

## QUESTIONS ON PARASHI'OT BEHAR-BECHUKOTAI

**Q-1. (a)** What are 5 goals of observing the agricultural laws of *shemita*? **(b)** Why does 25:1 specify that the *shemita* laws were given at *Har Sinai* (3 reasons)? **(c)** Of the 613 *mitzvot*, which 4 in this *parasha* concern *shemita*? **(d)** May one use (1) soap made from *shemita* produce? (2) medicinal creams made from *shemita* produce? (3) cut down a tree during the *shemita* year in order to use the wood (2 situations)? **(e)** (1) Were the *shemita* and *yoveil* years counted during the 70 years between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> *Beit haMikdash*? (2) With what 3 punishments did *Hashem* threaten *Bnei Yisrael* for failing to observe *shemita*? **(f)** Which 8 *mitzvot* in this *parasha* concern *yoveil*? **(g)** What are 3 differences between the laws applying to (i) *shemita*, versus those of (ii) *yoveil*? **(h)** How does the observance of *yoveil* cause people to refrain from stealing? **(i)** How do the years of (1) *shemita* and (2) *yoveil* represent how a person should spend the earlier and later years of his life? (*Vayikra* 25:1-28)

**A-1. (a)** (1) We acknowledge that we do not own the land – *Eretz Yisrael* is *Hashem's*, and we must perform His *mitzvot* to be worthy of keeping it (*Sanhedrin* 39a). (2) A farmer, forced to turn to *Hashem* for his sustenance during *shemita*, realizes that in the other 6 years, he reaped only due to His benevolence (*Kli Yakar*). (3) With one year of no labor every 7 years, farmers could devote themselves to *talmud Torah*, just as no labor every 7<sup>th</sup> day increases *talmud Torah* (*Sforno*). (4) *Shemita* shows wealthy people the daily grief the poor suffer, and when the rich suffer without a *parnasa* for a whole year, they realize how much the poor endure every year and are generous towards them (*R. Bechaya*). (5) When the nations claim that *Bnei Yisrael* obtained *Eretz Yisrael* by stealing it from its prior owners, *Bnei Yisrael* show them, by observing *shemita*, that the land belongs to *Hashem*, and His Will gave the land to them (*Alshich*). **(b)** (1) This teaches that just as *Hashem* gave the *shemita* laws, with all their details, at *Har Sinai*, so did He give the details of all *mitzvot* at *Sinai* (*Rashi*). (2) *Shemita* is specifically mentioned as given at *Sinai* since the *Torah* guarantees that the year before *shemita* will produce a crop large enough to last for 3 years, showing that the *mitzvot* must be Divine, since no human could make such a guarantee (*Chatam Sofer*). (3) The *shemita* laws make sense only if *Hashem* commanded them – so, too, we follow all of the other *mitzvot* only because He commanded them at *Sinai* (*Darash Moshe*). **(c)** During the *shemita* year, not to (1) farm the land (*Sefer haChinuch – Mitzvah* 326). (2) cultivate trees (*Mitzvah* 327). (3) harvest anything that grows wild (*Mitzvah* 328). (4) gather fruit in the usual manner (*Mitzvah* 329). **(d)** (1) Yes, as long as it is inedible; (2) no (*Rambam – Hilchot Shemita ve-Yoveil* 5:10). (3) (i) Yes, but only before any fruit appears or after the fruit has matured; (ii) no, once the fruit begins to appear, so that the fruit will not be wasted (5:17). **(e)** (1) *Shemita* years were counted, but not *yoveil* (10:5). (2) (i) Less productivity of the land; (ii) poverty, forcing sale of the land (*Kiddushin* 20a). (iii) Exile from *Eretz Yisrael* (*Rashi – Vayikra* 26:34). **(f)** To (1) count the years, 7 cycles of 7 years (*Mitzvah* 330). (2) blow the *shofar* on *Yom Kippur* to proclaim liberty for every *eved ivri* (*Mitzvah* 331). (3) sanctify the *yoveil* like a *shemita* year (*Mitzvah* 332). (4) not farm the land (*Mitzvah* 333). (5) not harvest anything that grows wild (*Mitzvah* 334). (6) not gather fruit in the usual manner (*Mitzvah* 335). (7) not sell a field in *Eretz Yisrael* permanently (*Mitzvah* 339). (8) return land to the original owners (*Mitzvah* 340). **(g)** (1) (i) *Shemita* cancels monetary debts, (ii) but *yoveil* does not; (2) (i) *shemita* does not free bondsmen and restore land to its original owner, (ii) but *yoveil* does; (3) (i) *shemita* releases debts at the end of the year, (ii) but *yoveil* releases land at the start of the year (10:16). **(h)** Since the land reverts to the owner whom *Hashem* designated, one realizes that *Hashem* will arrange for all that he obtains illegally to return to its rightful owner(s), and he gains nothing, since all that will remain with him is the sin (*Mitzvah* 330). **(i)** (1) The 1<sup>st</sup> 6 years of the *shemita* cycle represent his first 60 years, which are mainly occupied in studying for and earning a *parnasa* – in his 7<sup>th</sup> decade, he should separate himself from his business and devote himself completely to learning *Torah* (*Abarbanel*). (2) For the first 10 years of his life, one does not know what life is about; for the next 50 years, represented by the *yoveil*, he devotes himself to worldly pursuits, but at age 60, he should leave everything aside and think only about gaining *olam haba* (*Alshich*).

