 20
-  Rabbi Judah Mischel 21
-  Mrs. Shira Smiles 22
-  Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi 23

### ISRAEL CONTENT

-  Hebrew Language: David Curwin 24
-  Riddles: Reb Leor Broh 24
-  Dust & Stars: This Week in Jewish History 24

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# Human 'Havings', Human 'Doings' or Human Beings?

## The Gift of Shabbat



**Rabbi Doron Perez**

Executive Chairman, World Mizrahi

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 Before our eyes, material gratification has trumped spiritual meaning; consumerism has superseded education.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 lives. 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.”<sup>1</sup>

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.”<sup>2</sup>

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.<sup>3</sup> 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.”<sup>4</sup>

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



**By prohibiting all acts of creative work and shaping the world for material gain, Shabbat celebrates this state of simply being.**

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.<sup>5</sup>

### 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 as the sabbatical

year. Indeed, the Torah refers to the sabbatical year as “shabbat” far more frequently than it uses its other names such as shemitta and *shevi’it*.<sup>6</sup> Only Shabbat and shemitta are called by the unique term שבת 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 much of the 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.

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, 20:9.
6. See Vayikra, 25:1-8.



PIRKEI AVOT

# World of Tens



**Rabbi Reuven Taragin**  
Educational Director, World Mizrahi  
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בְּעֶשְׂרֵה מְאֻמָּרוֹת נִבְרָא הָעוֹלָם. וּמָה תִּלְמוּד לּוֹמֵר, וְהֲלֹא בְּמֵאֲמָר אֶחָד יְכוּל לְהַבְרִיאֹת?  
אֲלֵא לְהַפְרִיעַ מִן הַרְשָׁעִים שֶׁמֵאֲבִידִין אֶת הָעוֹלָם שֶׁנִּבְרָא בְּעֶשְׂרֵה מְאֻמָּרוֹת,  
וְלִתּוֹ שָׂכָר טוֹב לְצַדִּיקִים שֶׁמְקַיְמִין אֶת הָעוֹלָם שֶׁנִּבְרָא בְּעֶשְׂרֵה מְאֻמָּרוֹת: (אבות ה:א)  
עֶשְׂרֵה דוֹרוֹת מֵאֲדָם וְעַד נֹחַ, לְהוֹדִיעַ כְּמָה אַרְךְ אֶפְסִים לְפָנָיו, שֶׁכָּל הַדּוֹרוֹת הָיוּ מְקַעֲסִין וּבָאִין עַד שֶׁהִבִּיא עֲלֵיהֶם אֶת מִי הַמְּבּוּל.  
עֶשְׂרֵה דוֹרוֹת מִנֹּחַ וְעַד אַבְרָהָם, לְהוֹדִיעַ כְּמָה אַרְךְ אֶפְסִים לְפָנָיו, שֶׁכָּל הַדּוֹרוֹת הָיוּ מְקַעֲסִין וּבָאִין. עַד שֶׁבָּא אַבְרָהָם וְקִבֵּל שָׂכָר כָּלָם: (ה:ב)  
עֶשְׂרֵה נְסִינּוֹת נִתְּנָסָה אַבְרָהָם אֲבִינוּ עֲלֵיו הַשָּׁלוֹם וְעַמְד בְּכָלָם... (ה:ג)  
עֶשְׂרֵה נְסִים נַעֲשׂוּ לְאַבְרָהָם בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְעֶשְׂרֵה עַל הַיָּם... (ה:ד)  
עֶשְׂרֵה נְסִים נַעֲשׂוּ לְאַבְרָהָם בְּבֵית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ... (ה:ה)

## Anonymous Numerical Lists

The fifth perek of Masechet Avot diverges from the previous four in two significant ways. Firstly, the fifth perek consists predominantly of anonymous statements, as opposed to citing statements in the name of various sages. In addition, the earlier *perakim* focus mainly on ethics and morals, while the fifth presents numerical lists of various historical phenomena, often without delineating any ethical implication.

The first half of the perek presents lists in descending numerical order. The first six *mishnayot* list groups of ten, the following three bringing groups of seven, and the final six bringing groups of four.

The lists of ten are uniquely significant because the number ten symbolizes something full and complete. These lists appear in historical order. The perek begins with the ten *ma'amarot* (utterances) with which G-d created the world, then continuing with the world's first ten generations from Adam Harishon to Noach, and the subsequent ten from Noach to Avraham. The third *mishnah* then mentions the ten trials Hashem used to test Avraham, the ten miracles Hashem performed on behalf of the Jewish People in *Mitzrayim* and at the Yam Suf, the ten ways the Jews "tested" Hashem, and, finally, the ten miracles that Hashem performed on behalf of our ancestors in the times of the *Beit Hamikdash*.

What do these lists teach us?

## Significant Actions Significantly Impact a Significant World

A closer look reveals a common theme across these lists, rooted in how the *mishnah* explains the significance of the first list.

The first *mishnah* explains that Hashem created the world with ten *ma'amarot* in order to increase the reward and punishment *tzadikim* and *resha'im* (respectively) receive for their impact on the world. The multiple *ma'amarot* reflect the significance of each aspect of our world we are rewarded for sustaining. They should inspire us to take our role and impact seriously.<sup>1</sup>

Avot D'Rebbi Natan specifies three actions as sufficient to sustain the entire world: doing one mitzvah, keeping one Shabbat, and saving one life. Man sustains the world when he emulates Hashem, as His creation included refraining from work on one Shabbat alongside the creation and sustaining of the life of one person.

Each person is meant to see his actions as those that sustain or destroy the valuable world Hashem invested ten *ma'amarot* in. The gemara elaborates on this theme, asserting that one should always see the world as half meritorious and half liable and his own actions as the ones that determine not only his fate, but that of the entire world as well.

## The Generations — Noach, Avraham and the Jewish People

Subsequently, we learn how Hashem twice sustained a sinful world for a period of ten generations. Rashi explains that Hashem did this in the hope that the actions of even one person (Noach or Avraham) would justify its existence. The ten *ma'amarot* gave the world a chance; the ten generations gave man a chance.

Though Noach's actions were not enough to save his ten generations, Avraham's were. As opposed to Noach, who survived but did not influence his surroundings, Avraham influenced others and succeeded in steering at least part of the world in the right

direction. Through this, he saved the world and received the reward intended for the ten generations that preceded him. Avraham was not just a righteous individual; he was able to impact his surroundings and, thereby, received the reward "of others" for his influence upon them.

In addition, the ten tests Avraham passed taught his contemporaries about the value of commitment to Hashem. Indeed, Rashi links Avraham's ten tests to the ten *ma'amarot*. Avraham's passing of the tests and his unflinching commitment to Hashem's will, ensured a realization of the goals of creating the world. After two sets of ten generations, the ten *ma'amarot* were finally justified.

Avot d'Rebbi Natan connects the set of ten following on — the ten miracles — to Avraham's ten tests. It was Avraham's efforts that merited the miracles Hashem performed for his descendants. Hashem rewarded Avraham's supernatural commitment with supernatural intervention on behalf of later generations of Jews. The reward Avraham received from previous generations benefited future ones as a result.

May our following Hashem's directives and passing His tests sustain the world He created, merit His reward, and merit His performance of miracles on our behalf and on the behalf of many generations of our descendants!

● Summarized by Yedidyah Rosenswasser.

1. Kohelet Rabbah 7:19 describes how Hashem led Adam Harishon through the world, showed him how beautiful everything was and told him, "Make sure not to destroy it." This demonstrates the significance of the role we play in this world. This idea is the backdrop of the many sources Talmud Bavli, Masechet Shabbat 10a and 119b, Bereishit Rabbah 43:7, Midrash Tehillim 86) that present those who fulfill (specific) *mitzvot* as Hashem's partners in creation.

HAFTARAH - PARSHANUT ON THE PARSHA

# Behar-Bechukotai: Healing a Fractured World



**Rabbanit Shani Taragin**  
Educational Director, World Mizrahi

**T**he haftarah for this week's double parasha, Parashat Behar-Bechukotai, serves as commentary and response to the reproach (*tochecha*) found at the core of the parasha. This selection from the prophecies of Yirmiyahu (16:19-17:14) contains elements of curses and blessings, resonating with images from the parasha and underscoring the harsh messages. The dissonance, however, highlights significant differences between them, offering further messages.

The parallels are quite apparent as both the parasha and the haftarah relate to similar themes and contain similar imagery:

(1) Both readings juxtapose punishment involving children and altars – “And you shall consume the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters you shall consume. And I will destroy your high places and cut down your images” (Vayikra 26:29-30). Yirmiyahu similarly complains – “Their altars are like the remembrance of their children” (17:2).

(2) We are taught of the punishment of exile in the parasha – “Then the land will enjoy her Sabbaths, for as long as it lies fallow...then the land will rest and will enjoy her Sabbaths... that you did not observe while you dwelled upon it” (26:34-35) as well as in the haftarah – “You shall be discontinued from your heritage that I gave to you” (17:4). (Rashi: “Against your will you will leave the land, for not having observed your Sabbaths that I commanded you, that the land may rest”).

After establishing the similarities, we may now appreciate the notable differences between the parasha and the haftarah:

(1) The blessings and curses described in the parasha are formulated in the plural and are addressed to the nation as a whole, whereas those mentioned in the haftarah are addressed to the individual, formulated in the singular. The words of the haftarah complement and teach us that in addition to national sin and punishment, each individual is accountable for his/her actions and therefore may not shirk personal responsibility to adhere to the mitzvot.

(2) The parasha begins with blessings, i.e. the reward that awaits the nation if it follows the path of Torah and mitzvot, and then continues with warnings of punishments. The order in the haftarah is reversed; Yirmiyahu begins with rebuke: “Cursed is the man who trusts in mortals” (17:5), and only afterwards assures: “Blessed is the man who trusts in G-d” (17:7). This creates a chiasm between the parasha and the haftarah wherein the latter complements and balances the former. The parasha begins with eleven pesukim of blessings followed by thirty pesukim of curses! The haftarah contains a perfect balance of blessings and curses, creating an equilibrium and closure of blessings: Blessing – curse – curse – blessing. (Perhaps this is the basis for ChaZa”L to extrapolate more blessings than curses in the parasha – see Bava Batra 88b.)

(3) The parasha presents two opposite poles of those who are blessed

vs. cursed: “Blessed are those who walk in G-d’s statutes and observe His judgments”, and “cursed are those who despise the statutes”. In contrast, Yirmiyahu describes two similar men – “blessed is the man (*gever*) who trusts in G-d,” and “cursed is the man who trusts in man”. The difference between them is only the object of their trust; therefore, there is hope for one to transfer his faith in man to faith in G-d.

