

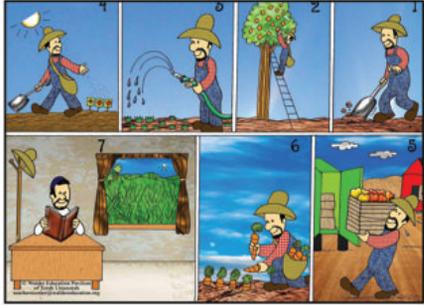


SOUTH HEAD YOUTH PARASHA SHEET

PARASHAT BEHAR-BECHUKOTAI



Every week we celebrate the beautiful and holy day of Shabbat on the seventh day of the week. This is because Hashem created the world for 6 days and He rested on the seventh day. So too, Hashem tells us, all week you should work, however, on the seventh day you should take a break, relax, and celebrate the holy Shabbat.

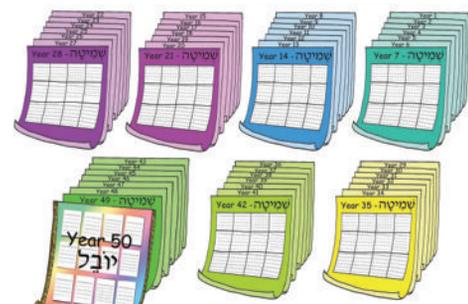


In Israel, the Jewish farmers are not only commanded to celebrate Shabbat every week like all other Jews, but they are also commanded to rest from their labour every seven years! The seventh year is called the Shmittah year. In this year Jewish farmers are obliged to let the land rest. They may not plant or harvest. Instead, the Jewish farmers are required to spend their time engaged in Torah study. Take David, the Jewish farmer as an example. David is a very busy farmer. Every day he goes out to work to plough his field and plant his seeds. He is very successful. He yields lots of produce which he sells to the fruits and vegetables stores in Israel. David does this for six years, however on the seventh year he stops. It's time for David to take a break! Not because he is tired, but because Hashem commanded him and every other Jewish farmer to do so. At

first, when David's children see that their father is not at work, they become very worried. 'Daddy, how will we have money? How will we survive if you do not work?' David calmly responds, 'Hashem commands us farmers not to work in the seventh year. This is called the Shmittah year. Hashem is the One who created the whole world. The entire earth belongs to Hashem. Hashem wants us to remember that He is the One who causes everything to grow. Even though I will not be working in the field, our crop will still grow in the Shemittah year and this will remind us that everything in this world only happens because Hashem wants it to. Hashem promises every farmer that keeps the Shemittah year, that he will enjoy three years of plentiful produce on the sixth, seventh and eighth years. So you see my dear children, you have nothing to worry about'. David's children are satisfied with their father's response, but they still have one more question. 'Dad, what will you do for a whole year if you are not ploughing the field?' To which David responds, 'For an entire year I will have the privilege of learning Torah. I will be able to apply my mind to learning Hashem's holy Torah, without having to worry about anything else. I feel very lucky and privileged to be able to do this'.

When David finishes talking to his children, he walks outside and sees his beautiful field blossoming with ripened fruits and vegetables. It all looks so good and so delicious, but David knows that it's the seventh year, and not only can he not work his field, but he cannot sell his produce either. So David hangs up a big sign on his field which says, 'This food is free. Everyone is free to take all the fruits and vegetables that s/he wants!' Now this is not an easy Mitzvah for David to keep, because he must make sure that there is still enough fruit and vegetables for him to feed his family. But David knows that he must trust in Hashem, and then Hashem will provide him with whatever he needs for the coming year. At the end of the year, when David returned to his field, he was amazed. Even though he did not plough or plant seeds for an entire year, his field was still blossoming with beautiful fruits and vegetables. From here we see that although it may seem hard to keep a Mitzvah, Hashem always rewards us for keeping His laws. This example shows us that if we follow the laws of Shmittah Hashem will make sure we have plenty of food to eat.

The Parasha also speaks about the Yovel year, also known as the Jubilee year. The Yovel year occurs every fifty years, following a cycle of seven Shmittah years. In the Yovel year, Jewish people are not permitted to work the land. Additionally, in the Yovel year all land is returned to its original owner. But what does it mean to return land to its original owner and how can a Jew be a slave? When the Jewish people conquered Israel with the help of Hashem, the land of Israel was divided by tribe and by family. Every family owned a piece of land in their tribe's portion. In the Yovel year, all the land was returned to its original owner. Therefore, when a person bought or rented another person's land, the price of the land was based on how many years were left until the Yovel year. In the Yovel year all Jewish slaves were set free. But how can a Jewish person be a slave? In the times of the Mishkan and Beit Hamikdash, if a Jew needed money he could sell himself as a slave to another Jew for up to six years. If a Jew was a slave at the time of Yovel, he would be set free. So the price of a slave was also based on the amount of years remaining until the Yovel year. It is very important to note that the Torah warns us against humiliating a person who had to sell him/herself as a slave. We are also forbidden to force a Jewish slave to do hard labour. In fact we are required to treat a Jewish slave very nicely. For example, if