**Q-2. (a)** How do we know that in doing business, we should give a fellow Jew preference in making a sale or a purchase? **(b)** (1) Why does 25:14 say “*lo tonu*” (do not aggrive [your brother]), then repeat it in 25:17? (2) Why does 25:17 add, “*ve-yareita meiElokecha*” (you shall fear *Hashem*)? (3) Which sin is a more severe – *ona'at mamon* or *ona'at devarim*? (4) How do we know this (3 views)? **(c)** When discussing a fellow Jew who has become poor, why does 25:35 say, “*ve-hechezakta bo*” (you shall hold on to or strengthen him)? **(d)** What are the 8 degrees of giving charity? **(e)** (1) What is one required to do for poor Jews, from the command, “*ve-chai imoch*” (he shall live with you – 25:35) (2 views)? (2) Why does 25:36 add, “*ve-chey achicha imoch*” (so that your brother can live with you) (2 views)? (3) If 2 men are in the desert and there is enough water for one to survive, should the one with the water share it with the other (2 views)? **(f)** (1) When one gives a loan with interest to a fellow Jew, which 5 parties to the transaction commit a sin? (2) What is *ribit devarim* (interest on a loan using words)? (*Vayikra* 25:14,17,35-37)

**A-2. (a)** In describing proper business practices, 25:14 says, “When you make a sale to your fellow [Jew] or make a purchase from the hand of your fellow [Jew], ...” (*Rashi*). **(b)** (1) 25:14 prohibits hurting others in business (*ona'at mamon*), and 25:17 prohibits hurting others personally by verbally harassing or annoying them or by giving bad advice (*ona'at devarim*); (2) do not think that no one knows what bad things you are thinking about your neighbor, because *Hashem* knows (*Rashi*). (3) *Ona'at devarim*; (4) (i) 25:17 adds, “*ve-yareita meiElokecha*” (fear *Hashem*) in prohibiting *ona'at devarim* (25:17), but not for *ona'at mamon* (25:14); (ii) *ona'at mamon* affects only the victim's money, but *ona'at devarim* demeans his very self; (iii) with *ona'at mamon*, restitution is possible, but the pain that *ona'at devarim* causes can never be undone (*Bava Metzia* 58b). **(c)** This teaches that the highest form of charity is preventing him from becoming poor – by offering him a job or loan or by investing in his business (*Rambam – Hilchot Matanot Aniyim* 10:7). **(d)** (1) Giving someone aid with a frowning countenance; (2) giving less than what is proper, but with a friendly countenance; (3) giving to the poor man after he has asked for it; (4) when the poor man knows who gave to him, but he remains unknown to the giver; (5) when the giver knows to whom he is giving, but the poor man does not know from whom it came; (6) when neither the giver nor poor man know each other; (8) giving a poor man a job or loan or entering into a partnership with him (10:7-14). **(e)** (1) (i) Give him the financial and other assistance he needs (7:1). (ii) Protect his life and heal him if he is sick (*Ramban*). (2) (i) The repetition of “*ve-chai imoch*” emphasizes how serious this requirement is; (ii) it teaches that if one took illegal *ribit* (interest), he must return it, so the borrower can live with him; (3) (i) Yes – *Ben Potiri* says, “*ve-chey achicha imoch*” teaches both should drink and die, and one