Perhaps the greatest commentary on the parasha is the conclusion of the haftarah: “Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for You are my praise” (17:14). Whereas we may have anticipated some consolation after the rebuke of the Torah and the harsh prophecy of the navi, the haftarah does not describe comfort of redemption; it merely expresses a wish and a desire for salvation and healing that are not yet visible. It begins a new section of distress and persecution as Yirmiyahu describes his contentions with his iniquitous audience. His plea for healing and salvation does not herald salvation, but rather is a petition and prayer in anticipation of continued struggle.

Parshat Bechukotai describes the vicissitudes that will befall Am Yisrael in the wake of their actions. Hashem will bring upon them “a sword that will avenge His covenant” and make them flee before their enemies, and one day He will return them to the desolate land in the wake of the covenant that had been made with their forefathers. One component, however, is missing; we don’t hear of the peoples’ reaction and response to the troubles that will befall them. This is the primary goal

*Continued on page 7*

# Halachic Q&A



## Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Head, Mizrahi Rabbinic Council | Rabbi of the Gush Etzion Regional Council  
Rosh Yeshiva, Jerusalem College of Technology | Founder and Chairman, Sulamot and La'Ofek

**Question: We were invited to our friend's home for Friday night dinner. They live about 45 minutes away and they are taking in Shabbat early. What should we do about hadlakat neirot? If we light at plag at home, we will miss the tefillah and arrive late for dinner.**

Answer: There is no good solution. You should turn lights on in your home (better to use LED lights if you have) in honor of Shabbat before plag hamincha and without a bracha. Light candles with a bracha at the home where you are eating and have in mind during the bracha for the lights at home. This is not ideal as it is preferable to light where you sleep (see Halacha Mimkorah – Shabbos 3, for more details), but we can allow for this when there is a reason to eat elsewhere.

**Question: Is there a prohibition of saying G-d's name in vain in another language? For example, can one say "G-d"?**

Answer: This matter is subject to dispute. The Shach (YD 179) writes that one may not erase names of G-d written in other languages. The Rambam's formulation is the same. Based on this, Rebbe Akiva Eiger assumed that one could say G-d's name in another language, given that only a prohibition to erase was mentioned.

On the other hand, the Chayei Adam understood that one may not say G-d's name in another language.

Therefore, many are lenient based on Rebbe Akiva Eiger. However, some do not say the full name of G-d in other languages but rather change it a bit to satisfy the opinion of the Chayei Adam as well. This is my practice.

Nevertheless, I differentiate between two different cases. When I give a shiur, I am willing to say "G-d" because, me'ikar hadin, I could even say Hashem's name (although the minhag is not to say Hashem's name even in that context). However, I try to refrain from saying a phrase like, "Oh my G-d," in line with the Chayei Adam. Most poskim are lenient in this regard.

**Question: I may have missed counting sefirah yesterday, but I do not remember. Can I continue counting with a bracha?**

Answer: Shu"t Terumat Hadeshen addresses this case, and writes that one should continue counting with a bracha. The Shulchan Aruch (OC 489:8) quotes this as the proper practice. The Pri Chadash explains the reasoning behind this ruling: In general, we have a halachic principle that two doubts about a certain case can combine to allow us to rule leniently (even if each doubt on its own would not have been strong enough). This is called a sfei-sfeika. In our case, there are two sfeikot:

- Doubt #1: Doubt whether or not the person counted
- Doubt #2: Halachic doubt regarding the ruling of a person who forgot to count. Most Rishonim hold that one who forgets to count can continue counting with a bracha, even though we generally do not paskin this way.

Because we have two sfeikot together, you may continue counting with a bracha (MB 489:38).

The Ketav Sofer explains the leniency a bit differently. He writes that fundamentally we hold like Tosfot's opinion that one can count even if he forgot. The reason we do

not do so is because of safek brachot lehakel. Nevertheless, once we have even another safek (even if it is weaker), there is enough reason to allow one to count with a bracha.

**Question: At weddings, I often see steamed bread at the kabbalat panim. What is the proper bracha to make?**

Answer: There are two ways to cook with steam.

1) The first type involves steaming the vessel from the outside. The steam does not directly interact with the dough. In this case, the dough is fully considered bread and requires 'hamotzi'.

2) The second type involves steaming the dough directly. Shu"t Ginat Veradim writes that cooking with steam is considered halachic cooking, and his teshuva is quoted in the Kaf Hachaim (and accepted by Or Letzion, v'Zot Habracha, Birur Halacha). Therefore, steamed bread of this form is considered just like cooked dough, which the Shulchan Aruch writes (OC 169:13) is not considered bread. Nevertheless, because this topic is subject to dispute, the Shulchan Aruch writes that ideally, a G-d fearing person should only eat this type of food in the context of a seuda so the bracha is already covered (Rema - because it looks like bread). However, the basic ruling meikar hadin is that the bracha is mezonot and 'al hamichya' (SA, Rema, MB, Kaf Hachayim) even if you eat an amount to be satisfied (MB 169:75). The Mishnah Berurah writes that lechatchila one can make a mezonot if the piece is less than a kezayit.

Therefore, the answer to your questions depends on the type of steamed bread.

*Continued on next page*

# מה עניין שמיטה אצל הר סיני?

הרבנית שרון רימון  
Tanach teacher and author



שלא שרתה שכינה בישראל עד שעשו מלאכה... ר' יוסי הגלילי אומר: גדולה מלאכה שלא קנס המקום מיתה על אדם אלא מתוך בטילה...

שישה ימים בני האדם צריכים לעבוד לצורך פרנסתם ולמען קיום וקידום העולם, וביום השביעי עליהם לשבות ולזכור את בורא העולם המקיים את הכל; באופן דומה לכך, במשך שש שנים בני האדם צריכים לעבוד את האדמה ולהוציא ממנה את לחמם, ואילו בשנה השביעית עליהם לשמוט את אחיזתם בקרקע, לחוש שהקרקע שייכת לה' ולבטוח בה' שיתן להם כדי צרכם, כפי שמבטיחה התורה: "וְכִי תֹאמְרוּ מַה נֹּאכַל בַּשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁבִיעִית הֵן לֹא נִזְרַע וְלֹא נֶאֱסַף אֶת תְּבוּאָתֵינוּ: וְצִוִּיתִי אֶת בְּרַחְתִּי לְכֶם בַּשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁשִׁית וְעָשִׂית אֶת תְּבוּאָתָהּ לְשֵׁלֶשׁ הַשָּׁנִים:" (ויקרא כ"ה, כ-כא).

מבחן האמונה בשנה השביעית מבוסס על העשייה וההשתדלות במשך שאר השנים. התורה איננה מעוניינת שבני האדם יסמכו על הנס באופן קבוע ויתנתקו מהעשייה בעולם הזה. היא מעוניינת בעשייה האנושית למען פיתוח העולם, ויחד עם זאת היא מחנכת את האדם להאמין בה'.

הצד השני של המטבע הוא שהאמונה בה', המתחזקת בשנה השביעית, מהווה בסיס נכון להשתדלות ולעשייה במשך שאר השנים: האדם אשר שומט את הקרקע פעם ב-7 שנים נוטע בלבו אמונה ובטחון בה', ומתוך כך כל עבודה שיעשה בקרקע תהיה מתוך הרגשה עמוקה של אמונה בה', וידיעה ברורה שהארץ ומלואה שייכים לה'.

מקור מחייתו, ממנה כל פרנסת ביתו, ואינו עובד בהאף שאינו יודע מהיכן יאכל, וכל זה מתוך בהירות אמונתו שבוטח בה'...

האמונה בה', "אנכי ה' אלקיך" (שמות כ', ב), היא השורש הכללי של כל המצוות.

לכל מצווה יש פרטים מיוחדים, המביאים לידי ביטוי רעיון ספציפי.

מצוות השמיטה היא השיא במדרגת האמונה, וניתן לומר שפרטיה מביאים לידי ביטוי את רעיון האמונה בה' בצורה הגבוהה ביותר: היכולת לבטוח בה' ולתלות בו את קיומנו בלי כל השתדלות.

בדרך כלל, התורה איננה דורשת מהאדם להימנע מעשייה בעולם הזה ומהשתדלות לצורך קיומו. להפך: האדם נדרש לעשות השתדלות לצורך קיומו. האדם נברא בגן עדן "לעבדה ולשמרה", והתורה חוזרת ומדגישה את הצורך במלאכה לקיום העולם, ואפילו מצוות השמיטה עצמה פותחת באמירה לגבי הצורך בעבודת האדמה בשאר השנים: "שֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים תִּזְרַע בְּעִבּוֹדֵת הָאֲדָמָה בְּשָׁנִים תִּזְמַר פְּרִמָּה וְאֶסַּפְתָּ אֶת תְּבוּאָתָהּ" (ויקרא כ"ה, ג). וכך גם במצוות השבת: "שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תַּעֲבֹד וְעָשִׂיתָ כָּל מְלֶאכֶתְךָ" (שמות כ', ט).

וכך אומרים חז"ל על פסוק זה:

מכילתא דרבי שמעון בר יוחאי פרק כ פסוק ט:

ששת ימים תעבוד ועשית כל מלאכתך – כשם שנצטוו ישראל על מצות עשה של שבת כך נצטוו על המלאכה. ר' אלעזר בן עזריה אומר: גדולה מלאכה,

וְדָבָר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה בְּהַר סִינַי ... כִּי תָבֹאוּ אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אָנִי נֹתֵן לְכֶם וְשָׁבַתָה הָאָרֶץ שְׁבַת לָהּ. (ויקרא כ"ה, א-ב)

רש"י מעלה את השאלה הידועה:

מה ענין שמיטה אצל הר סיני, והלא כל המצוות נאמרו מסיני?! אלא מה שמיטה נאמרו כללותיה ופרטותיה ודקדוקיה מסיני, אף כולן נאמרו כללותיהן ודקדוקיהן מסיני, כך שנויה בתורת כהנים.

רש"י, בעקבות המדרש, שואל מדוע טורח הכתוב להזכיר כאן שמצוות השמיטה נאמרה בהר סיני.

תשובתו של רש"י היא שמצוות השמיטה מלמדת על כל המצוות כולן – כשם שהכתוב טורח להבהיר שפרטי מצוות השמיטה נאמרו מסיני, כך גם כל הפרטים של כל המצוות נאמרו מסיני.

אולם, עדיין נשאלת השאלה – מדוע נבחרה דווקא מצוות השמיטה כדי ללמד רעיון זה? לכאורה, ניתן היה לבחור כל מצווה אחרת ולהדגים בעזרתה את העיקרון של נתינת פרטי המצוות מסיני.