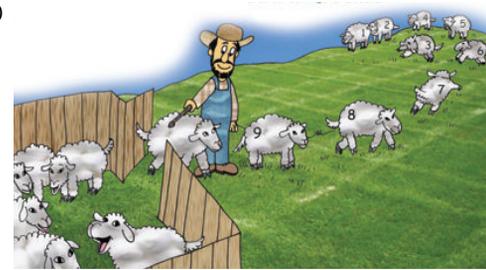


a Jewish master only has one piece of juicy steak in the house he is not permitted to eat it. He is required to give it to the Jewish slave for dinner.

Our Parasha also speaks about the important Mitzvah of Tzeddakah. Tzeddakah is a very important Mitzvah. One who gives Tzeddakah is rewarded in three different ways: he is saved from harm, Hashem repays him for what he gave and he is rewarded with long life. Our Parasha tells us that we should give Tzeddakah to needy people. We are told that we may not charge interest on the amount that another person owes us. In addition, the Torah commands every Jew to give 10% of his/her earnings to Tzeddakah. This Tzeddakah is called Ma'aser. So if a person earns \$100 he needs to give \$10 to Tzeddakah. Jewish farmers are also required to give Tzeddakah. The Jewish farmer is required

to give a tenth of all his/her animals to Hashem. So if a farmer owns sheep, cows and goats, he is required to count all of his animals and give every tenth animal to Hashem, to be used in the Beit Hamikdash. This Mitzvah is called Ma'aser Behaima. The farmer gathers all of the Ma'aser Beheima and travels with them all the way to the Beit Hamikdash in Jerusalem, where he gives them to a Kohen who offers the animals as a Korban to Hashem. Once the Korban is offered to Hashem, the farmer is given the meat of the animals, and he is permitted to eat it, but only within the walls of Jerusalem. The reason why Hashem specifically gives this law to the farmers is so that they should not forget to learn some Torah. As soon as the farmer offers the Korban, he develops a greater understanding of Hashem and His Mitzvot than beforehand, and he welcomes Hashem's holy presence into his everyday life.

Our Parasha concludes with many blessings and curses. Hashem made a promise to us. (We read this promise every single day in the second paragraph of the Shema prayer). He told us that if we keep His Mitzvot and follow the laws of the Torah, He will reward us with blessings. He will send us rain when it is needed, give us lots of produce and He will make sure that there is peace in the holy land of Israel. However, if we do not keep the Torah Hashem will close the heavens so that there will be no rain and the earth will not yield its produce.



The Torah is the most valuable thing in the world and it is the most precious gift that Hashem gave to the Jewish people. If we keep Hashem's Mitzvot, He will reward us and bestow many blessings upon us and the entire Jewish nation. There will be peace in the land of Israel and we will always feel Hashem's presence. But if, G-d forbid, we do not follow Hashem's ways and we do not keep Hashem's Torah and Mitzvot, Hashem will not be happy with us and He will punish us. We won't receive the blessing of bountiful produce, instead there will be a famine. And Hashem will not protect Israel, but rather the enemies will attack our holy land. The Torah gives us a very detailed list of all the blessings and curses. The blessing were given on Mount Grizim, a mountain alive with grass and vegetation, and the curses were given on Mount Eval, a barren mountain.

Our Parasha this week teaches us that Hashem is very good to us. He gives us life, food, the ocean, the sun and everything that we need. But if Hashem is good to us then why is there also bad in the world? Why are there sad people, why are people starving, why do people become sick and why do some people pass away young? We have just mentioned that Hashem rewards us when we do something good and some terrible things may happen if we do something not so good. But does this mean that when

something bad happens it's a punishment? Definitely not! There is no such thing as bad in the world, instead there are two types of good. There's a good that looks good for example, the birth of a baby, and there is a good that looks like bad. An example of this is when a person becomes sick. Everything that Hashem does is for good. We may think that it's bad, but that's only because the good is hidden from us. There is a saying 'think good and it will be good'. Even when something appears to be bad, we should always think good. When Hashem sees that we are thinking positively and when He sees that we are trusting Him, He will surely make sure that things turn out well.



Mission: When something goes wrong this week remember to say to yourself, 'This too is for the best'.

It was great seeing you in Shule!

**We hope you enjoy reading this Parasha Sheet and quizzing your family!
Shabbat Shalom from Brookie and the South Head Youth Crew**