should not see the death of a fellow Jew; (ii) no – *Rebi Akiva* says, “*ve-chey achicha imoch*” teaches he should live “with you”, but because your own life has precedence over the life of a fellow Jew, you first are required to save yourself (*Bava Metzia* 62a). **(f)** (1) The (i) lender, (ii) borrower, (iii) loan guarantor, (iv) witnesses to the loan, (v) scribe who writes the contract; (2) if the borrower, in consideration for having received the loan, tells the lender some information that is vital to the lender, the information is prohibited interest, and the borrower may not tell it to the lender (*Bava Metzia* 75b).

**Q-3. (a)** From where do we learn that stealing from a non-Jew is prohibited? **(b)** What is the significance of the sequence of the following laws – (1) *shemita* and *yoveil* followed by the laws of selling moveable property? (2) followed by the laws of selling one's ancestral land? (3) followed by the laws of selling one's house? (4) followed by the laws of borrowing with interest? (5) followed by the laws of an *eved ivri* purchased by a Jew? (6) followed by an *eved ivri* purchased by a non-Jew? (*Vayikra* 25:40-42,50;)

**A-3. (a)** When discussing a Jew's redeeming an *eved ivri* who is owned by a non-Jew, 25:50 says, “he shall make a reckoning with his purchaser,” teaching that the non-Jew must be paid the fair value of the Jewish slave, and similarly, all other transactions must be fair (*Bava Kama* 113b). **(b)** The *Torah* conveys that (1) if one is greedy by not observing *shemita* and *yoveil*, *Hashem* will cause him to sell his moveable property; (2) if he does not repent, He will cause him to sell his ancestral land; (3) if he still does not repent, he will be forced to sell his house; (4) if he does not mend his ways, he will have to borrow money and pay interest; (5) he then will become so desperate that he will be forced to sell himself as a slave to a fellow Jew; (6) finally, he will have to sell himself as a slave to a gentile and become a servant of *avoda zara* (*Rashi*).

**Q-4. (a)** Why is 26:1, the prohibition of making idols, followed by 26:2, the requirements to observe *Shabbat* and revere the *Mikdash*? **(b)** Since *Shemot* 20:5 says that the rewards for *Bnei Yisrael* for serving *Hashem* will be 500 times greater than their punishments for not serving Him, why are there only 11 verses (26:3-14) of blessings, but 30 verses (26:15-45) of curses in *Bechukotai*? **(c)** Of the 22 blessings listed if *Bnei Yisrael* perform the *mitzvot*, which (1) 6 blessings relate to successful agriculture? (2) 8 blessings relate to security and peace? (3) 3 blessings relate to population growth? (4) 5 blessings relate to spiritual greatness? **(d)** Why do the blessings focus on material rewards and not spiritual rewards (3 views)? **(e)** Since 26:8 says that 5 of *Bnei Yisrael* will pursue 100 of the enemy, which is a ratio of 1:20, why will 100 of *Bnei Yisrael* pursue 10,000 of the enemy, which is a ratio of 1:100, and not 2,000 of the enemy, which is a ratio of 1:20? **(f)** In the *tochacha*, (1) what are the 7 general categories of curses? (2) When 26:17 says that the enemies of *Bnei Yisrael* will rule over them, who