הנתיבות שלום מסביר מדוע דווקא מצוות שמיטה מלמדת שכל פרטי המצוות נאמרו מהר סיני:

"השורש הכללי של כל המצוות הוא עניין אמונה, ומלבד זה יש לכל מצווה עניין פרטי המיוחד במצווה זו... שגילוי האמונה שהיה בהר סיני הוא שורש כל המצוות כללותיהן ופרטותיהן, שכל מצוותיך אמונה. אך מיוחדת מצוות שמיטה שהיא השיא במדרגת האמונה... אשר יהודי נוטש שנה שלימה את שדהו

Continued from page 5

of the haftarah – to complete the picture and serve as a guide for response in times of affliction. The haftarah begins and ends with expressions of trust. In the midst of

harsh realities, more than portraying a picture of optimism and reward, the navi provides us with hope in our relationship with Hashem, trusting that "nothing in

the world happens by chance, and that whatever happens under the sun is all by G-d's decree." (Chazon Ish, *Emunah U'Bitachon*).

Continued from previous page

**Question: Is there an issue with doing haga'lah on a scratched pot?**

Answer: If the pot is cleaned well, it is fine. If you aren't sure, you can do libun kal

at the spot which was difficult to clean and then do haga'lah on the entire pot afterwards.

(You can find videos on Youtube by Rav Rimon with guided explanations of how to do libun kal and other kashering procedures).

● Compiled by Yaakov Panitch.



# Everyone matters!



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

**W**e are the height of parent-teacher school conferences. These days are consequential for teachers, parents, and students. Here is a pertinent point from this week's Torah portion, parashat Behar.

The Parasha describes someone whose financial condition has begun to deteriorate, when we are commanded: "And you shall support him." In other words, we must pay attention and help him from the start so that he does not reach financial ruin. Rashi writes that this is like a donkey carrying a heavy load. If the load begins to sway a little while on the donkey's back, one person can stabilize it. But once it falls to the ground, not even five people will be able to put it back in place.

Our commentators explain that this principle is also relevant to education. We need to identify problems at their inception and address them with wisdom before it's too late. When a young person begins to go downhill and is identified as an at-risk student, he suddenly receives lots of special attention, counseling, and pampering. What would have happened had he received such attention a year earlier, if signs of distress had been recognized and he had received support at that time?

Not only in the area of education is it worthwhile to recognize problems at an early stage. This is also true regarding marriage (when there are initial signs of tension it's preferable to go for counseling and not to wake up only after an explosion), and it is true regarding all kinds of emotional crises that would have been better treated prior to worsening, as well as physical ailments and diseases that are less severe when caught in their early stages. "And you shall support him" – early, in advance, before it's too late.

The parasha calls upon us to be aware, to listen, to open our eyes in relation to ourselves and to our children, to others and to the world at large: What are the little fissures visible around us and what are we going to do about them?



I don't want to quote all the curses and disastrous prognostications that appear in Bechukotai. There is a long list of diseases, terrors, and persecutions and all of us hope that most of them are already behind us. But there is one curse that should make us pause:

"I will bring fear in their hearts in the lands of their enemies, and the sound of a rustling leaf will pursue them; they will flee as one flees the sword, and they will fall, but there will be no pursuer" (Leviticus 26:36).

Read this well. We are talking about people whom no one is chasing. They hear the sound of a leaf moving in the wind and think they are in danger. They run away and stumble over each other even though their fear is only imaginary. They do not know how to distinguish between a real danger and an imaginary fear. Rashi comments on this as follows: "For they will have fear in their hearts, and every moment they will think that someone is chasing them."

We definitely need to contend with the deeply troubling circumstances and events in the world around us. But all of us need to check that we do not run away from troubles that we ourselves invent, that our hearts are not full of fear that has no basis in reality.



Mazal tov. This Shabbat we read the Torah portion of Bechukotai. It is the last

parasha in the Book of Leviticus, the most challenging of the Five Books of Moses.

In the Book of Genesis, the world is created. In the Book of Exodus, we leave Egypt. The Book of Numbers is full of fascinating stories of our desert wanderings and the Book of Deuteronomy features the emotional parting speech of Moshe Rabbeinu. And the Book of Leviticus? It is mainly comprised of commands and instructions, is virtually devoid of stories, and is preoccupied with the sacrificial service in the Mishkan.

Many commentators note that it is precisely because of its didactic content that the Book of Leviticus is the most important of the five books. The Torah is not a suspense story or a melodramatic reality show. The Torah demands connection, immersion, and devotion – not only when the content is easy or entertaining. If we do not have patience for the Book of Leviticus, how will we develop patience for the challenging aspects of our lives? Do we wish to become people who search only for excitement and run away from challenges?

The Jewish American author Herman Wouk, a winner of the Pulitzer Prize, once wrote about Jewish devotion in this way: "A publisher once decided to publish a simple version of the Bible. He adapted the Five Books of Moses in a manner that simply eliminated all the laws. The Book of Leviticus was reduced to about half a page. But the Jews never cut out a single word of the Torah. The plan for building the Mishkan and the story of the splitting of the Red Sea are of equal value in their eyes."

On Shabbat, we prove this once again when we complete the reading of all 859 verses in the Book of Leviticus.



# For the Shabbat Table



**Rabbi Danny Mirvis**  
Deputy CEO, World Mizrachi  
Rabbi of Ohel Moshe Synagogue, Herzliya Pituach

“If you shall follow my decrees and keep my Mitzvot and perform them...” (Vayikra 26:3).

This week’s second Parsha begins with the blessings that await us if we stay true to Hashem and His commandments. Within the blessings of achieving peace and military success, we come across a mathematical problem:

“You shall pursue your enemies and they shall fall before you by the sword. Five of you shall pursue a hundred, and a hundred of you shall pursue ten thousand and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword” (Vayikra 26:7-8).

If five shall pursue a hundred, it means each person will have the ability to pursue twenty enemies. Based on that, a hundred should only be able to pursue two

thousand enemies – not the ten thousand we find in the verse.

Rashi explains the apparent lack of proportion:

“And is that the correct calculation? Surely it should have only said that a hundred of you shall pursue two thousand! However, you cannot compare a few who perform the Torah to many who perform the Torah”.

Rashi explains that when many people come together to perform the Torah, not only does the total strength grow, but so do the strength and potential of each and every individual. Therefore, whereas five could only chase away a hundred, a hundred could chase away ten thousand. Herein lies the vital lesson of the strength that comes through unity.

For example, praying as part of a Minyan or even larger community has three benefits in this regard. First, I increase the overall ability of the gathering, for “B’Rov Am Hadrat Melech” – In (the presence of) many people, the King is glorified. Second, my personal potential for meaningful prayer grows as part of the community. Third, I increase the individual potential of every other member of the group.

Hence, the benefits of unity extend far beyond avoiding the dangers of division. Unity in and of itself empowers us all to achieve more, as individuals, as communities, and as a nation, coming together to work towards elevated goals.

By prioritising unity and internalising its great power, may we all be strengthened as a result.

Shabbat Shalom!



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# Family Feeling



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l

**I** argued in my *Covenant & Conversation* for *parshat Kedoshim* that Judaism is more than an ethnicity. It is a call to holiness. In one sense, however, there is an important ethnic dimension to Judaism.

It is best captured in the 1980s joke about an advertising campaign in New York. Throughout the city there were giant posters with the slogan, “You have a friend in the Chase Manhattan Bank.” Underneath one, an Israeli had scribbled the words, “But in Bank Leumi you have *mishpachah*.” Jews are, and are conscious of being, a single extended family.

This is particularly evident in this week’s *parsha*. Repeatedly we read of social legislation couched in the language of family:

When you buy or sell to your neighbour, let no one wrong *his brother*. (Lev. 25:14)

If your brother becomes impoverished and sells some of his property, his near redeemer is to come to you and redeem what *his brother* sold. (Lev. 25:25)

If *your brother* is impoverished and indebted to you, you must support him; he must live with you like a foreign resident. Do not take interest or profit from him, but fear your G-d and let *your brother* live with you. (Lev. 25:35-36)

If *your brother* becomes impoverished and is sold to you, do not work him like a slave. (Lev. 25:39)

“Your brother” in these verses is not meant literally. At times it means “your relative”, but mostly it means “your fellow Jew”. This is a distinctive way of thinking about society and our obligations to others. Jews are not just citizens of the same nation or adherents of the same faith. We are members of the same extended family.

We are – biologically or electively – children of Abraham and Sarah. For the most part, we share the same history. On the festivals we relive the same memories. We were forged in the same crucible of suffering. We are more than friends. We are *mishpachah*, family.

The concept of family is absolutely fundamental to Judaism. Consider the book of Genesis, the Torah’s starting-point. It is not primarily about theology, doctrine, dogma. It is not a polemic against idolatry. It is about families: husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters.

At key moments in the Torah, G-d Himself defines His relationship with the Israelites in terms of family. He tells Moses to say to Pharaoh in His name: “My child, My firstborn, Israel” (Ex. 4:22). When Moses wants to explain to the Israelites why they have a duty to be holy, He answers, “You are children of the Lord your G-d” (Deut. 14:1). If G-d is our parent, then we are all brothers and sisters. We are related by bonds that go to the very heart of who we are.

The prophets continued the metaphor. There is a lovely passage in Hosea in which the prophet describes G-d as a parent teaching a young child how to take its first faltering steps: “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son... It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by the arms... To them I was like one who lifts a little child to the cheek, and I bent down to feed them.” (Hosea 11:1-4).

The same image is continued in rabbinic Judaism. In one of the most famous phrases of prayer, Rabbi Akiva used the words *Avinu Malkeinu*, “Our Father, our King”. That is a precise and deliberate expression. G-d is indeed our sovereign,

our lawgiver and our judge, but before He is any of these things He is our parent and we are His children. That is why we believe Divine compassion will always override strict justice.

This concept of Jews as an extended family is powerfully expressed in Maimonides’ *Laws of Charity*:

The entire Jewish people and all those who attach themselves to them are like brothers, as it states: “You are children of the Lord your G-d” [Deuteronomy 14:1]. And if a brother will not show mercy to a brother, who will show mercy to them? To whom do the poor of Israel lift up their eyes? To the Gentiles who hate them and pursue them? Their eyes are turned to their brethren alone. (Mishneh Torah, Laws of Gifts to the Poor, 10:2)

This sense of kinship, fraternity and the family bond, is at the heart of the idea of *Kol Yisrael arevin zeh bazeh*, “All Jews are responsible for one another.” Or as Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai put it, “When one Jew is injured, all Jews feel the pain.”

Why is Judaism built on this model of the family? Partly to tell us that G-d did not choose an elite of the righteous or a sect of the likeminded. He chose a family – Abraham and Sarah’s descendants — extended through time. The family is the most powerful vehicle of continuity, and the kinds of changes Jews were expected to make to the world could not be achieved in a single generation. Hence the importance of the family as a place of education (“You shall teach these things repeatedly to your children...” [Deut. 6:7]) and of handing the story on, especially on Pesach through the Seder service.

Another reason is that family feeling is the most primal and powerful moral

bond. The scientist J. B. S. Haldane famously said, when asked whether he would jump into a river and risk his life to save his drowning brother, “No, but I would do so to save two brothers or eight cousins.” The point he was making was that we share 50 per cent of our genes with our siblings, and an eighth with our cousins. Taking a risk to save them is a way of ensuring that our genes are passed on to the next generation. This principle, known as “kin selection”, is the most basic form of human altruism. It is where the moral sense is born.

That is a key insight, not only of biology but also of political theory. Edmund Burke famously said that “To be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle (the germ as it were) of public affections. It is the first link in the series by which we proceed towards a love to our country, and to mankind.” Likewise Alexis de Tocqueville said, “As long as family feeling was kept alive, the opponent of oppression was never alone.”

*Strong families are essential to free societies.* Where families are strong, a sense of altruism exists that can be extended outward, from family to friends to neighbours to community and from there to the nation as a whole.

It was the sense of family that kept Jews linked in a web of mutual obligation despite the fact that they were scattered across the world. Does it still exist? Sometimes the divisions in the Jewish world go so deep, and the insults hurled by one group against another are so brutal that one could almost be persuaded that it does not. In the 1950s Martin Buber expressed the belief that the Jewish people in the traditional sense no longer existed. *Knesset Yisrael*, the covenantal people as a single entity before G-d, was no more. The divisions between Jews, religious and secular, orthodox and non-orthodox, Zionist and non-Zionist, had, he thought, fragmented the people beyond hope of repair.

Yet that conclusion is premature for precisely the reason that makes family so elemental a bond. Argue with your friend and tomorrow he may no longer be your friend, but argue with your brother and tomorrow he is still your brother. The book of Genesis is full of sibling rivalries but they do not all end the same way. The story of Cain and Abel ends with Abel dead. The story of Isaac and Ishmael ends with their standing together at Abraham’s grave. The story of Esau and Jacob reaches a climax when, after a long separation, they meet, embrace and go their separate ways. The story of Joseph and his brothers

begins with animosity but ends with forgiveness and reconciliation. Even the most dysfunctional families can eventually come together.

The Jewish people remains a family, often divided, always argumentative, but bound in a common bond of fate nonetheless. As our *parsha* reminds us, that person who has fallen is our brother or sister, and ours must be the hand that helps them rise again.

#### AROUND THE SHABBAT TABLE:

- Why do you think families so often argue?
- Can you join a family you are not born into? Can you join the Jewish people even if you were not born a Jew?
- Do you feel related to Jews from other parts of the world?

- 
1. Mechilta de-Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai on Exodus 19:6.
  2. Edmund Burke (1729–1797), *Reflections on the French Revolution: The Harvard Classics*, 1909–14.
  3. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Chapter XVII, “Principal Causes Which Tend to Maintain the Democratic Republic in the United States.”



# Heter Mechirah



**Rabbi Hershel Schachter**

Rosh Yeshivah, Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University

**T**he land shall observe a Shabbos rest for Hashem. (Vayikra 25:2)

There is an *issur derabbanan* of *amirah l'nochri* (instructing a non-Jew to perform a forbidden activity) with regard to performing *melachah* on Shabbos. The Gemara in Bava Metzia questions whether *amirah l'nochri* is a general rabbinic prohibition that applies to all *issurei Torah*, leaving the matter unresolved. The Ra'avad rules stringently, maintaining, in disagreement with the Rambam, that it is prohibited to have a non-Jew plant *kilayim*. Tosfos concurs with the Ra'avad that *amirah l'nochri* applies to all *issurei Torah*.

In the case of a Jew instructing a non-Jew to work his field in Eretz Yisrael or renting his field in Eretz Yisrael to a non-Jew during *shemittah*, it seems that there is a more serious prohibition. The Gemara in Avodah Zarah draws a comparison between *shevisas behemto* (the resting of one's animal) on Shabbos and *shevisas sadeihu* (the resting of one's field) during *shemittah*. If a Jew provides a non-Jew with his animal to perform *melachah* on Shabbos, he violates the *issur d'oraisa* of *shevisas behemto*, not merely the *issur derabbanan* of *amirah l'nochri*. One must ensure that no *melachah* be performed with his animal in Shabbos, even if he is not the one performing the *melachah*.

The Tosfos Ri"ד points out that the Gemara seems to have understood the passuk of *ושבתה הארץ שבת לך* in this way as well. Thus, the Torah requires that no *melachah* be performed on one's field during *shemittah*, and not only that one must personally abstain from working the land. Accordingly, a Jewish owner of a farm would violate an *issur d'oraisa* if he were to have a non-Jew perform work

on his farm during *shemittah*. *Amirah l'nochri* during *shemittah* constitutes an *issur d'oraisa*, not merely an *issur derabbanan*.

Many farmers in Eretz Yisrael employ a *heter mechirah*, in which land in Eretz Yisrael is sold to non-Jews for the duration of the *shemittah* year in order to avoid the stringencies of *shemittah*. One of the stipulations of the *heter mechirah* issued in the late 1800s was that *melachos* (*d'oraisa*) could only be performed on the land by non-Jews. However, given the understanding of *ושבתה הארץ שבת לך* that emerges from the Gemara, it is not at all clear that hiring non-Jewish workers lowers the level of the *issur*. As in the case of *shevisas behemto* on Shabbos, *amirah l'nochri* to work one's land on *shemittah* may be an *issur d'oraisa*.

The simple understanding of *ושבתה הארץ שבת לך* is that it represents not only an *issur aseh* (a prohibition expressed as a positive commandment), but a *mitzvas aseh* as well – to see to it that all of one's land lies fallow over the *shemittah* year. This point may be significant with regard to the implementation of the *heter mechirah* as well. Years ago, after the Medinah was established, the Chazon Ish was opposed to relying on the *heter mechirah*, and Rav Binyomin Mendelson, rav of Moshav Komemiyut, explained that his position was related to the *mitzvah* of *ושבתה הארץ שבת לך*.

The simple reading of *ושבתה הארץ שבת לך* is that there is a *mitzvah* to let every inch of land owned by a Jew in Eretz Yisrael lie fallow during *shemittah*. Accordingly, selling the land to a non-Jew, aside from avoiding the violation of the *issurim* of *shemittah*, results in the loss of an opportunity to fulfill this *mitzvah*. Thus, unlike *mechiras chametz*, which is a *ha'aramah* to

avoid violation of *ובל ימצא*, the *heter mechirah* is a *ha'aramah* that precludes the fulfillment of a *mitzvah* that would have otherwise been fulfilled. *Ha'aramah* to avoid an *aveirah* is permissible, but *ha'aramah* to avoid a *mitzvah* is not. This explains the opposition of the Chazon Ish to the *heter mechirah*.

As mentioned, the *mitzvah* of *ושבתה 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.

● Adapted from Rav Schachter on the Parsha II.



# How Much Do You Really Want It?



**Rabbi Yisroel Reisman**  
Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshiva Torah Vodaas

**A**t the beginning of the second half of our double Parsha, we begin the reading of Parshat Bechukotai with *אם בחקתי תלכו* – if you follow my laws (26:3). Although perhaps the main Limmud of the Parsha is the *Tochacha* (admonition) it begins with the *Brachot* that Hashem promises to bring upon Am Yisrael when they live according to His will. The Ramban teaches that these are a glimpse into what we will receive in the days of Mashiach which amongst them include *ונחתי שלום בארץ* – “I will grant peace in your land” as well as *ורדפתם את* – “You shall give chase to your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword”. The last of these *Brachot* listed is *ואשבר מטה עלכם* – “I will break the yoke that weighs down on you”.

When reading the Pesukim in the order in which they are presented it is difficult to understand why the Torah would put this Pasuk at the end. The Chasam Sofer asks if we have already been taught about the peace that there will be in Eretz Yisrael and the falling of our enemies, what is this “yoke” the Torah is referring to? It is understood that in Galut we still have the burden of our enemies, but in the times of Moshiach when we are in control how could it be that we will have any burden?

The Chasam Sofer answers his own question by looking at the end of Parshat Behar where he points to the Pasuk that teaches *כי עבדי הם* – “for they are my

servants” (25:42). Rashi here explains that the Pasuk is coming to teach us *שטרי קודם* – “My document of servitude comes first”. Our relationship with HaKadosh Baruch is primarily defined by recognizing that which we desire ourselves to the will of Hashem. We may crave certain foods or would want to wear shatnez, but we need to understand that the ultimate reason we keep ourselves from these actions is because we have been commanded as such. We should view, as the Rambam explains, the things that one would typically desire as something we theoretically strive to obtain yet recognizing it is the laws put in place by Hashem that are keeping us from doing so. Yet when dealing with Mitzvot they may seem more logical such as stealing the mindset of one should be “who would want to do such a thing.

We find in our world that very often this formula amongst people’s approaches to Mitzvot is the other way around. People would be repelled by the thought of eating treif, yet for theft they would claim that it is only because of what we have been commanded that they have not committed such a deed. The Chasam Sofer explains that this is the burden, even in *ימות המשיח* that will still be upon us. Am Yisrael will be a nation looked up to by the rest of the world, will we finally experience the *Geula Shleima* and yet could it be that there would still be something within us

that desires that which is forbidden? This is the yoke the Chasam Sofer explains will be removed. We will be able to do Mitzvos not coming from a place of holding ourselves back from certain desires but out of the pure will to do so.

The Gemara in Rosh Hashana 28B explains *מצוות לאו ליהנות ניתנו* – “Mitzvot were not given for pleasure”. Rashi teaches there *אלא לעול על צוואריהם ניתנו* – “rather they (Mitzvot) were given as a yoke on our necks”. We must understand though this does not mean this is what our relationship is supposed to look like with that which we are commanded to do. Rather there is a higher level of *ואשבר מטה עלכם*, to break this yoke upon us and be able to perform Mitzvot simply from a place of pure *Ratzon Hashem*.

What our goal must be is to obtain this level of Mitzvah observance now through training ourselves to better see how to approach them daily and consider what our true desires are and what they should be. It is in our hands to decide whether Mitzvot will continue to be a burden upon us with the constant need of breaking down a barrier in order to fulfil them, or to reach a higher degree with a deeper appreciation for the opportunity at hand at fulfilling the will of Hashem with all that we do.

● Edited by Zac Winkler.