are these “enemies”? (g) 26:21 warns, “If you [Bnei Yisrael] behave with Me [Hashem] ‘keri’ – what does “keri” mean (4 views)? (h) How do we know that Yerushalayim was sanctified for all time, even after the destruction of the Beit haMikdash? (i) After 26:40 says, “[Bnei Yisrael] will confess their sins and the sins of their fathers”, will Hashem not then “remember My covenant with Ya’akov”? (26:42) – why does 26:41 say that Hashem will bring them to their enemies’ land – do they not deserve reward for repenting, not punishment? (j) Why was the galut Bavel (Babylonian exile) 70 years long? (Vayikra 26: 26:1-45)

**A-4.** (a) This refers to the Jew in the previous verses who was sold as a slave to a gentile – while his master worships idols and does not observe *Shabbat*, he must not follow his master and must observe all the *mitzvot*, both positive (e.g. observing *Shabbat*) and negative (e.g., no *avoda zara*), and he should also go to the *Beit haMikdash* during the *regalim*, even if it entails taking time off from his duties to his master (*Ramban*). (b) The blessings are stated in general terms while the curses are very specific, and by generally stating the blessings, Hashem leaves room to increase the number and intensity of the blessings, but by stating the curses in great detail, He limits the punishments to those that are stated (*ibn Ezra*). (c) (1) (i) Hashem will provide rain in the proper season, (ii) the land will yield its produce, (iii) the trees will bear fruit, (iv) Bnei Yisrael will still be busy storing grain from one harvest when the next harvest comes, (v) Bnei Yisrael will eat bread to satiety (26:4-5); (vi) Bnei Yisrael’s old grain will improve with age, and they will move the old grain to make room for the new (26:10); (2) (vii) Bnei Yisrael will dwell securely in *Eretz Yisrael*, (viii) Hashem will provide peace, (ix) no other people will make Bnei Yisrael tremble, (x) wild beasts in *Eretz Yisrael* will be harmless, (xi) the sword of no army will pass through *Eretz Yisrael*, (xii) Bnei Yisrael will chase their enemies, (xiii) 5 of Bnei Yisrael will chase 100 of the enemy, and 100 will chase 10,000, (xiv) the enemies of Bnei Yisrael will fall before them (26:5-8); (3) Hashem will (xv) turn to Bnei Yisrael and bless them, (xvi) make Bnei Yisrael fruitful, (xvii) greatly increase the numbers of Bnei Yisrael (26:9); (4) Hashem will (xviii) establish His covenant with Bnei Yisrael, (xix) set up the *Beit haMikdash* among them, (xx) not reject Bnei Yisrael, (xxi) walk among them, (xxii) make Bnei Yisrael His people (26:9,11-12) (*Maharsha – Bava Batra* 88b). (d) (1) Since receiving spiritual rewards for performing *mitzvot* is expected, Hashem does not need to list these blessings; rather, the miraculous material blessings are described (*Ramban*). (2) The primary blessings and punishments come not in this world, but in *olam haba* and *gehenim*, and Hashem