# True Freedom



**Chief Rabbi Sir Ephraim Mirvis KBE**

Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth

**T**hose 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 meshit'iyhu"*, 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.

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# Renewal vs Change



**Rabbi Shalom Rosner**  
Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh

אם בְּחֻקֹתַי תֵּלְכוּ וְאֶת־מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ וְעָשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם:

*If you follow My statutes and observe My commandments and perform them (Vayikra 26:3).*

**M**uch ink has been spilled explaining this *pasuk*. The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh has 42 different interpretations of the this *pasuk*. We will highlight an important and relevant lesson derived from this *pasuk* by the Menachem Tzion, Rav Menachem Sacks, the son-in law of Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank.

In every generation there are movements among even observant Jews to “modernize” Judaism in an unhealthy way. Such individuals desire to maintain the “logical” principles of the Torah and they claim that in order to preserve our religion in a modern society, we should relinquish the irrational mitzvot, known as “*chukim*”. In an advanced society, we need to adapt our religion to the times.

The Gemara (Shabbat 31b) states that when a person passes away, one of the questions that Hashem will ask of them is: “*Kavata itim laTorah?*” Did you set aside time to study Torah? But we have, on occasion, suggested another interpretation. “Did you adjust the times – the norms and influences of the day – to the precepts of the Torah rather than trying to adjust the Torah to fit with the times?” (the latter would reflect – *kavata Torah La'itim*). The



**Once *chukim* are ignored,  
other Mitzvot are later  
disregarded as well.**

influence should be from within the Torah environment to the outside world and not the opposite. Some people try to adapt the Torah to modern times. They suggest that we be “open-minded” about contemporary norms and values. We say that, on the contrary, we need to open our minds to accept the Torah and adapt our lives to it.

History testifies that once change is instituted at the “*chukim*” level, it eventually leads to the demise of the observance of rational mitzvot as well. Trying to modernize the Torah leads one down a slippery slope. “*Torat Hashem Temima Meshivat Nafesh*” – only when Torah is complete does it restore the soul.

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik distinguished between a “*mechadesh*” (renewal) and a “*mesahane*” (change). It is important to constantly evaluate how to perform

mitzvot properly in different situations. During the covid period *gedolei hador* were challenged with many new halachic questions that arose and many treatises were written to address those issues. As Hazal tell us “*ein bet midrash b'li chidush*”. However, to be “*mesahane*” – change halacha to adapt to modern times is prohibited.

The Menachem Tzion interprets our *pasuk* as follows. If you follow my statutes (“*im b'hukotai telechu*”), only if you keep the mitzvot, the *chukim* that may be difficult to comprehend, only then – will you continue to observe the rational mitzvot. Once *chukim* are ignored, other Mitzvot are later disregarded as well.

During this period between Pesach and Shavuot as we prepare for our celebration of *Matan Torah*, may we strengthen our learning and observance of Torah and mitzvot, both *chukim* and *mishaptim* and transmit the full mesorah to future generations. Only then we will be worthy of the blessings that are promised in the following *pesukim* – peace and prosperity in the land of Israel!

# The Covenant of the Patriarchs and the Land of Israel



**Michal Horowitz**  
Judaic Studies Teacher

In Parshas Bechukosai, we read the tochacha: the great rebuke foretold to us, shall the nation throw off the yoke of Torah and mitzvos. The Torah promises us that terrible tragedies will befall our people. The *pasukim* are painful, difficult and punishing.

The Torah prophesies that:

*G-d will thrust upon us the fever, wasting eyes, pining eyes and panic; we will be smitten before our enemies, we will run when no one is chasing us; our might and pride will be broken, our heavens, like iron, and the land, like copper; our energy will be exerted in vain and our enemies will eat the fruits of our labor; wild beasts will bereave us and decimate our flocks; the sword will be brought upon us and we will be under siege in our cities; ten women will bake bread in the same oven and all that will result will be crumbs; we will consume the flesh of our sons and the flesh of our daughters we will consume; our cities will be destroyed and our sanctuaries desolate; our Land will be desolate...*(Vayikra 26).

Amongst these terrible *klalos* (curses) the *pasuk* tells us: וְזָכַרְתִּי אֶת-בְּרִיתִי יַעֲקֹב; וְאֶת-בְּרִיתִי יִצְחָק וְאֶת-בְּרִיתִי אַבְרָהָם, אֶזְכֹּר — וְהָאֶרֶץ אֶזְכֹּר — and I will remember the covenant with Yaakov, and also the covenant with Yitzchak, and the covenant with Avraham I will remember, and the land I will remember (Vayikra 26:42).

There are many interpretations into this beautiful verse. In the midst of our suffering, our trials and terrible tribulations, G-d will remember (*keviyachol*) the covenant He made with the Avos and the Land, and He will wake up (*keviyachol*) to redeem us.

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, the Rav, zt'l, teaches: "The very fact that Israel is isolated internationally, that the vast

majority of *Klal Yisrael* is sympathetic towards her and ready to suffer all manner of charges against her by Jew-haters; the fact that we identify with the State and see all who oppose it as Jew-haters, the very fact that we know that this is our own problem which no outsiders can understand, sanctifies us with the sanctity of the Patriarchs.

*'And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land of thy sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be your G-d'* (Bereishis 17:8).

"Take away Eretz Yisrael, and the Jews of the diaspora will be engulfed by a tremendous wave of estrangement and assimilation. All the dramatic, tragic experience of the sanctity of the Patriarchs, the existential difference of Jewish history, would, far be it, be wiped out. And who can say that we would be able to salve the sanctity of Sinai if the Jew ceased to feel the Patriarchal sanctity in its full tragic depth.

"How apt are the words of the Torah: וְזָכַרְתִּי יַעֲקֹב; וְאֶת-בְּרִיתִי יִצְחָק וְאֶת-בְּרִיתִי אַבְרָהָם, אֶזְכֹּר — וְהָאֶרֶץ אֶזְכֹּר (Vayikra 26:42) – I will ensure that the Patriarchal covenant will never be forgotten.

"When you reach the stage of: *You will be lost amongst the nations, and the land of your enemies shall consume you* (v.38); when you will be in turmoil, dumbfounded, afraid, when you no longer want to be recognized as Jewish, when you hide yourselves like Jonah in the bowels of the ship, when you will be frightened by the lot of Abraham the Hebrew, of the Patriarchal covenant – it will not avail you, in spite of all, to forget the ancient covenant. *I will bring about you something new that will always remind you of your Jewishness, that will exemplify the fact that you are different though you are physically*

*the same as other people. I, G-d, will remember the Patriarchal covenant so that you will be forced to remember it.*

"The covenant of Abraham will boom forth from the radio, all the newspapers will point out the Jew, his particular problems, his stubbornness as well as his cast-iron determination. The shadow of Abraham our father will pursue you. Do you know how? By Eretz Yisrael. *And the Land I will remember!* Do you know why I am determined to uphold the Patriarchal covenant, the paradoxical history of Jewry in all its tragedy and grandeur? Because: *But despite all this, while they are in the land of their enemies, I will not despise them nor will I reject them to annihilate them, to annul My covenant with them, for I am Hashem their G-d* (v.44).

"Because I want the continued existence of the people with Torah and mitzvot, with Shabbos, kashrus, tefillin and tzitzis; because I do not want you to thrust the covenant of Sinai aside – *I will remember for them the covenant of the ancestors, whom I took out from the land of Egypt before the eyes of the nations, to be a God to them. I am the Hashem* (v.45).

"To save the covenant of their ancestors at Sinai, I must realize the Patriarchal covenant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that is, to be at one with the suffering and joy of *Klal Yisrael*" (The Rav Speaks, p.150-152).

As we celebrate Yom Yerushalayim once again, and give thanks to the RS"O for the privilege of our *Medina*, our *mekomos ha'kedoshim* liberated in our day and time, the *zechus* we have to walk, enjoy, benefit from, pray in and connect to our Land, let us pray for the day of the ultimate redemption, when our nation and our Land will be blessed with only *brachos* and everlasting *shalom*.



# Jerusalem / Seek and Find



**Rabbi Menachem Leibtag**  
Tanach Study Center | Yeshivat Har Etzion

**T**he Torah never specifies the precise geographic location of where the permanent Bet HaMikdash is to be constructed. Instead, the site is consistently referred to as “the one which G-d will choose” (“HaMakom asher yivchar Hashem”).

However, we do find a very obscure hint regarding how we are to find this site: “l’shichno ti’drshu, u’bata shama” (Devarim 12:5) – G-d will only show us the site if WE look for it. This ‘hide and seek’ type relationship is reflective of every Divine encounter. To find G-d, man must SEARCH for Him.

According to these psukim, this principle applies to the nation in same manner as it applies to the individual. [As we say in the daily Ashrei: “karov Hashem l’chol kor’av” – G-d is close to those who call out to Him.]

When Am Yisrael as a nation, begins a serious search for G-d, then G-d will show them the proper location to build the Mikdash.

The generation of Yehoshua, despite their military conquests, did not succeed in establishing the permanent Mikdash (after conquering the Land). Instead, they erected the temporary Mishkan in Shilo. There it remained, quite neglected, during the entire time period of the Judges. After the city of Shilo was destroyed by the Phlishtim (during the time of Eli / see Shmuel chapters 4-6) both the Mishkan and the “aron” wandered from site to site. It was only during the time period of David haMelech that Bnei Yisrael actively aspired to build the Mikdash.

For example, when David became king over all of Israel (see II Shmuel 5:1-9), his first act was to conquer the city of

Jerusalem. His next project was to gather the nation in order to bring the “aron” (the holy ark) to his new capital city (see II Shmuel chapter 6). Note how Divrei ha’yamim describes how David explained his plan (and the reason) to the nation: “David said to the entire congregation of Israel: If you approve, and this is from G-d (the events of David’s rise to power), let us go forward and invite all our brethren in the land of Israel, together with the KOHANIM and LEVIIM and gather together, IN ORDER TO BRING BACK to us G-d’s HOLY ARK – ‘ki lo DRASH’NU’HU b’yemei Shaul’ – for during the time of Shaul WE DID NOT SEEK IT” (I Divrei Hayamim 13:2-3)

David Ha’melech notes how the “aron” had been neglected during the generation of Shaul at the national level. In contrast to Shaul, David ha’melech considered bringing the “aron” to Yerushalayim as his highest national priority.

After the “aron” finally arrived in Jerusalem, the next step in David’s master plan was to build a permanent house for the “aron”, i.e. the Bet Ha’Mikdash in Yerushalayim: “When the King was settled in his palace and G-d has granted him safety from his enemies [he’niach lo m’kol oyvav m’saviv], the King said to Natan the prophet: Here I am dwelling in a HOUSE of cedar wood, while the ‘aron’ is dwelling only in a TENT!” (see II Shmuel 7:1-2)

Even though G-d informed David that Am Yisrael would have to wait another generation before the Temple could be built (in the next generation by his son Shlomo, see II Shmuel chapter 7), its precise site was already designated in David’s own lifetime (see I Divrei Ha’yamim 22:1). In

fact, David haMelech himself prepared all the necessary building materials (see the remainder of that chapter).

If you read the above sources carefully, you’ll see that the underlying reason for G-d’s decision to delay its construction for one more generation stemmed from the need to wait until its ‘function’ – to make a Name for G-d – could be properly fulfilled.

‘Jerusalem’ is destined to become more than just the city that houses the Temple. Ideally, Jerusalem should become the National Cultural and Religious Center of the Jewish people, while making a Name for G-d. This aspiration is found in the prophecies of most all of the later prophets. For example:

“For Jerusalem will be called the city of Truth (“ir ha’emet”), and the mountain of the Lord of Hosts – “har ha’Kodesh” (see Zecharya 8:3).

“For out of Zion will come forth Torah and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (see Isaiah 2:3).

Today, be it for halachic, technical, or political reasons, we are not permitted to rebuild the Bet HaMikdash.

Until the proper time comes, this aspiration remains our national dream and an everlasting prayer. Nonetheless, to rebuild the city of Jerusalem as our National Center – a city of Truth, Justice, and Sanctity – is not only permitted, it is our duty. In our own generation, G-d has opened for us a historic opportunity. The achievement of this goal remains our national responsibility.

# Living Without Worry



**Rabbi Eli Mansour**

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**T**he Haftara read for Parashat Behukotai is a prophecy from the Book of Yirmiyahu, and contains the famous verse, “Baruch Ha’geber Asher Yibtah B’Hashem, Ve’haya Hashem Mibtaho” – “Blessed is the man who trusts in G-d, and G-d shall be His source of trust” (Yirmiyahu 17:7).

Different interpretations have been given for the difficult phrase “Ve’haya Hashem Mibtaho.” One explanation is that Hashem becomes a reliable source of trust for those who place their trust in Him. If “Yibtah B’Hashem” – a person trusts G-d, then “Ve’haya Hashem Mibtaho” – G-d will come through for that individual, and care for him under all situations.

However, Rav Moshe David Vali (Padua, Italy, d. 1777), in his commentary to the Haftarat, explains this verse differently. He writes that many people trust G-d, but also trust other people or things. Many of us, for example, indeed believe that Hashem is the one who provides our needs, but at the same time, we place our trust in our jobs, our bank account, our investments, our businesses, a client, a product, and so on. The prophet here speaks of a person “Asher Yibtah Be’Hashem” – who not only places his trust in Hashem, but “Ve’haya Hashem Mibtaho” – he places his trust exclusively



**One who lives with true Bitahon (faith in G-d), however, knows that in any event, everything in his life and in the world is controlled solely by G-d.**

in Hashem, relying only on Him, and not on anyone or anything else.

The prophet compares such a person to a tree that is planted near large springs of water from which its roots draw sustenance, such that “Bi’shnat Basoret Lo Yid’ag” – it is not worried during periods of drought. Rav Avraham Pam (1913-2001), in his work on the Haftarat, notes that this description characterizes somebody who has complete faith in Hashem – he is never worried or anxious. Generally, Rav Pam writes, people feel anxious about things which they cannot control. And when they are unable to control something relevant to them, they become frustrated and angry. One who lives with true Bitahon (faith in G-d), however, knows that in any event, everything in his life and in the world is controlled solely by G-d. He trusts that everything is under

G-d’s control and no one else’s, and that G-d is always caring for us, no matter how difficult or hopeless the situation appears.

Rav Pam adds that one of the special qualities shared by all great Torah sages is their constant peace of mind and serenity. Every day, vexing questions are brought to them, and people facing difficult and painful problems come to them seeking their counsel. And yet, despite hearing of all the hardships in Am Yisrael, they are always level-headed and calm. Even when they are beset by personal problems, they maintain their peace of mind. This special ability stems from their Bitahon, from their firm belief that everything is in Hashem’s hands, and He is always doing what is best for us.

Let us all strive to reach the level of “Bi’shnat Basoret Lo Yid’ag,” where we do not worry about or fret over difficult situations that arise over the course of life. Let us instead ensure that “Ve’haya Hashem Mibtaho” – we place our trust solely and exclusively in Hashem, and in no one and nothing else, so that we can enjoy serenity and peace of mind at all times, no matter what problems or hardships we are facing.

# Heads Held High



**Rabbi Moshe Weinberger**  
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In this week's *parshah*, we find a word which is only used once in all of *Tanach*. The culmination of the blessings in *parshas Bechukosai* contain the following statement: "I broke the staves of your yoke and led you *komemius*" (Vayikra 26:13). While the word *komemius* is based on the root word (קמה) meaning to arise, stand up, or be established, what exactly does it mean here? Let us study three different explanations.

*Rashbam* offers the simplest explanation: "Yokes of wood are called 'staves' [מוטות] because they bend [מתה] and bow the neck of the ox. *Komemius* is when the yolk is removed and one can straighten up his head." According to *Rashbam*, *komemius* essentially means free or liberated. We were slaves in Egypt. But Hashem led us out toward the land of Israel as free men and women. Along these lines, *Onkolus* translates the phrase "led you *komemius*" as "led you with freedom." *Komemius* therefore expresses our transition from being slaves, always looking down into the dirt, bent over, bowing down in submission to our human masters to a state of liberation, not subject to the whims of any man.

*Rashi* offers a second explanation of the word based on the *Midrash* in *Toras Kohanim*, "*Komemius* - with an upright posture." This connotes more than simple freedom. It implies that when Hashem led us out of Egypt, we had a new attitude - a new state of mind. We felt courage and confidence. Similarly, he explains that when the *passuk* says, "And the children of Israel went out with an outstretched arm" (*Shmos* 14:8), it means with "great and public courage."

While *Chazal* says, "Anyone who walks with an upright posture pushes away the legs of the Divine Presence (*Kiddushin* 31a),

this is only with respect to an individual. On a national level, Hashem requires us to stand tall and unflinchingly uphold the honor and dignity of our people. As we say repeatedly in *davening* throughout Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, "And therefore place the glory of Hashem on Your nation." Desecration of the honor of the Jewish people is a desecration of G-d's name.

Commenting on the phrase in *Birkas HaMazon*, "May the Merciful One break the yoke of exile from upon our necks and lead us upright [*komemius*] into our land," *Rebbe Nosson zy'a*, explains in *Likutei Halachos* (*Birkas Hamazon* 4:14):

For this verse is stated with respect to *Eretz Yisroel*, toward which the Jewish people were going. All travels, roads, and paths of the Jewish people were to conquer *Eretz Yisroel*.... This is what "led you *komemius*" means - with an upright posture, with brazenness and stubbornness, whereby we stand upright with great obstinance to be victorious in war and thereby come to *Eretz Yisroel*. This was the primary purpose of leaving Egypt.... It is impossible to enter *Eretz Yisroel* and to be victorious in this war, which is the primary war a Jewish person must fight, except through extremely great stubbornness, in the way of "led you *komemius*..." to our land.

But there is a third, and even deeper explanation of the word *komemius*. That is found in the *Sfas Emes's* explanation of the word based on a mysterious *Gemara* which says, "*Komemius* means... like the two stories [קומות] of Adam HaRishon [who was two stories tall - i.e., twice the height of a 'normal' human being]" (*Bava Basra* 75a). The *Sfas Emes* in our *parshah* explains "The form of Adam was merely

garment for the light of the soul of his life that was within him... So too, a Jew's life has a hidden and a revealed element. By rectifying the revealed portion [through improvement of our character traits, by doing *mitzvos*, and by studying Torah], one merits the inner side, which is the hidden life of a person. This is *komemius* [the two stories of a person - the physical side and the deeper, hidden side]."

With this deeper explanation of *komemius*, we can now understand the source of the confidence, courage, and holy stubbornness that the Jewish people need in order to claim our rightful place in *Eretz Yisroel*. Where does it come from? How can we not be discouraged and broken by the fact that the whole world hates, condemns, and attempts to degrade us? Where do we find the wherewithal to throw off the yoke of the submissiveness of two thousand years of exile to reclaim our rightful place, standing tall in Hashem's holy land?

The answer lies in the *passuk* immediately preceding the one in which Hashem said, "I broke the staves of your yoke and led you *komemius*." In it, Hashem tells us, "I will walk among you." The Infinite One Himself lives within every Jew - within the Jewish nation. Unlike the other nations of the world, we, on a national level, have a "second story." We are not merely our physical bodies. We are not merely intelligent beasts. While the rest of the world cannot tolerate this idea, it animates us and gives us the ability to stand up tall in the face of the millions and billions of people who hate and want to destroy us.

Our place in *Eretz Yisroel* today is not the product of the fleeting kindness of the nations of the world during the brief period after the Holocaust when, because of their guilt for letting the Nazis slaughter

*Continued on page 22*

# Foreclosure On Your Soul



Rabbi YY Jacobson  
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After the Jewish people entered the land of Israel, Joshua, the Jewish leader, assigned a plot of land to every tribe and family, as recorded in the book of Joshua. If a Jew fell upon hard times and was compelled to sell his ancestral field, the Torah – the constitution of Judaism – gave him the right to redeem it two years after the purchase date.

The seller would return the money to the buyer and receive his field in return. If he did not redeem it, the field would return to him automatically with the arrival of the Jubilee year.

What happened if a poor Jew was forced to sell an ancestral home located within a walled city in Israel? Here the law changed dramatically. This home could be redeemed only until the first anniversary of the sale. Thereafter, it remained the property of the buyer in perpetuity, and did not return to the seller with the arrival of the Jubilee year.

How about if a Jew sold an ancestral home located in an un-walled city? The home could be redeemed immediately after the sale, just like a home in a walled city. And even if it was not redeemed during the first year of the sale, it could still be redeemed afterwards, till the arrival of the Jubilee year when it returned to its original owner, just like the law regarding the field.

What is the logic behind the three different laws concerning the sale of fields, homes in walled cities, and homes in un-walled cities?

Nachmanides, explains the rationale in a rather moving way: Selling your personal home due to impoverishment affects not your income (a home does not produce regular profits), but your dignity. Selling

your field due to poverty, on the other hand, might affect your income (a field produces regular profits) but not your personal honor. To preserve the dignity of an impoverished individual who was forced to give up his home, the Torah allows him to redeem it immediately after the sale, throughout the entire first year, as soon as he comes up with the money. After the year is up, however, he certainly relocated to another home; now the buyer is entitled to hold on to his purchase as long as he wishes. It cannot be redeemed any longer.