promises that one who performs *mitzvot* will have good health, prosperity and security to enable him to increase his service to Hashem and gain even more spiritual rewards, while it will be more difficult for those who rebel against Him to earn *olam haba* (*Ramban – Hilchot Teshuva* 9:1). (3) The blessings do promise 5 spiritual rewards (26:9,11-12), and the righteous will merit spiritual greatness even when indulging in the material blessings (*N. Scherman*). (e) The ratio for 100 of Bnei Yisrael is higher than the ratio for 5 of Bnei Yisrael, since the more people who are united in serving Hashem, the more effective their collective actions will be (*Rashi*). (f) (1) (i) Health – Hashem will inflict illnesses on Bnei Yisrael (26:16); (ii) agriculture – Bnei Yisrael will sow their fields in vain, and trees will not bear fruit (26:16, 19-20); (iii) peace – the enemies of Bnei Yisrael will defeat them, and Hashem will break the pride of Bnei Yisrael (26:17,19); (iv) wild animals will kill the children of Bnei Yisrael, destroy their livestock, and diminish the population, and the roads will become desolate (26:22); (v) punishments – Hashem will punish Bnei Yisrael with the sword, pestilence and shortage of bread (26:25-26); (vi) desperation – with their idols destroyed, the *Beit haMikdash* desolate, and their cities in ruins, Bnei Yisrael, as a result of starvation, will be forced to eat their children (26:29-32); (vii) exile – Hashem will scatter Bnei Yisrael among the nations (26:33) (*Maharsha*). (2) The “enemies” refer to fellow Jews – the curse is that not only will the nations ruling over Bnei Yisrael take what they see Bnei Yisrael possess, but fellow Jews also will ensure that their secret treasures are taken away (*Rashi*). (g) (1) Casually – as a matter of choice and convenience, by not taking the *mitzvot* seriously; (2) holding back, by hardening their hearts toward Hashem (*Rashi*). (3) With stubbornness, by refusing to draw close to Hashem (*Onkeles*). (4) By chance – believing that their misfortune is coincidental, not Divinely ordained (*Ramban*). (h) 26:31 says, “ve-hashimotoi et Mikdesheichem”, (I will bring your sanctuaries to desolation), meaning that Yerushalayim will still retain its *kedusha* after the *Beit haMikdash*’s destruction (*Ramban – Hilchot Beit haBechira* 6:16). (i) Since Bnei Yisrael’s repentance in 26:40 will be incomplete, Hashem will humble them further by bringing them back to *Eretz Yisrael*, which will be ruled by their enemies, as happened during *Ezra*’s return to *Eretz Yisrael* after *galut Bavel* (*Ramban*). (j) The *galut* “appealed the land” (26:34-35), reflecting Hashem’s anger for Bnei Yisrael’s failing to fulfill the *shemita* and *yoveil* requirements for 436 years – each 100 year period included 14 *shemita* years and 2 *yoveil* years, for a total of 70 of the 436 years, for which the 70 years of *galut* atoned (*Rashi*).

**Q-5.** (a) When 26:42 says that Hashem will remember His covenant with the *avot*, why does He first mention *Ya’akov*, then *Yitzchok* and finally *Avraham* (2 views)? (b) When, after the *tochacha*, 26:46 says that Hashem gave all the previously stated laws to Bnei Yisrael through *Moshe* at *Har Sinai*, why are 6 laws – *arachin* (valuations), *temura* (changing animals’ *kedusha*), *hakdashah* (donating objects to the *Beit haMikdash*), *bechor* (first-born animals), *cheirem* (banned property) and *ma’aser sheini/beheima* (2<sup>nd</sup> tithe and animal tithe) – then added (4 reasons)? (c) Why does the last verse of *Sefer Vayikra* repeat 27:34 that these laws were given through *Moshe* at *Har Sinai*? (*Vayikra* 26:42-46, 27:34)

**A-5.** (a) (1) While *Ya’akov* was “the least” of the *avot*, his merit should suffice to save Bnei Yisrael, but if that is not enough, the merit of *Yitzchok* will suffice; and the merit of *Avraham* certainly will suffice (*Rashi*). (2) Hashem will remember the merit of *Ya’akov*, because all his children were *tzadikim*, but even the merit of *Yitzchok* will suffice, even though he had *Eisav*, and the merit of *Avraham* will suffice, even though he had *Yishmael* (*Abarbanel*). (b) (1) Since the voluntary acts of *arachin*, *temura*, *hakdashah*, *bechor* and *cheirem* do not fit the theme of the rest of *Sefer Vayikra*, which details mandatory *mitzvot* that atone for the sins of Bnei Yisrael and bring them closer to Hashem, these laws are separated from the rest of the *mitzvot* (but this does not explain why the obligatory *ma’aser* is included) (*Hirsch*). (2) All of the *mitzvot* previously mentioned in *Vayikra* are part of Hashem’s *brit* with Bnei Yisrael at *Sinai* (the “*brit Chorev*” – *Devarim* 28:69), but these laws, though also given at *Sinai*, are not part of the *brit* (*Sforno*). (3) All of *Sefer Vayikra* describes how Hashem makes us *kadosh*, but these appended laws show that Bnei Yisrael can also declare items *kadosh*, and these *mitzvot* show that Bnei Yisrael has the limited ability to create *kedusha* (*Sefer haChinuch – Mitzvah* 357). (4) In the *arachin* laws immediately following the *tochacha*, the sum of the payments for all of the age groups is 143 *shekalim*, and the *arachin* atone for the 143 curses, including the 45 curses in *Bechukotai* plus the 98 curses in *Ki Tavo* (*Ba’al haTurim*). (c) One might think that he must perform only the obligatory *mitzvot*, but not the optional *mitzvot* at the end of *Sefer Vayikra* – the *Torah* tells us that since Hashem gave even those *mitzvot* at *Sinai*, once one undertakes, through a *neder*, to do them, he cannot change his mind and must carry them out (*Hirsch*).

**Q-6.** (a) (1) For each age group up to the age of 60, a female’s *arach* (fixed value) is 50%-60% of a male’s *arach* – why is the *arach* of a woman older than 60 a full 2/3 of that of a man older than 60? (b) (1) What are the only 3 *mitzvot lo ta’aseh* (negative *mitzvot*) for which one incurs *malkot* (lashes) even though he did no act of commission? (c) From which crops did *ma’aser sheini* (2<sup>nd</sup> tithe) have to be taken (2 views)? (d) (1) Why did the annual *ma’aser beheima* (tithe of kosher domestic animals) have to be eaten in Yerushalayim? (*Vayikra* 27:7-10,30-32)

**A-6.** (a) (1) After age 60, a man’s value decreases faster than a woman’s, as it is stated, “if there is an old man in the house, there is a stumbling block in the house; if there is an old woman in the house, there is a treasure in the house” (*Rashi*). (b) (1) (2) (i) Swearing falsely, (ii) cursing someone using Hashem’s Name, (iii) *temura* (*Ramban – Hilchot Temura* 1:1) (c) (1) Grain, grapes and olives (*Rashi*). (2) Every crop that is primarily for human consumption (*Ramban – Hilchot Terumot* 2:1). (d) (1) To increase the *Torah* knowledge of the farmers and their families – since they were involved in the barley harvest around *Pesach* and the wheat harvest around *Shavuot*, the farmers would want to offer the *Yom Tov Korbanot* and rush back to the harvest – by having to eat the *ma’aser beheima*, they remained in Yerushalayim, surrounded by the members of the *Sanhedrin*, *kohanim*, *levi’im* and other sages, who taught them *Torah* (*Bechorot* 59b).

**Q-7.** In the *haftara*, to what activity does the *Navi* refer when he says, (a) “*arur ha-gever asher yivtach ba’adam*” (cursed is the man who trusts in man), and (b) “*baruch ha-gever asher yivtach be-Hashem*” (blessed is the man who trusts in Hashem)? (*Yirmiyahu* 17:5,7)

**A-7.** When a farmer (a) plowed and harvested during *shemita*, saying, “I will sow during *shemita* and eat,” he was cursed; (b) observed *shemita*, he was blessed (*Rashi*).