Concerning a field however, which affects a person's income rather than his dignity, short-term redemption was unnecessary. The Torah's only concern was that the field be returned to its original owner upon the arrival of the Jubilee year, in order not to deprive a person and his family of their natural source of income.

Homes in open cities, says Nachmanides, were often used for farmers and guardians of fields. Thus, they were treated like the fields themselves and needed to be restored to their owner by the Jubilee year. Yet since their sale (just as the sale of full-fledged homes in walled cities) was embarrassing for the seller, they too could be redeemed immediately after the sale, even before the passing of two years.

Fields, homes located in un-walled cities, and homes located in walled cities, symbolize three aspects of our daily lives:

Fields represent a person's career and his or her day-to-day interactions and purchases in the outside world, in the "field."

Homes, situated in un-walled cities, represent a person's internal home and family life, which are not exposed for all to observe.

Homes located in walled cities, surrounded by an additional wall of protection, are symbolic of the most vulnerable and intimate space of a person's life, usually guarded by an additional fortress of privacy. This represents a person's inner relationship with his core-self, his core values, his soul. His G-d.

When you sell your field, i.e. when you allow your career and your daily external encounters to become tarnished by dishonesty and selfishness – you can get away without noticing your moral degeneration for a full two years. Only after two years of moral and spiritual decay will you begin to sense the void in your life. The depravity caused by the "selling" of your integrity will begin to haunt you. Then, when you have become aware and frustrated, you can liberate your field and your life. Even if you don't, time and life's experiences are likely to do the job. In the 50th year, you will get back your field. But why wait so long?

Then comes the far more serious situation where you "sell" your home, i.e. you lose touch with your loved ones, your wife, your children and your closest friends. In your smugness you enter into your private bubble and you alienate the people closest to you. You give up your home.

And when you dispose of your home, you will sense the emptiness immediately. Your life will just become far more shallow and artificial. Since the pain will be felt immediately, you are indeed capable of liberating your home right after the "sale." Here again, even if you don't possess the courage to change, time and life's journey usually will change you. But why wait? Who knows what can transpire till then?

*Continued on page 23*



# Behar-Bechukosai: Chizuk



**Rabbi Judah Mischel**

Executive Director, Camp HASC; Mashpiah, OU-NCSY

In the height of High Holiday celebrations in autumn of 1978, the Lubavitcher Rebbe suffered a heart attack. Dr. Ira Weiss of Chicago, a renowned cardiologist who had written a textbook on heart rhythm analysis, served as the head of the team of doctors who treated the Rebbe. For years following the Rebbe's miraculous recovery, Dr. Weiss continued to maintain a close relationship, attending annual farbrengens and closely monitoring the Rebbe's wellbeing.

One year, Dr. Weiss brought a professional colleague with him, Dr. Gerald Dorros Jr., a world-renowned cardiovascular interventionist from Wisconsin. After the farbrengen and medical consultation, Dr. Dorros had the opportunity of a few private moments with the Rebbe in *yechidus*. Not knowing what to expect from a deeper conversation with the Rebbe, he was surprised when the Rebbe suggested that the doctor should devote himself to preventative medicine: 'Consider treating people who are healthy — not only those who are suffering from illness or in need of emergency medical care. You can make healthy people even more healthy.'

"Are we to believe that we can improve on what the Almighty has done?" replied the doctor with curiosity. "Of course!" the Rebbe responded. "If a layman can't improve on what the Almighty has created in this world, and if a doctor does not aim to improve on what the Almighty has done, then what are we doing here with our lives?"



Our sedra introduces us to our Torah-defined responsibility in lending a helping hand and issues a prohibition against taking / charging interest on a loan when assist our neighbors and brothers in their time of need:

"If your brother becomes destitute and his hand falters beside you, you shall support him, whether a convert or a resident, so that he can live with you... Do not take interest from him."

(*Vayikra*, 25:35-6)

Rashi adds detail in his commentary on the verses:

"Do not allow him to fall down and collapse altogether, in which case it would be difficult to pick him up again [from his dire poverty]. Rather, "support him" while his hand is still faltering [for then it is easier to help him out of his trouble]. To what can this be compared? To a load on a donkey-while it is still on the donkey, one person can grasp it and hold it in place. Once it falls to the ground, however, [even] five people cannot pick it up."

Before someone becomes completely destitute and is in need of a bail-out, rehabilitation, we must strengthen them, and to be *רואה את הנולד*, 'ahead of the curve', anticipating what may happen before it does.

Rambam (*Matnas Aniyim*, 10:7) provides us with even greater detail:

"There are eight levels in charity, each level surpassing the other. The highest level, beyond which there is none, is a person who supports a Jew who has fallen into poverty [by] giving him a present or a loan, entering into partnership with him, or finding him work so that his hand will be fortified so that he will not have to ask others for a hand-out: 'You shall support him, the stranger, the resident, and he shall live among you.' Meaning, support him before he falls and becomes needy."

Our charge of *v'hechezakta bo*, "strengthen and support one another" is to do so

spiritually as well as materially. This includes offering words of encouragement or guidance, and whatever resources we may have at our disposal. Perhaps someone can benefit from our social currency, our professional introduction, our listening ear or good word, but the main thing is devoting ourselves to the 'preventative medicine' of *v'hechezakta bo*.

Rebbe Moshe Alshich notes that when we are presented with an opportunity to help, we sometimes imagine others with more skills, resources, better connections or greater wealth, to be in a better position to assist. However, in the commandment, אחיך "your brother" is in *ישון יחיד*, singular form. This means your brother or sister, not that of the person with more resources. Our calling is to take others' potential needs personally, see them as our own brother or sister, and even to imagine that we are the only one able to be of assistance to them. We should not passively assume that others will do our mitzvah for us.



Rebbe Nosson Dovid of Shidlovitz (*Sefer Imrei Binah*, *Parshas Behar*), writes:

"When one loves another, he can uplift him spiritually. If one is invited to dine with the king, and replies, 'I don't want to go unless my friend comes with me' he has expressed a deep bond of love, and has manifested the ultimate, inner goal and meaning of the Covenant between Am Yisrael and Hashem. This applies to every Jew. To the degree that a person takes part in manifesting the relationship and strengthening the Covenant between friends and God, he can bring the entire world to perfection."



*Continued on page 22*

# Emunah

## Mrs. Shira Smiles

International lecturer and curriculum developer

**P**arashat Behar speaks almost entirely about the laws of Shemittah and Yovel. It is therefore surprising that we find laws of social justice interspersed throughout the parashah. We find laws pertaining to honesty in business and laws forbidding charging interest. One would think that parashat Mishpatim would be the appropriate place for these halachot. What is the commonality between all these topics?

The Gra points out that the first word in the Torah, Bereishit, forms the acronym of six fundamental middot that a person needs to serve Hashem. Bitachon, ratzon, ahavah, shetikah, yirah, torah. The Chovot Halevavot understands bitachon as the tranquility one experiences when he completely relies on Hashem to take care of all his needs. In developing bitachon, one deepens his confidence in Hashem's total guardianship and thus can acquire the remaining attributes becoming a more complete oved Hashem. Rav Milevsky in Ner Uziel understands our parashah as

expressing the theme of bitachon. Particularly in the year preceding Yovel as well as in the Yovel year itself, leaving one's field fallow and forfeiting financial stability takes a tremendous amount of bitachon that Hashem will provide sufficient food and livelihood for this period. Cheating in business and taking interest displays the exact opposite middah, lack of trust that Hashem provides each person with his exact needs. Based on this idea, Rav Hofstetter in Dorash Dovid explains the following Gemara (Shabbat 31a). After 120 years at the Final Judgement, a person will be asked "nasata venatata b'emunah", did you deal honestly and faithfully in business? B'emunah can also be understood "with emunah". Did you lead your life with the clear understanding that Hashem is in charge? Did you live with the total conviction that everything you received was a Divine gift and did you appreciate it as such? A person living with this level of bitachon will invariably conduct his business with integrity because cheating others just does not fit into his ethos.

There is an added fascinating psychological insight that Rav Schlesinger shares in Eleh Hadevarim. He explains that in shenat shemittah, the seventh year, a farmer may go to other fields and pick produce from his neighbor's land. Throughout the year he becomes accustomed to take freely from wherever he chooses, whenever he wishes. Habit, as a rule, becomes embedded in one's behaviorism and has the power to dictate a person's actions. Here the Torah is concerned that one should not become accustomed to taking in ways that are not permitted. Thus, the paramount importance of honesty with other people's possessions is underscored in this section.

Rav Kaufman in Mishchat Shemen observes that the majority of the bircot hashachar are expressed in the plural except "sheasa li kol tzarki". This brachah is meant to remind us that Hashem sustains every person and provides their exact individual needs. Each morning we solidify our midat habitachon framing our behavior throughout the entire day.

*Continued from page 19*

us, that they "allowed" us to have a state simply as refuge for a poor and beleaguered minority. Our sovereignty over the land of Israel and the recognition of Yerushalayim as our eternal capital are not products of the world's spirit of charity and pity. They are an outgrowth of the

fact that we have returned to our home, upright, with confidence, brazenness, courage, and the knowledge that we bear the name of G-d within us.

Just like the degradation of the Jewish people was a degradation of Hashem's

name, the return of the honor of our nation returns honor and prestige to Hashem's name in the world. May Hashem cause the complete return of the revelation of His kingdom on earth with the advent of the complete redemption, may it come soon in our days.

*Continued from page 21*

Before taking leave of the Rebbe, Dr. Dorros asked one last question: "Are you asking me to attempt to make man a perfect being?" "No," the Rebbe told him, "that is not what is asked of you." With a twinkle, he added: "Leave that for Mashiach."

Dr. Dorros later founded the Dorros-Feuer Interventional Cardiovascular Disease Foundation — and as Medical Director, continues to promote proactive heart health and wellbeing to countless recipients, "making healthy people even more healthy".

By lifting one another up, and strengthening each other even before we might face an inner or outer challenge, may we merit the restoration — and perfection — of our collective physical and spiritual health, with the coming of Mashiach, soon and in our days.

# Sorry, We Made a Mistake



**Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi**  
Popular Torah teacher and author

**T**his week I have been talking with sweet female students who have come from the United States for a week. As always, when we are not on our phones, we just talk about it. About addiction, about wanting to quit, about being able to talk face to face again. At the end of the conversation, a sweet nineteen-year-old girl came up to me and told me that she can not imagine moving on after falling off the wagon a bit in terms of modesty. She feels like a liar, she looks like a righteous daughter of Israel, and inside her – this terrible lie, or is it actually her truth.

There are boys and girls who walk among us certain that they are lying: beautiful on the outside and ugly on the inside, and all they need is this wonderful speech from Parashat Bechukotai, in which G-d promises, “I will be present in your midst.” And Rashi, in one of his wonderful commentaries, interprets, “I will, as it were, walk with you in the Garden of Eden, as though I were one of yourselves and you will not be frightened of Me. One might

think that this implies: you will not fear (reverence) Me! Scripture however states, ‘but I will be your G-d.’ Wow G-d promises that G-d “walks” in each of us as it was in Gan Eden, as it was in reality before sin. This is the true face of everyone! If this is so, then why the dirty feeling? Here is the second part of Rashi’s words: precisely because G-d is among you. This awe that you feel is precisely the proof that your soul is so pure, for otherwise you would not be so shocked at yourself...

And what do we do now?

Only the one who understands that G-d is in him, who is a bearer of heaven, can fall, say “I was wrong” and recover. That is why the celebration of Har Meron is always celebrated before the celebration of Har Sinai. Who will climb the mountain of the Lord? Only those who rehabilitate themselves after a fall. Rabbi Akiva built a huge life enterprise, but he admitted that he had obviously made a mistake. He started all over again. Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai opened the eyes of the “ordinary” people, turned them into a wave of bones,

and when he realized that he was wrong, (!) he gave this people the most popular holiday, Lag Ba’Omer. From Har Meron it is already possible to climb Har Sinai.

Judaism is very simple, I explained to the sad girl. Unlike the new psychic practices that tell you, “It’s not you,” and that only make you feel more guilty, Judaism says simply: man must admit the evil he has done, just as he acknowledges the good he has. What a reformed society we would become if we, as educators, could also say, “I was wrong.” Gan Eden is not a utopia, it is always there... The feeling that we have fallen testifies to its existence like a thousand witnesses.

Have you fallen? Get up, my beautiful one, and go, G-d is with you now.

*Continued from page 20*

Then comes the third and most serious condition – when you “sell” your most intimate space, when you become alienated from your deepest sense of self, from your core-values, from your inner relationship with G-d. In such an event, you can sense the extraordinary void immediately and thus liberate your soul right away. But if you wait for more than a year, you will likely lose the chance to ever liberate your inner identity again.

When you allow the external pressures or enjoyments of life to rob you of your core self, when you no longer dedicate twenty minutes a day to speak your heart out to your Creator, when you have no time for the essence of it all, you will soon lose touch with the notion that you ever had any innocence to lose. You may no longer know that there was anything to liberate.

It is painful to lose things (“fields”) in life. It is far more painful to lose people

(“homes”) in life. But the worst pain of all is when we lose our connection with the quintessence of life and reality, with G-d. We simply can’t afford to lose our souls. None of us can afford to sacrifice our few intimate moments of prayer and communion with G-d because of other responsibilities or pleasures. For without this relationship, we might one day look in the mirror and observe a dead soul.

# Hebrew Language in the Parsha



David Curwin

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Parashat Behar includes a set of circumstances where the financial situation of an Israelite gradually declines. In some cases, the Israelite may be sold into slavery. If that happens, he may require redemption from slavery, as is described in this verse:

וּמָרָא אֲחִידָה עִמּוֹ וְנִמְכַר לְגֵר תּוֹשֵׁב עִמָּךְ אוֹ לְעֶקֶר מִשְׁפַּחַת גֵּר:

“If a resident alien among you has prospered, and your kinsman being in straits, comes under his authority and gives himself over to the resident alien among you, or to an offshoot of an alien’s family...” (Vayikra 25:47)

The word translated here as “offshoot” is עֶקֶר and it only appears here in the entire Tanakh. As such, and especially due to the lack of clear context in the verse, it is subject to much debate among the commentaries and translations.

The translation here as “offshoot” (or the similar “branch”) is widely accepted by modern scholars. This understanding comes from parallels in Aramaic and other Semitic languages. For example, in the 8th-century BCE Sefire inscriptions, a parallel to עֶקֶר clearly means “descendant.”

A related Aramaic word is עֶקֶר, which appears in the Aramaic sections of the book of Daniel.<sup>1</sup> In those verses it means “root” (of a tree) and it carried that meaning over into rabbinic Hebrew,<sup>2</sup> but more frequently took the metaphorical sense of “important thing.”<sup>3</sup>

How did the same word come to both mean “root” and “offshoot”? It seems that roots and shoots are similar in the way they spread out from the tree (even if they have different purposes.) So עֶקֶר applied to both of them.

A similar phenomenon can be seen with the word שֹׁרֵשׁ, which also usually means “root.” But there are times it also means “descendant” (offshoot) as in the phrase שֹׁרֵשׁ יִשָׁי (Yeshayahu 11:10), which refers to the descendants of Yishai.

Another example where עֶקֶר has multiple meanings is in the adjectives עֶקֶרָה and עֶקֶרָה meaning “barren.” Linguists posit that עֶקֶר comes from the root עֶקֶר meaning “to pull up by the roots, uproot.” From there it came to mean “remove,” which led to the sense of being “barren, empty.”

1. Daniel 4:12,20,23.

2. Mishna Maasrot 3:10.

3. Mishna Avot 1:17

## Parsha Riddle



Reb Leor Broh

Mizrachi Melbourne

Of the 24 Mitzvot appearing in Behar, only 3 are accompanied by the words “And you shall fear your G-d”. What are they?

### Answer to the Parsha Riddle

1. Not to oppress a Jew verbally or advise him incorrectly to gain advantage of him (25:17)
  2. Not to charge interest when lending a Jewish person (25:37)
  3. Not to work a Jewish servant with hard labor (25:43)
- Rashi, explains how in each of these cases, the need for reminding “And you shall fear your G-d” is necessary:
1. “The advisor may say, ‘I only meant it for his good’, and who can say he didn’t?”
  2. The lender may pretend that the money he is lending on interest, is not his money, but belongs to a gentile, and who would know otherwise?
  3. The employer may say “I’m just giving him a job, not trying to demoralize him”, and who would know his real agenda?

## DUST AND STARS THIS WEEK in Jewish History

- May 13, 1896:** Solomon Schechter discovered the famous Cairo Geniza, and subsequently rescued thousands of pages of rare Hebrew medieval manuscripts.
- Iyar 23, 2448 (1313 BCE):** Moshe hit a rock at Refidim to provide water for the Jews, which became the “Well of Miriam,” accompanying them for the next 40 years in the desert.
- May 15, 1948:** As the British mandate over Palestine came to an end per UN resolution 181 establishing Jewish and Arab states, Arab armies invaded Israel.
- May 16, 1916:** France and England signed the Sykes-Picot agreement arbitrarily partitioning the Ottoman Empire, without consulting the people that lived there.
- Iyar 26, 5507 (1747):** Yahrzeit of Rabbi Moshe Chayim Luzatto (Ramchal), kabbalist, philosopher, Hebrew poet and author of many classic Jewish works.
- May 18, 1950:** Operation Ezra and Nechemia commenced, bringing 120,000 Jews fleeing Iraq to Israel in one year.
- Iyar 28, 5728 (1967):** Yom Yerushalayim — The Israeli army liberated the Old City of Jerusalem in the 6-Day War, reuniting the 3,000 year old capital of the Jewish nation.

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Young Israel of Southfield  
Congregation Kadimah-Toras Moshe

### MINNESOTA

Congregation Darchei Noam

### MISSOURI

Yeshivat Kadimah High School Nusach  
Hari B'nai Zion Congregation  
Young Israel of St. Louis

### NEW HAMPSHIRE

Hillel at Dartmouth

### NEW JERSEY

Ahavas Achim  
Volunteer Chaplain Middlesex County  
Congregation AABJ&D  
Congregation Adath Israel of the JEC  
National Council of Young Israel  
Congregation Ahavat Achim  
Congregation Ahavath Torah  
Congregation Brothers of Israel  
Congregation Darchei Noam of Fair Lawn  
Congregation Etz Chaim of Livingston  
Congregation Israel of Springfield  
Congregation Ohr Torah  
Congregation Sons of Israel of Cherry Hill  
Kehilat Keshet  
Ma Tov Day Camp  
Ohav Emeth  
Pal Foundation  
Shomrei Torah of Fair Lawn  
Synagogue of the Suburban Torah Center  
Yavneh Academy  
National Council of Young Israel  
Young Israel of Teaneck

### NEW YORK

Beis Community  
Congregation Anshei Shalom  
Congregation B'nai Tzedek  
Congregation Bais Tefilah of Woodmere  
Congregation Beth Sholom  
Ramaz  
Ma'ayanot Yeshiva High School for Girls  
MTA – Yeshiva University  
High School for Boys  
Young Israel of Merrick  
Congregation Beth Torah  
Congregation Etz Chaim of  
Kew Gardens Hills  
Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun  
Congregation Ohab Zedek  
Great Neck Synagogue  
Iranian Jewish Center/Beth  
Hadassah Synagogue  
Irving Place Minyan  
Jewish Center of Atlantic Beach  
Kehilath Jershurun  
Kingsway Jewish Center  
Lincoln Square Synagogue

Merkaz Yisrael of Marine Park  
North Shore Hebrew Academy  
Young Israel of Merrick  
NYC Department of Correction  
OU-JLIC at Binghamton University  
OU-JLIC at Cornell University  
Queens Jewish Center  
Stars of Israel Academy  
The Jewish Center  
The Riverdale Minyan  
Vaad of Chevra Kadisha  
West Side Institutional Synagogue  
Yeshiva University High School for Girls  
Young Israel of Hillcrest  
Young Israel of Jamaica Estates  
Young Israel of Lawrence-Cedarhurst  
Young Israel of New Rochelle  
Young Israel of North Woodmere  
Young Israel of Oceanside  
Young Israel of Scarsdale  
Young Israel of Woodmere

### OHIO

Beachwood Kehilla  
Congregation Sha'arei Torah  
Congregation Torat Emet  
Green Road Synagogue  
Fuchs Mizrachi School  
Heights Jewish Center

### PENNSYLVANIA

Shaare Torah Congregation

### SOUTH CAROLINA

Brith Sholom Beth Israel  
Congregation Dor Tikvah

### TENNESSEE

Baron Hirsch Congregation

### TEXAS

Mayerland Minyan Synagogue  
Robert M. Beren Academy  
United Orthodox Synagogues of Houston

### VIRGINIA

Keneseth Beth Israel

### WASHINGTON

Bikur Cholim-Machzikay Hadath  
Northwest Yeshiva High School  
Sephardic Bikur Holim Congregation

### URUGUAY

Comunidad Yavne Uruguay

### VENEZUELA

#### CARACAS

Ashkenazi Kehilla  
Mizrachi Venezuela



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